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Canadian Society for Medical Science
33 Wellington St. North, Hamilton
ON, L8R 1M7

April 27, 2018

Dear Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS),

I am writing, on behalf of the Island Health, Department of Laboratory Medicine, Pathology & Medical Genetics, to provide support for the CSMLS advocacy initiative and contribute to efforts that reduce the health human resource (HHR) shortage of medical laboratory technologists (MLTs) in Canada.

In alignment with CSMLS views, Island Health has high expectations of the testing quality produced by Canada's laboratory workforce. We believe MLTs are integral in this process and that informed and committed laboratories, academic programs and professionals are central to taking action against the HHR shortage. The CSMLS advocacy initiative, ultimately, aspires to ensure patients continue to receive timely support and high-quality laboratory services by qualified MLTs.

I acknowledge that Canada is facing a serious HHR shortage of MLTs and recognize that the profession, health care teams and patients will be negatively affected if academic programs are not supported in their efforts to increase the number of enrolled students. In 2010, the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) identified that [approximately half of all MLTs would be eligible to retire within 10 years](#), with the greatest impact felt in Canada's rural and remote communities. This period of time has closed in on the professional community and its [negative effects are evident](#).

According to [evidence collected by CSMLS](#), the number of clinical placement sites for laboratory students is decreasing. This is increasing the burden on the remaining clinical sites to uphold the high standard of quality training required by MLT students to achieve competency. Academic programs require a clinical placement site and reserved spot prior to admitting a student, creating a system bottleneck.

Island Health's, Department of Laboratory Medicine, Pathology & Medical Genetics is committed to evaluating our department capacity in 2018 and determining whether MLT students can be received for clinical placement training in the near future with the expectation that there is consideration for funding/resource support provided for these placements.

Department of Laboratory Medicine, Pathology & Medical Genetics
1952 Bay Street | Victoria, BC V8R 1J8 Canada

Tel: 250-370-8226 | Fax: 250-370-8873
Catriona.Gano@viha.ca

I welcome discussions with academic programs across Canada, accreditors and other stakeholders to ensure that conversations produce viable and sustainable action plans. Although our organization may or may not be able to support the evaluation of all CSMLS MLT competencies, I recognize that providing students with the experience and exposure to some competencies is vital in the HHR collaborative model CSMLS stands behind.

In addition, I am committed to discussions internally regarding the hiring of clinical placement students who have been certified and determining/enhancing the potential for streamlining employment opportunities. A component of this discussion will include the evaluation of precarious positions and the impact of this on the medical laboratory professionals our organization employs.

I hope other health care organizations recognize the importance of increasing opportunities for clinical placement training of MLT students and work with us and CSMLS to create a strong HHR solution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catriona Gano". The script is cursive and fluid.

Catriona Gano
Director, Laboratory Medicine
Island Health