



November 18, 2024

The Honourable Lawrence MacAulay, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Ottawa, ON K1A 0K9

RE: Urgent Need for Funding Towards a National Testing Centre for Internationally Trained Veterinarians

Dear Minister MacAulay:

As you know, Canada is experiencing a prolonged shortage of veterinarians affecting all areas of the profession, including food animal and regulatory practice. While expansion plans at three of the five Canadian veterinary schools will help, those efforts will fall far short of addressing the urgent need for veterinary professionals across a broad range of sectors.

As Canada ranks as the world's fifth largest agricultural exporter, with annual red meat exports alone totalling \$9.5 billion, the economic impact of food animal veterinarians cannot be overstated. Each food animal veterinarian contributes approximately \$1.2 million in direct and indirect economic output to their community, enabling livestock and poultry producers to sustain and expand their operations. A shortage of veterinarians in both food animal and regulatory medicine threatens our ability to prevent major disease outbreaks, posing risks to public health and the economy.

We believe that Canada must do more to leverage its pool of internationally trained veterinarians. Despite having a large number of internationally trained veterinarians in Canada, many are currently awaiting licensure. Before they can practice, these veterinarians must pass a clinical proficiency examination (CPE) that evaluates their practical skills across a wide range of veterinary competencies. The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association's (CVMA) National Examining Board collaborates with the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM) in Saskatoon to host the CPE several times a year, with WCVM being the only English-language site in Canada for this four-day examination.

To facilitate internationally trained veterinarians entry into the workforce, we support a targeted investment to expedite veterinary skills testing and training. The WCVM can currently provide 100 testing spots for 250 internationally educated veterinary candidates. At current exam pass rates, this results in up to 55 qualified veterinarians entering the workforce each year. A proposed \$50 million capital investment to establish a national testing centre – part of a larger \$100 million+ initiative at the WCVM – would significantly expand testing and training capacity to ensure that all qualified veterinarian candidates can enter the workforce each year.

An expanded national CPE testing center at WCVM would be equipped with multiple assessment stations, a multi-user surgical suite, veterinary pathology facilities, basic medical imaging, anesthesia induction and recovery areas, and housing for live animals, and would significantly increase testing capacity. This multi-purpose facility would also support retraining programs to increase exam success rate for candidates.

This initiative has garnered broad support across the veterinary and agriculture sectors, and across Canada's five veterinary colleges and the Deans Council - Agriculture, Food and Veterinary Medicine¹, 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.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the well-being of Canadians. As national associations representing the veterinary profession and agricultural sector, we would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this important initiative further and request your leadership to help meet the needs of Canada's agri-food sector.

We look forward to your response and to collaborating on this matter.

Sincerely,



Dr. Tim Arthur
President
Canadian Veterinary Medical Association



Dr. Nathan Erickson
President
Canadian Association of Bovine Veterinarians



Dr. Martin Scanlon
President
Deans Council - Agriculture, Food & Veterinary Medicine

¹ Deans Council - Agriculture, Food and Veterinary Medicine - www.cfavm.ca/en/index.html



Keith Currie
President
Canadian Federation of Agriculture



Nathan Phinney
President
Canadian Cattle Association



Will Lowe
Chair
National Cattle Feeders' Association



Phil Boyd
Executive Director
Turkey Farmers of Canada



Roger Pelissero
Chair
Egg Farmers of Canada




Tim Klompemaker
Chair
Chicken Farmers of Canada



Teddy Markey
Executive Director
Canadian Hatching Egg Producers



Stephen Heckbert, APR
Executive Director
Canadian Pork Council



David Wiens
President
Dairy Farmers of Canada

cc: Minister of Health, Mark Holland, P.C., M.P.

Minister of Rural Economic Development and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Gudie Hutchings, P.C., M.P.

Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, Associate Minister of Health, Ya'ara Saks, P.C., M.P.

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Francis Drouin, M.P.

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Yasir Naqvi, M.P.

Paul MacKinnon, President of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency

Deputy Minister of Health, Greg Orencsak

Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Lawrence Hanson

Shadow Minister to the Minister of Health, Dr. Stephen Ellis, M.P.

Shadow Minister to the Minister of Agriculture, Agri-Food, and Food Security, John Barlow, M.P.