

Advisory Note for Manitoba Education and Training
Copy to Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives

Type: Decision ☒ Discussion ☐ Information ☐

Attention to: Minister ☒ DM ☒ ADM ☒ Branch ☐

Division/Branch: Manitoba Education and Training

Title: Ongoing veterinary student training funding

Date: March 6, 2019

Issue Summary:

Veterinarians in Manitoba 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. The veterinarian's mandate has significantly evolved in the past decade. With this evolution comes the need for more veterinarians to fill new positions.

The Manitoba Veterinary Medical Association (MVMA) has developed a comprehensive plan to improve recruitment and retention of graduates to the regions of greatest need and to ensure the sustainability of this vital profession to the agricultural industry and animal health in Manitoba.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

- Collaborative negotiation of the new interprovincial agreement to ensure that the quota of student seats for Manitobans at Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVN) in Saskatoon is maintained at the current number.
- Initiatives to enhance recruitment and retention of WCVN graduates, including earmarked seats for rural students, expanded mentorship programs and efficiency improvements to the current provincial STEP program.

Background:

The WCVN is Manitoba's veterinary school. The current interprovincial funding agreement is being renegotiated and is due for renewal in 2020. The MVMA is asking the Government of Manitoba to maintain its current level of funding and to continue offering 15 seats to Manitoba students

Current Status:

- Manitoba currently the lowest number of veterinarians per capita in Western Canada. An analysis of veterinarians preparing to retire indicates that this shortage will be exacerbated over the next five years, leading to increased risk of poor disease outbreak management, worsening animal welfare management, and likely increased veterinarian burnout.
- In a recent survey of MVMA members, 21% of practice owners indicated that they wished to hire another veterinarian immediately and another 38% plan to hire in the next 1-2 years, although many businesses have stopped advertising due to the chronic shortage of applicants for the open positions.
- This current shortage of veterinarians is highest in the rural regions, which has the potential of greatest negative impact on the agricultural economy in the event of a foreign animal disease (FAD) that is not detected promptly.
- Manitoba is one of the few provinces that has strong cross-departmental linkages through the One Health Steering Committee which has representatives from Manitoba Health, Manitoba Agriculture and Sustainable Development. This committee relies on practicing veterinarians to carry out public policy aimed at antibiotic resistance prevention, zoonotic disease surveillance, foodborne disease control and animal welfare management, to name just a few aspects of their work.
- WCVN conducts extensive research on economically important food animal diseases and provides direct assistance to Manitoba producers and veterinarians in managing these threats.
- WCVN's Prairie Diagnostic Services provides critical support to the Manitoba Veterinary Diagnostic Services Laboratory.

Future Status:

The Manitoba/WCVN partnership represents 20% of the annual funding provided by the western provinces. If the Manitoba government decreases support, the loss of funding will have a considerable impact on the college and its ability to meet its mandate to Western Canada.

Analysis:

A continued strong commitment to WCVN is required to prevent a shortage of veterinary services which would impact multiple aspects of the agricultural industry and animal health in Manitoba.

Cautionary Notes:

- The local and provincial economy benefits from an estimated \$174,338,000 in direct economic activity from veterinary clinics. The rural regions are at the highest risk of losing veterinarians over the next 5 to 10 years, which in turn will have a direct effect on local services and economies.
 - The risk of a FAD, such as the current internationally circulating African Swine Fever. With the future shortage of veterinarians in the rural regions, the risk of missing a FAD is substantially higher and would have a devastating effect on the swine industry in Manitoba.
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Additional Information:

- Detailed Brief: Interprovincial Funding Agreement for the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM)
- Letters of Support

Signed:



Dr. Jonas Watson
MVMA President



Dr. Chris Bell
Chair, MVMA Manitoba WCVM Seats Ad Hoc Committee

Detailed Brief: Interprovincial Funding Agreement for the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVN)

1. Introduction
2. WCVN's Role in Manitoba
3. The Role of the Veterinary Profession in Manitoba
4. Looking to the Future: Recommendations
5. Letters of Support

1. INTRODUCTION:

VETERINARY MEDICINE IN MANITOBA

Veterinarians in Manitoba have varied job descriptions and a vast array of responsibilities. We are involved in companion animal health, animal population control, detection and education regarding zoonotic disease, livestock health, prudent antibiotic use, the detection of emerging diseases, animal welfare, One Health initiatives, government services, laboratory research and diagnostic services. The veterinarian's mandate has significantly evolved in the past decade. With this evolution comes the need for more veterinarians to fill new positions.

Manitoba currently has 408 licenced veterinarians practicing in the province. On a per capita basis, that is the lowest in Western Canada. There is a need for more veterinarians in Manitoba, and this shortage is expected to worsen in the next five years. There are 72 veterinarians currently licensed in Manitoba that have been in practice 35 years or longer. The vast majority of these vets are projected to retire within the next five years. Another 72 licensed vets have been in practice 29 – 34 years. A substantial proportion of these veterinarians are also projected to retire within the next five years, with the remainder retiring within the next ten years. In a recent survey of MVMA members, 21% of practice owners indicated that they wished to hire another veterinarian immediately and another 38% plan to hire in the next 1-2 years. Many practices looking for veterinarians have stopped advertising due to the historical lack of applicants for open positions.

2. THE ROLE OF WESTERN COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE IN MANITOBA:

OVER HALF A CENTURY OF PARTNERSHIP AND INVESTMENT

The Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVN) is a regional school dedicated to training veterinarians in the four western provinces. Over the last 56 years, the Manitoba government has made a significant investment to the infrastructure, facilities, equipment and expertise at the WCVN. The WCVN is Manitoba's veterinary school. The current interprovincial funding agreement is being renegotiated and is due for renewal in 2020. The Manitoba Veterinary Medical Association (MVMA) is asking the Government of Manitoba to maintain its current level of funding and to continue offering 15 seats to Manitoba students.

The MVMA is actively pursuing initiatives that will improve the recruitment of WCVN mixed animal graduates to Manitoba and improve retention by supporting all veterinarians when they are in practice. 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.

WCVN PROVIDES MUCH MORE THAN SEATS

WCVN's commitment extends far beyond teaching 15 veterinary students each year. Under the interprovincial agreement, the WCVN's responsibility to all four western provinces 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).

The WCVM has an excellent record for successfully training veterinary students. In the last ten years, 95.3% of MB students that 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 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:

i) Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea Virus

PEDV in Canada has created 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 to producers in Manitoba. Additionally, they have liaised with industry to update disease control protocols.

i) 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 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 has 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 by 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. Please see the attached letter for a complete summary of the relationship between MB VDS Lab and PDS.

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 to gain hands-on experience with a diverse range of large animal 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 in between these two demands is the number of seats funded at WCVM.

3. THE ROLE OF THE VETERINARY PROFESSION IN MANITOBA

When you picture a veterinarian, you are undoubtedly picturing someone who is tending to an ill or injured animal. Perhaps you are picturing someone like James Herriot, or maybe your own veterinarian when your dog needed his shots. This picture is, of course, accurate, that is what we do. But that is only a partial picture, only part of what we do. It's like having finished one corner of a jigsaw puzzle. Only when you complete the picture do you see the full value that veterinarians bring to Manitoba and therefore the full value of the investment in WCVm.

There are many more parts to this picture. We have listed a few below.

GROWING MANITOBA'S PROSPERITY

In contrast to human medicine, many veterinarians return to the province to work in, start and operate small businesses. There are 141 active veterinary practices in Manitoba. Based on the most recent Canadian Veterinary Medical Association economic report these practices generate \$174,338,000 in direct economic activity. This puts private veterinary practice roughly on par with the combined economic impact of commercial and recreational fishing in this province.

These practices directly employ approximately 1370 Manitobans and provide work for many more in associated industries. Veterinary clinics collect an estimated \$5,500,000 annually in PST on supplies and medications. Veterinary practices are also growing faster than the overall economy, with growth rates from 4 to 6%.

The indirect economic impact is incalculable as veterinarians are essential to our \$2.2 billion livestock industry. Moreover, the provincial government is focused on the growth of the livestock sector in Manitoba, especially hogs. This will require additional veterinary resources to sustain and support that growth.

Additionally, veterinarians also support in-province education through the employment of graduates from the Veterinary Technologist Program at Red River College and various veterinary assistant programs.

SUPPORTING PUBLIC HEALTH

One Health is a global initiative that recognizes that the health of humans, animals and ecosystems are interconnected.

Small and large animal veterinarians are essential to the recognition and investigation of serious zoonotic threats and emerging diseases. Veterinarians working in communities throughout the country are vital to early detection of disease and to help ensure public health and safety. Additionally, veterinarians provide essential information to animal owners about diseases and parasites that can be shared between animals and humans.

Globally, some diseases of note that are present in both humans and animals and have had a significant impact on the human population and the economy in recent years include:

- North America and Europe Pandemic Influenza H1N1 2009 Virus (pH1N1)
- West Nile Virus
- Waterborne Diseases: An Outbreak of Escherichia coli in Walkerton, Ontario, Canada
- BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy)
- Blastomycosis
- Lyme Disease
- Rabies

To give a local example, Blastomycosis is a fungal disease that is potentially fatal to both humans and dogs. The disease organism hides in the soil in unpredictable locations throughout southeast Manitoba as well as the Canadian Shield along the Manitoba – Ontario border. Infection occurs when spores are inhaled. It cannot be passed between individuals, but the fact that dogs have their noses to the ground makes them excellent sentinels for identifying sites contaminated with the spores when they become ill. Veterinarians are much more aware of this disease than most human physicians and can often diagnose it quickly enough to treat successfully and then also warn the owners of the risks of disturbing the soil.

Another Manitoba example is Lyme disease, a bacterial infection carried by the black-legged deer tick found throughout much of North America. Dogs, horses and humans are commonly affected by Lyme disease, and veterinary medicine has been on the vanguard of monitoring the spread of these ticks throughout Manitoba. Dogs and horses both live in direct, at times constant, contact with the environment of the ticks, and as such are sentinel species tracking the geographical spread of Lyme disease.

Rabies is a fatal disease transmissible from animal to humans and is present in Manitoba. Veterinarians, particularly in rural Manitoba, are the primary contact point for rabies exposure and act as a liaison between human and animal health.

Veterinarians who treat companion animals have a more significant role to play in human public health than is commonly recognized. The very nature of veterinary medicine places its professionals in the interface between humans and animals; they are uniquely positioned to identify diseases that can affect the health of both humans and animals.

In remote northern and First Nations communities, there is a growing demand for veterinarians to play a key role in supporting public health and animal welfare.

PREVENTING ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE

Veterinarians in all fields are stewards of prudent antimicrobial use in animals. Antimicrobial resistance is a growing threat to global health. Veterinarians play a crucial role as advocates for the proper use of antibiotics in pets and livestock.

Health Canada recognizes the critical role that veterinarians play in antimicrobial stewardship. Recent regulations introduced require veterinary prescriptions and direct patient contact for all veterinary antimicrobial treatments and dispensing. Prudent antimicrobial use also is vital to ensuring the safety of the food chain and the prevention of drug resistance.

As a novel example it is worth noting that as of last year, antibiotics used in the bee colonies that pollinate our crops must be exclusively through a prescription by a veterinarian.

SAFEGUARDING THE HUMAN-ANIMAL BOND

A 2016 GfK survey estimated that 61% of households in Canada own at least one companion animal. These households look to companion animal and mixed animal practitioners to provide care for these pets. In some cases, this care is the most basic care that contributes to public health and safety by controlling pet overpopulation and providing rabies vaccination. Increasingly, however, pets are playing a much more significant role in family lives. Pets play a role in the emotional, mental and physical well-being of their owners. They are part of the family and as such, pet owners are expecting much more sophisticated care for their pets. In response, there is a growing demand for the services provided by companion animal and mixed animal veterinarians and the range of services offered by these practitioners. Veterinarians play a crucial role in supporting and nurturing this human-animal bond.

PROMOTING ANIMAL WELFARE

The Office International des Epizooties (OIE), (World Animal Health Association), of which Canada is a member and signatory to agreements and standards, has recognized that the assurance of farm animal welfare is a critical function of the veterinary infrastructure of a nation. The introduction of The Animal Care Act almost 20 years ago placed Manitoba in agreement with the principals of the OIE, recognizing that the administration of this essential public good legislation should be delivered by the Office of the Chief Veterinarian for the province. The Animal Care Act extends the veterinary oversight of animal welfare to include both companion animals and livestock. Veterinarians act as Animal Protection Officers for the Province of Manitoba.

VETERINARY SERVICE DISTRICTS

The Veterinary Service Districts (VSD), overseen by the Veterinary Service Commission (VSC), were developed in 1970 to provide rural areas of Manitoba with access to consistent and affordable veterinary care. Each Veterinary Service District is supported through annual provincial grants as well as local funding through the municipalities that they serve. This, in turn, supports the mixed animal veterinary practitioners that service each district. In total there are 27 Veterinary Service districts of which currently three have vacancies, and at least three others are actively recruiting veterinarians. The partnership of the VSD with provincial and local government has built a strong network of veterinary support since 1970. The VSC supports the VSD and is complementary to several of the recommendations in this brief. The VSC is looking at having more student interaction, including visits to WCVm to provide information, promote more uptake of the many programs available to MB students, and increase awareness of the opportunities in Manitoba. The MVMA is encouraging more mentorship activities by VSD veterinarians, and we are looking to divert some grant dollars into a pilot project to cover up to 50% of the cost for a first-year internship in a VSD practice.

4. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: MANITOBA AND WCVm IN THE 2020s

THE FUTURE WITH DECREASED FUNDING

The Manitoba partnership represents 20% of the annual funding to WCVm provided by the provinces. If the Manitoba government decreases support, the loss of funding will have a potentially devastating impact on the college and its ability to meet its mandate to Western Canada without dramatically raising tuition or developing an entirely new structure. Maintaining existing partnerships and identifying potential funding options is critical to the WCVm's future. As well, the province's support will ensure the strength of existing partnerships with government agencies and industry stakeholders in the province of Manitoba.

The other significant impact would be on young Manitobans aspiring to become veterinarians. Reducing access to WCVm would force some young Manitobans to seek veterinary education in the US or overseas and incur unsustainable debt loads. These students are also less likely to return to Manitoba than WCVm graduates. According to Stats Canada 2018, veterinarians are not in the top ten wages for Canada which includes professions with similar years of education, including physicians, dentists, engineers and university professors. The average veterinarian earns \$92,000 a year. Veterinarians tend to make far less than their counterparts in human medicine, yet graduate with significant student loans which take many years to pay off.

THE FUTURE WITH STABLE FUNDING

At the same time, we recognize that the government has an obligation to be as prudent as possible with the public purse and as such is right to demand that the maximum benefit is derived from any investment of tax dollars, including this investment in WCVM. The MVMA, therefore, has crafted a set of recommendations designed to enhance the power of this investment.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO WCVM

i) Rural Initiative Seats

The WCVM's current admission focus on high academic achievement does not consider the student's background. Use of academic achievement as the sole qualifier for interview selection potentially filters out students who are academically proficient and have a rural or food animal background.

The MVMA has proposed to the WCVM that a portion of the 15 seats per year are 'ear-marked' for students with an animal production background. The MVMA suggests letters of reference from a local veterinarian confirming that the student has spent a significant amount of time in a rural practice, with exposure to the lifestyle accompanying of this type of practice. Additionally, the MVMA suggests letters of recommendation from members of the community showing the applicant's commitment to the community (4-H, Pony Club, Cattlemans, Young Leaders etc.).

ii) Mentorship program and Beyond

The MVMA proposes to the WCVM that the mentorship program (training the mentee and the mentor) be expanded and/or integrated into the Manitoba government STEP program to allow students access to mentors and to receive mentee training while participating in the STEP program. This mentorship program will help build essential ties between the student and their mentor veterinarians during their summer studies in rural Manitoba. The WCVM is encouraged to extend their mentor training through online, web-based services to the veterinarians of Manitoba, particularly those participating in the government-funded STEP program. This inclusion of Manitoba veterinarians would create an excellent synergy between the program offered from the province and the WCVM.

iii) Dedicated access to WCVM resources

The MVMA proposes to the WCVM that the college establishes and provides more structured and direct consulting services to veterinarians working in Manitoba. Manitoba veterinarians benefit from a vibrant relationship with the WCVM. A more structured consulting service would ensure that all veterinarians, and in particular veterinarians in rural and isolated settings, are provided with direct consulting access to the WCVM resources including continuing education and specialist consulting resources.

iv) Pathology service support and reciprocity

The MVMA proposes to the WCVM that the college continue to seek and formalize support for current and future education, training and pathologist relief services to Manitoba agriculture and veterinary diagnostic laboratory at the University of Manitoba. The WCVM can play an important role in providing residency program support for veterinarians working and practicing veterinary pathology in Manitoba through this vital connection to the WCVM.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MANITOBA GOVERNMENT

i) Collaborative Negotiation of the New Interprovincial Agreement

The MVMA requests the maintenance of the current level of funding to the WCVM for the duration of the next agreement. The MVMA suggests the government engage with all stakeholders of veterinary medicine in the province of Manitoba, particularly with veterinary professionals through the MVMA, for future funding reviews.

ii) Improvement of the STEP program funding model

The STEP program is a successful initiative of the Manitoba government, allowing for exposure of young veterinary students to rural veterinary medicine in Manitoba. There is concern from the students and the participating veterinarians regarding the way the funding is provided each spring. There is ambiguity about when and if the funding for the program will be renewed each spring. As such, it is difficult for students and veterinarians to make commitments for summer job positions that depend on the funding. In some cases, students could be left without employment, with little notice, due to the timing of the provincial budget announcement. The MVMA proposes that the government consider approval of STEP funding one year in advance to ensure that the participating veterinarians can confidently offer summer student employment based on the opportunity for funding support.

iii) Student loan relief and tax incentives

Student loan debt is a significant concern for graduating veterinarians. Most Canadian graduating veterinarians leave school with \$70,000-\$125,000 in student debt (Canada student loans, Provincial student loans and lines of credit) amassed over the 6-8 years of university required to attain a DVM degree. The repayment of this debt affects the student's decision to seek employment. Most students seek higher wages which are offered in small animal practice and typically in larger population centers.

The MVMA proposes that the Manitoba government consider a tax incentive program for up to 5 years post DVM graduation. This option would allow students to retain more of their after-tax income, which would allow for repayment of debt and investment in Manitoba by these young professionals.

The MVMA also proposes that the government consider a student loan relief program for all veterinarians coming to Manitoba. The loan relief program would be best instituted in a staged manner, such that veterinarians staying longer in the province receive increasing relief. A loan relief program offers an excellent incentive to attract and retain veterinarians to Manitoba

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MANITOBA VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

MVMA Student and Early Career Engagement Initiative

- Work with the WCVN and Manitoba government to improve recruitment and retention of veterinarians to Manitoba through partnerships discussed above.
- The MVMA will fund 10-15 WCVN veterinary students to attend the CenCan Veterinary Conference in Winnipeg yearly for the next five years. The goal of this initiative is to introduce and engage veterinary students to the careers and lifestyle offered to them in Manitoba. This will be an opportunity for the MVMA, Manitoba government, CFIA and practicing veterinarians in Manitoba to showcase the province and opportunities for students following graduation.
- The MVMA will look at forming a student and early career engagement committee within the MVMA to promote Manitoba veterinary careers to students within the WCVN and grassroots at the high school level, to oversee admissions policies from Manitoba, to work collaboratively with the Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Advanced Education and Training to address concerns and initiatives between the Manitoba veterinary profession and the WCVN, to create a universal job posting site for Manitoba which is promoted and easily accessible, to initiate any other mandate of the MVMA relating to training, recruitment, mentorship and support of veterinary medical careers in Manitoba.
- The MVMA will discuss developing an externship program collaboratively with the Manitoba government, WCVN and practicing veterinarians in Manitoba
- The MVMA should develop a buddy/mentor system for veterinary students (possibly through the STEP program) and early career veterinarians. The goal will be to provide access to a mentor veterinarian that is not associated with their practice that can assist in guidance and familiarize the mentee with the Manitoba Veterinary community, MVMA and government of Manitoba.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

1. Canadian Veterinary Medical Association
2. Dr. John Campbell – Western Canadian Beef Cattle Surveillance Network
3. Dairy Farmers of Manitoba
4. Dr. Keri Hudson-Reykdal – The Rural Perspective from a Mixed Animal Practitioner
5. Mr. Wab Kinew, Leader of the Official Opposition
6. Keystone Agricultural Producers
7. Manitoba Beef Producers
8. Manitoba Chicken Producers
9. Manitoba Turkey Producers
10. Prairie Diagnostic Services Inc
11. Western Manitoba Pre-Veterinary Medical Association



CANADIAN VETERINARY
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE
DES MÉDECINS VÉTÉRINAIRES

March 4, 2019

Honourable Kelvin Goertzen
168 Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

Via e-mail: minedu@leg.gov.mb.ca

RE: funding to the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM)

To the Honourable Minister Goertzen:

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA), federally incorporated in 1948 by an Act of Parliament, represents 7,400 members from across Canada, including all licensed veterinarians in Manitoba. Furthermore, the CVMA accounts for 7,850 affiliated Registered Veterinary Technicians. The CVMA is the national and international voice for Canada's veterinarians, providing leadership and advocacy for veterinary medicine. We also provide the North-American veterinary college accreditation for all Canadian colleges, including the WCVM, and are advocates for adequate investment in veterinary education across Canada.

The CVMA thanks the Manitoba Government for its long-standing investment in veterinary education. It is our understanding that your government is currently reviewing Manitoba's contribution to the Western College of Veterinary Medicine. The CVMA urges you to maintain or increase the number of seats you currently fund in order to prevent a shortage of quality veterinary services in your province.

Veterinarians make essential contributions to the health and well-being of agricultural food-producing animals, companion animals and wildlife. The work of veterinarians contributes significantly to public and ecosystem health and to healthy economies. Manitoba raises a large number of food-producing animals that enter the human food chain. Animal health and wellbeing and effective management of diseases contribute to food quality, food safety and public health. From an economic perspective, veterinarians foster domestic sales, exports and employment, either directly or indirectly.

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One Profession, One Strong Voice.
Une profession, une voix unifiée.



CanadianVeterinaryMedicalAssociation



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CVMAACMV



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According to the most recent Canadian pet population survey conducted by Kynetec on behalf of the Canadian Animal Health Institute (CAHI), 61% of households in Manitoba own at least one dog or cat. These owners need a small or mixed animal veterinary practitioner to provide care for their pet. Such care contributes to public health and safety by controlling pet overpopulation and providing rabies vaccination. Overall, veterinary practices that serve food-animal production, companion animals and wildlife provide for the well-being of Manitobans and all Canadians.

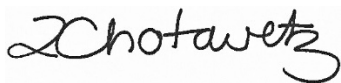
In order to protect the aforementioned benefits to society, top quality veterinary education and a sufficient number of veterinarians are required. Canada's need for veterinary services is anticipated to rise as a result of growing export markets and a new national action plan to ensure proper antimicrobial stewardship requiring veterinary oversight of all antimicrobial use. An increase rather than a decrease of investment in veterinary education is thus required.

For over half a century, the Western College of Veterinary Medicine has proven its expertise in educating veterinarians. Beyond this invaluable service, the WCVM provides for post graduate and specialist training programs, research in biomedical and veterinary sciences, clinical and diagnostic services, continuing education, public extension education and training support for veterinary technology students. These are all services critical to veterinary care. In summary, adequate funding is needed to meet a growing demand for veterinary services that ensure animal health, public health, ecosystem health and the well-being of all Canadians.

The CVMA thanks you for considering the above and would like to appeal to you to maintain or increase the funding to students at Manitoba's at WCVM.

Sincerely,

Dr. Terri Chotowetz



CVMA President

cc: Dr. Jonas Watson President, Manitoba Veterinary Medical Association
Dr. Doug Freeman, Dean, Western College of Veterinary Medicine

JaR:TC/nn



**UNIVERSITY OF
SASKATCHEWAN**

Western College of
Veterinary Medicine

Department of Large Animal Clinical Sciences
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January 21, 2019

Dr. Keri Hudson Reykdal
Hudson Reykdal Veterinary Services
Box 10
Ashern, Manitoba
ROC OEO

Dear Dr. Hudson Reykdal,

This letter is in response to your request for information concerning our Western Canadian Beef Cattle Surveillance Network study. This project was primarily funded by the Canadian Cattlemen's Association through the Beef Cattle Research Council. However, in addition significant funding was obtained from other sources including Saskatchewan Agriculture, Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association, and Alberta Beef Producers. Although the funding included significant participation of Manitoba veterinarians and producers, we were unable to find opportunities to pursue research funding from within Manitoba itself.

Animal health monitoring and surveillance programs provide critical information to key stakeholders in both industry and government in order to assist with the management of various disease risks. Diseases in the beef cattle industry and even the threat of disease can have significant negative impacts on the economic viability of beef operations, animal welfare, food safety, public health and the environment. In many cases, policy makers in both industry and government are forced to make decisions about mitigating various risks with very limited available data. Animal health surveillance systems can provide objective evidence of the prevalence or freedom from specific disease hazards, which may support trade and market access of beef cattle and beef products from Canada to other parts of the world.

Surveillance systems also provide quantitative evidence of the impact of management decisions and management practices on our beef operations and the extent to which producers are adopting practices such as animal welfare practices or health management practices. The estimates of production parameters that are established through surveillance may help to prioritize investment in research and risk management. The importance of animal health monitoring and surveillance systems has been recognized in Canada with the formation of the Canadian Animal Health Surveillance System which is an initiative of the National Farmed Animal Health and Welfare Council and also includes broad based collaborative support of industry and governments. All of these partners recognize the importance of animal health surveillance systems and have a shared national vision to have effective and integrated animal health surveillance in Canada.

Overall, thirteen full surveys on various topics, four follow-up surveys and 3 quick fact sheets were distributed to participants of the surveillance network. As part of the surveillance network, 2 biological sample collections which collected samples of blood and feces of approximately 20 cows per herd were

undertaken in 2014 and 2016. These herds were tested for the presence of antibodies to *Mycobacterium avium* paratuberculosis (Johne's disease), *Neospora caninum*, and bovine leukosis virus. In addition, in a subsample of the herds, samples were collected from breeding bulls in 2015 to test for reproductive diseases and fecal samples were obtained from a sample of calves in 2016 to test for parasites. Approximately 17-20 herds from Manitoba participated at various times throughout the project.

The Beef Cattle Research Council has renewed the funding for this project for another 5 years and the project has been expanded to a national scale. We are currently working on recruiting herds within the province of Manitoba and across the rest of Canada. This project is one example of the many beef cattle projects that are carried out at WCVN that provide applied scientific information that can be used by stakeholders in the beef industry across Western Canada including the province of Manitoba. Scientific papers are currently being published and more results will be released as they become available.

Thanks for your interest in the project. If I can be of any assistance or answer any questions you may have about the project, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "John Campbell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" and last name "Campbell" clearly distinguishable.

Dr. John Campbell
Professor
Dept. of Large Animal Clinical Sciences
Western College of Veterinary Medicine

January 17, 2019

Honorable Kelvin Goertzen
Minister of Education and Training
168 Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8
Email: minedu@leg.gov.mb.ca

Re: Funding to the Western College of Veterinary Medicine

Dear Minister Goertzen,

Dairy Farmers of Manitoba (DFM) is concerned with any proposed cuts to the funding of student seats at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVN) in Saskatoon. We understand the government is considering cutting funding by the equivalent of 5 students, dropping to 10 from 15 students per year.

DFM's position is that any reduction in the number of seats available to Manitoba students at the WCVN would have a significant negative impact for the dairy sector and other animal agriculture sectors. This is especially concerning at a time where we are seeing market growth in the province and therefore farmers are increasing their herd size to respond. In addition, with our New Entrant Program successfully adding new farmers to the province, we need to ensure they have vets available to them.

DFM strongly encourages the Province of Manitoba to look at ways to increase its funding of student seats at the WCVN. The partnership that Manitoba has with the WCVN is the most cost-effective way to collaborate and create the critical mass required to host a world-class veterinarian college – and to produce quality vets for Manitoba. To reduce funding at this time will only exacerbate an already critical shortage of mixed practice veterinarians for the dairy industry and could potentially impact animal welfare practices and our public trust with consumers.

The dairy sector is facing significant pressures to enhance its use of rural large animal veterinarians based on two important issues. First, there are global efforts to manage growing concerns related to the overuse of medically important antimicrobials and the very real concerns related to the rise in antimicrobial resistance (AMR). The AMR concerns are heightening the need for more prudent dispensing and use of these important medicines. It is therefore requiring our dairy farmers to seek veterinarian prescriptions for many important medicines that previously were available without the need for veterinary services, i.e. over the counter purchases. According to Health Canada requirements, dairy farmers must have a valid client patient relationship (VCPN) in order to access certain veterinary products.



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Dairy Farmers of Manitoba is committed to producing milk according to the highest standards of quality and is totally financed by and represents all dairy farmers in the province.

Secondly, the dairy industry, like other animal agriculture sectors continues to be wrongly targeted by the mainstream and social media regarding our animal welfare practices. The dairy industry has responded with its own national assurance program called the proAction program. Through proAction, Canadian dairy farmers collectively demonstrate responsible stewardship of their animals and the environment, sustainably producing high-quality, safe, and nutritious food for consumers. As a result, dairy farmers are looking for closer and more intimate relationships with their local veterinarians to maintain and enhance our social responsibility. We appreciate the Province of Manitoba's support for DFM to advance the proAction program in Manitoba.

While these types of pressures are leading to increasing demands for large animal veterinarian services, we see current vet services are critically short in supply in many rural dairy production areas. Already the veterinarian services sector is uncompetitive in many rural communities where there is only a single option for the provision of services. It is essential that animal welfare not be impacted by these service levels.

Our hope is that you see any reduction in the number of seats available to Manitoba students at the WCVM would have a significant negative impact for the dairy sector and other animal agriculture sectors and that you would take this into consideration when finalizing your funding decision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Wiens', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Wiens
Chair, Dairy Farmers of Manitoba

Cc: Honorable Ralph Eichler, Minister of Agriculture

THE RURAL PERSPECTIVE FROM A MIXED ANIMAL PRACTITIONER

Veterinary clinics in rural areas rely on the animal production industry and pet owners for their income. Farmers and ranchers in this province are accustomed to prices for services that are well below the average of other western provinces. These low prices create a difficult situation for rural practices that want to grow and build a thriving business. It is well known throughout the industry, that small animal business owners have more lucrative businesses.

With these facts in mind, it is easy to draw the conclusion that if Manitoba vet students do not receive a subsidized education, they will be unlikely to move to rural Manitoba. Without the current subsidy, their student debt load will be much higher. US vet students typically have debts in excess of \$167,000USD and struggle to repay loans, buy businesses and even support their families. If MB students have a similar level of debt on graduation, a move to rural MB would not be fiscally responsible or inviting and we will no longer attract the best applicants.

We believe that a focus on rural veterinarians is needed. Rural vets are best served by a well-rounded education in both small and large animals in order to effectively serve small communities and maintain a viable business. There are few practices in Manitoba that can support large animal vets only. Poultry, swine and dairy are the only areas that may be able to support specialized large animal veterinarians. At present in MB, there is one full time poultry veterinarian and 10 full time swine practitioners, as well as 4 vets doing some swine work in addition to regular case load. The majority of dairy vets also service a mixed animal clientele. Most of these industries are located in the southern third of the province which has a larger population base as opposed to the beef industry which is spread throughout the province.

Small rural communities are reliant on mixed animal practitioners who can serve their pet, horse and production animal needs. The beef industry in particular is very seasonal. Fall is very busy, with herd health and pregnancy diagnosis followed by calving season and bull evaluations in the spring, which tends to involve many sleepless nights. But summer and winter have very little work for beef herds that are out to pasture or on winter feeding grounds without easy access and no reason for handling. Therefore, it is essential to have the ability to work on all species to maintain a healthy business. Small animal services in these areas are also vital for controlling pet overpopulation as most rescues are filled with dogs from rural and remote areas. Horses, dogs and cats in rural areas are also much more likely to come into contact with infectious diseases such as rabies and parasites of concern to human health such as *Echinococcus*.

The majority of veterinarians express the need for work-life balance, quality of life and time with family. Gone are the days of the old school mentality of all work and no time with family. The new generation of vets are focused on a work-life balance which includes less on-call, mentorship, location of practice and salary. With suicide rates climbing in the profession, finding this balance is critical. Work-life balance is often difficult in rural areas due to large service area and small number of veterinarians per practice with 24/7 on call schedule. Larger practices, with more veterinarians need to cover a larger service area which means a large amount of time spent on the road travelling, which is also physically and mentally taxing. The rural logistics create a situation with no easy answers.

- Dr. Keri Hudson-Reykdal, Ashern, Manitoba



Province of Manitoba

LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Johanna Rodger
Box 69
Argyle, MB R0C 0B0
jrodger@xplornet.ca

Dear Ms. Rodger:

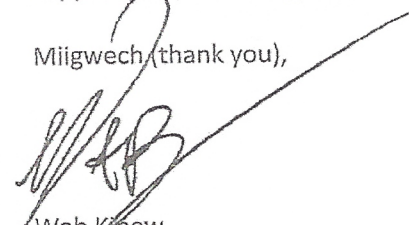
Thank you for your recent correspondence regarding the Pallister government's proposal to cut the number veterinary school seats. I share your concerns with this move and the long term impacts on animal welfare and front line services for animal owners.

Veterinarians are in demand in Manitoba, and one of the best ways to ensure we meet that demand is by increasing access to education and training. The Pallister government's cuts will hurt rural communities and farmers in particular who rely on veterinary services to keep their livestock healthy and their businesses operating smoothly.

My staff have noted these changes and will continue to monitor them going forward. When the House resumes in the spring we will be able to question the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture on these cuts. Please do not hesitate to reach out to my office if you learn anything new as it could help us in this work.

I appreciate your thoughts on this important issue.

Miigwech (thank you),



Wab Kinew
Leader of the Official Opposition
Province of Manitoba

P.S.: If you have a desire to push this forward through the media please let us know. All the best in 2019!

KAP annual meeting 2019 resolutions

Maintenance of service roads for access to fields

KAP will lobby the Government of Manitoba to upgrade and maintain service roads where access roads have been closed due to Manitoba government policy.

Class 1 licence for farm use

KAP will request that the Government of Manitoba create and implement a Class 1 (semi-trailer) licence for farmers to harmonize with the Saskatchewan government.

Railways

KAP, with assistance from the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, will lobby the national railways to continue their efforts to provide dual rail lines in order to prevent the collisions that occur on shared single lines.

KAP will continue to work with the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and the Government of Canada to make rail transportation a priority, ensuring that financial assistance from the federal government is available to ensure farm commodities can get to market.

Movement of farm machinery and equipment

KAP will work with the various provincial government departments to develop a document and/or website that explains in simple language the new and existing regulations that apply to the movement of farm equipment, machinery and commodities.

Living Labs

KAP will approach Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to have a role in the strategic direction of the Living Labs project to ensure farmers have the option and ability to perform best management practices which directly address the needs outlined in the Paris Climate Accord and the UN's IPCC-SR15 report.

Drainage, retention and irrigation

KAP will lobby the Government of Manitoba to remove compensation requirements for Class 3 to 5 wetlands for projects where the water is entirely maintained and stored within the project, to then later be used as an irrigation source.

KAP will urge the Government of Manitoba to reduce or remove the offsetting costs of draining class 3 wetlands.

Seed research and development

KAP will lobby Agriculture and Agri-food Canada to continue to research, develop and finish wheat varieties that set the standards in the milling industry.

Grain dryer certification

KAP will continue to lobby the Office of the Fire Commissioner, Manitoba Infrastructure and Manitoba Agriculture to provide clarity to the interpretation and application of the Canadian Standards Association regulations so that producers have access to both new and used grain dryers, as well as expedited grain dryer certifications in Manitoba.

Expanding natural gas capacity

KAP will develop a plan with key industry stakeholders to expand natural gas capacity in rural Manitoba in order to provide economic and competitive benefits to producers, the agricultural sector and Manitoba as a whole.

Wild boar population in Manitoba

KAP will lobby the Government of Manitoba to direct resources that will identify and eradicate wild boar populations because these animals have the potential to spread African swine disease into Manitoba's pork industry.

Veterinary training for Manitoba residents

KAP will meet with the provincial minister of education to encourage the Government of Manitoba to maintain its level of support funding for Manitoba students at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine.

KAP will discuss with the dean of the WCVI additional supports that would encourage graduates to return to Manitoba and establish or join large animal practices.

Cereal genetic funding

KAP will lobby the Government of Canada to do further research on a point-of-delivery check-off system, in place of trailing or end-point royalties, in order to fund seed variety development.

Cash Advance Program

KAP will lobby commodity groups to work with the Government of Canada to allow innovative farms and value-added enterprises in Manitoba to access the interest-free Cash Advance Program, using an enhanced crop list similar to other provinces.

Establishment of innovative farms and value-added enterprises

KAP will lobby the Government of Canada and the Government of Manitoba to provide more resources to help innovative farms and value-added enterprises to get established in Manitoba.

Road test for Class 1 licence

KAP will lobby the Government of Manitoba and Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation to address the deficiency of instructors who give the road tests for Class 1 drivers' licences so that farm employees do not have to wait two months to get a test. By that time, seeding is over.



December 13, 2018

Honorable Kelvin Goertzen
Minister of Education and Training
168 - 450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8
Email: minedu@leg.gov.mb.ca

Re: Funding to the Western College of Veterinary Medicine and meeting request

Dear Minister Goertzen,

Manitoba Beef Producers (MBP) is writing to voice our industry's concerns with respect to any proposed cuts to the funding of student seats at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVN) in Saskatoon.

MBP is the primary voice of the province's beef industry, representing approximately 6,500 cattle producers. 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.

The WCVN has a long and successful history of contributing to the growth of the livestock sector, and specifically the beef cattle sector in western Canada. The WCVN began in 1963 as a collaborative partnership between the four western provinces to collectively support the establishment of a regional veterinary college. The initial deal provided Manitoba with an allocation of 10 students to be placed by students coming from Manitoba. Over time as the college grew, Manitoba's allocation grew to 15 student seats at the college.

It is MBP's position that any reduction in the number of seats available to Manitoba students at the WCVN would be a huge step backwards and would have devastating impacts for the beef sector and other animal agriculture sectors. This is especially concerning at a time where your colleague, the Minister of Agriculture has announced your government's goal to grow the beef cattle herd.

Currently the beef cattle sector is facing significant pressures to enhance its use of and engagement with rural large animal veterinarians. These pressures are two-fold. First, there are global efforts to manage growing concerns related to the overuse of medically important antimicrobials and the very real concerns related to the rise in dangerous antimicrobial resistance (AMR). The AMR concerns are heightening the need for more prudent dispensing and use of these important medicines and it is requiring our producers to seek veterinarian

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MANITOBA CATTLE PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

prescriptions for many important medicines that previously were available without the need for veterinary services, i.e. over the counter purchases. According to Health Canada requirements, producers must have a valid client patient relationship (VCPR) in order to access certain veterinary products.

Secondly, the beef industry, like other animal agriculture sectors continues to be targeted by misinformation in the mainstream and social media regarding our animal welfare practices. The beef cattle industry has responded with its own assurance program called the Verified Beef Production Plus (VBP+) program. Producers are aware of their social responsibility and are increasingly looking for closer and more intimate relationships with their local veterinarians. On a related note, it has been the practice of the provincial government that in order to access agricultural policy framework funding for certain beneficial management practices to support initiatives under the VBP program that producers have been required to have a VCPR.

These types of pressures are leading to increasing demands for large animal veterinarian services, this at a time when these services are already in critically short supply in many rural beef production areas. Already the veterinarian services sector is uncompetitive in many rural communities where there is only a single option for the provision of services. It is essential that animal welfare not be impacted by these service levels.

At this time it is MBP's position that the Province of Manitoba should be looking to increase its funding of student seats at the WCVM rather than looking to reduce funding. The partnership that Manitoba has with the WCVM has proven to be very successful and the most cost-effective way to collaborate and create the critical mass required to host a world-class veterinarian college. To reduce funding at this time will only cause an already critical shortage of mixed practice veterinarians to become even more dangerous, and potentially impact animal welfare practices and the public trust required to grow the beef herd and to meet your government's stated objective to grow the beef herd.

I appreciate your thoughtful consideration of these concerns, and MBP requests the opportunity to meet with you at your convenience to further explain the importance of this funding being continued or enhanced. Please contact our General Manager Brian Lemon at blemon@mbbeef.ca or (204) 772-4542 to organize the opportunity to meet.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tom Teichroeb', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tom Teichroeb
President
Manitoba Beef Producers

Cc: Hon. Ralph Eichler, Minister of Agriculture
Cc: Manitoba Veterinary Medical Association



February 11, 2019

Honourable Kelvin Goertzen
Minister of Education and Training
168 – 450 Broadway
Winnipeg MB R3C 0V8

Re: Proposed decrease in funding of provincial seats at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine

Dear Minister Goertzen,

Manitoba Chicken Producers (“MCP”) would like to express our concern with the proposed cutbacks to the subsidization of provincial seats for graduating veterinarian students in conjunction with the Western College of Veterinary Medicine.

MCP represents 145 registered producers in both the hatching egg and chicken industry. Manitoba is home to 4 hatcheries, two federal processors, and four provincial processors which are also stakeholders in our chicken industry. As an industry, we contribute over 3,700 jobs, \$300M in GDP, and pay over \$100M in taxes. Despite these contributions, there is currently only one poultry veterinarian practicing within Manitoba.

Our industry has invested millions of dollars in food safety, animal care, and sustainability. While we maintain these programs in our hatcheries, processors and on farm, at the grass roots level, poultry veterinarian services are a major component of our ability to do so. Moving forward, with increased oversight required for anti-microbial use, our industry’s dependency on a strong veterinary presence will increase, not diminish.

The proposal to decrease funding of provincial seats at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine is of significant concern to our industry.

Our ability to maintain a vibrant industry that delivers a safe, healthy, and wholesome protein to our consumers is predicated on a commitment from all stakeholders, which in this case includes the Government of Manitoba facilitating the Western College of Veterinary Medicine to provide increased veterinary support to our industry.

Sincerely,

Jake Wiebe, Chair

Cc: Honourable Ralph Eichler, Minister, Manitoba Agriculture

Dedicated to representing the needs of the hatching egg and chicken producers of Manitoba by providing leadership in maintaining a viable and stable chicken production industry.

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Web: www.chicken.mb.ca



February 11, 2019

Honourable Kelvin Goertzen
Minister of Education and Training
168 – 450 Broadway
Winnipeg MB R3C 0V8

Dear Minister Goertzen:

The Manitoba Turkey Producers (MTP) would like to express our concern with the proposed cutbacks to the subsidization of provincial seats for graduating veterinarian students in conjunction with the Western College of Veterinary Medicine.

The turkey industry in Manitoba represents 55 farming families, along with a hatchery and local processor. The safety and sustainability of the poultry industry is very important to both the economy and consumers in our province. Currently, there is only one poultry veterinarian practicing within Manitoba, which is a troubling issue. We feel opportunities to entice graduating veterinarians to practice in Manitoba should at minimum be maintained. The proposal to decrease the incentives will result in negative impacts.

With increasing national and global attention on animal welfare, the turkey industry has begun to place further attention on the incorporation of on farm practices to ensure the proper care and handling of turkeys being raised within Canada. Items such as water treatment, feed, air quality and bedding management practices are essential for successful day to day operations in our industry. The proper humane methods of euthanasia are a critical part of an effective on-farm animal welfare program and the methods utilized must be done to minimize distress experienced by the animal. The mandatory national Turkey Farmers of Canada On Farms Program requires producer training for euthanasia by a certified veterinarian. This is one example of on-going increasing demands that require involvement of veterinarian assistance on our farms.

Other emerging areas of concern are farm antibiotic usage and environmental sustainability. Antimicrobial resistance in humans has resulted in the requirement for veterinarian prescriptions to utilize important medicines on farm. This requirement is another contributing factor that shows the increasing requirements for veterinarian professionals to assist producers with on farm demands.

Veterinarians provide not only direct animal services, but constructive one-on-one consultation for farmers. The increased pressures in the turkey industry and agriculture as a whole will only continue to rise in the future. Ensuring that all turkey production is adhering to the high quality standards is critical to the continued viability in the industry. Our producers strive to provide a high quality, safe and healthy product to the consumer. Manitoba Turkey Producers strongly urge your government to reconsider the stated intention to cut support by reducing the number of eligible seats assigned to Manitoba students at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine. Our industry would view this as our government seeing animal agriculture as an industry of less importance to Manitoba's economy.

We thank your Department for considering our concerns and would offer to continue further discussion on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and a trailing dot at the end.

Rachelle Brown
Chair
Manitoba Turkey Producers

cc: Honorable Ralph Eichler, Minister of Agriculture



SASKATOON

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January 30, 2019

Dr. Keri Hudson Reykdal
Manitoba Veterinary Medical Association
1590 Inkster Blvd.
Winnipeg, MB R2X 2W4

Dear Dr. Reykdal,

I understand the Manitoba legislature is reconsidering the amount of support it provides to the Western College of Veterinary Medicine. As the CEO of Prairie Diagnostic Services, Inc. over the past 2+ years, I would like to share with you another perspective of the benefits this support provides not only the veterinary profession but animal and crop agricultural interests in Manitoba. It is critically important that decision makers are well aware that the funding to support a regional veterinary college in western Canada delivers much more return on this investment than just well-trained veterinarians.

Animal health diagnostics, disease surveillance and early warning of endemic and foreign animal disease threats, disease outbreak and food safety investigations, support for antimicrobial resistance mitigation programs, export market qualification (freedom from disease validation), feed quality and toxicologic investigations, as well as applied research into new diagnostic methodologies are just a few of many benefits that Prairie Diagnostic Services (PDS) and the Manitoba Veterinary Diagnostic Services Laboratory (MB VDS) provides the veterinary profession, public health agencies and agricultural customers across western Canada.

PDS continues to work very closely with MB VDS Lab to provide as robust and comprehensive service as possible with the limited resources available. Each Lab receives part of its operating revenue from provincial sources; however, these funds are inadequate to provide either Lab with the depth and breadth of support it needs. Neither laboratory can do all this alone. In my tenure as Lab Director at PDS, I have seen first hand how hard our Labs strive to deliver on their mandates and provide for their customers:

- veterinarians that serve all aspects of the profession,
- teaching support (both DVM and Graduate programs) at the WCVU,
- applied research partners at the WCVU and other western Canadian institutions
- livestock producers and corporate food animal agriculture businesses,
- feed mill operators and nutritionists,

- wildlife agencies,
- public health agencies, and
- the Ministries of Agriculture and Public Health in MB, SK, AB and BC.

The ability of PDS and of the MB VDS Labs to serve the diverse needs of its customers has become more challenging in recent years, as funding from public sources has either been static or reduced, while expenses continue to rise significantly.

To highlight a few of these challenges, I need only to reflect on the difficulty both Labs have in attracting and retaining highly skilled talent that is core to our operations – from pathologists to technologists. Neither PDS nor the MB VDS Lab can offer truly market competitive compensation packages, nor hire enough staff to effectively manage emergency (disease outbreak) situations, without compromising other services or creating substantial added stress for its workforce. Another important example is the difficulty both Labs have in investing in new equipment or IT infrastructure, which would otherwise enhance operations and streamline processes. Animal disease surveillance including but not limited to virtual real time syndromic monitoring for endemic disease threats, active involvement in food safety investigations and the ability to track antimicrobial resistance trends and support legislative changes to prescribing practices of antibiotics for animal use, are all critically important services to MB as they are to all other provinces. In their current state, neither Laboratory is in a secure, sustainable position to meet expectations. There is no reserve capacity; in fact, the MB VDS Laboratory is currently contracting for pathology services from PDS and is deeply engaged on a number of initiatives with PDS that will benefit both publically funded laboratories (assuming additional funding is made available).

So, what does all this have to do with the funding agreement that supports the Western College of Veterinary Medicine? A lot! Any downturn in funding of the WCVN will have a very direct and negative impact on PDS, and indirectly upon the MB VDS Lab and all Manitoba veterinary and agricultural interests. PDS is jointly owned by the Univ. of Saskatchewan (WCVN) and the Province of Saskatchewan. Its work and major decisions are overseen by a Board of Directors representing its owners, its customer base from across western Canada, and other business experts. If the WCVN is forced to cut programs because of a downturn in provincial funding, PDS will see a drop in the operational support it receives from WCVN. PDS will then be forced to retrench and reduce its support of western Canadian regional interests, and focus primarily on the needs of Saskatchewan veterinarians and farmers. In other words, the regional concept that underpins the WCVN also supports western Canadian veterinary and agricultural stakeholders that are dependent upon animal health diagnostics, surveillance and applied research capabilities. Here are a few interprovincial services and programs at risk and would likely be compromised if funding to WCVN - and hence support of PDS - is reduced:

- The inability to hire and retain adequate professional staff PDS will result in less support of veterinary pathology and microbiology teaching programs at WCVN. This would negatively impact all students at WCVN, including those from Manitoba.
- Current and future applied research programs at PDS will fail to deliver on the promise of new technologies for diagnostic applications, e.g. whole genome sequencing. All of

Western Canada will benefit from these advances, particularly those livestock operations in the Prairie Provinces.

- Reduced professional service support and/or more costly test fees for Manitoba veterinary and agricultural customers, e.g. Clinical pathology service and EIA testing are just two prominent areas where the MB VDS Lab has become dependent upon PDS support. Listed below are specific testing services and support that PDS has provided MB over the past three years.
- Inability of PDS to provide surge capacity for diagnostic testing to help MB manage future disease outbreaks. The MB VDS Lab sought additional support and PDS was willing and prepared to actively support the recent PED outbreak in Manitoba swine operations. It would not be in Manitoba's interest to compromise the established relationship and support it would need should there be another disease outbreak like this.
- Reduced collaboration between MB VDS Laboratory and PDS. Our friends in Winnipeg are currently looking to PDS for transfer and use of its Laboratory Information Management System and related electronic systems that will greatly enhance VDS operations. Similarly, PDS and MB would like to continue its collaborative efforts to create a more rapid and effective animal health intelligence network, but without adequate operational funding, both Labs will be forced to contract and reduce or stop work on such initiatives.

Below is a list of services PDS provided in the last year or so to support our colleagues in Winnipeg:

- 1) Management (testing, interpretation, reporting) of all MB Clinical Pathology submissions with the departure of their only Clinical Pathologist (hired by the Univ. of Calgary CVM). This contract was extended for another year while MB VDS sought a replacement. Now with a replacement on board, the contract has been extended yet again to cover absences of this individual.
- 2) Anatomic Pathology case support, following the retirement of an experienced Pathologist from MB VDS.
- 3) Provided MB VDS the costing model previously developed for PDS. PDS provided not only the software, but also on-site training, customized templates, and follow-up training and technical support at no charge.
- 4) PDS has trained selected VDS staff on the PDS Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS), including on-site accessioning training.
- 5) PDS provided direct disease outbreak support and performed most of the testing needed to address an EIA outbreak in 2017.
- 6) PDS had prepared to provide support to MB in managing their recent PEDv outbreak. Although this plan was not implemented, PDS was prepared to receive and test >100 swine samples per day.
- 7) PDS has provided uncontrolled copies of PDS SOPs for particular needs at VDS, e.g. Anthrax submissions.
- 8) PDS has provided insight and experience on operational and facility issues, e.g. hoist selection and maintenance.
- 9) PDS provides endemic and reportable disease surveillance data to VDS on a contractual basis.

Another way to look at the level of cooperation and support, and hence the value of interprovincial animal health diagnostic services, is to look at the actual PDS caseload coming from Manitoba sources and the value of these services and cooperative projects:

- In 2015-2016, there were 19,000 test requests for PDS coming from Manitoba. In 2017-2018, the volume of testing increased to 25,000 requests. Except for specific testing programs that are underwritten by SK Agriculture, Manitoba currently enjoys the same pricing for diagnostic testing as do customers in SK and other western provinces. If operational funds are cut to PDS by reduced support to WCVN, then PDS may be forced to add surcharges for out of province submissions. This is already the case when submissions are referred to the Ontario Animal Health Lab at the University of Guelph. The net result will be a substantial rise in diagnostic test fees and services that Manitoba has previously received at very competitive prices.
- The demand for PDS veterinary diagnostic services from Manitoba continues to increase yearly, as mentioned above. The data also reveal that since 2015, pre-tax revenue from Manitoba submissions are as follows:
 - 2015: \$250,000
 - 2016: \$280,000
 - 2017: \$360,000
 - 2018: \$370,000
 - This growth is occurring not because of marketing programs or sales promotions, but rather because there is a need – a demand for these testing services that either MB VDS is unable to provide due to capacity limitations, or are tests that are beyond their scope of testing (e.g. EIA, mycotoxin testing, etc.)
- There are enough Clinical Pathology and Surgical Pathology submissions from Manitoba to support one full time pathologist at PDS in terms of salary and benefits. The contracts between PDS and VDS, and between PDS and the pathologist performing the work, have both been renewed for another year. These contracts are upwards of \$200K per year.
- The PDS LIMS system took several years and nearly \$1MM to build. It is a state-of-the-art system that collects, stores and reports data. It can be easily queried for epidemiologic and research purposes. It allows PDS to report surveillance data to CAHSN (Canadian Animal Health Surveillance Network) and produce notifiable disease reports to the Ministry of Agriculture in SK and MB in virtual real time. PDS is beginning discussions with the MB VDS Lab to transfer this technology to their Lab. PDS is willing to do this on a cost recovery basis, as all parties believe this enhanced capability will help build a better network of animal health intelligence data for western Canada. If PDS operating funds are cut, one recourse will be to fill the funding gap with revenue generated from the commercial sale of this industry leading, proprietary LIMS system.

To summarize, a healthy, well-supported Western College of Veterinary Medicine is as important to Manitoba as it is to the other western Canadian provinces. The benefits go well beyond the provision of trained veterinarians. Closely associated with and materially supported by the WCVN, Prairie Diagnostic Services provides these same provinces with professional animal health diagnostic support above and beyond what their own provincial labs can provide. Any reduction in funding to WCVN will similarly have a direct impact on the financial well-being of PDS. The net result for PDS will be a contraction of regional diagnostic and surveillance services, reduced inter-lab operational support, a compromise of the surge capacity needed during times of disease emergencies, an increase in costs for out of province customers, and force a more narrow focus on the needs of its primary investors.

As it has demonstrated in the past, a strong interprovincial commitment and robust funding model will help sustain WCVN and its associated service provisions into the future. Let's not compromise what has taken years to develop and shows so much promise for the future of animal health and welfare in western Canada. Eroding this alliance to meet short term financial goals will have far reaching long term consequences. I fear that Manitoba will lose far more than it is aware of. Reducing veterinary student seats not only compromises the veterinary profession in the province, but doing so creates further hardship for those that depend upon well trained vets and access to cutting edge diagnostic testing on a timely and affordable basis. High quality veterinary educational programs, research and diagnostics and direct access to the expertise associated with these institutions, delivers value to Manitoban constituents every day. I believe it is a big mistake to compromise an effective and growing interprovincial relationship, which seeks to foster even deeper collaboration and support for the veterinary profession, livestock and poultry producers, and for public health interests in Manitoba.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carl K. Johnson', with a stylized, flowing script.

Carl K. Johnson, AM, DVM
Prairie Diagnostic Services, Inc.
52 Campus Drive
Saskatoon, SK S7N 5B4 CANADA

February 7th, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing to you on behalf of Brandon University's Western Manitoba Pre-Veterinary Medical Association (WMPVMA). The WMPVMA consists of 25 pre-veterinary students who hope to attend the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVN). We are very concerned to hear that the Provincial Government is considering cutting funding to the WCVN by funding only 10 seats for Manitobans, reduced from the current 15 seats.

In Canada, aspiring Manitoban vet students can ONLY apply to the WCVN. The admissions process is incredibly competitive, in fact only 26% of Manitobans who applied for the 2018-19 year were accepted (1). Clearly, reducing available seats would make getting accepted even more challenging. Ultimately, there will be even fewer veterinarians to fill job postings in a province that is already facing a shortage in small, mixed and large animal veterinary professionals. Additionally, as the province has expressed a desire to grow the agriculture industry, that is not possible without more large animal veterinarians.

The WCVN needs provincial support to continue educating veterinarians and so do veterinary students, as the cost of veterinary school is an extreme expense. Currently, tuition is about \$10,000 a year, not including supplies and living costs, however tuition for non-subsidized seats, of which five are being offered next year, will be \$60,000 a year (1). This is an expense that many intelligent, motivated individuals could not manage. Many veterinary students already struggle with debt and the proposed changes would only exacerbate the current debt issue. These additional financial strains would also make it more likely for new veterinarians to seek work in metropolitan areas rather than returning to rural Manitoba to practice where incomes are lower, however demand for veterinary services is high.

Canada has a large agricultural industry and most Canadians own a pet. In fact, the population of companion animals in Canada has increased by about 10% in the last decade (2). Additionally, the livestock industry continues to see growth with a 7.0% and 5.6% increase for beef and dairy respectively (3). Clearly, there is a high need for veterinarians in order to care for the many animals in our society. Not only are veterinarians critical for animal health but human health as well. Therefore, they play an integral role in the One Health initiative which is a multi-discipline effort to attain optimal health for people, animals and the environment (4). These days there is an increasing level of contact between humans and domestic and wild animals thus increasing the risk for exposure to new viruses, bacteria and other pathogens. Overall, education for Manitoban vet students must continue to be supported in order to ensure a healthy society for all of its members.

We ask that you please raise these proposed changes as an extreme concern with your Provincial Government officials, sign and share the petition linked below and advocate for the current 15 funded spots at the WCVN to remain! Please respond with your position on this issue to the WMPVMA.

Thank you for your support,

Sincerely,

The Western Manitoba Pre-Veterinary Medical Association

https://www.change.org/p/brian-pallister-keep-the-15-manitoba-subsidized-seats-at-the-western-college-of-veterinary-medicine?recruiter=934370725&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=copylink&utm_campaign=tap_basic_share

Resources:

1. <https://admissions.usask.ca/veterinary-medicine.php#PreparingforVeterinaryMedicine>
2. <https://iloveveterinary.com/blog/veterinary-medicine-colleges-canada/>
3. <https://www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/pubs/2017-2018-annual-report.pdf>
4. <https://www.avma.org/KB/Resources/Reference/Pages/One-Health94.aspx>