

Minister
of Agriculture and
Agri-Food



Ministre
de l'Agriculture et de
l'Agroalimentaire

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0C5

JUN 11 2013

Quote: 189843

Mr. Dan Davidson
President
Ontario Beekeepers' Association
8560 Tremaine Road, Box 476
Milton, Ontario L9T 4Z1

Dear Mr. Davidson:

Thank you for your letter concerning the Canadian border opening to packaged bees from the U.S. I appreciate the time you have taken to share the Association's views.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) share your concern for honeybee health. We recognize that a decline in the honeybee population would have far-reaching implications. As you note in your letter, the general health of bees has deteriorated in the U.S. in recent years through causes that include, but are not limited to, colony collapse disorder and the development of drug resistance. This decline could have devastating effects on the national bee industry and, given the important role of bees in pollinating fruits and crops, on the agricultural community as a whole.

Previous disease evaluations and risk assessments led to prohibitions, and they consistently resulted in the CFIA not issuing permits for this commodity. The CFIA was not satisfied that this commodity would not, or would not likely, result in the introduction or spread of disease within Canada, as per subsection 160 (1.1) of the *Health of Animals Regulations*. These previous risk assessments could not identify import conditions that could be implemented to mitigate the animal health risks identified with U.S. bee packages. Accordingly, without scientific proof that the import of packaged bees from the U.S. would pose an acceptable risk, the importation of this commodity into Canada has not been allowed.

The CFIA is currently updating the risk assessment to address the animal health risks associated with the importation of honeybee packages from the U.S. An evaluation of the disease risk associated with imports must be conducted before any changes can be made to the current import conditions for honeybee packages from the U.S. If Canada were to relax import controls to allow for more sources of replacement stock without a full risk assessment that supports such an importation, the benefits could only be for the short term. Over the longer term, relaxing import controls could cause the deterioration of bee health in Canada.

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Canada

Mr. Dan Davidson

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I trust that this information will be of assistance to you. Again, thank you for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gerry Ritz". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a large initial "G" and a long, sweeping underline.

Gerry Ritz, PC, MP