
NEWS RELEASE

Ministry of Health

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NEW SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM TO PROTECT CANADIANS' HEALTH

VICTORIA – Canada Health Infoway and the British Columbia government, in full collaboration with the other provincial and territorial governments and the Public Health Agency of Canada, announced today that the Province will develop a pan-Canadian Public Health Surveillance System to help carry out faster, more co-ordinated responses to potential epidemics.

The new electronic system will make it possible for public health workers across Canada to collect, share and analyze critical health information to help manage infectious disease outbreaks. It will replace an older surveillance system currently being used in parts of Canada, and also serve as an infrastructure for more comprehensive public health systems in the provinces and territories.

“British Columbia was chosen to lead the project with Infoway, on behalf of the provinces and territories, because of our track record in public health management,” said B.C. Health Minister George Abbott. “A national surveillance system will enhance health professionals’ ability to respond in an emergency and to work more collaboratively with partners across Canada.”

“This system will help health-care providers, patients and governments prevent the spread of disease through faster and better identification of potential epidemic or disease outbreaks wherever they occur in Canada,” said Richard Alvarez, Infoway’s president and CEO.

“SARS taught us that it was time to invest in a new generation of surveillance systems to track infectious diseases,” added Federal Health Minister Tony Clement. “The better our information is, the better prepared we are. To fully protect the health of Canadians, we must develop the necessary tools to allow us to co-ordinate our responses to emerging disease threats.”

After a detailed procurement process and extensive consultation with public health experts from all jurisdictions, IBM Canada has been selected as the systems integrator for the pan-Canadian solution. The system will be available for jurisdictional implementation in 2007.

The federal government provided \$100 million to Canada Health Infoway to plan and co-ordinate development and implementation of the system. Participating provinces and territories will cover the remainder of the costs.

Patient privacy and confidentiality will be protected to meet all requirements outlined in federal and jurisdictional health information privacy legislation. Safeguards will be built into the surveillance system to protect patient information.

1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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