

September 14, 2021

Ontario Minister of Health

Hon. Christine Elliott

College Park 5th Floor, 777 Bay St.

Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

To the Honourable Minister of Health:

We are reaching out to you to discuss the current shortage of medical laboratory technologists in Ontario. Based on the Call to Action released by the Medical Laboratory Professionals Association of Ontario (MLPAO) on August 30th 2021, we would like to pose solutions regarding the provision of fiscally responsible healthcare services to the Ontario public.

The statement released by the MLPAO brings to light the severity of the shortage of such integral members of the healthcare industry and the potential effects it will have on both patient and taxpayers. According to a survey completed in April 2021, as stated by the MLPAO, a staggering 87% of medical laboratory professionals are burnt out and 42% are considering a complete change in profession or early retirement. Clearly, there is an urgent need to seek sustainable and fiscally responsible solutions to this crisis.

Combined Laboratory & X-Ray Technologists (CLXTs) are medical laboratory professionals who provide a cost-effective healthcare delivery option and are currently under-utilized within the province of Ontario. The role of a CLXT was created specifically to provide equitable, cost-effective diagnostic services to the public in rural and suburban communities. It is not known by most, but CLXTs are trained to provide diagnostic imaging, laboratory and electrocardiography in health care facilities and hospitals that have upwards of 80 to 100 beds, as well as urgent care facilities. This profession is an integral part of the rural health delivery landscape in Western Canada, and our technologists have proved to be especially essential during the COVID-19 pandemic. They continue to provide critical diagnostic services which allow all health care team members, such as physicians and nurses, to make informed decisions and arrive to accurate diagnosis for patients and their families.

This unique blend of skills and competencies create opportunities to reduce the number of employees required for staffing both medical laboratory and diagnostic imaging departments in suburban and rural sites, resulting in significant cost savings of public dollars. With the current fiscal considerations in healthcare, the employment of more CLXTs in rural hospitals and healthcare centres would be a viable and responsible solution to the current shortage of medical laboratory professionals within your province. For example, a typical daytime shift in a rural diagnostic department would require two Medical Laboratory Technologists (MLT) and two Medical Radiography Technologists (MRT). This number of required employees could be reduced to two or three CLXTs, while still providing equitable, competent diagnostic services. Examples of savings include:

1. Employing three (3) CLXTs instead of four (4) MLT and MRTs in a healthcare centre. Based on the current MLT median hourly wage in Ontario of \$38.50/hour, this would result in an annual savings to the public of approximately \$77 000. If this shift in employment were to

occur with just 20 positions in the province, it would result in an annual savings of 1.54 million dollars.

2. With respect to callbacks after regular working hours, a single CLXT can be on call alone in place of an MLT and MRT (2 staff). This would result in a savings of approximately \$210 per callback. As there are regularly multiple callbacks after hours in hospitals across the province, particularly during the pandemic, this could also be an opportunity for significant cost savings.

Creating more CLXT positions within Ontario communities has the potential to result in sustainable and financially feasible solutions to the current shortage of medical laboratory staff. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light the critical role that laboratory professionals hold in providing timely, accurate, and high quality healthcare to the public. We would like to request the opportunity to meet with you, at your convenience, to provide detailed information on what the members of our society do and how diagnostics can be provided more efficiently, sustainably and cost-effectively to the Ontario public.

Kindest regards,

Ranessa Guo & Keith Holowinski

Co-Presidents, Canadian Society of Combined Laboratory & X-Ray Technologists

