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11AM - Lab Improvements

Good afternoon Mr. Chair and esteemed committee members, my name is Alex Bushell, CEO of Lab Improvements. Thank you for inviting me to speak with you today about how the COVID-19 pandemic has delayed the procurement of new medical equipment and services.

When COVID-19 hit North America in March, elective surgeries were cancelled - leading to a large backlog of patients waiting for cancer detection and diagnosis. In order to catch up, many hospitals are extending surgery hours into the evenings and weekends. This sudden increase in volume is going to overwhelm Ontario's pathology labs which were already [under equipped and short staffed](#) before the pandemic due to the [chronic shortage of Medical Lab Technicians](#).

Based in Peterborough, Lab Improvements specializes in developing and manufacturing robotic solutions for hospital labs. In 2018, we partnered with the Peterborough Regional Health Centre through a [provincial program](#) called Procurement by Co-Design to develop a device that would automate the sorting and filing of histology slides, a time consuming bottleneck seen in all pathology labs across Ontario and leads to delays for patient diagnosis and treatment. The project was highly successful and has since been featured in multiple industry publications as well as [CTV news](#) nationally.

Once our technology was installed in the Peterborough Regional Health Centre, the staff time required to sort and file patient samples dropped dramatically from six and a half hours down to less than an hour. This allowed the already overworked staff to focus on higher yield activities within the lab. Peterborough Regional Health Centre is now able to be more efficient in the use of its fiscal and staff resources.

After seeing the success of the technology in Peterborough, many of Ontario's leading pathology labs began actively pursuing the purchase of our SlideTrack technology. Adoption provides hospitals with immediate improvement in patient diagnosis times, in addition to saving their labs time and money. However due to budget uncertainty caused by COVID-19, many new equipment purchases here in Canada have been delayed or cancelled. These procurement delays have severely impacted our projected growth but more importantly it has left Ontario pathology labs in a precarious position.

Both Federal and Provincial levels of Government have promised additional money for health care to make up for funding shortfalls but there has been no additional information on when it will arrive, how it will be distributed, or what conditions might be

attached to this money. Lab Improvements calls upon the Government of Ontario to streamline the procurement process and prioritize the adoption of Ontario developed technology. This would let the medical technology developed here at home to help with Ontario's COVID-19 recovery while also helping companies like ours to hire additional staff into desirable high tech manufacturing jobs that Peterborough and our province so badly need right now.

Two specific items that could help hospitals and regional health units adopt Ontario developed technology are:

- The creation of a specific fund for the purchase of made-in-Ontario technology from small and medium sized enterprises.
- A one-time injection of funding to healthcare supply chain services organizations like Plexxus, Mohawk Medbuy Corporation, and Northern Supply Chain for the procurement of efficiency improving technologies.

The Lab Improvements team knows that these two items would have an immediate impact on the abilities of the hospitals and regional health units we work with across the province. Ensuring that they are more efficient in the delivery of life saving medicine and are able to put their resources where they are needed most.

Thank you for your time, I look forward to your questions.