



Medical Laboratory Professionals' Association of Ontario
L'Association des professionnels des laboratoires médicaux de l'Ontario

MEDIA RELEASE: ACTION NOW FOR ONTARIO LABS SUGGESTS HUMAN RESOURCE SHORTAGES

OCT 23 - HAMILTON ON: Action Now for Ontario Labs

“Preliminary analysis of survey data suggests troubling shortages of medical laboratory professionals. **Action Now for Ontario Labs** is a multi-phase project bringing together employers, educators, laboratory professionals, and government to understand the ongoing laboratory human resource shortage.

Preliminary data, representing both public and private laboratories and most key Ontario employers, is concerning. With 55 of Ontario's 214 IQMH-accredited medical laboratories that have responded to date, an immediate need for **245 Medical Laboratory Technologists (MLTs)** across the province has been identified.

This is particularly alarming considering only **157 new MLTs** graduated from Ontario's five remaining MLT programs and passed the national certification exam required to join the workforce this year.¹ Even though preliminary respondents represent just 26% of Ontario laboratories, we would still need almost double the number of MLTs entering the workforce to meet their needs.

There is a currently waitlist at all five Ontario MLT programs: St. Clair College - Windsor, St. Lawrence College - Kingston, Ontario Tech University - Oshawa, The Michener Institute - Toronto, Cambrian College – Sudbury.

This problem has deep roots after seven MLT programs closed in the 1990s caused a declining MLT workforce for decades now. The MLPAO has been raising this need to the provincial government over the past 3 years – the situation is predicted to rapidly worsen as 44% of the profession is expected to retire within the next 5 years.

The projected shortage of medical laboratory professionals has only accelerated due to a variety of reasons including the COVID-19 pandemic. With 70% of Ontario laboratories entering the pandemic short-staffed,² the breakneck pace of the last 8 months is causing burnout.³

In this most recent survey, 74% of laboratories indicated that turnaround times were definitely or somewhat affected by shortages of personnel. The top three factors affecting staffing levels were identified as morale (68%), staff burnout (sick leave, stress leave – 68%), and childcare concerns (67%).

Our next step will be to work with employers to approach the current MLT programs to discuss increasing seats, then work with government to support these additional seats. Our message can no longer be ignored. We need to ensure training programs are in place to support the healthcare needs of Ontarians.” #ActionNowForONLabs #MedLabON – Michelle Hoad, MLPAO CEO

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¹ Of the 166 who challenged the exam - comparable to previous years – 2019 (162) 2018 (166) 2017 (151).

<https://www.csmls.org/Medical-Laboratory-Professionals/How-to-become-a-Medical-Lab-Professional/National-Report-Card-2018.aspx>.

² Based on a survey of 2212 lab leaders and professionals in May 2020.

³ 82% of lab staff are experiencing burnout based on a survey of 737 lab professionals in June 2020.