

July 1, 2020

Honourable Christine Elliott, Minister of Health
College Park 5th Flr - 777 Bay St.
Toronto ON M7A 2J3

RE: Medical Laboratory Professionals are Front-Line Workers

Dear Minister Elliott,

On Canada Day, we celebrate what makes us proud to be Canadian. One of the things many of us refer to (especially in conversations with our US friends) is our Universal Healthcare system, delivered and administered by our provinces. The strength and resilience of these systems determines our capacity to endure a range of crises. Some are unpredictable, like the recent COVID-19 pandemic, while others we can anticipate, like the steadily aging population of our province.

As we climb past 1.4 million COVID-19 lab tests processed and analyzed by Ontario's Medical Laboratory Professionals, our laboratories—a critical part of our healthcare system—are quickly approaching breakdown. Labs have been understaffed and underfunded for years. 77% of labs across our province entered the pandemic short-staffed. Once elective surgeries and new testing is added, 68% of lab managers fear their teams will be unable to meet demands.

We have been anticipating the retirement of 44% of the profession in 4-8 years. The extreme burnout from the fight against COVID-19 has accelerated this projection to an immediate and pressing concern. This workforce does not exist. The closure of seven programs in the 1990s has created a lack of trained MLTs for decades now. There are wait-lists at all five remaining MLT schools.

This pandemic revealed the horrific state of Long-Term Care homes which resulted from decades of governments delaying action until it was too late. We are writing to you to ensure the government can make changes to laboratory medicine system and avert disaster. With an aging patient population, retirements increasing, staff burnout, lack of funds, and inadequate numbers of trained MLTs, we are currently headed towards a breaking point.

Unlike the pandemic, the staffing shortage in Ontario Labs is a crisis we can anticipate. We need to act now to ensure our healthcare system we are so proud of remains strong. We have requested a meeting with your office to discuss solutions and await your response.

Thanks,



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