

DATE: January 24, 2023

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

NAME AND TITLE: Councillor Garth Frizzell, Chair
Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs

SUBJECT: Enhancing Veterinary Care in the Region

ATTACHMENTS: Correspondence dated October 14, 2022 from the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training to the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George regarding a Veterinary Medicine Program at the University of Northern British Columbia

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Council REQUESTS the Mayor's office provide a letter to the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills:

- (a) in support of establishing a Veterinary Medicine Program at the University of Northern British Columbia with consideration given to practicum placement and retention of students in the region; and
- (b) that requests a review and consideration of the potential impact of veterinarian retirement trends and changes to the degree qualification assessment and accreditation of all medical practitioners, including veterinarians, to help mitigate the service gap.

PURPOSE:

For Council's consideration.

DISCUSSION:

At the December 20, 2022 meeting of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs, the committee reviewed correspondence from the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training (now known as the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills) to the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George (RDFFG) and the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (RDBN). The letter was a follow-up to the RDFFG's request for the Ministry to explore establishing a veterinary medicine program at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) as one mechanism to address the need for high quality and responsive veterinary care in the region.

While the committee recognizes that establishing a veterinary medicine program will not address the immediate need for veterinary care in Prince George and surrounding communities, it does provide yet another avenue to draw prospective students to attend UNBC in Prince George with the hope that those students would one day establish a veterinary practice in the region. The committee also recognizes the need for local 24/7 emergency veterinarian services in the region which would both serve pet owners and provide a location for prospective veterinary program students to complete their practicum hours with the aim at retaining those prospective veterinarians in the region.

To advocate for more immediate enhancement of veterinary services in the region, the committee will also be further considering the projected retirement rate and scope of work of veterinarians in the region, and the requirements associated with degree qualification assessment and accreditation for immigrant veterinarians.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

The Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs submits this report for Council's consideration in recommending that the Mayor's office provide a letter to the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills in support of the Regional Districts' effort to fill the need of bringing high quality and responsive veterinary care to Prince George and the region.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Councillor Garth Frizzell, Chair
Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs

MEETING DATE: February 6, 2023