

e-Health Connection

Issue #2 – April 2006

A “Watershed Event” for e-Health in Ontario



Above: Steini Brown presents details of the e-Health strategy renewal process.

e-Health Strategy Renewal Forum: The Beginning of an Important Dialogue

On Thursday, March 23rd, members of the Ontario e-Health Council, LHIN e-Health leads, and e-Health experts from across Ontario gathered in Toronto to discuss the renewal of Ontario’s e-Health strategy. Presentations from Steini Brown and Roger Girard provided the context for an open and useful discussion about the past, present, and future of e-Health in Ontario.

The session began with an overview of some of the challenges and gaps with the existing e-Health strategy, and the need for strategy renewal. This was a welcome topic, and one that had been the subject of previous discussions of the Ontario e-Health Council.

In describing some of the tenets of the strategy, Steini Brown emphasized the importance of developing a “balanced portfolio” of e-Health initiatives and projects. “The type of outcomes we need won’t come from investing in just one place,” said Brown. “They come from investing into a balanced portfolio.”

A New Vision for e-Health in Ontario

By 2015, Ontario’s health system is the safest, highest quality, and most sustainable in Canada because people have the right information, at the right time, and in the right place. Ontarians are confident that:

- They have the information they need to make decisions about their health and health care;
- Providers and clinicians are freed to focus on timely and highest quality care; and
- Government and LHINs ensure an accountable, equitable, effective, and efficient health system.

A New Vision for e-Health in Ontario

A key outcome from the meeting was a new e-Health vision. An initial draft vision was presented, and was the subject of much debate during the morning session. Meeting participants said that our province’s e-Health vision needed to be bold, clear, and specific. They also said the vision should be a call for the achievement of a ‘quantum leap’ for e-Health in Ontario, and not simply incremental change. Thanks to this discussion, a revised vision – which can be found on the text box on this page – was crafted. When Steini Brown presented this new, more ambitious version, which captured participants’ ideas, it was met with applause.

Stakeholder Input is Shaping the Renewed Strategy

Roger Girard presented some initial thinking regarding the governance, funding, and implementation of the new strategy to generate feedback on potential directions. The comments from participants addressing these issues were very valuable. The themes that emerged from the discussion will help shape the future state of e-Health in Ontario, and the articulation of the new e-Health strategy.



Above: Participants discussing a new vision for e-Health.

A number of important themes emerged during the forum and from discussions that followed. These included:

- **The importance of changing the way people work.** Participants emphasized the need for integration, to create a system that is seamless to people and providers.
- **The need for a much clearer governance model.** This includes well-defined lines of accountability and linkages that reflect the reality of today's broader health sector in Ontario. Participants wanted to ensure stakeholders continue to have a voice.
- **The need for sustained, long-term e-Health funding.** Participants emphasized that e-Health needs to be seen as more than a one-time capital investment. Broader health sector organizations need to realize and re-coup some cost savings, or avoid costs that would have been incurred in the absence of e-Health.
- **The central role of continuing care.** Participants from inside and outside the continuing care sector emphasized the increasing role continuing care is playing in our health system. Continuing care's current and future importance to e-Health was acknowledged.
- **The need to consider different approaches to e-Health deployment.** Participants suggested that new and different approaches to e-Health – such as a chronic disease approach – should be considered.
- **The need to ensure that the business – and not technology – is central to the renewed e-Health strategy.** Business needs should be driving technology – and not the other way around.

A New Era for e-Health in Ontario

The strategy renewal meeting on March 23rd marked the beginning of a new era for e-Health in Ontario. It was, as some pointed out, a “watershed event.”

It resulted in a bold, ambitious draft vision, and those in attendance noted their shared passion for e-Health and positive, forward-looking approach.

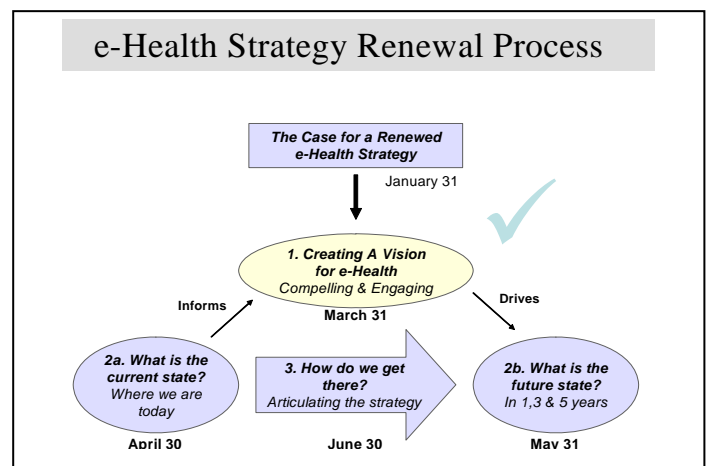
In closing the session, Roger Girard noted that Steini Brown recognizes the importance of e-Health. “As our new ADM, Steini Brown is a champion for e-Health,” said Girard. “He appreciates how e-Health is central to the government’s health transformation agenda.”



Above: Steini Brown and his team revise the e-Health Vision for Ontario.

What's Next?

The March 23rd meeting marked the beginning of a longer process that will involve more discussions and dialogue with Ontario's e-Health leaders. The following chart shows the phases and timelines for this important process.



To provide additional input or suggestions, please email Steini Brown at adalsteinn.brown@moh.gov.on.ca