

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

September 3, 2020

Honourable Ross Romano
Minister of Colleges and Universities
5th Flr - 438 University Ave.
Toronto ON M7A 1N3

RE: Training Programs for Ontario's Laboratories

Dear Minister Romano,

This week we watched with great interest your government's announcement of an investment of \$9.3 million into training programs to connect students and job seekers with careers in auto and advanced manufacturing. This is an admirable endeavour which will support the province's economic recovery, and we hope to see the same long-term training investment in Ontario's medical laboratories.

Hours away from passing the 3-million mark of COVID-19 tests, Ontario laboratories are experiencing a shortage of Medical Laboratory Technologists (MLTs). This is not new—our MLT workforce has been declining for decades now following the closure of 7 of 11 MLT programs in the 1990s. 77% of Ontario laboratories entered the pandemic short-staffed, with many jobs open for 12+ months, and there is currently a waitlist at all five Ontario MLT programs.

This is both a short-term and long-term concern. COVID-19 has significantly increased the demand for laboratory testing. The pandemic has also amplified the shortages by accelerating retirements, and some MLTs are leaving for other careers due to burnout. Looking at current registration and examination numbers, we know 44% of the profession will likely retire within the next 5 years.

We are working with HealthForceOntario on their short-term initiative to support COVID-19 testing with recently retired and internationally educated MLTs and biomedical sciences students. However, the shortage precedes COVID-19 and will continue after without a long-term strategy.

Turnaround times for lab testing will suffer from the shortage of MLTs. The efficiency of instrumentation is at the maximum for the human resources. The system cannot be pushed any further—Ontario laboratories are at a breaking point. We need the same cohesive approach the government is taking with the auto and advanced manufacturing training programs.

On Wednesday we announced our multi-step plan *Action Now for Ontario Labs* and would like to request a meeting with you to discuss training solutions. We look forward to speaking further soon.

Thanks,



Michelle Hoad, CAE
Chief Executive Officer
Medical Laboratory Professionals' Association of Ontario