

To: Minister Marie-Claude.Bibeau, Minister of Agriculture and Agrifoods, Minister Bill Blair
Minister of Border Security and Emergency Preparedness, Minister John Barlow, MP for
Foothills

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Dear Members of Parliament,

The announcement today from the Federal Government of Canada regarding its border closure will impact commercial beekeeping catastrophically. We are second generation beekeepers on the prairies just south of Calgary and we operate approximately 8000 hives. This announcement is going to make it impossible for our farm to produce a honey crop as we require a large staff to manage 8000 hives. More importantly, this decision will negatively impact Canada's agricultural industry, food supply and economy.

All of our expected workers have been returning to our farm, The Greidanus Honey Mill, each season for several years. We have been using the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) for over 25 years as it has been impossible to staff our farm with Canadian workers. Many of these SAWP workers have been with our farm for more than 10 years. These men are skilled beekeepers. Because there are very few programs in apiculture, most of the knowledge is gained in beekeeping is through experience. It is not realistic to assume we can train an individual in 2-3 weeks time to perform the work these men do.

No one could have predicted COVID-19 to become a global pandemic a month ago. We applaud the government in its willingness to take measures to contain the spread of this virus. It is also realistic that there will be unintended consequences due to the decisions that need to be made in this pandemic. We feel that it is our responsibility to alert you to unintended consequences and present options so that damage caused by the pandemic can be minimized.

I respectfully request that Seasonal Agricultural Workers (SAWP) be considered essential to Canada. These workers must be allowed to cross the border into Canada to allow Canada to sustain its agricultural industry. We are willing to work within any constraints to prevent any unnecessary transmission of the COVID-19 virus to Canadians. We are willing to follow any quarantine measures deemed necessary and be monitored and fined for any noncompliance.

There are three major reasons, beyond my individual needs, that we feel we must bring to your attention so you can reconsider your decision.

- 1) The lack of seasonal workers will jeopardize Canada's food supply. Honeybees in Canada are critical to successful pollination of crops. A lack of workers for this industry will result in very few hives being available for pollination.
- 2) Our economy is going to be negatively impacted. Agriculture is an interdependent industry. If one sector does poorly other sectors suffer. Billions of dollars will be lost due to lowered production levels. We are essential support to canola growers (seed and commercial crops). Cattlemen are constantly asking for hives to promote better forage yields for their cattle. Blueberry production is directly proportional to the number of

bees pollinating the blossoms. The orchards (apples cherries, peaches, apricots raspberries, blackberries, pumpkins, melons, cucumbers...) all over Canada depend entirely on bees to produce a crop.

- 3) In Alberta, the beekeeping industry is going to be decimated by this decision and it will take years to recover. In 2019, we suffered one of the worst crops in recent history. This decision will not allow us to recover, it will cripple us financially and will destroy any hope of recovery in the foreseeable future.

Please reconsider the decision to close the border to SWAP workers. We have families, we have elderly parents. We want to protect our selves and are willing to work with the Government to ensure these workers are brought to Canada in a manner that will not jeopardize our own health as well as any of the governments objectives when it comes to public safety.

Sincerely,

Grace Strom for the Greidanus Honey Mill