



## **A. Background**

In April 2014, Government passed the Laboratory Services Act (the Act) to move forward on the laboratory reform mandate. Enacted on October 1, 2015, the Act consolidates responsibilities for governance, funding and service delivery oversight of publicly funded medical laboratory services under a single statute. As the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) proceeds with operationalizing the administrative aspects of the Act, expert advice from various stakeholders is required. The Ministry has established the Laboratory Operational Committee (the Committee) to provide the Ministry with timely access to expert advice and guidance when making critical operational decisions under the new Act.

## **B. Mandate**

The Committee will provide the Ministry with advice and guidance on operational issues related to the laboratory system in British Columbia. The Committee's approach is evidence-based, and its advice reflects medical and scientific knowledge and current clinical practice. The recommendations of the Committee aim to improve and maintain the quality, safety and performance of the British Columbia laboratory system.

## **C. Duties and Powers**

On the direction of the Ministry provide advice and assistance (including recommendations, if appropriate and requested) to the Ministry on any laboratory services matter, including but not limited to:

1. Approvals (and cancellations) regarding the provision of benefits, fees, testing technology;
2. Approvals of new and changes to existing laboratory requisitions;
3. The development and implementation of laboratory protocols and guidelines;
4. Policy issues that may impact the quality of services, care of patients and/or the delivery of laboratory services in the province;
5. Other initiatives that may optimize the efficiency and effectiveness of various aspects of the laboratory system;
6. Receive, review, and investigate reports of, or concerns about, actual or potential conflicts of interest in relation to laboratory facilities;
7. Appoint sub-committees or working groups of the Committee, at the discretion of the Chair in consultation with the Ministry, if required to support the Committee in achieving its mandate; and,
8. Any other matter which the Ministry may refer to the Committee from time to time.

**D. Membership/Appointment**

1. The Committee will consist of up to ten (10) members, but not fewer than seven (7) persons.
2. Committee members (Members) will be appointed by the Ministry, which will seek Expressions of Interest from relevant stakeholder groups – such as, the Health Authorities, publicly-funded/privately-owned laboratory facilities, the Doctors of British Columbia, and the boards/councils of relevant professional colleges or associations.<sup>1</sup>
3. The Members will include the following:
  - a) There will be five (5) medical/clinical practitioners, including:
    - i. Two (2) laboratory medicine physicians (from the fields of clinical pathology, anatomical pathology, hematology, medical microbiology, or genetics);
    - ii. One (1) clinical scientist;
    - iii. One (1) referring practitioner;
    - iv. One (1) medical laboratory technologist.
  - b) There will be two (2) government members.
  - c) There will be two (2) persons chosen as representatives from British Columbia’s publicly-funded laboratory facilities – preferably one from an urban health service delivery area and the other from a rural health service delivery area.
  - d) There will be one (1) person chosen as a representative of the general public.
4. A government member will be appointed as Chair of the Committee.
5. Another government member may be designated as Vice-Chair, who will be responsible for assuming the Chair’s responsibilities and exercising the Chair’s powers at the request for the Chair or when the Chair is unable to fulfill his or her responsibilities.
6. The Committee may, at the discretion of the Chair, seek outside input by inviting other persons to participate in Committee meetings.
7. Secretariat (administrative and logistical support), research, economic and policy support for the Committee will be provided by the Ministry.

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<sup>1</sup> Including, but not limited to: College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia (CPSBC), College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia, (BC) College of Midwives, College of Podiatric Surgeons of BC, College of Dental Surgeons of BC, Association of Registered Nurses of BC, BC Nurse Practitioner Association, Midwives Association of BC, BC Dental Association, BC Podiatric Medical Association, BC Society of Laboratory Science, and Health Sciences Association of BC.

**E. Membership Qualifications Criteria**

1. The Members should possess the following competencies:
  - a) Knowledge of issues related to the health care system at the community, regional and/or national level;
  - b) Experience in committee and/or community work;
  - c) Ability to comply with the Committee's Conflict of Interest Policy;
  - d) Ability to act with integrity and independence of specific interests;
  - e) Ability to relate to and respect a diverse range of values and beliefs;
  - f) Ability to review and synthesize considerable amounts of information;
  - g) Availability to commit the time necessary to participate fully;
  - h) Experience or familiarity with government policy and decision-making processes;
  - i) Experience working in a team-based and/or collaborative decision-making environment; and,
  - j) Objectivity and strong reasoning skills, including the ability to understand complex systems.
2. The public Member should also possess the following competencies:
  - a) Awareness of, and interest in, the perspectives of members of the general public on issues related to health care services, particularly laboratory services;
  - b) Experience with public engagement; and,
  - c) Potentially possess broad economic expertise.

**F. Membership Duration and Withdrawal**

1. The government members will have indefinite terms. All other members are typically appointed for two (2) terms (i.e., 2 years) and are eligible for two (2) subsequent appointments of two (2) years, for a maximum of three (3) terms (i.e., 6 years).
2. Length of appointment may be adjusted to ensure optimal succession planning.
3. Members are required to attend at least 75 percent of the Committee meetings each term. Members who do not comply will automatically forfeit membership. Exceptions to this are at discretion of the Chair, who may approve:
  - a) Requests to participate in in-person meetings by telephone or other communications medium that permit the Member and all other persons participating in the meeting to hear each other. (Note: such a request must be submitted to the Chair and Secretariat at least 24 hours before the meeting.)
  - b) An extended absence of any Member (subject to the right of the Ministry to replace a Member at any time).
4. A Member may resign at any time upon written notification to the Chair and the Ministry.

### G. Responsibilities of the Chair and Vice-Chair

1. In addition to the duties and powers listed above, the Chair is responsible for:
  - a) Reporting on the Committee's activities to the Ministry;
  - b) Acting as the key liaison between the Committee and the Ministry;
  - c) Being the main spokesperson for the Committee;
  - d) Coordinating and ensuring Secretariat services (administrative and logistical support) to the Committee are provided by Ministry staff;
  - e) Scheduling the regular meetings of the Committee and any ad hoc / special meetings required to complete the time-sensitive and otherwise exceptional business of the Committee;
  - f) Preparing an agenda for each meeting of the Committee, in collaboration with the Ministry;
  - g) Ensuring the Committee's conflict of interest policy is properly applied in the process of reaching Committee advice and recommendations; and,
  - h) Providing reasons for every recommendation made by the Committee.
2. The Vice-Chair shall be responsible for assuming the Committee Chair's responsibilities at the request of the Chair or when the Chair is unable to fulfill his or her responsibilities.

### H. Responsibilities of the Secretariat

The Secretariat functions to be performed include, but are not limited to:

1. Assisting with scheduling and the coordination of regular and ad hoc / special meetings.
2. Preparing, assembling, and distributing Committee materials, including:
  - a) **Requests for Recommendation** – each request for a recommendation from the Committee requires a one-page briefing note that summarizes the issue, background, options (as appropriate and applicable) and preferred recommendation. This document is to accompany any materials that the Committee is to consider in its deliberations.
  - b) **Agenda and related documents** – meeting packages (including the agenda, requests for recommendation and associated documents) are to be assembled and circulated to Committee members no later than five (5) working days in advance of the meeting in which such material will be considered, or in the case of a special meeting, as far in advance of the meeting as is practicable.
  - c) **Minutes** – draft minutes and supporting documents are to be promptly circulated to all Committee members following each meeting. Approved minutes of meetings and related records are to be completed and maintained.

3. Maintaining records on any matter involving the exercise of performance of any duty or power of the Committee or Chair, including but not limited to:<sup>2</sup>
  - a) All recommendations made by the Committee;
  - b) All reasons for recommendation given by the Committee; and,
  - c) All disclosures and measures taken to mitigate specific conflicts of interest.

**I. Meetings and Decision-Making**

1. The Committee will meet at least six (6) times per term. The meeting schedule will be determined at the beginning of each term.
2. Additional meetings may be held at the discretion of the Chair, or the Ministry.
3. Meetings will typically be conducted in person, and be 3 to 4 hours in duration (depending on the agenda).
4. If deemed appropriate by the Chair, such in the case of ad hoc / special meetings, a meeting may be conducted via teleconference or other communication medium – as long as all participating members are able to hear each other throughout the meeting.
5. In addition to the Members, only the following persons may be permitted to attend meetings of the Committee:
  - a) Experts and other persons acting as resources to the Committee by invitation only;
  - b) Ministry staff that are providing Ministry functions; and,
  - c) Other persons as deemed appropriate by the Chair, in consultation with the Ministry.
6. **Quorum** – In the case of regularly scheduled meetings and special meetings, a quorum shall be 50 percent of total Members existing at the time of the meeting in question; however, a quorum may not be less than four members.
7. Recommendations from the Committee are made based on consensus.
8. Draft minutes will be tabled for review and approval at the next meeting. As appropriate, the reasons for recommendations will be recorded in the minutes.

**J. Term / Duration of the Committee**

1. The term (12 months) of the Committee begins when Committee members have been appointed in accordance with the Section D [Membership] of the Terms of Reference.
2. The Committee shall run indefinitely, ending only if and when the Ministry terminates the Committee.

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<sup>2</sup> The Ministry shall keep permanent records in accordance with ARCS – a combined records classification and scheduling system that facilitates the efficient and systematic organization, retrieval, storage, and destruction or permanent retention of the government's administrative records.

**K. Confidentiality and Conflicts of Interest**

1. All Members, invitees and other persons participating in the activities of the Committee (including its sub-committees or working groups) are required to respect the confidentiality of the Committee, including but not limited to meeting deliberations and any materials provided as part of the meetings. No participant shall knowingly divulge any such information to any person other than another participant, unless the participant is legally required to do so.
2. Each Member will sign a Conflict of Interest undertaking and disclose real, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest, both annually and before each meeting, according to the Committee's Conflict of Interest Policy.
3. The Secretariat will maintain a record of all disclosures and measures taken to mitigate specific conflicts of interest.
4. Breach of the Committee's confidentiality and/or the Committee's Conflict of Interest Policy may result in removal of the Member or other person from the Committee.

**L. Remuneration and Reimbursement**

1. Members will not receive any remuneration beyond the rates of reimbursement for travel expenses to which they are entitled by virtue of their position or employment.
2. Members will be reimbursed for travel expenses to attend meetings (in accordance with Government of British Columbia travel policy for Group 2 non-government employees). Members should submit their claims for travel expenses (with required documentation) to the Secretariat within 30 calendar days of each meeting date.

**M. Accountability and Reporting**

1. In addition to providing advice and recommendations to the Ministry, the Committee will report to the Ministry at least once per term regarding:
  - a) The activities of the Committee; and,
  - b) Any other matter the Ministry requires.