

April 27, 2023

Honourable Selina Robinson
Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC
V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Robinson,

Thank you for your letter on March 27, 2023, confirming the permanent subsidization of 40 seats for British Columbia students attending the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVI). This funding will help students afford to enter this profession and fill some spots in the veterinarian shortage in B.C.

However, as we continue to see a high demand for veterinary services for domestic animals and livestock, we need to do more to address the shortage of veterinarians. With 100 veterinarians retiring per year, the time to act is now.

We understand from your letter that the Provincial Nominee Program is one of the strategies being used by the Ministry. How many veterinarians have used this program and are now practicing in B.C.? Have applications been prioritized through this program? Has this intervention been effective? If not, what is being done to support this program to ensure its success?

In addition to this intervention, we are asking the government to reduce financial and licencing barriers for foreign-trained vets to come to B.C. to practice. This includes providing incentives for Canadian vet students abroad to return home to practice, through loan forgiveness, if students are willing to work in rural or northern practices and with mixed/large breed animals. There are 7,100 livestock farms in B.C., with the Northeast, Nechako and North Coast together accounting for the highest share of large animals with a ratio of 8,900 large animals to one veterinarian.

This is unsustainable and poses a serious risk to animal health and welfare in our province.

Lastly, we need a veterinary school in British Columbia. For far too long, the fate of veterinary practice in B.C. has rested outside of our province. In order to have local talent, having a veterinary school in the province will draw a wide pool of students from B.C. and around the world.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

Thank you for your consideration of this urgent matter and we look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Ian Paton
MLA Delta South
Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Food

Coralee Oakes
MLA Cariboo North
Shadow Minister for Advanced
Education

cc: Hon. Pam Alexis, Minister of Agriculture and Food
cc: Kevin Falcon, Leader of the Official Opposition, BC United