

## **Failed Staffing Strategy, Lack of Investments Leave Labs Short in Crisis**

*Three Military Staff a "Drop in the Bucket"*

**May 27, 2021 Winnipeg MB** – Earlier this week, critical staffing shortages in Shared Health Microbiology Departments that perform COVID and other necessary medical tests caused the Manitoba Government to reach out for assistance from the military. Reportedly, three Medical Laboratory Technologists from the Canadian Armed Forces will be provided to help backfill this urgent need for skilled laboratory professionals.

The Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals (MAHCP) is questioning whether this urgently needed assistance will arrive in time and if it will be enough, given recent resignations in Microbiology and other areas.

"Laboratory professionals are leaving our labs because they've been cut to the bone, and those left behind are being asked to do more and more. Now they're feeling the pressures of a health care system that is buckling under the strain of a COVID third wave," said Bob Moroz, MAHCP President.

"Three temporary medical laboratory technologists are welcome but it's a drop in the bucket compared to the demand placed upon these departments. Our laboratory staff need well thought-out solutions with proper planning, not desperate and temporary measures in a crisis."

Staffing shortages and related pressures are affecting many Shared Health laboratories across the province, which are struggling to maintain adequate staffing levels to keep up with rising demands for testing. This troubling trend started before the pandemic and has grown more acute over the past year as the need for COVID-19 testing has increased.

Third-wave demands are pushing scarce staffing resources even further, with increased overtime and additional shifts being added. Staff burnout is also on the rise, as is use of sick time, compounding an already precarious staffing shortage. Last year, Shared Health suspended a number of lab tests to try to relieve the pressure on Microbiology departments but they added no additional staffing resources.

"The government has no plan to sustain laboratory services, no recruitment and retention strategy to address a looming demographic crisis in our labs. Recent graduates are not enough to fill upcoming vacancies, including early retirements of professionals who are just fed up," said Moroz.

*The Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals (MAHCP) represents over 100 members in Microbiology Labs at Health Sciences Centre, St. Boniface Hospital, Westman Laboratory in Brandon, The Pas and at Thompson General Hospital. MAHCP represents over 1200 Shared Health laboratory professionals at sites across the province. More information about us can be found at [www.mahcp.ca](http://www.mahcp.ca).*