

May 26, 2020

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

RE: Pandemic Pay and Medical Laboratory Professionals

Dear Premier Ford;

As you know, in March 2020, COVID -19 was galloping toward us from the near horizon, infections were coming to Ontario with returning travelers, and lab tests for COVID-19 did not exist.

Much has happened since March and together we have successfully been moving mountains, or rather *flattening* them, under your capable leadership and that of Minister Elliott and our Public Health leaders. We and other Ontarians are grateful for your determination in the face of this important and difficult work.

Your announcement regarding Temporary Pandemic Pay recognized what we all know – Healthcare workers are a critical, frontline force in our fight against COVID-19 and they put their health and that of their loved ones at risk every day because of what they choose to do for a living. We applaud the intention of TPP to recognize this. As it happens however, critical frontline healthcare workers were overlooked in this initiative and our laboratory team asks that you carefully consider the work of **Medical Laboratory Professionals** in this initiative.

For the last number of years, nationally and provincially, diagnostic labs like ours have been experiencing ongoing and very serious shortages of qualified laboratory staff, often to the point of chronic short staffing and ongoing vacancies that just do not get filled. Enter COVID-19.

Since March, our laboratory team has continued to extend shifts for workers and to reorganize our staff, to temporarily *borrow* qualified staff from other labs, to train more staff to do COVID -19 testing, and to burden other staff with offloaded work from those testing COVID-19 samples – because Ontarians still get sick from many other things that require our help. We are happy to do this important and inherently risky work because we are professionals who want to serve our communities.

All of us on this team are deeply affected by the COVID-19 crisis, every single day with no respite visible in the distance.

We share our government's frustration with attempts to grow our provincial laboratory testing capacity. Even though we are working hard, we are ready to do more but labs everywhere – not just in Ontario - are experiencing unpredictability in receiving testing supplies and reagents. Supply unpredictability means testing limits. Our Clinical Microbiologists are collaborating with COVID-19 testing labs all over the province, every day, to redistribute samples and sometimes much needed equipment in response to supply chain volatility and local testing needs. Together with our management team, they are working

right beside us, nearly 7 days a week, supporting and encouraging our efforts to sustain ourselves and to meet upward testing goals.

We are continually retooling to get this important work done. Our resources are stretched, and our biggest challenges are largely out of our control. Our lab is full of tired and anxious laboratory professionals who, at a time when we might fittingly be recognized as part of the forefront of this health crisis, have instead been overlooked.

We are asking for your recognition of the hazardous work we do on the frontline of this pandemic by including us in Temporary Pandemic Pay.

Sincerely,

The Medical Laboratory Professionals of the Clinical Microbiology Laboratory
Kingston Health Science Centre
76 Stuart Street
Kingston ON.
K7L 2V7