

May 14, 2020

Michael Hillmer, PhD  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Capacity Planning and Analytics Division  
13th Flr, 1075 Bay St.  
Toronto, ON M5S 2B1

RE: Medical Laboratory Professionals Deserve Recognition

Dear ADM Hillmer,

Our members have been fighting COVID-19 for months, and now they are also fighting to be recognized. As their representative, I am asking you to hear our voice.

**Please—take our message to whichever ears need to hear it: medical laboratory professionals cannot be forgotten in this pandemic.**

This is a team no one sees. Despite this, many of them **engage directly with patients** to draw blood or collect samples. Within the hospital, the lab is most often out of sight and located in an area not accessible/visible to the public. We are almost always an afterthought. The COVID-19 pandemic has put the lab at the forefront.

Our labs are under considerable capacity pressure:

- 60% of Ontario Labs started the pandemic short-staffed
- medical laboratory teams have been struggling with recruitment, with positions open for over a year
- 31% of labs testing for COVID-19 have been affected by a staff member testing positive
- 21% have been impacted by a staff member taking early retirement because of stress

As the outbreak continues, lab teams are starting to show signs of wear. The teams who are striving to meet the testing quotas for this virus are being impacted by a multitude of factors. Parents are struggling to find childcare or going for weeks without seeing their kids who they must leave with a relative for fear of infection. Sick leave is rising. All vacation has been cancelled in labs. Over 70% of labs currently testing for COVID-19 are now concerned they will not be able to meet testing demands once elective surgeries and new testing comes into place.

KPMG has been doing a phenomenal job managing testing capacity. However, the human toll that this pandemic is taking on lab professionals **is not being considered.**



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

Shortly after the initial announcement the Ministry of Health added Paramedics and Respiratory Therapists, excluding the lab once again. This exclusion continues to be devastating. Lab management states that **over 91% of lab staff morale is low due to not being included in the Temporary Pandemic Pay** – keeping staff motivated is becoming increasingly difficult.

Today the Premier announced the expansion of testing to include any resident who displays any symptoms of the disease. We understand this is necessary to control the spread of the infection. This is yet another weight placed on a system that is already at capacity. The number of professionals doing this work (MLTs) is not growing to meet these demands.

We are all dependent on a strong laboratory system to bring closure to the pandemic, a fight which is still far from over. Take our message to whichever ears need to hear it: do not forget us. Recognize these hidden professionals facing almost unsurmountable odds, whose crucial work almost always goes unseen. This recognition and appreciation will be the spark that will carry us through to the end.

Thank you in advance,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MHoad', is positioned below the text 'Thank you in advance,'.

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

CC: **Premier's Office:** The Honorable Doug Ford  
**Ministry of Health:** The Honorable Christine Elliot, Laurel Brazill, Benjamin Levitt, Dr. Williams and Clint Shingler  
**Treasury Board:** Peter Bethlenfalvy, Karl Baldauf  
**Ontario Health:** Matthew Anderson, CEO  
**Ontario Hospital Association:** Anthony Dale, CEO  
**Ontario Medical Association:** Dr. Victor Tron  
**Ontario Association of Pathologists:** President, Dr Anna Plotkin  
**MLPAO,** Chair, Aline Letourneau