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## ***BACKGROUND***

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### **About the Health Informatics Institute**

The Health Informatics Institute (HII) is a not-for-profit research institute located at Algoma University. The Institute is focused on Applied Health Informatics research that improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the health system. Areas of interest include primary and community care, use of Electronic Medical Records (EMRs), geographic information systems (GIS) for health and serious games for health. We aim to develop, implement and commercialize research based innovative solutions and best practices and strive to maintain a strong network comprised of external academic, government and industry partners. [www.hiiu.ca](http://www.hiiu.ca)

### **Mission**

The Health Informatics Institute's mission is "To improve the health of communities by undertaking, developing and supporting health informatics research that improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the health system and advances the strategic interests of Algoma University (AU), leveraging Northern Ontario's established health informatics strengths to further develop, implement and commercialize research based innovative technology solutions and best practices".

### **Background**

In 2006, Sault Ste. Marie completed a Community IT Strategy that identified the health sector as a critical niche opportunity to be pursued. Shortly following, the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre was handed the mandate to implement this strategy and to ensure that opportunities were aggressively pursued. Beyond specific opportunities, it was felt that the formation of a Health Informatics Cluster Committee was an essential component of this strategy.

Consequently, the Health Informatics Cluster Committee was formed in 2006 and established a vision that Sault Ste. Marie would capitalize on its nationally recognized strengths to establish a vibrant, world-class health informatics cluster that would include private and public sector organizations leading in the application of information technology to health data, services and research. Committee members included senior representatives from the following organizations:

- Algoma Public Health
- Sault Ste. Marie and District Group Health Association
- Algoma District Medical Group
- Algoma University
- Northern Ontario School of Medicine
- Sault Area Hospital
- Sault College of Applied Arts and Technology
- Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre

The committee identified a number of projects in the Health Informatics sector, one of which was to establish a Health Informatics Research Chair and Health Informatics Institute (providing governance, management and promotion) for conducting research based on the community's strengths in Health Informatics.

It was envisioned that the Health Informatics Institute (HII) would be formally established as a not-for-profit organization affiliated with Algoma University, governed by an independent Board of Directors that would consist of deans, directors and professionals of key institutions and organizations and guided by an Advisory Committee of industry leaders, health sector leaders from the community, and health sector government officials. Institute membership would be available to include individuals and organizations with a common vision and research interests/goals as the HII.

In 2007, Algoma University started work to secure external funding by working with the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre's Health Informatics Development Manager and Executive Director to draft funding proposals for the establishment of the Institute's Chair/Scientific Director position, Institute management staff, and additional Institute start-up costs. As a result, funding was secured from FedNor, The Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC) and ESRI Canada (a private sector GIS company). In the summer of 2009 the university hired a Managing Director for the Health Informatics Institute. The Institute was incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation on July 24, 2009 and in the winter of 2009, work was completed by the preliminary board members and Managing Director to revise the draft By-laws, and to decide on the official name of the Institute and logo. Work also took place to recruit the Research Chair/ Institute Scientific Director.

With the appointment of the Chair/Institute Scientific Director advanced project planning and project proposal development will commence and research projects will be established. It is expected that additional Institute staff will be hired with existing and future project funds secured by the Institute.