

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

August 1, 2020

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

RE: Answers Needed for Ontario Medical Labs Before "Wave 2 + Flu"

Dear Minister Elliott,

It has been a month since we formally requested a meeting with your office to discuss solutions for Ontario's Medical Laboratory Professionals. With each month that passes, the situation becomes increasingly urgent.

We have hit 2 million COVID-19 lab tests processed and analyzed our members. As the province moves into Stage 3, we are facing the likelihood of a second wave of COVID-19 coinciding with flu season. We need solutions to critical infrastructure and human resources concerns in this increasingly brief respite.

With the onset of flu season each October, medical labs typically respond by increasing 7-10 hours each workday to accommodate an increase in flu tests. Ontario labs are already working 24/7 completing 20,000+ COVID-19 tests daily. 77% of Ontario labs entered the pandemic short-staffed. Adding 7-10 hours to a workday that is already 24 hours is simply impossible with existing staff levels.

PCR instrumentation (currently used to test for COVID-19) is estimated to last 7 years under normal use. Much of this equipment was already reaching its life expectancy before the pandemic hit. This equipment is constantly in service and nearing end of life. With new instruments now running around the clock beyond usual limits, their life expectancy may be as little as 1 year.

Lab teams have been working straight for four months now without reprieve. 88% of lab staff testing for COVID-19 are exhausted from no breaks, no days off, and long hours. This group is also suffering deep morale failure after being excluded from the Temporary Pandemic Pay given to nearly everyone else in their workplaces. They are facing continued long hours, unable to take vacation or leaves of absence, and will be fatigued when Wave 2 + Flu comes. We anticipate staff loss due to stress and illness from already understaffed teams experiencing burnout.

Ontario is currently lacking both people and instrumentation to handle Wave 2 + Flu. We need answers to short-staffing and infrastructure crises to avert severe testing delays. We have sent a second request for a meeting to discuss solutions and await your response. Fall will arrive sooner than we think.

Thanks,



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