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Dear Minister Colwell,

The Nova Scotia Beekeepers Association is writing to request a review of the protocols in place regarding honey bee importation in 2016, and request no future permits be issued to import honey bees into Nova Scotia. We appreciated the effort and expense undertaken by the Department of Agriculture this year but experience shows these kinds of efforts will be unsuccessful in preventing the introduction of Small Hive Beetle.

In 2016 Nova Scotia sent an inspection team to the Niagara region of Ontario to inspect hives that had been previously inspected by OMAFRA and approved for export to Nova Scotia. The team discovered SHB in a considerable number of these previously inspected apiaries. To us, this indicates a much higher prevalence of this pest than initially reported and a much greater risk of inadvertent introduction of SHB to Nova Scotia.

The situation within the Nova Scotia blueberry industry has also changed considerably in 2016. This year sees the lowest blueberry price in recent history. With the blueberry industry moving to rest a percentage of their blueberry land, we expect a decline in demand for pollinators. This could provide an opportunity for our local bee industry to continue to grow without the stress and risk of a new pest.

The hives imported from Ontario pollinate a small percentage of Nova Scotia blueberry fields. With the support of the Pollination Expansion Program, Nova Scotia's colony numbers and beekeeper numbers have increased dramatically in recent years and continue to increase in 2016. These increases demonstrate the capacity of our local bee industry to meet the pollination needs of the province's blueberry industry, eliminating the need for imported hives and the risks associated. The investment that beekeepers and the Province of Nova Scotia have made in growing our industry should not be put at risk by allowing colonies to be imported.

In closing, the Nova Scotia Beekeepers Association requests that the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture stop issuing permits for honey bee colonies coming into Nova Scotia.

I look forward to your response and would welcome an opportunity to discuss this further with you or your officials.

Sincerely,

Lauren Park, President  
Nova Scotia Beekeepers Association