

NWT HealthNet

Mr. Speaker, investment in HealthNet tools such as the interoperable Electronic Health Record (or iEHR), the Diagnostic Imaging/Picture Archiving Communication System (or DI/PACS), and Telehealth are critical to delivery of health care services for residents of the Northwest Territories.

These tools are resulting in better access and outcomes across the Northwest Territories. In the words of a local clinician, "This is transforming how we deliver care." In the words of one patient, "For ten seconds, everything went terribly wrong. Then for the next 4 days, everything went very right. The hospital in Inuvik...X-rayed my leg and using the new DI/PACS system, sent images to the orthopedic surgeon in Yellowknife. I got to see the technology and how health professionals use it in real-time. They decided the break was bad enough to airlift me by Medevac to Yellowknife. At Stanton Territorial Hospital I received first class care. Excellent people, excellent facilities and excellent technologies."

Mr. Speaker, patients are receiving access to services in communities we could not reach before, and this is resulting in safer, earlier, better patient care and resulting in more positive health outcomes. For example, we recently brought Computed Radiography to 13 communities, including Deline, Fort Good Hope,

Fort Liard, Fort Providence, Fort Resolution, Fort Simpson, Wha Ti, Tulita, Lutselk'e, Norman Wells, Paulatuk, Behchoko and Gameti . We will continue to roll-out to Aklavik, Ulukhaktok, Sachs Harbour, Tuktoyaktuk, Ft. McPherson over the next 2 months. This allows Community Health Centers to send digital diagnostic images to specialists in minutes for faster and in some cases lifesaving consultation. Prior to this, it took up to 2 weeks to physically mail x-ray film and get paper results back from a radiologist at another site. Alternatively, the patient had to travel away from home and family at a high cost.

Patients benefit from improved service delivery through these investments. Recently this was seen in Deline with the speed of results during the TB outbreak. TB results were available in 2 days, where in the past we would have waited two weeks and the outbreak would have continued to grow.

Investments in eHealth are essential to delivery of health care now and for the future. We know that our current system is growing at a faster pace than we can support. HealthNet tools enable greater efficiencies and innovation to support patient safety and delivery of care.

These investments are making a real difference to our people. A snowmobile accident patient in Inuvik got life saving treatment for their injuries as a result of telehealth intervention. To date we have successfully brought service delivery through telehealth to 34 Health Centres and 8 schools!

In another case, the DI/PACS system in Hay River allowed a physician to get a specialist at Stanton to urgently review an ultra sound image within minutes. The patient remained in the community and received immediate treatment from the specialist. Without DI/PACS, the patient would have been medivaced. Worse, upon getting to the specialist it would have been discovered that the trip was unnecessary and the treatment could have been done in the home community.

Mr. Speaker, eHealth is about access to care. Our iEHR roll-out continues to be successful with approximately 200 clinical users across the NWT. Lab information is available on-line, instead of the past paper records. There are currently over half a million results and diagnostic reports available instantaneously, enabling better care.

Mr. Speaker, I know that members share my excitement over the possibilities of eHealth. These are not just “nice to have” tools. They are essential for access and service delivery for residents we could not reach before. Patients are getting better care by connecting to a virtual team of providers that would normally be hundreds or thousands of miles away. Mr. Speaker, these tools are saving lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.