Thursday, January 21, 2016

The Honourable Jane Philpott
Minister of Health (Canada)

Via e-mail: hon.jane.philpott@canada.ca

RE: Antimicrobial Resistance

Dear Minister Philpott:

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) is the national body representing and serving the interests of the veterinary profession in Canada. The health and welfare of animals is a priority for Canadian veterinarians, along with a secure, safe food supply and public health.

Prior to the 2015 election we asked political parties about their position on antimicrobial resistance including gaps in the regulation of veterinary drugs that allow 1) over-the-counter sale of medically important antimicrobials without prescription, 2) own-use importation of veterinary drugs (especially antibiotics), and 3) use of active pharmaceutical ingredients not approved by Health Canada. The Liberal party answered as follows: “Liberals take the threat of antimicrobial resistance seriously; we believe that there has been a lack of leadership from the federal government to develop a strategy to mitigate this threat. We share the concerns in the spring 2015 Report of the Auditor General of Canada regarding this increasingly pressing issue. Liberals are committed to preserving the integrity and safety of the food chain, which is jeopardized by the improper use of antimicrobials. A Liberal government will engage with the provinces and stakeholders to address existing loopholes surrounding the use of antimicrobials.” (full response enclosed).

The CVMA actively promotes responsible use of antimicrobials by the veterinary profession to protect both animal and human health and welfare. It has long provided the profession with guidelines for the prudent use of antimicrobials. In support of federal action to strengthen Canada’s regulation of veterinary drugs to meet international standards, the CVMA is now consulting stakeholders on a proposed “Veterinary oversight of antimicrobial use – a Pan-Canadian Framework of professional standards for veterinarians”. This Framework, was developed in conjunction with the provincial veterinary regulatory bodies as a guidance document to promote implementation of the required federal regulatory changes.

The prudent use of antimicrobials in veterinary medicine is crucial to success of the Federal Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance and Use in Canada. We urge you to implement the key regulatory changes by the end of 2016 in accordance with previously published timelines. This will support a harmonized North American approach (consistent with Canadian trade interests) to address this key public health problem.

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The CVMA is committed to continue assisting the federal government in these and any other matters related to public health and welfare.

Sincerely,

Nicole Gallant, DVM
President

Encl.

JaR:NG/nn
October 12, 2015

Dr. Jean Gauvin
President
Canadian Veterinary Medical Association
339 Booth St
Ottawa, Ontario, K1R 7K1

Dear Dr. Gauvin,

Enclosed, please find the Liberal Party of Canada’s formal response to your questionnaire.

For more information on the Liberal Party of Canada’s vision for Canada, please take a moment to review our policies online at RealChange.ca. This site provides details on a Liberal government’s policies, goals, and priorities.

On behalf of our Leader, Justin Trudeau, and the entire Liberal team, thank you for writing to identify the major concerns of your membership.

We appreciate your interest in the Liberal Party of Canada’s policies as they relate to the issues which affect you.

Sincerely,

Anna Gainey, President
Liberal Party of Canada

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Cher Dr. Gauvin,

Veuillez trouver ci-joint la réponse formelle du Parti libéral du Canada à votre questionnaire.

Pour en apprendre davantage au sujet de la vision que le Parti libéral a pour le Canada, prenez un moment pour consulter nos politiques en ligne à ChangeRense.ca. Ce site présente des détails sur les politiques, les objectifs et les priorités d’un gouvernement libéral.

Au nom de notre chef, Justin Trudeau, et de son équipe toute entière, je tiens à vous remercier de nous avoir fait part des inquiétudes de vos membres.

Nous sommes reconnaissants de l’intérêt que vous portez aux politiques du Parti libéral du Canada, parce qu’elles concernent les questions qui vous touchent.

Bien cordialement,

Anna Gainey, Présidente
Parti libéral du Canada
Canadian Veterinary Medical Association

1. Animal cruelty legislation in Canada.

If elected, will your party update the federal animal cruelty law? AND Does your party believe that the present Criminal Code of Canada goes far enough to ensure the protection of animals?

Liberals believe that all animals should be treated humanely and that animal cruelty laws should be informed by the best scientific evidence available. We support modernizing animal cruelty laws provided the changes do not unreasonably interfere with important cultural and economic practices like farming and fishing.

An update to Canada’s animal cruelty laws is long overdue. As Liberal Justice Minister in 2005, Irwin Cotler introduced reforms, though unfortunately his proposals did not become law because an election was called. As Mr. Cotler suggested, our animal cruelty laws should use scientific language and be a standalone section of the Criminal Code, rather than simply a type of property offence. The law should recognize that animals are more than just property. In recent years, Liberal MPs have introduced a number of private member’s bills to reduce cruelty against animals. We will continue to consult with concerned Canadians to better promote animal welfare.

2. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR), own use importation (OUI) of veterinary drugs (especially antibiotics) and active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) loopholes.

If elected, during the next parliamentary session, what measures will your party undertake to mitigate antimicrobial resistance? AND If elected, will your party follow the recommendations of the Auditor General of Canada to close the loopholes of own use importation and importation of active pharmaceutical ingredients?

3. Antimicrobial use in Canada.

If elected, during the next parliamentary session, will your party implement the Federal action plan on antimicrobial resistance and use? AND What is your party’s position concerning antimicrobial use, not only in veterinary medicine and agriculture, but also in human medicine? AND What is your party’s position on veterinary oversight on the use of antibiotics in animals?

COMBINED ANSWER (2 and 3):

Liberals take the threat of antimicrobial resistance seriously; we believe that there has been a lack of leadership from the federal government to develop a strategy to mitigate this threat. We share the concerns in the Spring 2015 Report of the Auditor General of Canada regarding this increasingly pressing issue. Liberals are committed to preserving the integrity and safety of the food chain, which is jeopardized by the improper use of antimicrobials. A Liberal government will engage with the provinces and stakeholders to address existing loopholes surrounding the use of antimicrobials.

Moreover, when developing new policy, a Liberal government will actively consult with those directly affected and those with expertise in the relevant fields. Liberals value the important work of researchers and those with lived experience and will work collaboratively with experts, as well as those directly affected, on both policy development and program delivery.
More broadly, we believe strongly that government should base its policies on facts, not make up facts based on policy. Without evidence, government makes arbitrary decisions that have the potential to negatively affect the daily lives of Canadians. Unfortunately, Stephen Harper’s Conservatives have allowed ideology to trump common sense, good policy, and evidence about what works. A Liberal government will ensure the federal government rebuilds its capacity to deliver on evidence-based decision-making.

We will revoke rules and regulations that muzzle government scientists and allow them to speak freely about their work, with only limited and publicly stated exceptions. We will consolidate government science so that it is easily available to the public at-large through a central portal. We will create a Chief Science Officer whose mandate would include ensuring that government science is freely available to the public, that scientists are able to speak freely about their work, and that scientific analyses are appropriately considered when the government makes decisions.

Liberals know that data-driven decision-making leads to good public policy. We will release key information that informs decision-making. We will devote a fixed percentage of program funds to experimenting with new approaches to existing problems, instilling a culture of measuring results, innovation, and continuous improvement in how government serves the needs of Canadians. We will stop funding initiatives that are no longer effective and invest program dollars in those that are of good value.

We will also ensure a more robust system of oversight and review for legislation and other matters in the House of Commons and Senate. Specifically, parliamentary committees will be given more resources to acquire independent, expert analysis of proposed legislation.

4. **Embryonic stem cell research and research funding for animal and human disease.**

*If elected, what is your party planning to do concerning research and the research funding of embryonic stem cell for animal and human diseases?*

Liberals believe in the ability of government to be a force for good in society and understand that investments in research, technology and innovation are investments in Canada’s future.

As other countries innovate and invest in research and development, Canada has fallen behind. Canada has several innovation hubs, including for medicine and medical devices, pharmaceutical and bio-products. We have many successful, growing, innovative firms, but we do not have enough of them. We do not have enough well-financed incubators that provide the advice, office space, and access to research and financial support that entrepreneurs need as they start new companies. A Liberal government will kick-start Canada’s innovation potential over next three years by making significant investments to boost Canada’s innovative capacity. We will invest $200 million per year, in each of the next three years, in a new innovation agenda. We will provide direct support to business incubators, accelerators, and research facilities with the objective of creating successful networks like the American and German partnerships between businesses, government, and university and college research. The federal government must also continue funding basic research that the private sector – focused more on profitability and returns – will not undertake adequately. A Liberal government will work with provinces, territories and the research community to bolster innovation in the health and bioscience field. We will also continue to support cutting edge stem cell research through current funding mechanisms.