



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Action, not words:
Supporting a different course for Aboriginal health care**

MARKHAM, ON, Dec. 13 – Saint Elizabeth Health Care today announced that it will spend \$2 million over the next three years to support the national rollout of a web-based program known as @YourSide Colleague to First Nations and Inuit communities across Canada.

“The focus needs to be on assisting local people to identify and respond to local needs in a flexible and cost-effective way, for long-term results,” said Michael Decter, Chair of the Board. “We have something to contribute; it’s basic, and it works.”

The program offers ‘round-the-clock access to a virtual network of experts, colleagues and peers, as well as self-directed distance education and learning tools in areas such as diabetes, wound care and palliative care. All that is needed is a computer, access to the Internet, and a username and password.

Among those championing the approach are nearly 50 First Nations communities across Manitoba, who have been using the program for over two years to improve local health care quality and delivery.

“We’re very supportive and excited about the practical benefits of this program, not only for our nurses, but for our health care aides as well,” said Edna Stevens, a nurse manager of home and community care for First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) in Winnipeg. “It’s about better access to care and information, close to home, for our cultures and our communities.”

The key to @YourSide Colleague may be that nearly every aspect is created and maintained by health professionals who understand the day-to-day challenges direct care providers face. Reflecting national and regional standards, both of the professional nursing colleges in Manitoba now recognize it toward their continuing competence programs.

Saint Elizabeth Health Care will begin working immediately with First Nations and Inuit organizations and communities in a real spirit of partnership to expand and accelerate adoption of the program, with a goal to have a group of at least 10 new communities up and running in the first three months, and a total of 100 online by the end of March 2007.

“The reality is we can’t afford to wait – The current gap in health and quality of life between Aboriginal people and other Canadians requires action, not words,” said Decter. “We’re moving ahead, but would be delighted if governments and others want to bring resources to this challenge.”

Est. in 1908, Saint Elizabeth Health Care is a charitable not-for-profit Canadian organization providing direct care and service, consultation and technology solutions to support the transformation of care for health organizations and the people we serve.

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