



LAB  
WORK,  
**THAT'S  
US!**



## NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2025

### THE STATE OF LABS IN 2025 AND CHALLENGES ON THE HORIZON

The annual meeting of the APTS's local lab teams was held on May 29. It was a chance to get an overview of the state of these essential services, plan our upcoming actions, and give your representatives the tools they need to deal with employers, the health and social services ministry (MSSS), and Santé Québec.

One year after the *Moving forward for the future of our labs* event, members of the provincial working committee on medical laboratories (*Table nationale des laboratoires*), labour relations counsellors, and provincial representatives of their institutions met to take stock of the situation in their labs, the challenges for the coming year - particularly as we head into summer - as well as the impact of Santé Québec's arrival.

#### Here are the highlights.

While some teams are experiencing relative stability as summer begins - or even a slight improvement - the situation in most labs is touch and go. The prospect of service breaks is already looming in some institutions because of labour shortages and vacations.

The fact is that staff shortages are getting worse in the vast majority of labs. In some regions, mitigation measures are even being planned: for example, physicians are being asked to limit certain requests during a given period.

Emergency measures have also been rolled out in recent months. This was the case for the lab in Hôpital de Maria, in Gaspésie, which made headlines for the untenable situation its (too) small team had been experiencing for months!

The situation was different for the CIUSSS du Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, which couldn't offer our members enough working hours, with several quitting as a result. The staff shortage is starting to be felt now.

## WE DEMAND A CRITICAL CARE PREMIUM FOR BLOOD BANKS

Given the serious shortage of medical technologists in blood banks, some institutions granted them the critical care premium until last fall. The practice ended when budget cuts started, with the employer claiming it wasn't in line with the provisions of the collective agreement.

The APTS responded by filing grievances to contest the decision by the institutions concerned, and we are taking things a step further. The critical care premium is needed because of difficulties in retaining staff, and we hope to see it extended to all medical technologists who work in blood banks in every lab we represent, as a matter of fairness and to better support service delivery.

The APTS has submitted a formal request to the CPNSSS (management bargaining committee for the health and social services sector). Stay tuned!



## WORKFORCE PLANNING - AN ADDITIONAL TOOL TO ILLUSTRATE WORK OVERLOAD

To demonstrate - with receipts in hand - that the staff shortage is getting worse and putting labs on thin ice, the APTS is currently building a picture of the laboratory workforce. By collecting data about staff on the ground and hours worked, we will attempt to illustrate the major trends your representatives are seeing, such as work overloads, that affect you as employees and that also put pressure on services. Our goal is to find long-term solutions. This portrait will offer an overview for the province as a whole. It will also provide specific information about each cluster as well as the labs we represent outside Santé Québec (Héma-Québec and INSPQ).



## OTHER ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

### SIL-P rollout

Implementation of SIL-P, the provincial laboratory information system, is under way, and all OPTILAB clusters should be connected by December 2025. Unfortunately, problems observed during the initial rollouts still seem to be present whenever an institution goes online. We are watching things closely so that we can draw attention to problems, demand improvements for employees, and limit the impact on services provided to Quebecers.

### Plan to abolish the graduate medical laboratory technician job title

In March, the health and social services ministry announced its plan to abolish the graduate medical laboratory technician job title. The labour shortage, especially in blood banks, was the pretext. The APTS believes this is an unjustified decision that will not solve the problem identified by the employer. What is actually needed is a set of measures to attract employees and truly acknowledge the value of their work. We will continue to make representations to get the MSSS to see that it's barking up the wrong tree, again.

### Ventilation and OHS in labs

The lab at the Hôpital Sainte-Croix in Drummondville made headlines in early 2025 for formaldehyde fumes caused by the poor ventilation - and lack of maintenance - of macroscopic tables. Steps were taken, and the APTS made sure that none of our members working in labs would be exposed to this type of risk again. Monitoring is currently taking place to assess the situation in all our labs. We are also making representations to ensure that all necessary measures are taken to protect employees.

### Macroscopic description

"Macroscopy" is an activity carried out by a number of APTS members, as their managers and the pathologists who draw up protocols and provide training in this area are well aware. However, the macroscopic description of anatomopathological specimens may constitute a medical act. Under current legislation, we can't ask for recognition of the fact that professional practice has evolved for this activity, even though some APTS members have developed expertise and are carrying out the activity daily.

The APTS requested a legal opinion about the scope of this practice and its impact in order to protect our members who are affected by it, clarify the situation, and evaluate the possibility of gaining this recognition. We will continue to keep an eye on this issue.

## Assigning tasks to employees with other job titles

Each job title in a lab is associated with a specific role and specific responsibilities. However, as the labour shortage intensifies, managers are displaying a level of creativity bordering on recklessness in the area of organization of work as they assign specialized tasks to employees such as Class “B” technicians who do not have the qualifications of those with post-secondary diplomas in biomedical laboratory technology. This leads to concerns about the quality of essential services provided to Quebecers. The APTS has taken a position several times on this issue and will continue to address it as the phenomenon becomes more prevalent.



## COMING SOON: DISCUSSIONS WITH LAB MANAGERS

Valuable discussions took place during our day-long meeting dedicated to labs. Using these insights as a basis, your representatives have been invited to organize meetings with the managers of their respective labs, or to take advantage of opportunities as they arise, in order to tell them about the impact of managerial decisions. Topics include the labour shortage and the resulting work overload, respect for your expertise, obsolete facilities, and changes arising from SIL-P.

These meetings will offer us a clear overview of future developments in labs, at the local level and across Québec. We believe that regular and constructive discussions are the best way to improve the situation. Teams having difficulty arranging a meeting with their managers will be offered guidance and support.

Stay tuned for more information in our newsletters this fall.