



Health Coalition and HealthCare Unions Call for Transparency, Privacy Safeguards as Patient Records Sent Out of Province Amid One Patient One Record (OPOR) Rollout

February 19, 2026 – The Nova Scotia Health Coalition, alongside health care unions representing frontline and administrative workers, is calling for increased transparency and stronger privacy safeguards following confirmation that Nova Scotia Health has begun transporting paper patient records to Ontario for digitization by a private contractor.

Nova Scotia Health has stated that boxes of patient health records are being shipped to Iron Mountain Canada in Toronto to address a backlog of paper files. The move comes as the province continues implementation of its electronic health record system, One Person One Record (OPOR), intended to modernize and consolidate patient information across the health system.

The Coalition and unions acknowledge the importance of transitioning to a unified electronic system. However, they say the combination of a significant records backlog, out-of-province digitization, and ongoing challenges associated with major system rollouts warrants careful scrutiny.

“Personal health information is among the most sensitive data that exists,” said Jennifer Benoit, Provincial Coordinator for the Nova Scotia Health Coalition. “When original paper records are transported outside the province, there are additional points of vulnerability — including transit, storage, and handling. Nova Scotians deserve clear, public assurances about how those risks are being mitigated.”

Advocates also note that during digitization, records may be temporarily unavailable or delayed. In urgent medical situations, timely access to complete patient history can directly affect care decisions and outcomes.

The organizations further stress that successful implementation of OPOR depends not only on software, but on adequate staffing, training, and infrastructure. Reports of scanning backlogs and equipment challenges highlight the need for sustained investment in local capacity.

“Our members are trained in handling confidential health information under established privacy protocols,” union representatives said in a joint statement. “Where possible, this work should be completed in Nova Scotia by Nova Scotians. Strengthening in-province capacity supports both patient privacy and system resilience.”

The Nova Scotia Health Coalition points out lessons learned from rapid health IT rollouts including the IWK, these lessons include operational difficulties, including workflow disruptions and temporary access challenges. They say proactive transparency, thorough implementation and consultation are essential to maintaining public trust during the system transformation.

The Coalition and unions are calling for:

- Investment in healthcare professionals in our province and equipment to reduce backlogs within the province
- Clear contingency plans to ensure uninterrupted patient record access
- Ongoing engagement with workers, patients, and community stakeholders throughout OPOR implementation
- Public disclosure of privacy and security safeguards related to transporting and digitizing records outside Nova Scotia

“Modernizing health records is a significant undertaking,” Benoit said. “It must be done carefully, transparently, and with patient privacy and public accountability at the forefront. Nova Scotians need confidence that their health information is secure and that system changes are strengthening — not straining — public health care.”

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