

March 19, 2025

The Honourable Sylvia Jones
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
5th Floor, 777 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2J3
SENT BY EMAIL: sylvia.jones@pc.ola.org

Planned Closure of the LifeLabs Laboratory in Greater Sudbury and Impacts on Northern Ontario

Dear Minister Jones,

At a time when the Province is looking to Northern Ontario to drive economic growth, create jobs, and support critical industries, it is essential that our region's workforce and residents have reliable access to responsive and dependable health services.

For this reason, I am writing to express serious concern about LifeLabs' planned closure of its **Greater Sudbury laboratory this spring**, which would centralize Northern Ontario testing in southern Ontario.

The Sudbury laboratory processes specimens from across Northern Ontario, including Sault Ste. Marie, North Bay, Manitoulin Island, and rural communities along Highway 11. Chronically ill patients, newborns, long-term care residents, and individuals on time-sensitive medications depend on predictable turnaround times to guide clinical decisions. Transporting specimens hundreds of kilometres south introduces avoidable delays and new risks—particularly given frequent highway closures during Northern Ontario winters.

Beyond patient care, the closure weakens Northern Ontario's already strained health workforce. It reduces local employment, disrupts student placements and training pipelines, and undermines long-term recruitment and retention of medical laboratory professionals in the North.

At the same time, municipalities and health partners on Manitoulin Island have raised a constructive alternative: with appropriate provincial funding, **Manitoulin Health Centre** could expand in-house laboratory capacity to serve additional Island communities. This approach would strengthen public health infrastructure, reduce reliance on private providers, create local jobs, and improve service resilience—while acknowledging that until such capacity is in place, the Sudbury LifeLabs facility remains essential.

Minister, we respectfully urge the Ministry of Health to:

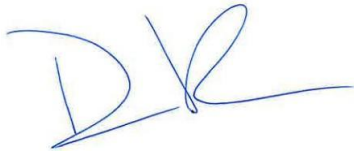
- Work with LifeLabs to **maintain essential laboratory processing capacity in Northern Ontario**, including in Greater Sudbury;
- Ensure **medically appropriate and reliable turnaround times** for Northern patients;

- Protect existing laboratory jobs and the **future workforce pipeline**;
- Explore and support **public-sector laboratory alternatives**, including adequate funding for hospitals willing to expand local testing capacity.

The planned closure of the Sudbury laboratory poses a serious risk to patient care, workforce stability, and regional health system resilience. We ask that the Ministry take immediate steps to address these concerns and clarify how Northern Ontarians will be protected.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue further at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Plourde', with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Dave Plourde
President

