



September 29, 2009

**Right to Know Week emphasizes the public's right to
access information**

This is Right to Know Week in Alberta and across the Country. Right to Know Week is to raise awareness about people's right to access government information while promoting freedom of information as essential to both democracy and good governance. This year marks the fourth year that Canadians have celebrated RTK Week.

Alberta's Information and Privacy Commissioner says the right to access information is fundamental in a democracy. "The right of a citizen to know what government is doing and to hold government accountable is a pillar of our democracy. Right to know defines the relationship between people and government; government is the servant. Watching the demonstrations in Iran earlier this year reminds us that a lot of countries do not hold the same principles. We have to cherish and protect our rights, and access to information is fundamental to those rights."

The Commissioner, though, is concerned that Public Bodies might delay or otherwise discriminate against access requests of a sensitive nature. "The right to access information must prevail, regardless of the sensitivity of the subject matter, or the nature of the person making the request. In keeping with the principles of the right to access information, delays, in particular when requests are made by the media, simply shouldn't happen", says Work.

"Right to Know Week is a valuable reminder of the importance of both access to information and protection of privacy," said Heather Klimchuk, Minister of Service Alberta, responsible for the province's freedom of information legislation. "In recent years, our government has taken strong steps to make even more information routinely available to the public, without compromising the protection of private information."

The Alberta government now regularly posts the following information online: ministers' office expenses, all government payments made to third parties, environmental studies, flight manifests for government aircraft, and inspection reports for all supportive living facilities.

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