

# Opportunities for Action

A Pan-Canadian Digital  
Health Strategic Plan



## Canada has been on its digital health journey for 10 years

Since the journey began, significant progress has been made in advancing the availability and use of electronic health information solutions from coast to coast to coast. Canadians and their providers are reaping the benefits of having electronic access to critical health information that enables faster and more effective care decisions. In fact, an estimated \$7.7 billion in benefits have accrued to Canadians and the health care system as a result of investments in telehealth, drug information systems and diagnostic imaging solutions. For example, care is safer and easier to access. Communication among the care team is quicker and easier. And there have been substantial productivity gains.

As with all journeys, it is appropriate and prudent to take stock at points along the way to reflect on progress made to date, confirm the end goal and refresh the plan as appropriate. In 2012 *Infoway* did just that. Beginning with extensive consultations with stakeholders in numerous cities across the country, *Infoway* analyzed important health care drivers and trends, reviewed provincial and territorial health and health care priorities, and identified enablers that would facilitate continued progress toward our collective digital health journey.

*Infoway* engaged more than 500 individual Canadians, clinicians, governments and health care administrators, national associations and vendors about their future health and health care needs. The process challenged them to consider which factors impact their work and which health and health care priorities digital health solutions could best support. We also asked them to define what success would look like, and to identify new opportunities for action that would increase value in health care.

### About Canada Health Infoway

Canada Health Infoway (*Infoway*) is an independent not-for-profit corporation funded by the Government of Canada. Our vision is healthier Canadians through innovative e-health solutions. *Infoway* jointly invests with every province and territory to accelerate the development and adoption of health information technology projects in Canada. Fully respecting patient confidentiality, these secure systems will provide clinicians and patients with the information they need to make better health and health care decisions. Accessing this vital information will help foster a more modern and sustainable health care system for all Canadians.

## Priorities

Six dominant themes emerged from an analysis of the health and health care priorities that stakeholders felt health information technology could best support.

### Healthy Living

Support Canadians in their quest to maintain good health and monitor their health conditions.

### Access to Services

Give Canadians access to convenient and timely health care services, and help them better navigate the health care system and interact more effectively with their health care team.

### Person-Centred Care

Help patients and the members of their multi-disciplinary care team personalize care through individualized care plans built using patient-specific evidence.

### Continuity of Care

Support evolving health care delivery models (e.g., primary care teams, after-hospital discharge management) by making sure all parts of the health system are digitized and connected so that providers can access and share information as patients transition to different levels of care (e.g., home, community, hospital).

### Quality Improvement

Help providers create and use high quality contextualized information and evidence that supports safe patient care.

### Efficiency Improvement

Help government officials, health system administrators, clinicians and others apply advanced analytical tools and techniques to health system data so they can improve population health analysis, health system planning and operations, research and evaluation.

Throughout the consultation process, *Infoway* asked stakeholders to imagine a future where digital health technologies support the six key health care priorities and then asked them to answer two important questions: What opportunities for action emerge? If these opportunities were successful, what would that look and feel like? Answers to these questions helped shape the path

forward. They identified what our country needs to do to ensure that Canadians' experience with the health care system is the best, most equitable and safest that it can be and what we need to do collectively to ensure a consistently high-performing Canadian health care system.

## Opportunities for Action

Based on stakeholder priorities and feedback, five important opportunities for action were developed.

	What is it?	Which types of solutions?
	<b>Bring Care Closer to Home</b> Using mobile patient monitoring solutions, coupled with other consumer health solutions, seniors and other patients with chronic diseases will be able to monitor their own health conditions from their home or within their community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patient monitoring solutions</li> <li>• Personal health records</li> <li>• Other consumer health solutions</li> </ul>
	<b>Provide Easier Access</b> Assist Canadians to have a more convenient health care experience, with reduced wait times, through the use of e-health solutions to better interact with their health care team and navigate the health care system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• e-visits</li> <li>• e-scheduling</li> <li>• e-prescription renewal</li> <li>• e-navigation</li> </ul>
	<b>Support New Models of Care</b> Continue to expand the deployment and use of EHR, EMR and other point-of-care solutions into all care settings to enable person-centred care and continuity of care, including, but not limited to, chronic disease management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EMR</li> <li>• EHR</li> <li>• Referral management</li> <li>• Discharge summaries</li> <li>• Care transitions</li> <li>• Chronic disease management</li> <li>• Telepathology</li> </ul>
	<b>Improve Patient Safety</b> Accelerate the deployment of medication management to reduce preventable medical errors. This may require the enhancement and/or replacement of many aging hospital information systems in the acute care setting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• e-prescribing</li> <li>• CPOE, closed-loop medication management</li> <li>• Medication reconciliation</li> </ul>
	<b>Enable a High-Performing Health System</b> Accelerate the deployment of analytics solutions to support the creation of information and evidence for clinical and administrative decision making in the quest to create a high-performing health system across Canada.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinical analytics and evidence development and use for clinicians</li> <li>• Analytics to support LEAN, population health, research, planning, operations and evaluation</li> </ul>

### Bring Care Closer to Home

... is about using mobile patient monitoring solutions, personal health records and other consumer health solutions so that seniors and patients with chronic diseases can more easily monitor their own health conditions within their home or community.

### Provide Easier Access

... is about helping Canadians have better and faster access to more convenient health care through the increased use of e-visits, e-scheduling, e-prescription renewal and e-navigation and enabling them to better interact with their health care team and navigate the system. More consumers will be able to book appointments, communicate with their providers and renew their medications, all online. They will also be able to easily access a provider to help them navigate the health care system.

### Support New Models of Care

... is about enabling person-centred care and continuity of care in every care setting through the effective use of electronic

health records, electronic medical records, referral management, electronic discharge summaries, telepathology, chronic disease management and other point-of-care solutions. Consumers will more readily see that their care providers are working together to seamlessly manage patient care. Providers will have the timely information they need to provide better quality care, and to better communicate and collaborate with the rest of the health care team, who may work in different care settings. Administrators will be better able to support changes in scope of practice to ensure that patients receive better care.

### Improve Patient Safety

... is about delivering care safely. For example, reducing preventable medical errors through solutions such as e-prescribing, computerized physician order entry, closed loop medication management and electronic medication reconciliation. Consumers will be more confident that the medications they are taking are safe. Providers will be more confident that their prescribing practices are evidence-based and they will be reassured that their patients are getting

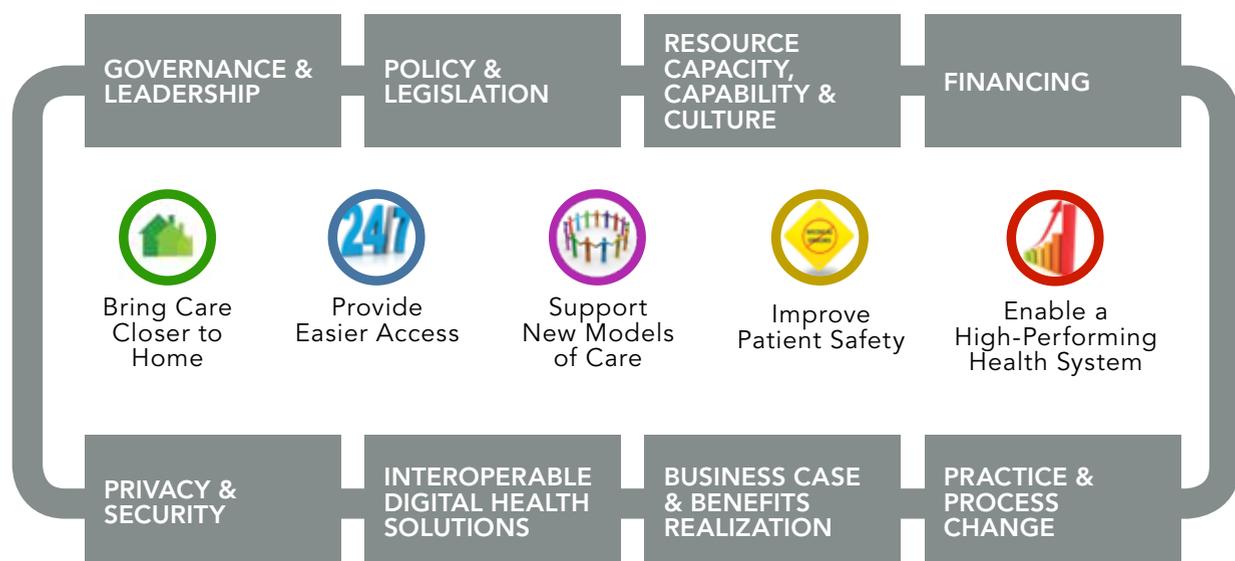
their medications, as prescribed. Administrators will see a reduction in preventable adverse drug events, a reduction in avoidable hospitalizations and improvements in the efficiency of daily work processes.

### Enable a High-Performing Health System

... is about supporting the creation of new information and evidence for clinical and administrative decision making through clinical analytics to support clinicians, and health system analytics to support LEAN, population health, research, planning, operation and evaluation. Providers will have more evidence to support using best practices and manage major outbreaks of disease. Administrators will have the information necessary to monitor key indicators, such as unnecessary hospitalizations, and put in place actions to prevent them from happening. Governments will be better able to determine what services yield the best value for money and will be able to allocate future funding accordingly.

## Key Enablers

These opportunities for action are not simply about introducing technology into different care settings and hoping for change. Information technology is an important enabler for transforming health care, but it alone will not be enough to make change happen. To optimize value, a number of enablers, or conditions, must be in place to support them.



### Governance and Leadership

...is about having appropriate organizational structures/arrangements in place to steer and direct the business-driven digital health agenda, and having leadership to champion, influence and support the use of digital health to improve health and health care.

### Policy and Legislation

...is about having clear health policy directions that enable and support the necessary people, practice, process and information and technology changes, and having legislation to enable secure sharing and use of health information within and among jurisdictions for clinical and administrative purposes.

### Financing

...is about having appropriate financial resources in place to fund the interoperable digital health agenda.

### Resource Capacity, Capability and Culture

...is about ensuring that there are sufficiently trained resources to deliver and sustain the effective use of digital health solutions, and supporting stakeholders to embrace a culture of change and to innovate and transform how they live, provide care and manage the health system.

### Practice and Process Change

...is about enabling system transformation that includes: working in multi-disciplinary teams; making the patient/client central to the care team; having appropriate management of care transitions; regularly using evidence-based best practices to deliver care and manage the system; and providing consistently high quality care.

### Privacy and Security

...is about working within a pan-Canadian privacy framework that supports appropriate information sharing, and managing consent in a privacy-sensitive manner within and between jurisdictions.

### Interoperable Digital Health Solutions

...is about ensuring the increased use of standards-based, interoperable and cost effective digital health solutions to support all stakeholders.

### Business Case and Benefits Realization

...is about developing business cases and conducting benefits evaluations for digital health investment at national and jurisdictional levels, including a planned approach to realizing the maximum possible benefits.

## Accelerating the Progress

The refreshed pan-Canadian digital health strategic plan is not about simply providing more of the same; it is about accelerating the progress around the opportunities for action.

The intent is to move the Canadian digital health agenda forward by addressing the enablers that need to be in place and building on cooperation, collaboration and data sharing to produce better care and better health outcomes.

To date, the focus has been on implementing provider-specific digital health solutions in physician offices, laboratories, hospitals and pharmacies, and ambulatory care, public health

and diagnostic imaging clinics. Now, the next logical step is to accelerate our effort in those areas that will improve the overall patient experience because they create better transitions through the system, foster better communication between patients and providers in all care settings, demonstrate the importance of quality by supporting continuous improvement, and create better value by supporting evidence-based care.

The views expressed herein represent the views of *Infoway* (or other persons as indicated), not the Minister of Health or any representative of the Government of Canada.

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