

Orazietti announces \$713,200 for health care innovation in Sault Ste. Marie

Provincial investment in Innovation Centre helps Algoma Games for Health develop stroke rehabilitation therapy

SAULT STE. MARIE - The province's investment of \$713,200 for the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre (SSMIC) is playing an important role in the development of rehabilitation therapy that assists individuals with the recovery of language skills after having suffered a stroke, David Orazietti, MPP announced today.

"We are continuing to build on the progress we have made improving health care infrastructure and front-line services in Sault Ste. Marie by making investments that are delivering measurable results, including this initiative that will provide stroke victims with interactive rehabilitation therapy to help improve their quality of life," said Orazietti. "Today's investment demonstrates our on-going support for residents who need important health care therapy services and has the added benefit of supporting health care innovation in Sault Ste. Marie, which creates high quality jobs in the community and strengthens our local economy."

Algoma Games for Health received provincial funding to develop a program that focuses on an emerging niche in the rapidly growing video game sector called serious games.

Serious games utilize video game technology for non-entertainment purposes such as training, education and rehabilitation.

Within the serious game sector, Algoma University and SSMIC have targeted the health care industry and have developed a relationship with a leading research team from the Toronto Rehabilitation Institute.

This particular stroke rehabilitation program combines video conferencing, voice recognition and therapeutic video games to provide an online platform to help improve speech therapy.

"This significant funding from the province's NOHFC will enable Algoma Games for Health to build on their momentum and take this product to the next level," said Tom Vair, executive director of the Sault Ste Marie Innovation Centre. "Supporting innovative projects like this is important to building a stronger Northern Ontario and we greatly appreciate the support of NOHFC and the Government of Ontario for this exciting project."

"Algoma University is pleased to work with our partners at the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre on this promising initiative," said Dr. Richard Myers, president, Algoma University. "The advanced online platform and games being developed by the AGFH team will assist speech therapists in delivering more engaging and timely care for their clients."

Provincial funding for the SSMIC's Algoma Games for Health is being provided through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation's (NOHFC) public sector emerging technology program.

The provincial government's 2011 budget increased the NOHFC budget by a further \$10 million per year from \$60 million in 2007 to 100 million in 2011 to support vital community infrastructure and economic development projects that create jobs and enhance the quality of life for Northerners.

Additional provincial investments expanding and strengthening Algoma University and the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre (SSMIC) include:

- Provincial charter establishing Algoma University as an independent institution
- Approval of Masters of Science (computer games technology)
- \$8 million for new Biosciences Centre
- \$5 million to expand and develop high quality degree programs
- \$3.5 million for transition to independent university
- \$3.1 million for facility improvements and modernization
- \$879,458 for research infrastructure
- \$684,200 from Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC) for health informatics
- \$522,588 from NOHFC for a New Science and Technology Centre
- \$518,808 for endowment foundation - Ontario Trust Program
- \$461,000 from Ontario Trillium Foundation for youth-based proto-launch initiative
- \$295,015 for creation of Ontario Digital Games Business Incubator Network
- \$250,000 to develop Computer Gaming Technology Centre
- \$250,000 from NOHFC for a strategic advisor
- \$142,900 from NOHFC for 3D hospital geospatial information system for management of infectious disease
- \$130,833 direct investment in services for students with disabilities
- \$50,000 from Ontario Trillium Foundation for game development training
- \$50,000 for solar project at Algoma University's George Leach Centre
- \$50,000 from NOHFC to develop an alternative energy strategy for Sault Ste. Marie
- \$42,000 from NOHFC for a business study on information technology