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For immediate release

**Community Patients Pay Price of Corporate Laboratory Control**

Ontarians should be very concerned that thousands of patients are about to have their access to essential medical health services restricted by the needs of large private corporations, said Gerard Kennedy, spokesperson for the Ontario Coalition for Lab Reform (OCLR).

Lifelabs announced earlier this week the pending shutdown of 15 public service locations for community medical laboratory testing, as well as the ending of services to 11 other community test service locations across the province, contrary to a public promise made at the time of their 2013 takeover of CML Laboratories. It is also cutting hours at 53 further locations and laying off over 125 staff in Ontario. Lifelabs is guaranteed the same 62% of the province-wide OHIP payment for this service regardless. An estimated 500,000 visits from 180,000 community patients could be disrupted.

“Patients will lose services not because of government cutbacks, but rather company choice” said Kennedy “Our coalition members would be glad to replace the very same services that are being withdrawn for the same price but we are not currently allowed to do so.”

OCLR members have heard from physicians from various Toronto area locations threatened with the loss of lab services that are very concerned for their patients’ wellbeing. In one case, a group ob-gyn doctors feel their patients will be at risk without the benefit of their integrated ultrasound and other diagnostic services for their pregnancies. “Lack of timely testing and possibly even missed testing will result in decreased medical care” says Dr. Georgina Wilcock an ob-gyn in a clinic of over 15 doctors at 1920 Ellesmere Road. In a second in Etobicoke, patients will be forced to travel an additional 3.4 kilometres.

“We need a public debate on community medical laboratory reform” said Kennedy who is also CEO of Alpha Laboratories “Funding should follow the patient, and the patients’ needs should be at the centre of public healthcare decisions, not the requirements of large private corporations.”

The Ontario Coalition for Lab Reform is a group of owner operated medical laboratories, non-profit laboratory organizations, laboratory professionals, healthcare providers, and allied health services.

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