

# BRIEFING NOTE FOR JANUARY 9, 2024

FOR THE MEETING BETWEEN THE HONOURABLE RENÉE CABLE AND THE MANITOBA VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (MVMA)

January 9, 2024

1:00 PM – 1:30 PM

Room 317, Legislative Building, 450 Broadway

**MVMA Representatives:** Corey Wilson, MVMA Executive Director/Registrar  
Dr. Mackenzie Marks, MVMA President  
Dr. Chris Bell, WCVL Liaison  
Michelle Kusano, MVMA Staff

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## PURPOSE

To provide an in-depth overview of the discussion points for the upcoming meeting with the Honourable Renée Cable, Minister of Advanced Education and Training, regarding the MVMA's role, challenges, and initiatives in Manitoba.

## AGENDA

### Meeting Agenda

#### 1. Overview of the MVMA and Its Role

Brief introduction of the Manitoba Veterinary Medical Association (MVMA)

#### 2. Addressing the Veterinary Professional Shortage in Manitoba

Presentation of current challenges in veterinary professional availability in Manitoba

Discussion on the impact of the veterinary shortage on public health, animal welfare, and Manitoba's economy

Overview of past and current MVMA programs to address shortage

#### 3. MVMA Proposals

Retention and return for service grants for non-IPA students

Proposal for further incentives to retain DVM graduates in Manitoba

Increasing Registered Veterinary Technologists graduates in Manitoba

#### 4. Collaboration with the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM)

Discussion on the role of WCVM in Manitoba's veterinary education

Proposals for increased support and collaboration with WCVM

#### 5. Collaboration with Government

Exploration of potential collaborative efforts and support from the Department

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Manitoba Veterinary Medical Association (MVMA) is the regulatory body for all veterinarians and Registered Veterinary Technologists (RVTs) in Manitoba. The MVMA also advocates on behalf of Manitoba veterinarians and works closely with the Manitoba Veterinary Technologists Association (MVTA).

Currently, the province faces a critical shortage of veterinarians and RVTs, leading to reduced access to veterinary care, especially in rural areas, and increasing stress on existing professionals. As of December 31, 2023, there are 432 veterinarians currently practicing in Manitoba and 447 veterinary technologists. Based on a recent workforce survey, there are at least 68.2 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) veterinarian positions and 79.75 FTE RVT positions that remain unfilled and are needed to meet the current demand in the private clinic practice sector alone. The MVMA asserts that the shortage of veterinary professionals is at crisis levels and that immediate action is required to ensure that Manitobans and their animals have reasonable access to veterinary care.

To address the critical levels of veterinary professionals in Manitoba, the MVMA has:

- Adopted regulatory reforms to attract foreign-trained veterinarians and streamlined standards for international veterinarian licencing and training requirements.
  - Expanded the RVT scope of practice to provide additional support to veterinarians.
  - Introduced the Limited Access Vaccinator Program to address the veterinary need in First Nation and underserved communities.
- Enhanced the relationship between the MVMA/Manitoba veterinary community and WCVN students.
- Supported the WCVN expansion and proposal for a dedicated national CPE Testing Center at WCVN to increase the number of licensed veterinarians.

The MVMA plays a critical role in maintaining veterinary standards and addressing the professional shortage in Manitoba. Through its regulatory and supportive functions, collaboration with WCVN, and proposed initiatives, the MVMA is actively working to ensure quality veterinary care and public health in the province.

To help build a sustainable future of veterinary medicine in Manitoba, we are asking the Manitoba government to:

1. Finalize and enhance the Labour Market Fund grant for non-IPA students
2. Create a veterinary incentive of retention program for DVNs
3. Provide support to expand the RVT program in Manitoba
4. Provide funding for the WCVN expansion

### 1.0 OVERVIEW OF THE MVMA AND ITS ROLE

#### BACKGROUND

The Manitoba Veterinary Medical Association (MVMA) is a professional organization representing veterinarians and veterinary medicine in Manitoba. Established in 1881, the MVMA has been at the forefront of advocating for the profession, ensuring high standards of veterinary practice and animal care in the province.

#### MVMA'S DUAL ROLE

##### As a Regulatory Body:

**Licensing and Regulation:** The MVMA is responsible for licensing veterinarians practicing in Manitoba. It sets and enforces standards of professional practice, ensuring that veterinary services provided to the public meet established guidelines for quality and safety.

**Ethical Standards and Discipline:** The organization maintains a code of ethics and conducts disciplinary actions when necessary. It addresses complaints against veterinarians and takes appropriate measures to uphold the integrity of the profession.

**Public Health and Safety:** The MVMA plays a crucial role in safeguarding public health by regulating veterinary practices that impact food safety, zoonotic diseases, and overall animal health, which directly affects human health.

##### As a Professional Association:

**Support and Advocacy:** The MVMA provides support to veterinarians in Manitoba, offering resources for continuing education, professional development, and networking opportunities. It advocates on behalf of its members on various issues impacting the veterinary profession.

**Community Outreach and Education:** The association engages in community outreach and public education campaigns, raising awareness about animal health and welfare, responsible pet ownership, and the role of veterinarians in society.

**Collaboration with Other Entities:** The MVMA collaborates with governmental bodies, educational institutions, and other organizations to promote animal health and welfare and to advance the field of veterinary medicine in Manitoba.

The MVMA's dual role as both a regulatory body and a professional association places it in a unique position to address challenges and opportunities within the veterinary field in Manitoba. Through its regulatory functions and professional support, the MVMA ensures the highest standards of veterinary care, upholds the profession's integrity, and contributes significantly to public and animal health and welfare.

## 2.0 ADDRESSING THE VETERINARY PROFESSIONAL SHORTAGE IN MANITOBA

### 2.1 CURRENT CHALLENGES IN VETERINARY PROFESSIONAL AVAILABILITY IN MANITOBA

Manitoba is currently facing a large shortage of veterinarians and Registered Veterinary Technologists (RVTs) in the province. As of December 31, 2023, there are 432 veterinarians currently practicing in Manitoba and 447 veterinary technologists. Based on a recent workforce survey, there are at least 68.2 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) veterinarian positions and 79.75 FTE RVT positions that remain unfilled and are needed to meet the current demand in the private clinic practice sector alone. The MVMA asserts that the shortage of veterinary professionals is at crisis levels and that immediate action is required to ensure that Manitobans and their animals have reasonable access to veterinary care.

Veterinary professionals are involved in livestock health, animal population control, detection and education regarding zoonotic disease, companion animal health, prudent antibiotic use, detection of emerging diseases, animal welfare, One Health initiatives, government services, laboratory research and diagnostic services. In the recent MNP study, the Economic Impacts of Veterinary Medicine in Canada, the veterinary sector in Manitoba is expected to output \$478.6 million, create 2,120 FTE positions, and pay over \$26.9 million in provincial tax per year.<sup>1</sup> Shortages in veterinary care pose risks to animals, the economy, and the public at large.

#### RECENT DATA ON VETERINARY PRACTICE IN MANITOBA

##### Veterinarians

To assess the current workforce of veterinarians in Manitoba, the MVMA provides the following data regarding the current workforce (as of May 1, 2022).

In 2022, the MVMA had 449 veterinarians who were both registered and licensed to practice veterinary medicine in Manitoba.

94.6% of licensed veterinarians (n=425) report that they are currently working in the veterinary field (Figure 1).

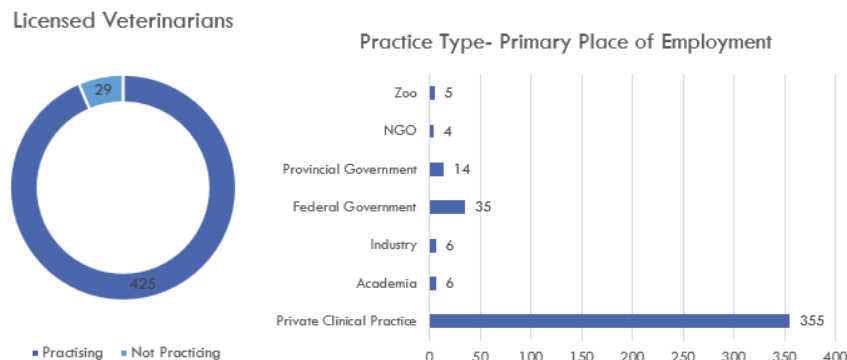


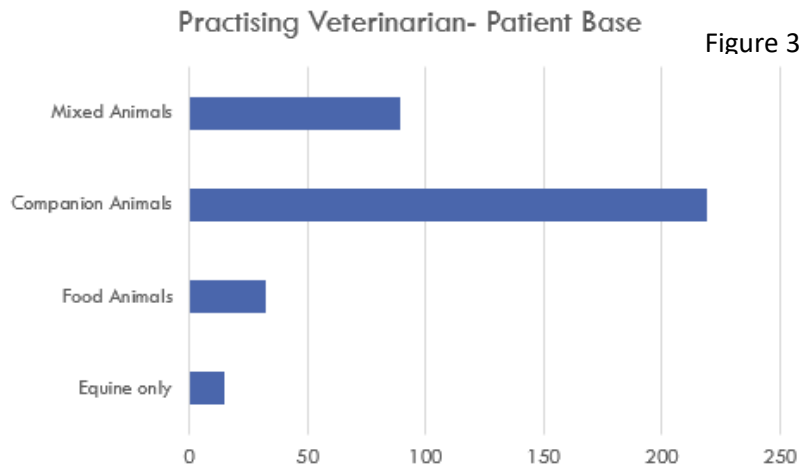
Figure 2

Figure 1

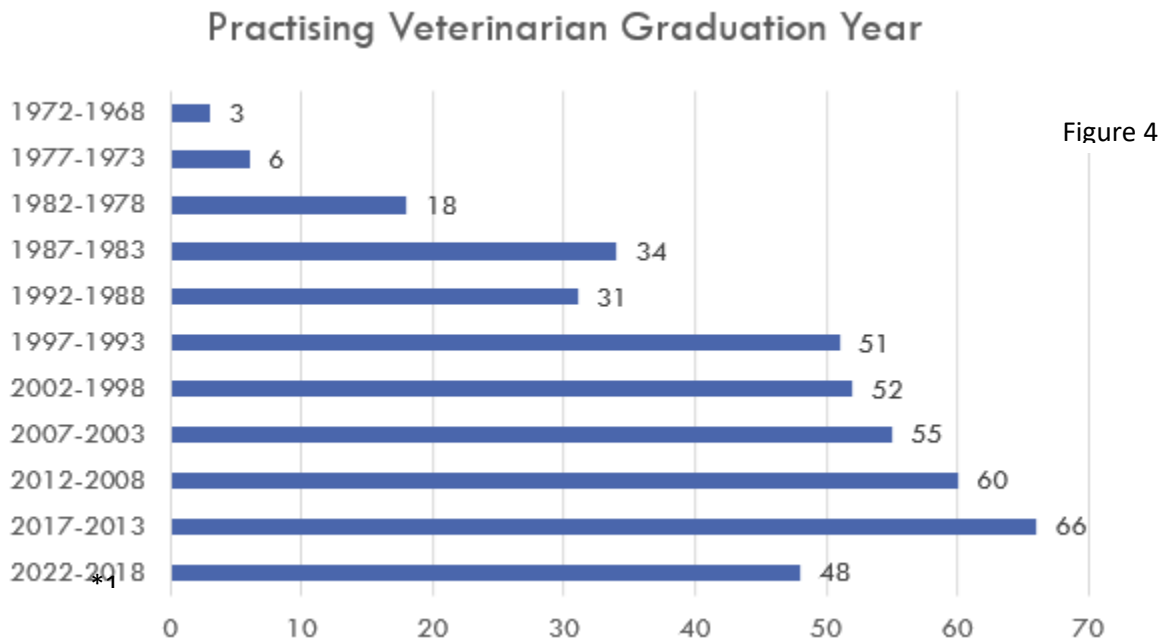
<sup>1</sup> The Economic Impacts of Veterinary Medicine in Canada, page 21

The vast majority of licensed veterinarians work in Private Clinical Practice (Figure 2). This data solely captures a licensed veterinarian's primary place of employment.

Of the veterinarians who engage in private practice, roughly two-thirds work solely with small/companion animals, while the remaining work in some capacity with large/food production animals (Figure 3).



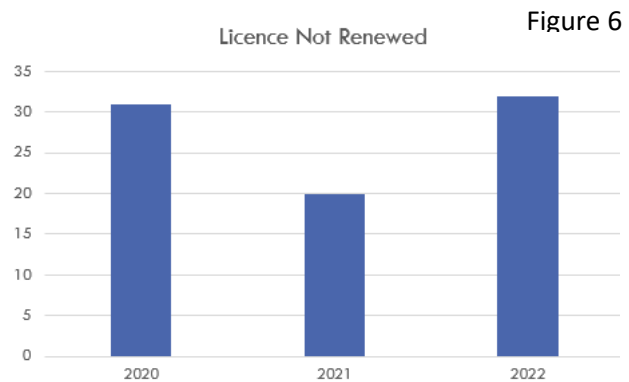
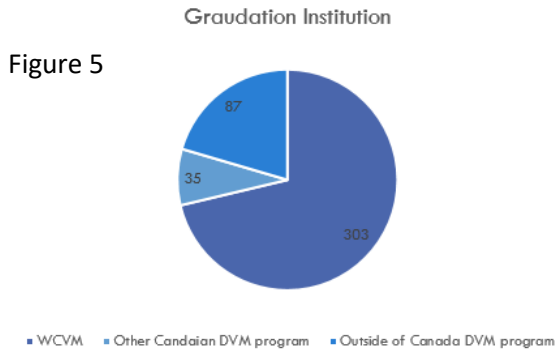
The average veterinarian graduated in 2003, with a standard deviation of 12 years<sup>2</sup>. (Figure 4)



<sup>2</sup> The 2022 graduation year does not include 2022 graduates of most accredited programs.

Assuming a 30-year average career, 93 licensed veterinarians were at risk of retiring in the shorter term, and 51 were likely to retire in the next 5 years. Assuming a 40-year average career, 28 licensed veterinarians were at risk of retiring in the shorter term, and 31 were likely to retire in the next 5 years.

Of the 425 practicing veterinarians in Manitoba in 2022, 72% were graduates of the WCVM, 8% were graduates of other Canadian veterinary colleges, and 20% were graduates of programs outside of Canada (Figure 5).



Since 2019, the MVMA has seen an average of 28 veterinarians cancel or fail to renew their licence to practice each year (Figure 6). This occurs for a wide array of reasons- from temporary leaves from the profession to care for family, to career changes, to retirement.

### Veterinary Practices

In addition to licensing individual veterinarians, the MVMA permits and inspects private veterinary practices in Manitoba. These practices provide services to both industry and families in Manitoba. As of May 1, 2022, there were 142 private practices in Manitoba (Figure 7).

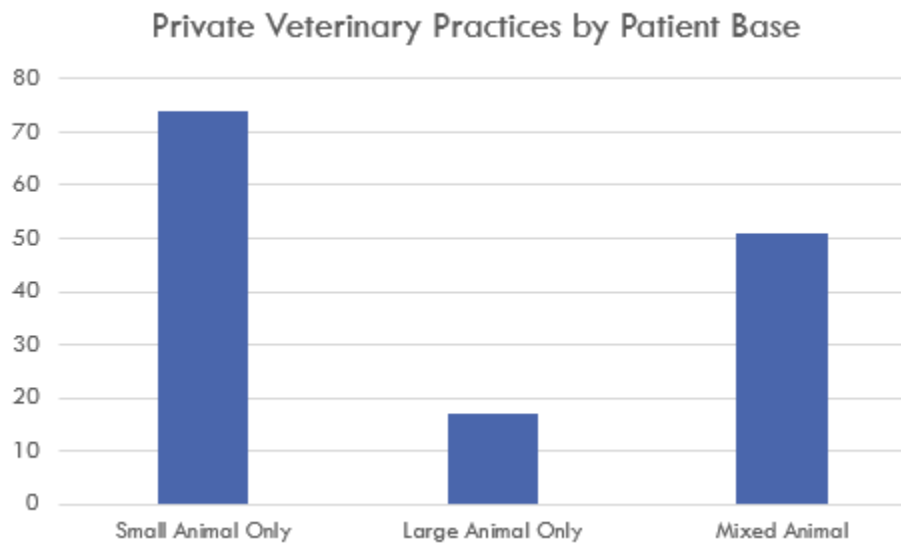


Figure 7



Veterinary practices exist throughout Manitoba. 58% of veterinary practices are located outside of the Winnipeg metropolitan area (30km radius of Winnipeg) (Figure 8).



Figure 8

In addition to private practices, licensed veterinarians work in an array of vital settings in Manitoba, including the provincial and federal government, industry, universities and other educational institutions, and other governmental institutions.

## RECENT DATA ON THE SHORTAGE OF VETERINARIANS

### 2020 CVMA Workforce Study

#### *Shortage Of Veterinarians in Canada*

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) published the [2020 CVMA Workforce Study](#) just prior to the current pandemic (Appendix B). The 2020 CVMA Workforce Study speaks to the shortage from largely a national level and provides Manitoba-specific data as well. While this data is now a few years old, both the national and province-specific data help quantify expected shortages in the long term and help identify issues surrounding shortages generally.

The 2020 CVMA Workforce Study identified the following three forces as the main contributors to the shortage of veterinarians throughout Canada (with the exception of PEI).

- *Population growth has exceeded the rate at which new veterinarians join the workforce*
- *Increased willingness to medicalize and spend on pets, creates additional demand*
- *Historically high retirement rates amongst large baby boomer cohort, accelerated by the opportunity to sell clinics to corporates<sup>3</sup>*

Indeed, the 2020 CVMA Workforce Study found that while 4.5 million dogs were medicalized (see a veterinarian at least annually) in 2007, by 2020, this number had jumped to 7.1 million dogs.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> 2020 CVMA Workforce Study, page 24

<sup>4</sup> 2020 CVMA Workforce Study, page 40

In terms of projecting the future demand for veterinary services, the 2020 CVMA Workforce Study found that household formation, disposable income, and the cost of veterinary services are the main factors.<sup>5</sup> Household formation in Canada is growing at a higher rate than all other G7 countries.<sup>6</sup> Further, the growth in disposable income is also the highest among G7 countries.<sup>7</sup> In terms of the cost of veterinary services, normal market principles are problematic. Services provided by veterinarians are largely focused on animal welfare; reducing demand for veterinary services by increasing cost would have the effect of reducing access to care for animals in need.

Acknowledging the current and ongoing shortage of veterinarians, the Government of Alberta has drastically increased its funding of the University of Calgary Faculty of Veterinary Medicine (UCVM). The Government of Alberta has committed an additional \$8.4 million annually to increase enrollment at UCVM and an additional \$58.5 million capital investment to the UCVM to double its annual enrollment.<sup>8</sup> Further, the Government of British Columbia has committed to investing an additional \$1.7 million to add an additional 20 subsidized seats at the WCVU.<sup>9</sup>

The MVMA submits that additional investments are required in Manitoba to reduce the shortage of veterinarians in the province.

### **2021/2022 MVMA Workforce Study**

The MVMA administered a workforce survey from November 29, 2021- to March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022. In the survey, each registered private practice in Manitoba was asked about the practice's current staffing levels and the extent of any staffing shortages in the practice (if any).

Specifically, registered private practices were asked how many Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) veterinarians are currently at the practice as well as how many additional FTEs veterinarians are needed (if any) to meet the current demand at the practice. FTE was defined as 40 hours of work per week.

At the time the workforce survey was launched, there were 144 private practices in the study (two closed during the reporting period and were removed from the data). Of the 142 private practices currently in Manitoba, 99 private practices reported data.

The data obtained in the workforce survey is found in Figure 9 and Figure 10.

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<sup>5</sup> 2020 CVMA Workforce Study, page 17

<sup>6</sup> 2020 CVMA Workforce Study, page 38

<sup>7</sup> 2020 CVMA Workforce Study, page 39

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ucalgary.ca/news/vet-med-ucalgary-receive-nearly-67m-double-its-enrolment> accessed May 26, 2022

<sup>9</sup> <https://news.usask.ca/articles/colleges/2022/province-of-b.c.-doubles-student-seats-in-veterinary-medicine-program-at-usask.php> accessed May 26, 2022

## Shortage of Veterinarians in Manitoba

		Number of Private Practices	Current FTE Positions	Reported FTE Positions Needed	Current FTE Average per Practice	Average FTE Need per Practice	Standard Deviation FTE Need per Practice
Winnipeg	Small Animal Only	41	112.7	29.2	2.8	0.7	1
	Mixed/Large Practice	7	21.95	4	2.9	0.57	0.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>134.65</b>	<b>33.2</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>1</b>
Rural <sup>#</sup>	Small Animal Only	15	30	11.5	2.1	0.8	0.9
	Mixed/Large Practice	36	51.6	23.5	1.4	0.7	0.76
	<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>81.6</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>0.8</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>99</b>	<b>216.25</b>	<b>68.2</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>0.89</b>

Figure 9

*\*Rural indicates that the practice is not located within 30km of Winnipeg.*

When looking at Manitoba as a whole, the average practice has a workforce of 2.2 FTE veterinarians and currently needs .7 FTE veterinarians to meet the current demand at the practice. When looking at the bigger picture, there are at least 68 FTE veterinarian positions that need to be filled in Manitoba to meet current demand in private practice alone. Further extrapolating the shortage to include the 43 practices that did not participate in the survey is somewhat moot. However, it emphasizes that the 68 FTE veterinarian positions are the minimum additional workforce of veterinarians needed to meet the current demand for private practice veterinary medicine in Manitoba.

To gain a better understanding of how shortage is felt across Manitoba and across patient bases, the data has been segregated by practice location (Winnipeg vs rural) and by practice type (small animal only vs mixed/large animal practice).

Generally speaking, both Winnipeg and rural practices report experiencing a drastic shortage in the veterinarian workforce—an average of .7 FTE veterinarians per practice. When looking at the average size of each practice, though, rural practices experience a higher degree of shortage; rural practices report an average need of .7 FTE veterinarian workforce per 1.4 current FTE veterinarian workforce (50% workforce increase), whereas Winnipeg practices report an average need of .7 FTE veterinarian workforce per 2.8 current FTE veterinarian workforce (25% workforce increase).

In addition to the workforce survey, the 2020 CVMA Workforce Study identified that the growth of veterinarians in Manitoba is slower than in other Canadian jurisdictions.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> 2020 CVMA Workforce Study, page 22

**Shortage of Registered Veterinary Technologists in Manitoba**

		Number of Private Practices	Current FTE Positions	Reported FTE Positions Needed
Winnipeg	Small Animal Only	41	158.35	37.75
	Mixed/Large Animal	7	27.9	3.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>186.25</b>	<b>41</b>
Rural*	Small Animal Only	15	31.85	13.25
	Mixed/Large Animal	36	37.4	25.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>69.25</b>	<b>38.75</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>99</b>	<b>255.5</b>	<b>79.75</b>

\*Rural indicates that the practice is not located within 30km of Winnipeg

Figure 10

The 79.75 current reported FTE RVT positions that need to be filled to meet the current demand only encapsulate the needs of the reporting 99 private practices. In addition to the 48 private practices that did not provide shortage data, RVTs are also engaged in work in other sectors, including government (federal and provincial), industry, academia, etc., all of which have reported shortages.

**2.2 IMPACT OF VETERINARY SHORTAGE ON PUBLIC HEALTH, ANIMAL WELFARE, AND MANITOBA’S ECONOMY**

The MVMA submits that the current and projected long-term shortage of veterinary care in Manitoba poses many risks to the public.

First and foremost, a shortage of veterinarians and RVTs leads to delayed and reduced access to care for Manitobans and their animals. This is already evident in Manitoba through the increase in practices that are not able to accommodate new clients and the increase in wait times for those looking to access veterinary care.

The MVMA is also concerned as shortages of veterinary professionals tend to disproportionately affect rural and other under-served areas. This is already evident as there are Veterinary Service District veterinary clinics that are sitting vacant due to a lack of ability to recruit and retain veterinarians and RVTs to provide service through these clinics. Each Veterinary Service District veterinary clinic that sits unoccupied represents a district that has reduced access to care. This is detrimental to both large and small animal owners in the area.

The risks associated with the shortage are vast and include the effects of the shortage on government veterinarian positions, industry positions, and educational and research positions. Risks can range from

failure to monitor and control contagious and infectious diseases, to failure to address animal welfare concerns, to impacts on industries' ability to ensure healthy, sustainable herds.<sup>11</sup>

One of the focuses that CVMA has leaned on at the federal level is the economic impact of veterinarians on Canadian (and, in this case, Manitoba) GDP. The health of the food stock herd is critically reliant on veterinarians as the keystone in the arch between farm and table. For a province like Manitoba with a large food stock herd (cattle, pork, dairy, poultry), the CVMA studies have shown that Manitoba is not meeting the industry needs, and thus, Manitoba is losing GDP and missing out on potential growth in trade opportunities.

Lastly, the MVMA submits that there is a risk to veterinarians and RVTs as the shortage in Manitoba continues. These risks include increased stress on veterinary professionals as they try to meet the demand for services by the public, risk of burnout for those who are overworked for extended periods of time, and risk that veterinarians and RVTs will leave the profession early due to the additional stress. These risks would all lead to a reduction of the work output of veterinary care providers and further exacerbate the workforce shortage.

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## 2.3 PAST AND CURRENT MVMA PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS SHORTAGE

### REGULATORY REFORM

*The MVMA* has continued to make strides in regulatory reform to better attract veterinarians from outside of Canada. Of note, at the 2023 AGM, *the* 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 who 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 *who 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.

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<sup>11</sup> The Economic Impacts of Veterinary Medicine in Canada, page 22

### **3.) Limited Licence- Internship**

This licence is available for those *who 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 *the* area of Board Certification of their supervisor. This limited licence is *time-limited* to one year.

### **4.) Expansion of RVT Scope of Practice**

The MVMA has expanded the RVT scope of practice to allow RVTs to provide care in areas previously restricted to veterinarians. This includes practices like administering rabies vaccine under indirect supervision. This allows RVTs to be better utilized to provide services in line with their training and expertise while allowing veterinarians to focus on service that requires their level of expertise and training. The RVT Scope of Practice, Retention and Career Advancement Committee has been investigating areas for further scope expansion, with movement expected at the 2024 AGM.

### **5.) Limited Access Vaccinator Program**

The MVMA has been working diligently with the Department of Agriculture and the Winnipeg Humane Society to develop a Limited Access Vaccinator Program. This program would allow veterinarians to train and supervise community members in First Nations and remote areas to administer rabies and other vaccines to companion animals. This program is slated for approval at the 2024 AGM and deployment in June 2024. This program will provide access to basic veterinary care in areas where access is limited or non-existent.

## **WCVM STUDENT RELATIONS**

Since 2019, the MVMA has invested heavily in its relationships with WCVM students. While ultimately, the MVMA cannot control whether a Manitoba-funded WCVM graduate chooses to practice in Manitoba, the MVMA believes it plays a vital role in ensuring that WCVM students remain connected to the veterinary community in Manitoba.

The actions taken by the MVMA to improve connections between WCVM students and the veterinary community in Manitoba include:

- Funding student participation at MVMA events, including the annual Membership Engagement Day (previously the CenCan Veterinary Conference), annual WCVM Student and MVMA Council Meet and Greet, annual summer student get-together, and annual WCVM student information sessions. The goal of these initiatives is to introduce and engage veterinary students to the careers and lifestyles offered to them in Manitoba. These events provide an opportunity for the MVMA, Manitoba government, CFIA and practicing veterinarians in Manitoba to showcase the province and opportunities for students following graduation, as well as provide students with professional connections to the province.

- Maintaining the MVMA-developed [DVM Student Practice and Job Opportunities](#) online resource. This resource provides an easy-to-use map of all practices in Manitoba that are offering students practice opportunities. The practices provide detailed information about their practice, the opportunities they offer, and clear contact information for follow-up.
- Maintaining the MVMA-developed Student Advertising online resource. This resource allows WCVM students to provide information to the MVMA membership about what types of practice and/or job opportunities they are looking for, as well as personal contact information.
- Supporting the WCVM Manitoba Student Group. This initiative was started in 2021 and provides the WCVM Manitoba Student Group with funding to meet to discuss Manitoba issues.
- Helping to increase the number of externships and rotations being hosted in Manitoba. This includes continuing to provide information to Manitoba veterinarians about the opportunity to host externships and rotations in Manitoba and serving as a liaison between Manitoba veterinarians and the WCVM. The MVMA will discuss developing an externship program collaboratively with the Manitoba government, WCVM and practicing veterinarians in Manitoba.
- Developing alternative strategies to address the shortage of veterinarians in Manitoba, including continuing to support the Veterinary Technologist Scope of Practice, Retention, and Career Advancement Committee.
- Collaborating with other Canadian veterinary associations to develop alternative strategies to address the shortage of veterinarians in Canada.
- Adopting an alternative pathway for graduates of programs not accredited by the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association or American Veterinary Medical Association to obtain registration and licensure in Manitoba.
- Working with the WCVM and Manitoba government to improve the recruitment and retention of veterinarians in Manitoba.

While the MVMA has made improvements since 2019, the MVMA commits to engaging in further retention efforts. The MVMA has finalized a DVM Student Engagement plan, which formalizes and expands the ongoing communication and engagement commitments that the MVMA has made to WCVM DVM students. The MVMA is hoping that ongoing retention plans can include the Manitoba government to create a stronger relationship between WCVM students, the MVMA and the Manitoba government.

## 3.0 MVMA PROPOSALS

### 3.1 RETENTION GRANTS FOR NON-IPA STUDENTS

Below are the highlights from the correspondence between the Manitoba Government and the MVMA regarding the retention grant for the eight unfunded Manitoba students at the WCVM. As well as the correspondence between the Post-Secondary Institutions Branch and the non-IPA students. This is a priority for the MVMA, and we believe that ensuring these eight students return to Manitoba is a small step in building a sustainable future for veterinary medicine in the province.

**April 11, 2023** – The MVMA requested 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 for 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 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 had the pleasure of meeting with these students, who are both excited to be entering a profession that is essential to the 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 believed that offering this support would allow these Manitoba students to return home to Manitoba following their studies, continue providing needed veterinary services, and be positive community members who help make Manitoba strong.

**July 31, 2023** – Under the previous administration, the Department of Advanced Education and Training committed to providing each of the unfunded students with a one-time grant of \$70,000 in 2023, the Labour Market Fund. In return, the students will commit to practicing veterinary medicine in Manitoba for a minimum of six months upon graduation.

**November 24, 2023** – The MVMA thanked the newly formed provincial government for continuing to support the Labour Market Fund. However, acting upon the concern of the non-IPA students, the MVMA requested enhancing the terms of the grant for a long-term commitment to Manitoba from the unfunded students. The MVMA proposed that in addition to the initial \$70,000 grant for returning to Manitoba to practice veterinary medicine, students should be eligible for an annual \$20,000 bonus for up to five years post-graduation, provided they continue their practice in Manitoba. Additionally, the MVMA requested clarity on their ability to receive the grant and participate in short-term specializations or board certification programs upon graduation. Some students are interested in agriculturally focused specializations that are not currently available in Manitoba, and the MVMA believes that allowing Manitoba students to partake in these programs before returning for their five-year commitment would bring invaluable and needed skills into our province.

**PSI Correspondence with Non-IPA Students** – Initial conversations between the Post-Secondary Institutions Branch (PSI) and the unfunded students started in September 2023. It was understood that there was an October 31, 2023, deadline for PSI to send the agreement to the unfunded students. On November 6, 2023, they received an email stating that the department aimed to send the agreement to the students by November 20, 2023. They were instructed that they had to return the signed contract to PSI no later than December 15, 2023. As we understand, the students have not received agreements to date.



### 3.2 PROPOSAL FOR ENHANCED INCENTIVES TO RETAIN NON-IPA STUDENTS

The MVMA proposes that in addition to the initial \$70,000 grant for returning non-IPA students to Manitoba to practice veterinary medicine, non-IPA students should be eligible for an annual \$20,000 bonus for up to five years post-graduation, provided they continue their practice in Manitoba. The MVMA believes that this adjustment to the arrangement would not only guarantee that the money expended is returned to Manitoba through veterinary care but also encourage long-term commitment from our students. The initial \$70,000 grant for a six-month return to service commitment reduces non-IPA student debt from \$280,000 to \$210,000 (excluding living expenses). However, this leaves students in a challenging financial position. This is combined with a general lack of competitiveness of financial support by the government to new graduates (see pages 17-18 for more information on veterinarian incentive programs), which, given the debt load of non-IPA students, is essential.

### 3.3 PROPOSAL FOR INCENTIVES TO RETAIN DVM GRADUATES IN MANITOBA

Manitoba currently faces a significant challenge in retaining Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) graduates. Unlike neighbouring jurisdictions such as Saskatchewan, Alberta, Ontario, and certain areas in the USA, Manitoba does not offer incentives for veterinary graduates to practice within the province after graduation. This lack of incentives is leading to a brain drain, with graduates opting for regions that provide financial and professional support.

To address this issue, the following incentive programs are proposed:

- Retention Grant Program
- Return for Service Grant
- Loan Repayment Assistance/Forgiveness Program

#### Comparative Analysis

Location	Amount	Program Details
<p>Saskatchewan</p> <p><a href="#">The Saskatchewan Student Loan Forgiveness Program for Veterinarians and Veterinary Technologists</a></p>	<p>20% of Saskatchewan Student Loan debt (up to \$4,000 annually, for up to five years, to a maximum of \$20,000)</p>	<p>Offers loan forgiveness for veterinarians and RVTs who work in rural or remote areas.</p>
<p>Alberta</p> <p><a href="#">Northern Alberta Development Bursary program – Veterinary Student Bursary</a></p>	<p>Option 1: \$7,000 per year</p> <p>Option 2: \$14,000 per year (half paid by bursary, half by sponsor)</p>	<p>Offers a bursary to incentivize Alberta DVM students to work in northern Alberta post-graduation.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Ontario</p> <p><a href="#">Veterinary Incentive Program</a></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">\$50,000 over five years</p>	<p>New veterinarian graduates will be eligible to receive grants for working in underserved areas and treating large animals.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">United States of America</p> <p><a href="#">The Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program</a></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">\$25,000 (USD) per year, up to three years</p>	<p>A federal veterinary medicine loan repayment program, targeting veterinarians who serve in high-need areas.</p>

Implementing these incentive programs in Manitoba will not only encourage DVM graduates to return and practice within the province but will also help address the shortage of veterinary professionals, especially in rural and remote areas. This initiative will align Manitoba competitively with neighbouring jurisdictions and make it a more attractive option for veterinary professionals.

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### 3.4 INCREASING RVT GRADUATES IN MANITOBA

As previously mentioned, there are at least 79.75 FTE RVT positions that remain vacant and are needed to meet the current demand in the private clinic sector alone. However, the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association commissioned a [Veterinary Professional Workforce Project](#), published in April 2021. In their study, they found that most practices had a 1:1 ratio of veterinarians to RVTs, while the optimum ratio is 1 veterinarian to every 2 RVTs (1:2).<sup>12</sup> We believe that practice conditions in Manitoba are materially the same and would work best with a 1:2 ratio. The MVMA currently has 413 licensed veterinarians, meaning that we believe we would need a substantial increase in RVTs to operate efficiently. While this number may seem high, it is somewhat clear that funding for veterinarian training will not meet current or projected demand, and thus, reliance on RVTs will increase over time.

#### **Red River College Polytech (RRCP) Veterinary Technology Program**

As the MVMA understands, RRCP currently enrolls 30 students per year and normally graduates 20-25 students per year. RRCP is not concerned about the attrition rate and is not able to expand the program. The waitlist has continued to have a steady wait time as this is the only program in Manitoba. Some clinics, desperate for RVT staff, have opted to enroll clinical staff in online programs. There are reported delays with these programs as well.

Enrollment as of January 2, 2024:

- Class of 2023: 17 students graduated
- Class of 2024: 24 out of 30 students entered the 2nd year Fall term

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<sup>12</sup> 2021 ABVMA Veterinary Professional Workforce Study, page 3

## **Additional Veterinary Technology Programs**

A private educational institution has expressed interest in introducing a Veterinary Technology program. The MVMA is steadfast in its support for an additional program and has offered help to advertise for sessional instructors as well as make connections between the institution and clinics that would need to provide clinical experience. While we have supported the institution to the best of our ability in this endeavour, it does not appear it will come to fruition.

## **Proposal**

As we attempt to fill the almost 80 FTE RVT positions, with the long-term goal of reaching a 2:1 RVT to veterinarian ratio, we propose the following solutions for consideration:

- Create a second RVT program in Manitoba.
  - Historically, there have been discussions about establishing a RVT program at Assiniboine Community College in Brandon. This would directly impact the shortage of RVTs in rural areas.
- Provide funding for Manitobans who pursue online RVT programs.
  - These individuals often are already employed within the veterinary medicine community and continue to work in clinic as they complete their studies. This is often a large undertaking for the practices as they assume the responsibility for hands-on learning. Funding for these seats should be considered with a benefit for these clinics as well.
- Increase RVT graduates of RRCP.
  - This proposal is two-fold: first, increase the number of seats at the college; second, improve the RVT graduation rate.

The MVMA is happy to explore these options further with the Manitoba Government by providing supporting data and insights on the most impactful, sustainable way forward.

## **4.0 COLLABORATION WITH THE WESTERN COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE (WCVN)**

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### **4.1 THE ROLE OF THE WCVN IN MANITOBA'S VETERINARY EDUCATION**

The Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVN) is a regional school dedicated to training veterinarians in three of the four western provinces. Over the last 61 years, the Manitoba government has made a significant investment in the infrastructure, facilities, equipment and expertise at the WCVN. The WCVN is Manitoba's veterinary school. Under the current interprovincial funding agreement, the WCVN offers 20 seats to Manitoba students. The WCVN serves the province in a variety of critical areas. We feel that a continued strong partnership with the WCVN is vital to Manitobans.

WCVM's commitment extends far beyond teaching 20 Manitoba veterinary students each year. Under the interprovincial agreement, the WCVM's responsibility to Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia includes seven key commitments that have been met for more than 50 years.

- Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) program
- Postgraduate and specialist training program
- Research in biomedical and veterinary sciences
- Clinical and diagnostic services
- Continuing education
- Public extension education
- Training support for veterinary technology students

### **WCVM Produces Qualified Veterinarians for Manitoba**

Numbers compiled by the WCVM and MVMA show an 82% retention rate of WCVM graduates to Manitoba. This number includes students from Manitoba, as well as from the other western provinces. When the latter are excluded, the rate is 72%. This number far surpasses the 51% retention rate for MDs trained in Manitoba (source: [www.ornh.mb.ca/capr\\_carms\\_review](http://www.ornh.mb.ca/capr_carms_review)).

The WCVM has an excellent record for successfully training veterinary students. In the last ten years, 95.3% of MB students who entered the program completed their DVM. The WCVM also has an impressive rate of 98%-100% of graduates successfully completing the North American Veterinary Licensing Exam (NAVLE), which places our regional school in the top 20% of veterinary schools worldwide.

### **WCVM Provides Postgraduate Training**

A specialist, also known as a diplomate, is a veterinarian who has invested in additional training and education in a specific area of veterinary medicine. Manitoba currently has only eight specialists in the province. We have a shortage of specialists in the fields of emergency medicine, ophthalmology, theriogenology, shelter medicine, internal medicine, surgery, dermatology, radiology, neurology and oncology, according to a survey of veterinarians practicing in the province. The WCVM is the only location in Western Canada capable of offering postgraduate degree education in veterinary medicine.

Due to the changing nature of veterinary medicine and the expectations of pet owners and producers, veterinary services have evolved, and technology has vastly improved. Specialists are required to offer and perform the advanced veterinary medical procedures and services expected by veterinary clients in Manitoba. At present, veterinarians from other provinces provide these specialized services. In some cases, out-of-province specialists travel to Manitoba to provide consults. Alternatively, general practitioners refer clients to the WCVM or other referral centers. Referrals out of province require our clients to travel long distances with sick animals. As well, when these specialized services are accessed out of province, Manitoba loses that potential income.

Veterinarians are increasingly being trained to work with and to refer to specialists. These modern practitioners look for jobs in areas where specialists and referral-level practices are easily accessible. Access to specialized services allows veterinarians to offer and provide a higher level of care to their patients and to help maintain a positive work-life balance. Manitoba currently lacks in this area of veterinary service.

### **WCVM Research Is Vital for Manitoba Producers**

The province of Manitoba has been able to take advantage of many research and development projects funded and supported in part by the WCVM. As part of collaborative disease response teams, herd health investigators are dispatched and assist with herd evaluation, testing and lab result interpretation, whenever an emerging disease threatens the health of western Canada's livestock.

For brevity, we have included only two examples:

#### **1.) Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea Virus**

PEDV in Canada has created a significant economic impact since 2017, with approximately 200 outbreaks to date, primarily in Manitoba and Ontario. Per premise, the loss is estimated between \$300,000 – 500,000. The 2018 outbreak is estimated to have cost > \$50 million alone.

Research at the Veterinary Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO), which is affiliated with WCVM, has played a central role in research, control of the virus, understanding the disease and the development of a vaccine. VIDO provided > 40,000 doses of the vaccine developed for producers in Manitoba. Additionally, they have liaised with industry to update disease control protocols.

#### **2.) WCVM Beef Cattle Research and Response to Disease Outbreak**

As part of collaborative disease response teams, herd health investigators are dispatched and assist with herd evaluation, testing and lab result interpretation. WCVM specialists are available to serve on the front lines of these disease investigations, providing their clinical expertise and skills.

In the past decade, major WCVM-based research projects have included a Western Canada Beef Productivity Study, led by a WCVM epidemiologist and a 5-year longitudinal study of the Western Canadian cow-calf industry, led by a WCVM beef cattle researcher. The Beef Cattle Research Council has renewed funding for the cow-calf industry project for another five years, and it has expanded to a national scope. Overall, this project entailed 13 full surveys on various topics, four follow-up surveys, and three quick fact sheets, which were distributed to participants of the surveillance network. Although Manitoba is included in the project, it has provided no funding.

### **Prairie Diagnostic Services at WCVM Supports Our Provincial Lab**

Veterinary diagnostic services in Manitoba are provided by both the Manitoba VDS Lab and Prairie Diagnostic Services (PDS) located at the WCVM. These labs work together to provide a broad range of services to Manitoba. Neither lab can provide all necessary services. Presently, PDS provides Manitoba

with a scope of services that the Provincial Laboratory cannot provide. PDS is funded in part by the WCVM, and any decrease in funding will have an impact on the laboratory's ability to provide these essential services.

### **WCVM's Veterinary Medical Centre Teaching Hospital Provides an Essential Service**

A key strength of the WCVM is its veterinary teaching hospital - the only one in Western Canada. The WCVM Veterinary Medical Centre (VMC) offers primary care to animal owners as well as advanced referral services to western Canadian veterinarians, including practitioners in Manitoba who rely on the VMC for access to new technologies and specialized care of their patients. The VMC also provides veterinary students, residents, and clinical interns with the facility to develop their clinical and diagnostic skills and gain hands-on experience with a diverse range of large and small animal cases.

### **WCVM Allows Young Manitobans to Follow Their Dreams With Access To Veterinary Education**

In survey after survey, veterinary medicine is a top career choice for young people. Because of Canada's regional funding model, WCVM is the only institution where Manitobans can train to become veterinarians without paying astronomical tuition fees to an American or overseas university. Education is a constitutionally guaranteed right. Young Manitobans who chose careers in everything from art history to zoology can access government-funded education in their home province. Because of the highly specialized nature of veterinary medicine, Manitoba is far too small to have its own program, so the government-funded education must occur out of the province in our regionally funded school in Saskatoon. There is demand from Manitoba students to enter the program, and there is demand from industry to hire them when they graduate. The bottleneck between these two demands is the number of seats at the WCVM.

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## **4.2 INCREASED SUPPORT AND COLLABORATION WITH WCVM**

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL CPE TESTING SITE**

The Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM) at the University of Saskatchewan plays a pivotal role in addressing Canada's national shortage of veterinarians, a situation exacerbated by increased pet ownership during the COVID-19 pandemic and a growing need in areas such as food animal practice and regulatory veterinary medicine.

#### **Current Challenge**

A significant number of internationally trained veterinarians are awaiting licensure to practice in Canada. To qualify, they must pass a Clinical Proficiency Examination (CPE) assessing their clinical skills across various veterinary competencies. In 2023, as of October 13, Canada has had 1180 new applicants that will need to complete the CPE in the next three to five years to attain their licence. This is up from 498 in 2022, and 266 in 2020. This is massive opportunity to address our veterinary shortage.

Currently, the WCVM is Canada's only English-language site for this four-day CPE, but faces limitations in space and resources, restricting exam enrollment and frequency.

## Proposed Solution – Dedicated CPE Testing Centre

The MVMA strongly supports the WCVM proposal of the establishment of a dedicated national CPE testing center. This center aims to significantly increase the number of qualified veterinarians entering the profession each year by tripling the current capacity of 55. The center will include multiple stations for medical examination assessment, a multi-user surgical suite, a veterinary pathology suite, medical imaging facilities, anesthesia induction and recovery areas, and live animal housing.

The MVMA views this expansion as a strategic solution for the province. Manitoba can leverage the existing relationship and infrastructure synergy of the WCVM to support the veterinary medicine community. By partnering with the federal government and western provinces, this could be an opportunity for Manitoba to see an influx of foreign-trained veterinarians without solely shouldering the costs associated with implementing this beneficial program.

### Benefits and Broader Impact

**Increased Testing and Training Capacity:** By expanding the testing capacity, the center will expedite the licensing of internationally trained veterinarians, thereby addressing the immediate need for more professionals in the field.

**Multi-Purpose Educational Resource:** The facility will not only be used for CPE testing but also for re-training programs, veterinary student education, and continuing education courses.

**Community and Industry Engagement:** It will serve as a hub for extension and outreach events, benefiting livestock producers, Indigenous communities, and other stakeholders.

## 5.0 COLLABORATION WITH GOVERNMENT

The Manitoba Veterinary Medical Association (MVMA) recognizes the critical importance of collaboration with government entities to address the ongoing challenges in the veterinary sector in Manitoba. Effective collaboration will not only enhance the veterinary profession but also significantly contribute to public and animal health in the province. The MVMA reiterates its four primary requests to the government, which are essential for the sustainability and advancement of veterinary services in Manitoba.

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### 5.1 FINALIZE THE LABOUR MARKET FUND GRANT FOR NON-IPA STUDENTS

- The MVMA urges the government to finalize the Labour Market Fund grant, aimed at supporting non-IPA students at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM).
- This grant is pivotal in alleviating the financial burden on these students, thereby encouraging them to return and practice veterinary medicine in Manitoba upon graduation.
- The implementation of this grant is crucial for addressing the shortage of veterinarians in the province, especially in under-served rural areas.

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## 5.2 CREATE A VETERINARY INCENTIVE OR RETENTION PROGRAM FOR DVMS

- The MVMA proposes the establishment of a veterinary incentive or retention program for Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) graduates.
- This program would provide financial and professional incentives for DVM graduates to practice in Manitoba, particularly in regions facing acute shortages.
- Such a program would align Manitoba with other provinces and regions that offer similar benefits, aiding in the retention of skilled veterinarians within the province.

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## 5.3 SUPPORT FOR EXPANDING THE RVT PROGRAM IN MANITOBA

- The MVMA requests government support for additional resources to increase the annual number of RVT graduates.
- Given the current demand for RVTs and the limitations of existing educational infrastructure, an increase in programming is essential to meet the growing needs of the veterinary sector.
- Government support in this area could include funding, resource allocation, and endorsement, enhancing the capacity to train more RVTs efficiently.

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## 5.4 PROVIDE FUNDING FOR THE WCVM EXPANSION

- The MVMA appeals for government funding to support the expansion of the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM).
- This expansion includes the proposed national CPE Testing Center, which is critical for increasing the number of licensed veterinarians.
- Government funding would enable WCVM to enhance its educational and clinical capacities, directly benefiting Manitoba's veterinary community and animal health services.

Collaboration between the MVMA and Manitoba Government is indispensable for addressing the current challenges in Manitoba's veterinary sector. By supporting these four key requests, the government can significantly contribute to the sustainability and growth of veterinary services, ensuring the well-being of animals and the public in Manitoba.

## 6.0 RESOURCES

[2020 CVMA Workforce Study](#)

[Letter from Minister of Advanced Education and Training and Minister of Agriculture \(July 31, 2023\)](#)

[Veterinary Professional Workforce Project](#)

[WCVM Briefing Note on Expansion](#)

[MNP Report on The Economic Impacts of the Veterinary Medicine in Canada](#)



