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MBTELEHEALTH EXPANSION CONNECTS MORE RURAL MANITOBANS WITH HEALTH-CARE EXPERTISE: OSWALD

More Manitobans will be able to access specialized health-care expertise with the expansion of Manitoba's successful MBTelehealth program to three new communities, Health Minister Theresa Oswald announced today.

"By investing in Telehealth, more Manitobans can connect with health-care expertise closer to home," said Oswald. "In communities across the province, Telehealth technology is helping link patients with the best care possible."

The province is investing an additional \$126,000 to expand MBTelehealth into Virden, Deloraine and Hamiota in the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority (ARHA). On behalf of their patients, doctors and health-care providers will be able to connect with other specialists through an interactive video connection. They will be able to see, hear and talk to each other on a television screen to discuss diagnosis and treatment options.

"The addition of three ARHA communities to MBTelehealth is important for rural service delivery because it creates new opportunities to access specialist services," said Penny Gilson, CEO of the ARHA. "The region and its residents have benefited greatly from MBTelehealth and acknowledge the province for being proactive in supporting this service."

"These three sites will provide more options for people living in the ARHA and ensure that doctors and health-care providers in the region can access the right expertise to meet local medical needs," said Liz Loewen, Manitoba eHealth director of Telehealth and Electronic Health Record Services.

MBTelehealth is part of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority's Manitoba eHealth Program. With this expansion, 50 communities and 17 Winnipeg locations now have a MBTelehealth site. This includes 15 First Nations communities, as well as at least one site in each of the province's regional health authorities. Earlier this year, the communities of Neepawa, Pinawa and Selkirk were also connected to health-care expertise through MBTelehealth.

Specialized equipment like handheld cameras and digital stethoscopes have been added at each new site, to help share detailed information like dermatology images or to transmit chest sounds to support patient care at a distance.

More information on MBTelehealth is available at www.mbtelehealth.ca.