

The Honorable Doug Ford
Premier
Government of Ontario
Toronto, Ontario

May 6, 2020

Via Email

Dear Premier Ford:

The OMA Section on Laboratory Medicine represents all laboratory physicians in the province of Ontario. Our members rely on the 6,300 Medical Laboratory Technologists (MLTs) and 5,000 Medical Laboratory Assistant / Technicians (MLA/Ts) who process the over 500,000 tests / day that are the starting point of care for the people of Ontario. The province is also relying on Ontario's MLTs and MLA/Ts to achieve its target of 16,000 COVID-19 tests per day. Now more than ever, we rely on the dedicated laboratory workers most of us will never see and yet are crucial members of the first-responder teams.

In light of the above, we are shocked that MLTs and MLA/Ts have not been included as eligible frontline staff in the Ontario Government's pandemic pay plan. Contrary to initial assumptions made by the Ministry, many of the members of the Medical Laboratory Professionals' Association of Ontario actually administer the test swabs or go bedside in hospital to take samples, thereby meeting the Ministry's criteria of working front line with COVID-19 patients. Some of the MLPAO's members have now tested positive as a result. There is significant risk within the lab as well. The process is dangerous. Laboratory work generates droplets. Just one droplet may contain a million or so viruses that can contaminate the laboratory worker or the laboratory. This segment of the health care profession is also at the lower end of the pay scale. Moreover, there is a risk of retention:

- labs entered the pandemic understaffed;
- there are not enough personnel to cover sick days, vacation and even necessary surgeries; and
- some workers are working past their planned retirement dates to help process tests.

The MLPAO estimates 44% of its members are going to be eligible to retire in the next 4 – 8 years but is worried some of this group will retire sooner as a result of being excluded and their hard work going unrecognized. This is something to be avoided in light of the fact that COVID-19 is predicted to be prevalent for the next 1-2 years at least.

Medical lab is critical frontline. We urge the Ontario government to do the right thing and include MLTs and MLA/Ts in its pandemic pay initiative.

Thank you,



Victor Tron, MD, FRCPC
Chair, OMA Section on Laboratory Medicine

Cc: **Premier's Office:** The Honorable Doug Ford, Michael Hillmer and Clint Shingler
Ministry of Health: The Honorable Christine Elliot, Laurel Brazill, Benjamin Levitt
Ministry of Long Term Care: The Honorable Merrilee Fullerton, Mason Saunders
Treasury Board: Peter Bethlenfalvy, Karl Baldauf
Ontario Health: Matthew Anderson, CEO
Ontario Hospital Association: Anthony Dale, CEO
Medical Laboratory Professionals' Association of Ontario: Michelle Hoad, CEO,
Lab Medicine Section Executive: Drs. Demo Divaris, Suhas Joshi, Neil Davis, Catherine Ross, Brendan Mullen