



April 14, 2023

Hon. Sarah Guillemard
Minister of Advanced Education and Training
141-450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8
minaet@leg.gov.mb.ca

Hon. Derek Johnson
Minister of Agriculture
165-450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8
minagr@leg.gov.mb.ca

Re: Support for Unfunded Manitoba Students at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine

Dear Ministers Guillemard and Johnson:

Manitoba Beef Producers (MBP) is writing to respectfully request that the Province of Manitoba consider providing funding toward the training of the eight unfunded Manitoba students currently enrolled in the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVN).

MBP is the primary voice of the Manitoba's beef industry, representing approximately 6,000 producers involved in various aspects of the beef cattle industry, including the cow-calf, backgrounding and finishing sectors. Our mission is to represent all beef producers through communication, advocacy, research, and education — within the industry and to governments, consumers, and others, to improve prosperity and ensure a sustainable future. A thriving beef industry generates considerable economic, environmental, and social opportunities and benefits for Canada. Having timely access to veterinary care is essential for our members and their livestock, as well as the larger agriculture and agri-food system in our province.

As the provincial government is aware, a scenario arose in recent years that created an opportunity for eight additional Manitoba students to secure non-IPA seats at the WCVN. However, unlike their fellow Manitoba students, their training is not currently being funded by the province. As a result, these students have paid roughly \$70,000 per year in tuition (not including living expenses) to attend the WCVN and under the current agreement they will continue to do so over the course of their four years of study. This contrasts with the less than \$15,000 per year tuition bill of their fellow funded Manitoba students.

The considerable financial burden taken on by these eight unfunded Manitoba students is expected to factor into their decisions about where they establish their careers upon graduation. For example, some believe they may have to no choice but to opt to go to jurisdictions outside of Manitoba which are offering loan relief or forgiveness, or financial incentives to help set up rural practices. The prospect of not having these newly-trained professionals come home to practice represents a lost opportunity to address local veterinarian shortages.

MANITOBA BEEF PRODUCERS

220-530 Century Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3H 0Y4

www.mbbeef.ca E info@mbbeef.ca P 204-772-4542 F 204-774-3264

MANITOBA CATTLE PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

The Manitoba Veterinary Medical Association (MVMA) too is requesting that these eight WCVN students be funded like their fellow IPA students already are. In its May 2022 Advisory Note for to your respective departments the MVMA had outlined the ability to repay training debt, as well as other factors which influence veterinary students' decisions about where to practice. The MVMA also recommended potential steps the provincial government could take to help attract and retain veterinary students in Manitoba. MBP believes that were the provincial government to provide funding toward these eight students it could have a positive impact on their decision to establish their veterinary careers in Manitoba. MBP also sees merits in exploring other initiatives such as those identified by the MVMA that would encourage veterinarians to work in Manitoba.

MBP again expresses its appreciation for the provincial government's commitment to support five additional veterinary student training seats at the WCVN commencing in the 2023-24 academic year. MBP sees significant value in this investment, including the government's specific recognition of the need to expand veterinary care for agricultural sector. It is hoped that these additional seats will help begin to address local shortages in this area. MBP believes that having a practical understanding and early skills development related to animal agriculture prior to entry to veterinary school could be important predictors of the likelihood of success in the program and in the students' desire to establish rural practices here in Manitoba.

Having access to large animal and mixed-practice veterinarians in rural Manitoba is critical. Training, recruiting, and retaining the next generation of these veterinarians will be key, not only to the sustainability of Manitoba's beef sector, but also with respect to maintaining public trust related to animal agriculture around matters such as animal care, food safety and public health. Predictable and consistent funding of seats will be very important moving forward, as will ensuring that admission considerations are based on the skillsets needed to be successful in the veterinary field. We look forward to continued discussions around securing a predictable and sustainable supply of veterinarians working in the agriculture sector, and in establishing an environment that encourages the recruitment and retention of veterinarians in Manitoba.

MBP thanks the provincial government in advance for its respectful consideration of the request to provide provincial financial support for the eight currently unfunded Manitoba students at the WCVN. This, along with other strategies to secure and retain veterinarians, could help toward addressing the immediate and long-term supply of veterinarians in Manitoba and securing a more stable workforce going forward.

If you require additional information, please contact our General Manager Carson Callum at 204-772-4542 or via cillum@mbbeef.ca.

Sincerely,



Matthew Atkinson
President
Manitoba Beef Producers

Cc: Corey Wilson, Executive Director/Registrar, Manitoba Veterinary Medical Association