



Government
of
Saskatchewan

Minister of Agriculture
Legislative Building
Regina, Canada S4S 0B3

January 7, 2025

The Honourable Lawrence MacAulay
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
OTTAWA ON K1A 0A6
lawrence.macaulay@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister MacAulay:

As you may be aware, Canada is currently dealing with a shortage of veterinary professionals, and this shortage is expected to become more pronounced over the coming years. Within Canada, about half of veterinary clinics are currently looking to hire a veterinarian, especially in rural areas, putting excessive concern and cost onto livestock and poultry producers.

Veterinary professionals provide care that is critical to One Health and One Welfare and help mitigate risks and optimize benefits to human, animal and ecosystem health, as well as prevent disease in animals and humans and maintain regulatory standards. Veterinary professionals are also an integral component to animal disease preparedness and ensuring the success of Canada's agriculture industry while there are animal disease pressures elsewhere in the world.

The shortage of veterinary professionals in Saskatchewan has been recognized by the veterinary field and stakeholders, including representatives from industries served by veterinary professionals, livestock producers, and animal owners. Unfilled veterinarian positions are a challenge faced by all provinces and territories, ranging from 36 to 100 per cent depending on the jurisdiction. Approximately half of those with an open position for a veterinarian indicate it has been open for longer than seven months. Without an adequate number of veterinarians in Canada, producers lose access to professionals that: diagnose disease and help them make best management decisions; help maintain safe food production practices; and provide individuals, families, and communities with care for their animals.

The Government of Saskatchewan is already supporting the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM) with the intent of producing more veterinarians. In 2023-24, the annual number of subsidized student seats at the WCVM increased from 20 to 25. In 2024-25, the Government of Saskatchewan provided \$13.2 million to the WCVM, an increase of \$636,000. This includes \$1.09 million to continue support of the five-seat expansion.

I strongly believe graduating more veterinarians from Canadian universities, alone, will not solve the veterinary workforce shortage; therefore, focusing efforts on credentialling foreign-trained veterinarians presents another opportunity to increase the number of veterinarians practicing in Canada. The Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture supports establishing a national testing centre at the WCVM, as we know the value of this centre, and the crucial role it will play in facilitating an increase in the number of licensed foreign-trained veterinarians. Veterinarians' roles in prevention, detection, and response to foreign animal diseases affecting livestock are crucial to management of such diseases. Without enough veterinarians, Canada will be unable to effectively manage foreign animal disease prevention and response to incursions, which may significantly impact the domestic and export markets for our livestock and poultry industries.

The WCVM is an internationally recognized centre for veterinary education, research and clinical expertise. Implementation of a national testing centre at the WCVM is broadly supported across the veterinary and agriculture sectors which includes Canada's five veterinary colleges and the Deans Council – Agriculture, Food and Veterinary Medicine. Veterinarians' work within the agriculture sector in maintaining animal, human, and environmental health ensures our agriculture industry will continue to maintain Canada's reputation as a safe, reliable source of agri-food products to the world.

The Government of Saskatchewan strongly urges the federal government to engage with the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association and provide funding for the national testing centre. It represents an excellent opportunity to address Canada's veterinary workforce shortage and its impacts on our livestock/poultry sector.

Sincerely,



Daryl Harrison
Minister of Agriculture

cc: Joel Neuheimer, CEO, Canadian Veterinary Medical Association
Honorable Ken Cheveldayoff, Saskatchewan Minister of Advanced Education