

May 7, 2020

Honourable Doug Ford
MPP Etobicoke North
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

RE: Pandemic Pay a Final Blow to Medical Laboratory Professionals

Dear Premier Ford,

Since the beginning of the outbreak, Ontario's 6731 Medical Laboratory Technologists and over 5000 Medical Laboratory Assistant/Technicians have been going in to work. We take the health of our patients very seriously. We have been striving 24/7 to increase lab testing capacity for our province and reach your target of 16,000 tests per day.

This Tuesday when our labs fell short of the target, you pledged to "continue to push the system" to get better results. The system cannot be pushed any further. It is already at its breaking point.

Ontario Labs entered the pandemic understaffed. For years, medical laboratory teams have not had enough personnel to cover sick days, vacation, or even necessary surgeries. Positions remain open for over a year. As a result, labs have been forced to rely on staff agreeing to work overtime to function. Many are working past retirement to ensure our communities do not go without care.

Our laboratory infrastructure is not built for a massive pandemic response. We are accomplishing the additional COVID-19 tests on top of the half a million daily lab tests we continue to perform for cancer, heart disease, and nearly every other medical condition. We are now facing an environment where labs must wrestle with vendors to get proper supplies and equipment.

We have been fighting hard now for 7 weeks, working even longer hours than before. Everyone is working above capacity. Managers are filling technologist positions; technologists are working double-shifts. One of our managers ended their night this week by washing the floor because there was no one else left to do it. Assistants are face-to-face with COVID-19 patients in hospitals; going into long-term care homes and retirement residences to work with patients.



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

All our members are incurring risks to themselves and their families. We are facing shortages of PPE. This risk is profound for those processing tests, and even more dire for our members engaging directly with COVID-19 patients.

When you updated the Pandemic Pay list with additional professional groups last week and medical laboratory professionals were still excluded, it was a **final blow** to the morale of a system hanging together by only a thread. Lab professionals were weary going into this crisis. They are now starting to give up hope. We are all dependent on a strong laboratory system to bring an end to the pandemic. The medical lab is a front-line service. We urge you to reconsider our inclusion in the Pandemic Pay system.

Alternatively, we look forward to further collaboration to ensure this group is recognized. Ontario's Medical Laboratory Professionals **cannot be forgotten**.

Thank you in advance,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MHoad'.

Michelle Hoad, CAE
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cc: Minister of Health Christine Elliot
Minister of Long-Term Care Dr. Merrilee Fullerton
Chair, Medical Laboratory Professionals' Association of Ontario