

Medical Laboratory Professionals' Association of Ontario

Pulse Check: MLT Shortage Looms Large

Ontario laboratories are experiencing severe burnout and staffing shortages after years of intensive COVID-19 testing, the resumption of surgeries and catching up on testing from millions of Ontarians that are now more comfortable to visit healthcare centers and get tests. This essential group of healthcare workers provide millions of lab results across Ontario, equipping doctors with the essential information they need to treat patients.

58% of labs are reporting a delay in providing test results due to the staffing shortages.¹ With over 42% of Medical Laboratory Technologists (MLT) in Ontario approaching retirement² this health human resources (HHR) shortage is impacting patient care.

In July 2024, the MLPAO conducted a pulse check survey requesting lab leaders to provide updates on their staffing shortages over the past year.

- **83% of Ontario labs continue to experience MLT shortages**
- **70% indicate that MLT shortages have stayed the same or worsened**

Overview:

- **83% of Ontario labs continue to experience MLT shortages**
- 68 lab leaders responded to the survey on behalf of their labs, representing approximately 53% of Ontario labs
- Respondents ranked their current MLT staffing shortage to last year:
 - **70% - MLT staffing shortages have stayed the same or worsened**
 - 30% - MLT staffing shortages have improved
- 16% of respondents indicate that they are experiencing a shortage of Medical Laboratory Assistant/Technicians (MLA/T); **64% of these are from rural and remote labs**

Immediate action is required:

- The number of MLTs eligible to retire within the next few years has increased from 39% to 42% over the past year.¹

¹ [MLPAO Report – Shortage of Lab Professionals Continues Post Pandemic](#)

² [2023 CMLTO Annual Report](#)



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L'Association des professionnels des laboratoires médicaux de l'Ontario

- The 2024 funding announcement by the Ontario government to add additional seats to MLT programs will help with the HHR shortage.
- **Clinical placements will continue to be a major bottleneck to getting new MLT graduates into the workforce; additional funding support is required for clinical placements.**

Survey Response

68 lab leaders from across Ontario responded to the survey, representing approximately 50% of Ontario labs.

- 25% urban
- 38% mid-size
- 37% rural and remote

Respondents were from public hospitals (90%), community laboratories (7%) and public health laboratories (3%).

MLT Shortages

83% of respondents indicated that they are experiencing MLT shortages.

In comparison to last year, labs rated the status of their MLT staffing shortage:

- **41% - somewhat worse or much worse**
- **29% - remains the same**
- 30% - somewhat improved or much improved

Top 3 reasons for worsening MLT shortages (respondents could select multiple answers):

- **53% - no qualified applicants for job postings**
- 47% - indicate more MLT vacancies, including retirements
- 33% - MLTs leave to take positions in other labs

Top 3 reasons that MLT staffing situations have improved since last year (respondents could select multiple answers):

- 50% - have hired more MLTs
- 38% - MLT students have accepted positions in our labs
- 38% - increased use of MLA/Ts to full scope of practice

MLA/T Shortages

18.5% of respondents indicate that they are experiencing a shortage of Medical Laboratory Assistant/Technicians (MLA/T).

Where there are MLA/T shortages, 64% are in rural and remote labs, 27% in mid-size urban labs and 9% in urban labs.