

## **CRITICAL FACTS ABOUT ONTARIO'S COMMUNITY LABORATORY SECTOR**

For decades, the Ontario Association of Medical Laboratories ("OAML") and its members have taken a leading role to ensure that Ontarians benefit from one of the highest quality community laboratory testing systems in North America. Ontarians that attend member OAML laboratories are assured that they are receiving the highest quality laboratory testing that meet or exceed established laboratory standards.

**70% of clinical decisions are informed by test results**

You may recently have received a communication from the Ontario Coalition for Laboratory Reform. This document contains negative and misleading information on the community laboratory sector. It is important to set the record straight about community laboratories in Ontario and the process undertaken to achieve modernization in this sector and bring greater value to the healthcare system.

**Lab results make up 80% of a patient's medical record**

### **COMMUNITY LABS IN ONTARIO TODAY**

There are seven community laboratory providers in the province: one large provider with 230 licensed collection centres, one medium sized provider with 94 licensed collection centres and 5 small providers with less than 20 licensed collection centres each.

Laboratory test results are crucial for clinicians to provide appropriate care for their patients.

- Provide vital information to **19,000 clinicians**
- Analyze specimens from **17 million patient visits** annually
- Collect specimens from residents in **700 long term care facilities**
- Provide services to over **100,000 patients in their own homes**
- Perform **125 million tests** annually

**Nearly 100% of cancer diagnoses are determined by lab results**

### **SYSTEM MODERNIZATION**

The Ministry of Health and Long term Care (Ministry) is expected to finalize the first stage of the modernization of the community laboratory system by the end of December. The Ministry established a Laboratory Services Expert Panel to review the laboratory services system. The Panel submitted its report in December 2015 after which the Ministry undertook a collaborative process with community laboratories. OAML members (large and small) worked with the Ministry to transform the decades old funding and delivery model for community laboratory services so it would be more relevant in today's healthcare environment and to reflect changing patient needs.

### **SYSTEM FUNDING**

Today, the Ministry is paying virtually the same amount per Ontario resident than it did in 1992/93 for community lab services. If inflation were included in this calculation, the expected per capita payment would be \$67.27 instead of the actual amount paid today which is \$42.98. This represents a savings to the Ministry of \$343 million in today's dollars. OAML laboratories have brought both quality and efficiency to Ontario's community laboratory testing system.

**Less than 3% of the  
provincial health budget is  
spent on laboratory services**

### **SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS**

Despite significant financial challenges community laboratories have achieved greater efficiencies, improved the patient experience and improved access:

- Licensed collection facilities are being modernized and upgraded to replace smaller outdated facilities
- Since 2003 the number of licensed collection centres has increased from 354 to 359
- Over 95% of routine testing results are reported to the ordering clinician within 24 hours
- Patients can book appointments to have their blood taken or check in online prior to attending at a collection site
- Labs have introduced wait time management systems to better manage wait times  
Direct to patient results are being provided to support patients in the management of their own health
- OAML members were the very first to submit laboratory results to the Ontario Laboratory Information System (OLIS). Today, over 95% of test results from community patients are being uploaded to OLIS.
- 97% of patients reported a "very good" or "good" patient experience with labs (*MOHLTC Ontario Health Survey 2014*)
- 98% of General Practitioners were satisfied with lab services (*MOHLTC Ontario Health Survey 2014*)

### **CONCLUSION**

Through the OAML, member laboratories have transformed the Ontario community laboratory sector from a number of dispersed and independent providers to a consolidated group of laboratories that are committed to providing Ontario patients with the highest standard of care and reasonable access to service. Ontarians can be assured that specimen collection and testing at OAML member laboratories are adhering to the internationally accepted standards of Ontario's rigorous quality management program.

The OAML and its member laboratories continue to work collaboratively with the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care to introduce new technologies and bring innovation to enhance community laboratory services for the Ontario healthcare system.