



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

March 8, 2021

Warren (Smokey) Thomas, President
OPSEU/SEFPO
100 Lesmill Rd. Toronto, ON M3B 3P8

RE: Capacity for Ontario's Laboratories

Dear Warren (Smokey) Thomas,

We read your press release this weekend calling for supporting capacity for Ontario's labs. Thank you for your solidarity. Laboratory capacity has been a persistent issue for the past 15 years which has now become a crisis with the pandemic.

A significant shortage of Medical Laboratory Technologists (MLTs) has been a barrier to increasing testing capacity throughout COVID-19. 70% of laboratories entered the pandemic short-staffed¹ and the demand for MLTs is almost double the supply.² 86% of laboratory professionals are experiencing burnout after a year of testing 24/7 and are contemplating early retirement/leaving the profession (37%) or stress/sick leave (44%).³ In the past 12 months, we have sent monthly letters to the Premier and the Minister of Health's office about this concern with not even an acknowledgement of receipt.

We share your call for funding to expand laboratory testing capacity to save lives and respond to current and future crises. The Auditor General's Special Report on Laboratory Testing, Case Management and Contact Tracing this November registers decades of healthcare professionals calling for support—for education and training, modernization, equipment, and resources—which have gone unanswered.⁴ Although concerns identified during SARS have been well-documented, little has changed. The public is now paying the cost of the government's lack of investment in our labs.

We also agree with Vice-President Eduardo (Eddy) Almeida that community colleges and training institutions play a critical role in solving this problem. Our research has shown some of the biggest roadblocks are program seats and clinical placements, and there are wait-lists at all 5 MLT schools.

Medical laboratory professionals are a smaller group—we do not have the same large numbers as other health care professions. Because our voice is not as loud, the lab is often forgotten. COVID-19 has brought this to forefront. Now is the time to act. We would love to meet with you to speak more about how we can raise our voices together about capacity in Ontario laboratories.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MHoad'.

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

¹ Based on a survey of 2212 lab leaders and professionals in May 2020.

² Our Fall 2020 survey reported a shortage of 286 open MLT positions. [Only 157 new MLTs successfully challenged the exam - comparable to previous years – 2019 \(162\) 2018 \(166\) 2017 \(151\)](#).

³ Based on a survey of medical laboratory professionals December 2020.

⁴ [Office of the Auditor General, "Summary: Special Report on Laboratory Testing, Case Management and Contact Tracing," November 2020.](#)