

Ontario Invests \$1.49 Million in Clinical Preceptor Pilot to Strengthen Ontario's Medical Laboratory Workforce

Funding will support dedicated training and help approximately 41 Medical Laboratory Technologist students complete required clinical placements in 2026/2027

HAMILTON, ON, August 12, 2026— The Medical Laboratory Professionals' Association of Ontario (MLPAO) welcomes **\$1,491,025 in provincial funding through the Skills Development Fund Training Stream** to support a Clinical Preceptor Pilot Program designed to strengthen Ontario's medical laboratory workforce. The initiative will fund dedicated clinical training in participating laboratories, helping expand access to clinical placements for Medical Laboratory Technologist (MLT) students while enabling frontline laboratory professionals to remain focused on delivering critical diagnostic testing services.

Medical laboratory professionals perform the testing that informs approximately 70 percent of medical decisions and play a critical role in Ontario's healthcare system. With growing demand for laboratory services and ongoing workforce pressures, investments that support both student training and workforce sustainability are essential to ensuring patients continue to receive timely, high-quality care.

"Healthcare starts with a test, and every test depends on the expertise of a medical laboratory professional," said **Michelle Hoad, CEO of the Medical Laboratory Professionals' Association of Ontario (MLPAO).** "Medical laboratory professionals play a vital role in patient care, generating the results that inform approximately 70 percent of medical decisions. We are grateful to the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development for this \$1.49 million investment in dedicated clinical preceptors. By supporting laboratories facing staffing pressures, this pilot will help provide students with the hands-on clinical training they need to succeed while allowing frontline MLTs to remain focused on delivering the diagnostic services that patients and healthcare providers rely on every day."

Ontario's medical laboratory workforce continues to face significant challenges. More than 350 MLT positions remain vacant across the province, while demand for laboratory services continues to grow and an estimated 35 percent of the workforce is approaching retirement. According to MLPAO's 2025 survey of laboratory leaders, 68 percent of Ontario laboratories continue to experience MLT shortages, while 40 percent reported those shortages are adversely affecting testing turnaround times.

The Clinical Preceptor Pilot Program is intended to help address a key challenge facing the profession: ensuring students can access the clinical placements required to complete their education and enter the

workforce. The funding will support laboratories in providing dedicated supervision and mentorship for students while reducing pressure on existing staff.

The pilot program will fund four participating laboratory organizations across Ontario. These preceptors will provide supervision, mentorship and hands-on training for approximately 41 MLT students completing required clinical placements during 2026.

Participating partners include:

- Eastern Ontario Regional Laboratory Association (EORLA)
- InterHospital Laboratory Partnership (IHLP)
- North Bay Regional Health Centre (NBRHC)
- University Health Network (in the north) (UHN)

Clinical placements are an essential component of MLT education, providing students with the practical experience required to complete their training. After meeting their educational and clinical requirements, graduates can complete the CAMLPR entry-to-practice examinations and pursue registration with the College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Ontario (CMLTO). As laboratories across Ontario continue to face staffing shortages, dedicating staff time to supervise and train students can be challenging, underscoring the importance of initiatives that support dedicated clinical preceptors.

By funding dedicated preceptors, the province is helping participating laboratories strengthen student training, reduce pressures on frontline staff, and support recruitment and retention efforts in regions facing ongoing workforce challenges. The initiative will focus on eastern, northern and southwestern Ontario, where participating laboratory partners play a critical role in delivering diagnostic services to their communities.

Partner Perspective

"Across Eastern Ontario, laboratories continue to face recruitment challenges while demand for diagnostic testing continues to grow," said **Dennis Garvin, Chief Executive Officer, Eastern Ontario Regional Laboratory Association (EORLA)**. "This funding will help us provide students with dedicated clinical mentorship and hands-on learning opportunities while supporting our existing workforce. By investing in preceptors, the province is helping strengthen the bridge between education and practice and supporting the next generation of medical laboratory professionals who will be essential to delivering healthcare in our communities."

"For more than 65 years, the InterHospital Laboratory Partnership has connected rural hospitals through a unique regional laboratory program that strengthens access to high-quality diagnostic services. At the heart of our success are the Medical Laboratory Technologists who work behind the scenes every day to provide the diagnostic results that inform patient care. This investment will help strengthen the future of laboratory medicine by supporting experienced MLTs in mentoring students, building clinical expertise, and preparing the next generation of laboratory professionals. We are grateful to MLPAO for its advocacy



and leadership, and to the Ministry for its commitment to developing the healthcare workforce of tomorrow. Together, we are investing not only in future laboratory professionals, but in the strength and resilience of healthcare for the communities we serve." **Jimmy Trieu, President & CEO of Huron Health System and Chair of the IHLP CEO Council.**

"The province's investment through the Skills Development Fund is an important step in building a sustainable medical laboratory workforce, particularly in Northern Ontario," said **Rachel Desjardins, Manager, Laboratory Services, North Bay Regional Health Centre.** "Combined with the Learn and Stay Grant, expanded MLT education capacity and the continued advocacy of MLPAO to raise the profile of our profession, we are attracting more students to medical laboratory careers. This funding helps us address the next critical piece by building capacity within our laboratories to provide the hands-on clinical training those students need to become practice-ready MLTs. With more than one-third of Ontario's practising MLTs approaching retirement, investing in the next generation now is essential to protecting access to laboratory services for the communities we serve."

"UHN Laboratory Medicine Program is proud to support MLPAO's leveraging of Ontario's Skills Development Fund, and its investment in building a strong, skilled medical laboratory workforce. By creating meaningful, hands-on learning experiences for students in Northern Ontario, we are helping develop the next generation of laboratory medicine professionals while strengthening local capacity and supporting the long-term needs of the communities they will serve." **Christine Bruce, Senior Director, Laboratory Medicine, University Health Network.**

About MLPAO

The Medical Laboratory Professionals' Association of Ontario (MLPAO) is the provincial organization for medical laboratory technologists and medical laboratory assistant/technicians. Incorporated in 1963, it represents over 3800+ laboratory professionals across Ontario.

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