

THE HONOURABLE ROBERT BLACK  
SENATOR – ONTARIO



L'HONORABLE ROBERT BLACK  
SÉNATEUR – ONTARIO

SENATE | SÉNAT  
CANADA

December 11, 2024

The Hon. Lawrence MacAulay  
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

The Hon. Mark Holland  
Minister of Health  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

The Hon. Ya'ara Saks  
Minister of Mental Health and Addictions  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Ministers,

Canada is currently facing a prolonged shortage of veterinarians impacting all sectors of the profession, including food animal health and regulatory practice. During a recent meeting with the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA), they explained that the current expansion of three out of five veterinary schools will not be significant enough to address the growing need for veterinary professionals across the country.

CVMA highlighted that while Canada has a large pool of veterinary talent to draw on, many foreign veterinarians are currently awaiting licensing. To support the facilitation of internationally trained veterinarians into the workforce, CVMA discussed the need for a targeted investment to expedite veterinary skills testing and training. Apparently, they can provide 100 testing spots for 250 internationally trained veterinary candidates however, at the current exam pass rate this only leads to 55 qualified veterinarians entering the workforce every year.

The CVMA also expressed concerns about the lack of adequate mental health support for veterinarians and their support staff, which risks further burnout and could drive both new and experienced professionals out of the veterinary field—particularly in the absence of an influx of new graduates. A shortage of veterinarians in both food, animal, and regulatory medicine poses significant risks to our public health and our economy as veterinarians struggle to keep up with growing demand, making it harder to prevent major disease outbreaks.

Furthermore, they noted that the lack of access to essential veterinary medicines in Canada jeopardizes public health and security, as veterinarians are unable to prescribe the medications necessary to control animal diseases before they spread.

I respectfully request that you meet with the CVMA to discuss their concerns further, and I look forward to receiving further information and your response. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R. Black'.

The Honourable Robert Black, Senator (ON)  
Chair, Senate Standing Committee on Agriculture and Forestry

c.c.: Joel Neuheimer, Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, [jneuheimer@cvma-acmv.org](mailto:jneuheimer@cvma-acmv.org)