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Government commits to action on health as symposium concludes

Calgary... Promoting wellness particularly for children and youth, advancing primary health care, realizing improvements in mental health service delivery and making electronic health records a robust reality by 2008 will continue to be the four immediate government priorities reinforced by the International Health Symposium.

The three-day symposium concluded today in Calgary. The event featured over 400 participants and 28 experts from around the world. Its goal was to identify innovations that drive excellent health systems and healthier populations.

"We heard a wealth of ideas at the symposium," said Health and Wellness Minister Iris Evans. "It was a lively, open discussion where, for the first time, stakeholders from across the Alberta health system gathered to learn from international health experts. I want to thank the speakers, The Conference Board of Canada and our symposium organizing committee for all their hard work."

"We will now consider the ideas we heard within the Alberta context, weave them together with the excellent work already going on in Alberta's health regions and take action in these four critical areas," she said.

Symposium delegates heard a number of key points:

- There is no single solution to health care, but rather improvements must evolve over time;
- Improvements must focus on the patient and evidence-based outcomes;
- Solutions must meet your own society's expectations and values;
- An attitude of openness is necessary for new possibilities and the best health care options;
- Change in health care systems should be evolutionary and entrepreneurial;
- Collaboration among professionals is vital;
- Quality care is achieved when health teams learn together and act accordingly; and
- Change must be focused on what will work and what will make a positive difference to the health of the population.

"The symposium showed me that Alberta is well on its way to being Canada's innovation leaders," said Evans. "But we've only just begun. I am committed to working with Albertans and those directly involved in the health system to make our system the best it can possibly be."

Minister Evans will be meeting with health regions in the coming weeks to discuss what they learned at the International Health Symposium. Albertans will be kept fully informed as the priority areas for action are further developed.

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