

## THOMPSON HOSPITAL LAB CRITICALLY SHORT-STAFFED, AT RISK OF CLOSURE

*Only Three Lab Technologists Left, 75% Vacancy Rate*

**April 25, 2023** Winnipeg MB – Critical laboratory staffing shortages at Thompson General Hospital threaten to shut down emergency room services altogether, according to the Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals (MAHCP) that represents diagnostic technologists in Manitoba. Access to laboratory services, performed by specialized allied health professionals, is necessary for rapid diagnosis and treatment of patients in car accidents, heart attacks, pregnancy complications and other medical emergencies. Emergency rooms in Roblin (2020) and Eriksdale (2022) have previously been closed due to lack of available lab services.

“Government and Shared Health have had years to address retention and recruitment for rural and northern diagnostics,” said Jason Linklater, President of the Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals. “Between working conditions and mandated overtime, a contract that is over five years old, and up to \$40,000 in hiring incentives in competing jurisdictions like Saskatchewan, Shared Health cannot expect to keep the highly specialized staff we have, let alone recruit new people.”

The staffing situation at the Thompson lab has steadily worsened in recent years. Since 2020, six medical laboratory technologists have left positions in Thompson. Currently there are only three technologists out of 12 total positions, a 75% vacancy rate.

Technologists who perform CT scans, X-ray and ultrasound testing in Thompson are also in increasingly short supply, with a vacancy rate of approximately 40%. Additionally, recent government data shows that the province-wide vacancy rate in diagnostics, which includes laboratory and diagnostic imaging, has nearly doubled in the past year, from 8.7% in March 2022 to 16.2% March 2023.

Workload assessment data obtained by MAHCP show that laboratory technologists in Thompson have been forced to work up to 47 hours straight, including full shifts and on-call, to keep necessary lab services available for physicians and patients.

“Lab staff are doing everything they can to keep the hospital running, but they need help and they’re not getting it,” said Linklater. “We are very concerned that the few technologists who are left won’t be able to hold out much longer.”

*The Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals is a union representing over 7000 allied health professionals working in more than 40+ disciplines across Manitoba. After a 99% strike vote in April 2023, MAHCP members have been info picketing at a number of locations. A full list is available on [www.mahcp.ca/infopickets](http://www.mahcp.ca/infopickets).*

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