



Canada Health Infoway

What is Infoway?

Canada Health Infoway is an independent, not-for-profit corporation established in 2001. Infoway's goal is to put in place the basic elements of a Canada-wide system of interoperable electronic health records for 50% of Canadians by the end of 2009. To achieve this goal, Infoway works as a strategic investor to accelerate the development of health information and communications technologies, including electronic health records, telehealth and public health surveillance systems on a pan-Canadian basis. The Members of Infoway are the 14 Federal/Provincial/Territorial Deputy Ministers of Health.

How does this work relate to the federal government's priorities?

The Government is committed to delivering the health care Canadians need, when they need it.

A patient wait times guarantee has been identified by Canadians as one of the most important government priorities. Investment in electronic health records is a key building block in establishing a health care system that provides improved access, quality and productivity, resulting in the reduction of wait times.

The anticipated benefits of an interoperable, pan-Canadian electronic health record system include:

- Canadians not having to repeat their health history to every provider along their journey through the health care system;
- increased patient safety, as the provision of faster, better information will speed diagnosis and treatment and help prevent medical errors;
- public health professionals better equipped to respond to emerging health crisis, having improved disease tracking and surveillance tools;
- reduced health care system costs resulting from fewer duplicated laboratory and clinical tests.

How much funding does Infoway receive from the federal government?

In the 2000 and 2003 Health Accords, First Ministers agreed to place a priority on funding the development of electronic health records and telehealth. The federal government invested \$1.1 billion in Infoway in response to those agreements and, in 2004, an additional \$100 million in support of public health surveillance. In Budget 2007, the government announced an additional \$400 million to Infoway to advance patient wait times guarantees through the development of health information systems and electronic health records.

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Infoway works collaboratively with health ministries, private sector information technology and health care partners, and end users of electronic health record solutions, including physicians, nurses and pharmacists. The corporation adds value through joint planning with provinces and territories, development and promotion of common architecture and standards, investment in shared services, sharing of knowledge, negotiation of national pricing with vendors and coordination of common procurement.

Adherence to the national architecture and standards for electronic health records, collaboratively developed by Infoway and its partners, allows jurisdictions to develop systems that meet their own priorities, with an assurance that all shared systems and components will be compatible.

Costs are shared:

- Infoway covers up to 100% of territorial and 75% of provincial project development and implementation costs (the provincial share is 25%)
- provinces and territories are responsible for 100% of ongoing operating and maintenance costs

What are the results to date?

With over 160 electronic health records projects in the planning or implementation stages, solid progress is being made in a variety of areas that contribute to the needed reductions in patient wait times. To date, Infoway and its partners have developed infrastructure elements, such as standards, an electronic health records architecture, a privacy and security framework and registries to uniquely identify patients and providers.

There have been some early successes in diagnostic imaging, laboratory and drug information systems. Many of the jurisdictions are currently moving from a planning mode into wide scale development and implementation, and significantly more visible accomplishments are expected in the near future. A recent diagnostic imaging study showed that 80% of referring physicians indicate wait times to review an exam were reduced and 86% of radiologists say turn-around time has improved.

Of the more than 160 projects mentioned above, here are a few recently-announced electronic health record initiatives, in which Infoway has had varying levels of involvement and investment:

- Quebec's \$547 million plan to create a province-wide electronic health record by 2011;
- British Columbia's investment of \$150 million to develop a province-wide electronic health record by 2009;
- Alberta's addition of \$116 million to existing investments aimed at delivering electronic health records for all Albertans by 2008;
- Prince Edward Island has launched a \$13 million project to provide an electronic health record for doctors' offices, hospitals and pharmacies by 2007.

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For more information on Infoway, please go to: www.infoway-inforoute.ca

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