



June 17, 2022

The Hon. Jon Reyes
Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration
156-450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8
minaesi@leg.gov.mb.ca

The Hon. Derek Johnson
Manitoba Economic Development and Training Minister
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Re: Need for Manitoba to Fund Additional Seats to Train Veterinarians

Dear Ministers Reyes and Johnson,

Manitoba Beef Producers (MBP) is writing to voice our industry's ongoing concerns around the local shortage of veterinarians and to offer our sector's support for two key requests being made by the Manitoba Veterinary Medical Association (MVMA) to the provincial government to help address this very serious situation. The MVMA's requests dovetail with previous MBP requests that more provincial funding be provided to support Manitobans wishing to pursue post-secondary education to become a veterinarian, and that an environment be created that supports the recruitment and retention of veterinarians for our province.

MBP is the primary voice of the province's beef industry, representing approximately 6,300 cattle producers including the cow-calf, backgrounding and finishing sectors. We are a non-profit organization with a producer-elected board consisting of 14 directors, each representing cattle producers in a specific region or district of Manitoba. Cattle producers represent the single largest livestock sector in Manitoba in terms of the number of individual producers involved.

As the MVMA identified in its recent submission to the province, "*... there are at least 68 full time equivalent veterinarian positions that remain unfilled and are needed to meet current demand in the private clinical practice sector alone. The MVMA asserts that the shortage of veterinarians is at crisis levels and that immediate action is required to ensure that Manitobans and their animals have reasonable access to veterinary care.*"

Manitoba's beef producers are experiencing both the direct and indirect effects of these veterinarian shortages. Veterinarians are needed to provide both urgent care on cattle operations, as well as to assist with other important services such as pregnancy checking, assistance with the development of herd health plans, helping to provide access to diagnostic testing and veterinary drugs, and so on. Timely access to care can be difficult given veterinary shortages or service limitations throughout many parts of the province, such as closed Veterinary Service District clinics. The odds of this situation worsening are considerable given information on projected retirements as provided by the MVMA.

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Having access to a stable supply of veterinarians is also critical to Manitoba's beef sector for other reasons. As the MVMA has noted, veterinarians work in an array of settings, including with governments and governmental institutions, in academia and research facilities, and in the private sector. Key services they provide include: detection and education regarding zoonotic diseases; diagnostic services; research; providing guidance re: prudent antibiotic use; supporting One Health Initiatives; and, providing inspection services at facilities such as food processing plants, among other important work. In short, maintaining veterinary services is essential to animals and the public alike.

As with other medical professionals such as physicians, it takes many years to train a veterinarian and MBP believes the time to act to help remedy the shortage of veterinarians in Manitoba is now. **Therefore MBP asks that the provincial government support the MVMA's request that the Manitoba government increase the number of subsidized Manitoba seats at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine on an ongoing basis from 15 seats to 25 seats starting with the 2023/2024 school year.**

In addition to the importance of provincial investments in training seats for Manitoba students, the other critical piece is having an environment which supports the recruitment and retention of veterinarians in this province. **MBP is therefore also supportive of the MVMA's request that the Manitoba government work with the MVMA and the WCVM to explore and implement approaches that will encourage more current and future Manitoba veterinary students to return here to practice.** For example, the MVMA has requested that the provincial government match incentives being provided by other provinces aimed at encouraging students to practice in their home provinces upon completion of their studies. MBP believes these and other strategies warrant immediate exploration.

In closing, MBP believes that provincial investments in training, recruiting and retaining the next generation of veterinarians will be invaluable with respect to maintaining public trust around matters such as animal care, food safety and public health, and to supporting livestock production in Manitoba. Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration of the matters raised in this letter. If you require additional information, please contact our General Manager Carson Callum at cillum@mbbeef.ca or (204) 772-4542.

Sincerely,

Tyler Fulton
President
Manitoba Beef Producers

Cc: Hon. Cameron Friesen, Minister of Finance
Cc: Corey Wilson, Executive Director/Registrar, Manitoba Veterinary Medical Association