



Canadian Veterinary
Medical Association
Association canadienne
des médecins vétérinaires

March 21, 2025

The Honourable Kody Blois, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Rural Economic Development
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Ottawa, ON K1A 0K9

Dear Minister Blois:

On behalf of the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association and over 16,000 veterinarians across the country, congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Rural Economic Development. We look forward to working with you to address critical challenges facing Canada's agriculture and veterinary sectors.

Canada is experiencing a prolonged shortage of veterinarians, particularly in food animal and regulatory medicine. This shortage threatens public health, food safety, and the economy. As the world's fifth-largest agricultural exporter, with annual red meat exports alone totaling \$9.5 billion, Canada relies on food animal veterinarians to sustain livestock operations and prevent disease outbreaks. Each veterinarian contributes approximately \$1.2 million in direct and indirect economic output to their community, making their role essential to continued growth.

To address this challenge, Canada must do more to leverage its pool of internationally trained veterinarians. Despite having a large number of qualified candidates, many remain unable to practice due to limited capacity for the Clinical Proficiency Examination (CPE), which assesses their practical skills. The CVMA National Examining Board collaborates with the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVN) in Saskatoon to host the CPE several times a year, but WCVN, the only English-language site in Canada, can accommodate only 100 candidates annually, leaving over 150 qualified veterinarians waiting for licensure.

We support targeted investments to expand testing capacity and expedite the integration of internationally trained veterinarians. A proposed \$50 million capital investment in a national testing centre at WCVN – part of a larger \$100 million initiative – could triple the number of veterinarians licensed to practice each year. This investment has garnered broad support across the veterinary and agriculture sectors and is essential for ensuring a sustainable veterinary workforce in Canada. A strong veterinary workforce is crucial to managing biothreats, animal welfare, food safety, and protecting our \$37.3 billion animal production sector.

This facility would include multiple assessment stations, a surgical suite, veterinary pathology facilities, and housing for live animals. Beyond CPE testing, the centre would serve as a hub for retraining programs, continuing education, and outreach initiatives for livestock producers, Indigenous communities, and other stakeholders. An influx of new veterinarians would also bolster the workforce of rural communities and help alleviate mental health challenges caused by overwork and burnout within the profession.

The CVMA, in collaboration with national agriculture associations including the Dairy Farmers of Canada, Canadian Cattle Association, Egg Farmers of Canada, and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, has received strong support for this initiative from several provincial agriculture ministers and Senator Robert Black, Chair of the

Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry. CVMA representatives and allied associations met with Minister MacAulay in February, who expressed his support to work together and advance this project.

Establishing this centre is essential to ensuring a sustainable veterinary workforce capable of supporting livestock producers, protecting public health, and safeguarding Canada's agricultural economy.

We also appreciate your willingness to examine existing barriers to licensing essential veterinary medicines and feeds needed in animal agriculture. Addressing these barriers to practice is critical to enhancing Canada's competitiveness and enabling veterinarians and farmers to provide the highest level of care for their animals.

Thank you for your continued commitment to advancing Canada's agriculture sector. CVMA would welcome the opportunity to collaborate further on these important initiatives.

Sincerely,



Dr. Tim Arthur
President
Canadian Veterinary Medical Association

cc: The Honourable Kamal Khera, Minister of Health
The Honorable Joanne Thompson, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard
M.P. Sophie Chatel, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food

