Dear Minister O’Toole:

**RE: Development of Standards for Psychiatric Service Dogs**

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) has been made aware that, as part of the *Mental Health Services for Veterans Action Plan*, Veterans Affairs Canada will soon undertake the development of standards for psychiatric service dogs. The CVMA commends you for taking this action to ensure consistency in the training and quality of service dogs to ensure the best possible outcomes for Veterans.

Canada’s veterinarians support legislation that does not discriminate against any one particular breed of dog (1). As you develop these national standards, we encourage you to refrain from implementing any breed limitations for service dogs. Such legislation would be in line with the regulations provided in the *Americans with Disabilities Act* in the United States (2).

We also encourage you to promote humane training options for service dogs. The CVMA supports the use of humane training methods that are built on current scientific knowledge of learning theory (3). Reward-based methods are highly favoured. Methods causing fear, distress, pain or anxiety are unacceptable.

On behalf of Canada’s veterinarians, we thank you for taking this information into consideration. Should you require veterinary input during the development of this policy, please do not hesitate to contact us. The CVMA would be pleased to assist you in the development of these national standards for psychiatric service dogs.
Best regards,

Dr. Jean Gauvin  
President  
Canadian Veterinary Medical Association

References:

1. CVMA Position Statement “Legislation Concerning Vicious Dogs”  

2. Americans with Disabilities Act (page 32)  

3. CVMA Position Statement “Humane Training Methods for Dogs”  
   http://www.canadianveterinarians.net/documents/humane-training-methods-for-dogs

JaR:JG/km