

April 11, 2023

The Honourable Sarah Guillemard
Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and
Immigration

Email: minaesi@leg.gov.mb.ca

The Honourable Derek Johnson
Minister of Agriculture

Email: minagr@leg.gov.mb.ca

Sent via email

Hello Ministers,

I am reaching out on behalf of the Manitoba Veterinary Medical Association (MVMA) regarding the shortage of veterinarians in Manitoba.

We first wanted to thank the Manitoba Government again for its recent commitment to increase funding and subsidized seats for veterinary students at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine. We appreciate this commitment to veterinary services and education for Manitobans. I have attached the MVMA's briefing note of May 30th, 2022, which contains detailed information about the current profile of the veterinarians and veterinary practices in Manitoba as well as information from the MVMA's 2021-2022 Workforce Survey.

Of note from this document:

- There are at least 68 full-time equivalent (FTE) veterinarian positions that need to be filled in Manitoba to meet current demand in private practice alone (page 7).
- The average veterinary practice has a workforce of 2.2FTE veterinarians and currently needs an additional .7FTE veterinarians to meet current demand at the practice (page 7).
- Assuming a 40-year average career, 28 licensed veterinarians are at risk of retiring in the shorter term and 31 likely to retire in the next 5 years (page 3).

Request

The MVMA requests that the Manitoba Government fund the eight (8) unfunded Manitoba students currently at the WCVM. This would include subsidizing their ongoing tuition and tuition they have already paid in their studies.

Prior to the government's commitment to fund additional seats at the WCVM, the WCVM had admitted western Canadian students. These students have paid roughly \$70,000 per year in tuition (not including living expenses) to attend the WCVM and under the current agreement will continue to do so over the course of their four years of study. This is in contrast to the less than \$15,000 per year tuition bill of their fellow funded Manitoba students.

The MVMA has recently had the pleasure of meeting with these students who are both excited to be entering a profession that is essential to industry in Manitoba, and distraught by their inability to return to their home province, as they are financially forced to move to other jurisdictions with loan forgiveness programs to ease their debt load.

The MVMA strongly believes that offering this support will allow these Manitoba students to return home to Manitoba following their studies and continue not only to provide needed veterinary services, but also continue to be positive community members that help make Manitoba strong.

Letters of Manitoba Unfunded Students

The currently unfunded Manitoba students have expressed to the MVMA their desire to be able to return to Manitoba to provide veterinary services upon graduation.

I am pleased to provide their letters which provide greater detail of the positive work they hope to provide Manitobans and their animals.

Additional Steps Taken by the MVMA to Address the Shortage of Veterinarians in Manitoba

In addition to this request, the MVMA advises that it has continued to make strides in regulatory reform to better attract veterinarians from outside of Canada. Of note, at the 2023 AGM, membership voted to create three (3) new limited licence categories for graduates of unaccredited programs. These new pathways are in addition to the multiple pathways available to international graduates through the National Examining Board.

1) Limited Licence- Board Certification

This licence is available for those that are board certified through the AVMA American Board of Veterinary Specialties (ABVS), or equivalent. These persons are eligible for a limited licence where they are able to practice in an unsupervised capacity. Their licence is limited to their area of Board Certification.

2) Limited Licence- Board Certification Program

This licence is available for those that are in a residency program recognized by the AVMA American Board of Veterinary Specialties (ABVS), or equivalent. These persons are eligible for a limited licence where they are able to practice under the supervision of a licensed member. Their licence is limited to their area of Board Certification program and lasts for the duration of their program.

3) Limited Licence- Internship

This licence is available for those that are in an internship and supervised by a board certified veterinarian. These persons are eligible for a limited licence where they are able to practice under the supervision of a licensed member. Their licence is limited to their area of Board Certification of their supervisor. This limited licence is time limited to one year.

Again, the MVMA applauds the Manitoba Government for its commitment to ensuring the workforce needed for sustainable veterinary care for Manitoban's and their animals. We believe

that helping currently unfunded Manitoba students will play a significant role in building this workforce.

The MVMA is committed to ensuring the safe, competent and ethical provision of veterinary services in Manitoba and will continue to strive to address the shortage of veterinary professionals in Manitoba.

We look forward to working with the Manitoba Government on this matter.



C. Wilson

MVMA Executive Director/Registrar

E: registrar@mvma.ca

P: 204.832.1276 e. 1

CC:

Dr. Mackenzie Marks, MVMA President

Dr. Scott Zaari, Chief Veterinary Officer

Dr. Gillian Muir, Dean, Western College of Veterinary Medicine

Dr. Chris Bell, President, Canadian Veterinary Medical Association

Enclosures

March 24, 2023

Rooms 141 and 165 Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB
R3C 0V8

Dear Honourable Sarah Guillemard and Honourable Derek Johnson,

My name is Jessica Buchel and I am a veterinary student currently in my 3rd year of studies at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine. I am one of the eight Manitoban students who pays \$55,000 more per year for my tuition than the majority of my colleagues from Manitoba. I am writing to you today with the hope that you will consider providing funding for myself and my seven non-funded classmates.

Prior to the Manitoba government's commitment to fund additional seats for 2023 entry, the WCVM, since 2020, had admitted students under a number of seats that were not funded by an interprovincial agreement (non-IPA seats). The eight Manitoban students that hold non-IPA seats pay roughly \$70,000 per year for their tuition at the WCVM. This is in contrast to less than \$15,000 per year tuition paid by our subsidized colleagues.

It is no secret that the severe shortage of veterinarians in Manitoba has left pet owners and livestock producers struggling to find prompt veterinary care for their animals; or sometimes unable to find any care at all. Veterinarians across Manitoba are struggling tremendously to keep up with the province's rapidly increasing animal population and to provide adequate care to them in a timely manner. This has been contributing significantly to the serious mental health crisis and burnout that is so prevalent in the veterinary industry in our province. Many veterinarians are taking extended leaves to cope with the stress, some are leaving the industry all together, and an increasing number are resorting to more drastic measures because they cannot take it any longer. This is a very real and devastating reality. Manitoba desperately needs more veterinarians to dampen the growing strain on the industry.

For myself, Manitoba is my home. I grew up here, my friends and family are here, and I have established connections in the veterinary industry here. My plan has always been to come back and practice as a veterinarian in Manitoba, but as I am nearing graduation, it has become clear that there are better opportunities in other provinces in terms of financial security. Similar to many of my classmates, I hope to be able to purchase a home and start a family in the future, but I do not consider this to be financially responsible with the amount of debt I will have accumulated by the time I graduate. With having to find ways to fund the entirety of my veterinary education myself, there is not much currently stopping me from entertaining these outside offers to alleviate my debt more efficiently. This has also effectively prohibited me from continuing my schooling and pursuing residency or internship programs after graduation. From my perspective, the Manitoba government has chosen to not invest the same amount in my education that they have invested in my funded classmates, and this has diminished my motivation to return to my home province.

The eight non-funded Manitoba students currently enrolled at the WCVM can help lessen the burden of shortages the veterinary industry that Manitoba is facing. These students want to come back to Manitoba, but the lack of recognition from our government makes us feel forgotten and weakens our loyalty to our province. We feel less valuable than our colleagues who are graduating with the exact same degree. We have come together to ask our government for support in funding our tuition. Thank you for your consideration of this life changing request. We really need your help.

Sincerely,

Jessica Buchel
WCVM class of 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Buchel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

March 23, 2023

Rooms 141 and 165 Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB
R3C 0V8

Dear Honourable Sarah Guillemard and Honourable Derek Johnson,

I am a third year veterinary student at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine. I was born in Winnipeg and raised in La Salle, Manitoba. I am also one of the eight non-IPA students from Manitoba that pay nearly \$70 000 per year in tuition alone.

I am writing today to ask for your consideration in providing funding for myself and my seven colleagues to help pay for our veterinary degrees. The severe shortage of veterinarians has left pet owners and livestock producers across Manitoba struggling to find prompt health care for their animals. It has also placed significant pressure on the shoulders of veterinary professionals that struggle to keep up with the workload of the province's growing animal population. This has contributed to the mental health crisis among veterinarians that has led many to take extended leave or even leave the field altogether, which further perpetuates the shortage. It is without question that Manitoba is in need of more veterinary professionals.

I have always assumed that I would return home to Manitoba after school. It is where my family, friends and life are. As I come to the end of my third year and begin planning for fourth year rotations, I have started to think more seriously about my life after graduation. While I have worked tirelessly over the last eight years of university to get where I will soon be, I have more goals in life than becoming a veterinarian. In particular, I hope to become a homeowner and start a family. But given the significant amount of debt I face after graduation and the rising cost of living in Canada, I question the feasibility of even these ordinary aspirations. It is now apparent that I need to consider opportunities elsewhere that would provide greater financial security and allow me to afford these other goals.

I hope that I can return to Manitoba and help ease the province's veterinary shortage. I want to work as a small animal clinician in or around Winnipeg and hope to get involved with programs that bring veterinary care to Canada's North and other underserved areas across the globe.

Please consider providing financial support to the eight of us. We have chased our dreams of becoming veterinarians and hope to utilize the knowledge and skills that we are building to bring excellent veterinary care back home to Manitoba.

Sincerely,
Rachel Knudson

March 18, 2023

Rooms 141 and 165 Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

Dear Honourable Sarah Guillemard and Honourable Derek Johnson,

My name is Riley Lapka. I am from Manitoba. I am currently enrolled in my second year of studies at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine. I pay \$55,000 more per year for my tuition than the majority of my colleagues.

Prior to the governments' commitment to fund additional seats for 2023 entry, the WCVM had admitted western Canadian students under non-interprovincial assigned seats. The students holding these seats will pay roughly \$70,000 per year, not including living expenses, to attend the WCVM under the current agreement. This is in contrast to the less than \$15,000 per year tuition of their funded colleagues.

Between my first and second years of studying at the WCVM, I returned to Manitoba for summer employment to work with Maple Leaf Agri-Farms shadowing the swine veterinarian. I really enjoyed working with swine and appreciate the benefits the Manitoba swine industry would receive from gaining another vet. This upcoming summer, the Veterinary Diagnostic Services Laboratory at the University of Manitoba have created a position for me to explore a career in diagnostic pathology. During my studies, I plan on returning to Manitoba for summer employment.

Ideally, after graduation, I would return to Manitoba to practice as it is my home. However, based on my financial situation, I fear a career in Manitoba is not feasible. The difference of \$220,000 between my tuition and my colleagues, without support from my government, has made this dream unrealistic. The largest loan available for veterinary students is not even enough to cover my full four year tuition of \$280,000. This makes exploring better offers in other provinces more appealing due to the amount of crippling debt I will face after graduation.

The eight non-funded Manitoba students currently enrolled at the WCVM would help lessen the burden of shortages the veterinary profession in Manitoba faces. The lack of recognition from our government has made us feel forgotten and weakens our loyalty to Manitoba. We feel less valuable than our colleagues who are graduating with the same degree. We are all capable and we are all qualified. We have created an alliance to ask our government for support in funding our tuition. Thank you for your consideration of this life changing request. We need your help.

Sincerely,
Riley Lapka
(204) 250-6649
North Kildonan, Winnipeg, MB



March 27, 2023

Dear Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration, and Agriculture,

I am a 3rd year veterinary student studying at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVN), I am writing to you to bring your attention to the current veterinary shortage that is being experienced within Manitoba.

There are currently 425 veterinarians within the province with at least 68 full time unfilled positions, with retirement and lack of recruitment that number is only increasing. There is a potential for the government to step in and assist in the form of funding to increase the amount of Manitoba students that receive veterinary training.

A bit of background on how the interprovincial agreement has changed with the class of 2024 (my year). The western provinces; Alberta, BC, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan formed an agreement to provide funding to the WCVN and received seats based on the amount given by each province. Alberta ended their funding agreement with the WCVN in 2020. This meant that there were approximately 25 seats available to for students to interview and be accepted outside of their provincial agreement, which comes with tuition fees sitting at \$68,000/year.

Below is how the other provinces in Western Canada are demonstrating they are hearing, supporting, and addressing the veterinary industry at a critical time period; a national veterinary shortage.

- BC's recent commitment to fund an additional 20 seats (40 seats total) which includes the students in my class that were accepted on a non-IPA seat. This is life changing for the students that were able to receive funding but also for veterinarians, veterinary support staff, and many others as it increases the potential for return.
- As of 2020, Alberta no longer provides funding to the WCVN they redirected that funding to University of Calgary veterinary program. This program only accepts Alberta residents therefore increasing the number of veterinarians that are likely to remain and practice within the province.
- Saskatchewan has the greatest advantage of training veterinarians from the western provinces, they provided incentives and designated spots for aspiring rural veterinarians and have a significant student debt forgiveness program (up to \$20,000) if you remain in the province for at least 5 years regardless of rural vs urban areas.

Manitoba, funds the lowest number of seats at the WCVN which significantly lowers the potential for return after graduation, and there is only a small incentive for rural practitioners (\$4000 for 5 year commitment). This highlights how providing funding to the existing Manitoba students that are paying non-IPA tuition and increasing the number of seats from 15 to 25 can level the playing field and improve return rates of graduates.

Frankly, the situation in Manitoba with regards to veterinary medicine looks bad and the situation with funding looks bad. With respect to education equity there are students admitted to the same program in the same year except one is paying almost 5x as much to receive the same quality of education, all due to a lack of funding from the province. It looks bad in terms of animal care and welfare as there are clinics in Manitoba that are so severely understaffed they cannot see patients or provide the level of care they would be if they were appropriately staffed. The increased tuition rates experience by non-IPA

students and increased debt load means that clinics with lower salaries will be passed up increasing the stress and shortage experienced by veterinarians within Manitoba.

I hope that with the reasoning and concern provided within this letter it is clear that Manitoba needs to take action to combat the veterinary shortage within the province starting at the top down; providing increased funding and training for existing non-IPA Manitobans and future ones. Currently, the burden of the province's inaction is being carried from the bottom up; veterinarians and veterinary students.

Students from Manitoba who are attempting to help provide support in the form of training to become veterinarians should not be saddled with high tuition rates because of the lack of resources provided from the government. I am urging you to see that other provinces are addressing these issues and there is opportunity for Manitoba to do the same.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "DSchock". The letters are cursive and connected, with a stylized 'D' and 'S'.

Danielle Schock, WCVI class of 2024

Dear Minister Johnson & Minister Reyes,

I am Tara Sweetnam from Winkler, MB and I'm currently a second-year student at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM).

I am writing to you both regarding the recent announcement of funding for additional spots at WCVM. Like many other students and people related to the veterinarian and agriculture professions, I was pleased to hear that Manitoba had decided to expand their funding for 5 additional seats especially with a rural, large animal focus. Unfortunately, the announcement also brought mixed feelings. As one of eight non-provincially (non-IPA) funded Manitoba students at the college, I felt that the government of Manitoba overlooked and undervalued current MB non-IPA veterinarian students as there was no mention or acknowledgement of funding for them or no appreciation that these students could also address the veterinarian shortage which is evident in the industry.

From Manitoba there are currently three students non-provincially funded students in third year, four in second year and one in first year. Although students vary in backgrounds, all of us have the potential to fill rural spots mentioned in the announcement 1- 3 years sooner than students that have yet to be accepted into the program.

I grew up on a dairy farm, was actively involved in 4-H growing up and was a 10-year member of Team Manitoba at the Western Canadian Classic (a dairy competition for Western Canadian youth). Through heavy involvement in the agricultural industry, I fell in love with both livestock and the community, driving me to study animal science and now veterinary medicine to be further involved in the industry and make it my life's work.

Currently non-IPA students pay approximately \$54,000 per year MORE than IPA students for their tuition (\$69,000 vs \$15,000). This totals \$276,000 vs \$60,000 after 4 years for tuition. With little to no incentive programs in Manitoba the reality for non-IPA students is grim. Simply put other provinces look to be a more attractive option when it comes to debt repayment. Large animal practice in the United States is another option to take advantage of the stronger US dollar value to pay down the tuition loan as quickly as possible. The mental stress of carrying this tuition debt load while studying is considerable. Fitting the criteria of a vet student sought by your government but for economic reasons only must consider looking elsewhere to practice upon graduation is a harsh but very pressing reality.

As a non-IPA student, I hope that you reconsider including the non-IPA students into your funding envelope to attract highly trained Manitobans to return to their home province and fill desperately needed positions sooner than a class that have yet to be accepted into the program, becoming part of the solution for the shortage of large and rural veterinarians.

Thank you for your time,

Tara Sweetnam

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tara Sweetnam". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

March 18, 2023.

Rooms 141 and 165 Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB
R3C 0V8

Dear Honourable Sarah Guillemard and Honourable Derek Johnson,

My name is Veronica LaCasse. I am from Manitoba. I am currently enrolled in my second year of studies at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine. I pay \$55,000 more per year for my tuition than the majority of my colleagues.

Prior to the governments' commitment to fund additional seats for 2023 entry, the WCVM had admitted western Canadian students under non-interprovincial assigned seats. The students holding these seats will pay roughly \$70,000 per year, not including living expenses, to attend the WCVM under the current agreement. This is in contrast to the less than \$15,000 per year tuition of their funded colleagues.

In the summers of my academic career, I have and will be returning to Manitoba, as it is my home. I will be working at Beausejour Animal Hospital, where I have volunteered since I was 17, in my third year. This is in hopes to start working there fresh after graduation. I have always respected the veterinarians that encouraged me to keep pursuing this career, and who are excited to share their wealth of knowledge with me.

That is a dream right now. The reality is that having a minimum debt load of \$220,000 more than my classmates means one of my classmates is easier to hire. I will not give up before asking, unlike my classmates, I must have an uncomfortable conversation with said mentors about money. This debt is crippling enough that I need to fight for an adequate wage or go somewhere where the wages are adequate. One of our assignments in our first year was to build our "dream ad posting" based on a general Indeed search for vet postings. That assignment was very eye-opening. I now know what other provinces have to offer, or even other countries. I also now know that living in Manitoba with this much debt, is not a reality.

The eight non-funded Manitoba students currently enrolled at the WCVM would help lessen the burden of shortages the veterinary profession in Manitoba faces. The lack of recognition from our government has made us feel forgotten and weakens our loyalty to Manitoba. We feel less valuable than our colleagues who are graduating with the same degree. We are all capable and we are all qualified. We have created an alliance to ask our government for support in funding our tuition. Thank you for your consideration of this life changing request. We need your help.

Sincerely,
Veronica LaCasse
Veronica.lac17@gmail.com
Springfield, MB



April 2, 2023

Manitoba Veterinary Medical Association
1590 Inkster Blvd
Winnipeg, MB
R2X2W4

RE: Letter of Support for Funding of Manitoba Non-IPA Seats

I am writing in support of an effort to secure funding for the 8 non-IPA seats of Manitoba students who currently attend the Western College of Veterinary Medicine.

The day I received my acceptance into the WCVI, was a day met with mixed emotions. The over joyous excitement of being accepted into the school I had dreamt about and the reality of the financial commitment it would be as a non-IPA student.

Being a student is synonymous with having debt. For non-IPA veterinary students, the debt incurred is much larger than typical student debt. Committing to 4 years of school at a non-government subsidized rate is a large financial risk. A risk that will put me and my future family in debt for a significant period. This debt also makes the pursuit of further postgraduate education and pursuing a specialty extremely difficult for the 8 non-IPA students. It also prevents us from taking over a clinic or starting a new veterinary practice in a location that is not yet well-served. Debt isn't only about the struggles during school but also the missed opportunities after.

In Manitoba, housing costs have continued to rise alongside the cost of living. This can be compounded by high-interest rates taking an even larger toll on those in non-IPA seats. Financial support would allow me to alleviate financial stress and come home to practise in Manitoba. The support would allow me to focus more on school and learning to be a great veterinarian that can service my province. Without the support, it may be a better option to use my connections in Saskatchewan to find a job post-graduation. With lower costs of living in some areas of the province, it would allow me to repay the incurred debt more quickly than in Manitoba.

I consider myself a loyal individual and a proud Manitoban, it is where I call home. It is where I want to come home after school. I recognize when someone or a group supports my ambitions and my efforts, I am indebted to them and want to honour that support.

If the Government of Manitoba decides to support the non-IPA students in the manner that they support, my fellow Manitoban classmates I will be indebted and excited to head home after graduating to work in my home province.

Non-IPA Manitoba Student

March 29, 2023

To Whom it may concern:

The non-IPA seats are only a blessing in that I was able to get into veterinary medicine. It has many drawbacks.

It is a social strain on relationships for those students foolish to tell others they are non-IPA students in SK or MB due to how few of us there are. It automatically labels us as the lowest students and limits our social options for studying with other students. This is one of the reasons I want to maintain my anonymity. The other reason for maintaining my anonymity is that people do not need to know my financial situation.

It also means that as a student I must choose a veterinary job based on salary more than on whether I want to do it. When I focused on large animal internship I had to constantly focus on costs and how much I could make at the end of it. It was disheartening to have to turn my back on large animal because of the lower salary in comparison to small animal medicine simply to pay back my debt.

The biggest drawback is the massive financial debt that will mean an additional 15 years of payments as compared to my colleagues for the DVM portion of my student debt. This has a huge mental toll as I must make use of bank lines of credit that charge interest of prime plus 2%. Also, due to the necessity of using a student line of credit there will be no option for a repayment assistance plan.

Not having to pay an addition \$60,000 per year would mean I would have less stress and could focus more on learning and not on my debt load.

That I have not received assistance from the Manitoba province, like the BC students did, has really made me question whether I want to go back to Manitoba. Why would I go back to a province that is not willing to support me as the rest of the provinces have for their non-IPA students?

Sincerely and Humbly a WCVN Student