



For Immediate Release  
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## ***Over 8,000 Health Care Professionals Challenge All Provincial Leadership Candidates to “Put Patient Safety First!”***

The BC Society of Laboratory Science [BCSLS] and the BC Association of Medical Radiation Technologists [BCAMRT] today jointly issued a challenge to all Liberal and NDP Provincial Leadership Candidates to put patient safety first and commit to establishing a Joint Regulatory College that would regulate and license Medical Laboratory Technologists (MLT) and Medical Radiation Technologists (MRT) in British Columbia. The BCSLS and the BCAMRT are the professional organizations that represent MLTs and MRTs working in the province’s health care system. They are urging the provincial government to implement measures that will protect patient safety and maintain confidence in medical laboratory testing and diagnostic services province wide. There are in excess of 8,000 of these technologists currently practicing in BC.

Regulatory colleges protect the public by ensuring that health care professionals are qualified and competent to practice. They establish who is allowed to practice, develop codes of ethics, determine scope of practice, enforce requirements for continuing competence and provide a public complaints/disciplinary process. The public in B.C. supports the licensing of laboratory and radiation technologists [88% according to an independent April 2009 survey], but politicians continue to ignore public opinion. The lack of licensing means that continuing education and continuing competency are not mandated, but are purely voluntary.

Both organizations have been proponents of self regulation of their professions for decades. In 1999 and 2002 respectively, the Health Professions Council recommended the regulation of MLTs and MRT’s. However, the government ignored the recommendation. In 2007, at the urging of the government, the two organizations forwarded a submission to the BC Ministry of Health to designate a Joint Regulatory College for Medical Laboratory and Radiation Technologists under the Health Professions Act. To date the BC Ministry of Health, politicians and bureaucrats, have chosen not to act. The Leadership Candidates now have an opportunity to change that and we challenge them to do so.

According to Cheryl McCullough, President of the BCSLS, “Medical Laboratory Technologists are regulated and licensed in every province in Canada **except British Columbia**. Since up to 85% of decisions about patient diagnosis and treatment are based on medical laboratory tests, the patient and their health care providers must always have confidence in the accuracy of these test results. As medical laboratory professionals we remain committed to our number one priority—ensuring patient safety through accurate medical laboratory testing. To that end we embrace the concept of self regulation and mandatory licensing and it is the professionals themselves who are asking for this regulation.”

Louise Kallhood, President of BCAMRT agrees, saying “many procedures performed by Medical Radiation Technologists are invasive, involving injection of contrast materials and radio isotopes, administration of ionizing radiation and management of patients who are critically ill or injured. Radiation Therapists make treatment plans and apply high energy x-rays with extreme accuracy for treatment of cancer patients. All procedures performed by these individuals are used to make clinical decisions and administer treatments and /or medication and therefore have a very real potential for public harm if they are not performed properly. Mandatory certification and continuing competency is critical in an environment where technology, processes, systems and procedures are rapidly changing. It is essential that medical technologists are required to maintain and improve their knowledge and skills once the initial formal training is completed.

The people of British Columbia have the right to expect that their tests and treatments will be performed by qualified, competent Medical Laboratory and Radiation Technologists. They deserve nothing less.

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