

Opening Remarks  
Ms Rita Burak, Chair of the Board of Directors (Interim)  
eHealth Ontario

Standing Committee on Public Accounts  
October 21, 2009

Thank you, Mr. Sterling and members of the committee for the invitation to appear before you today to discuss the auditor general's report and answer your questions.

Joining me is Mr. Rob Devitt, interim CEO of eHealth Ontario. You may know of Rob in his permanent role as President and CEO of Toronto East General Hospital.

I want to say at the outset that the board of directors and the new management team at the agency fully embrace the auditor general's report and are in full agreement with the recommendations contained in the report.

As the auditor's report indicates on page 14, since June 2009 we had already begun to address some of the procurement and accountability issues raised in the report.

I would now like to summarize the actions we have taken to ensure that the problems identified in the report have been addressed and share our progress in implementing the auditor general's recommendations.

### **Recommendation 1**

With regard to recommendation 1, we now have a completed business plan framework which integrates the various initiatives underway at eHealth Ontario in support of the strategy's three clinical priorities and underlying foundational activities.

It recalibrates deliverables in order to ensure that progress can be tracked and reported so as to assist the agency in being accountable for the delivery of results and tangible outcomes.

It identifies and eliminates areas of duplication within the organization so that resources are focused on delivering the strategy, maximizing the value achieved for the resources — both human and financial — that have been invested in the organization.

And it establishes benchmarks against which the board of directors may monitor progress.

As indicated in our initial response to the recommendation, with this foundation we will now commence a process to develop a strategic plan that goes beyond 2012, in conjunction with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and in consultation with stakeholders.

## **Recommendation 2**

The second recommendation in the report deals with governance processes. In response to this recommendation, I can report that at the September meeting, our board approved a balanced scorecard for the agency. The scorecard provides project management, and financial and performance indicators on each of the agency's initiatives, enabling the board to effectively monitor performance and ensure that initiatives are delivered on budget and on time.

We have also approved a risk management policy and process to ensure that the board and management are aware of risks to the achievement of goals and are taking mitigating actions to lessen or remove those risks.

## **Recommendation 3**

In response to recommendation 3, and building on the business plan, we have already begun to rebalance the workforce at eHealth Ontario. When the

Ministry's e-Health Program Branch was transferred to us in April of this year, there were about 600 employees and 385 consultants.

By September 30<sup>th</sup>, the number was reduced to 286 consultants. In the next two months the agency will make further reduction to 234 consultants, all of whom will have competed for work. By the end of the fiscal year, the number will be 160. This is an overall reduction of 225 consultants or 58 per cent.

Given the systems development activities of the organization, some degree of variable workforce will continue to be needed. A 15 to 20 per cent range of variable workforce is more appropriate for an organization of this size and complexity.

I would also draw the committee's attention to our initial response to this recommendation, whereby we describe the strengthened policy and procedures adopted to better manage consulting resources.

#### **Recommendation 4**

Finally to recommendation 4. The very serious issue of untendered consulting contracts at eHealth Ontario has unfortunately taken focus away from the important issue of patient care and progress toward an electronic health record. It has also undermined the public's confidence in the agency. For this I believe the people of the province are owed an apology.

I want to assure the committee that the board of directors and management of the agency have taken steps to ensure that the practices the auditor general observed will not recur at eHealth Ontario.

In addition to a strengthened procurement policy, we have also put in place an improved delegation of authority policy. We have enhanced the controllership

and organizational structure of the procurement function and strengthened the finance division's scrutiny of all payments.

We will be vigilant in implementing this enhanced procurement framework.

We have every confidence that when the auditor general conducts a follow up audit, he will be able to report major improvements to the committee.

In closing, I want to thank the board of directors and all of the very hard working staff at eHealth Ontario who have embraced the changes I've described, and who come to work every day wanting to make a contribution to patient care and progress toward an electronic health record.

Thank you.