

July 25, 2005

\$189 million to digitize X-rays, CT and MRI scans

Faster reports and images will improve quality of care for Albertans

Edmonton... A \$189 million investment by the Alberta government and Canada Health Infoway will digitize X-rays and CT and MRI scans across the province to improve quality of care for Albertans by providing doctors and patients faster access to reports and images.

Alberta Health and Wellness and Canada Health Infoway will contribute a total of \$143 million and \$46 million respectively to the project. The project will invest in sophisticated new diagnostic imaging systems that will allow hospitals and clinics throughout Alberta to electronically share patient X-rays and CT and MRI scans through Alberta's Electronic Health Record (EHR).

"A priority of Alberta's Third Way is about innovation that will meet patients' needs and make a positive difference in the health of Albertans. Electronic health records are vital for moving ahead on a range of initiatives that will do that. We're pleased to be working with Canada Health Infoway to make those improvements a reality," said Iris Evans, Minister of Health and Wellness.

Both organizations will make the investment over three years. The project is the largest of its kind in Canada to date. The investment is also Infoway's largest single contribution to any project to date.

In addition to improving patient care, this move will also help radiologists to be more productive and is expected to provide long-term cost savings through reduced storage requirements and electronic sharing of information.

By making digital health information available on a wider-scale, the project is an important step in further developing electronic health record systems. These systems provide health care professionals with rapid access to complete and relevant patient information, enabling better decisions about diagnosis and treatment. The result is a more cost-efficient health care system offering improved patient safety and better quality of care.

Alberta's objective is to have an electronic health record for every Albertan by 2008, which complements Infoway's objective of having electronic records available for 50 per cent of the Canadian population by the end of 2009.

"This initiative, which now becomes the largest of its kind in Canada, will be key in modernizing Canada's healthcare system. We're pleased to participate in this exciting endeavor which may serve as a model for other provinces, bringing benefits to patients across the country," said Richard Alvarez, President and CEO of *Infoway*.

The project is expected to be completed by March 2008. It will include three diagnostic imaging repositories: one in Calgary for the Calgary Health region, one in Edmonton for the Capital Health region and one in Red Deer for the remaining health regions as part of the Regional Shared Health Information

Program (RSHIP). The system can capture all the radiology exams done at hospitals and clinics throughout the province; there are 4 million diagnostic imaging exams done each year in Alberta.

This project is unique because it links an entire province through a diagnostic imaging network. Implementing shared digital imaging networks across the country will save the health care system an estimated \$350 million dollars annually. Sharing technology also helps address the challenge of providing affordable access for smaller hospitals and clinics to the technology underlying electronic health records. Small hospitals and clinics comprise 80 per cent of Canadian facilities.

About Canada Health Infoway

Canada Health Infoway's mission is to accelerate the development of compatible electronic health information systems across Canada. These systems provide healthcare professionals with rapid access to complete and accurate patient information, enabling better decisions about treatment and diagnosis. The result is a sustainable, more cost-efficient healthcare system offering improved patient safety and better quality of care. *Infoway* is an independent, not -for-profit corporation whose members are the federal, provincial, and territorial deputy ministers of health. As of March 31, *Infoway* had approved \$320 million for 105 projects in every Canadian province and territory.

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