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News Release

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Right to Know Week, September 28 to October 2, 2015

WHITEHORSE – The Yukon Information and Privacy Commissioner releases the following statement about Right to Know week.

This week is Right to Know week, a week celebrated by approximately 40 countries and 60 non-governmental organizations. The purpose of Right to Know week is to raise awareness of an individual's right to access government information, while promoting freedom of information as essential to both democracy and good governance.

This Right to Know week, my office is hosting two workshops for public bodies - Privacy under ATIPP and Privacy Policy and Program Development. A very important aspect of access to information legislation is ensuring individuals have the ability to access their own personal information that is collected and used by public bodies.

Public bodies wield a tremendous amount of authority over citizens. As such, it is essential that decisions made by public body employees that impact individuals, are made using accurate information. The ability to access one's own personal information provides an individual with the ability to ensure decisions made about them are based on accurate information. The *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (ATIPP Act) provides individuals the right to access their own personal information and to request a correction if the information is found to be inaccurate. The workshops offered this week will raise awareness in public bodies about the right to access personal information and to ensure policies are developed in support of this right.

During this Right to Know week, I would like to officially recognize each ATIPP Coordinator in a public body and the ATIPP Office staff for the hard work they do to ensure citizens have access to information.

Due to Yukon's size, ATIPP Coordinators generally have multiple responsibilities which require them to reprioritize their regular work duties when an access to information request is received. Management of an access to information request can be very time consuming, because the ATIPP Act has strict timelines within which an access to information request must be processed and a response provided. ATIPP Coordinators must be able to interpret and apply the ATIPP Act provisions and make decisions about what information to release. ATIPP Coordinators may be required to make decisions within a system that does not always embrace access to information and some access to information requests involve highly sensitive information. Most (if not all) ATIPP Coordinators are at lower levels within public bodies. Therefore, decisions they make about access to information are often influenced by senior management. If a public body refuses access to information and the decision is challenged by the person requesting the information, it is the ATIPP Coordinator that must defend the decision.

The ATIPP Act is scheduled for review this year. As part of the comments I will be issuing soon in respect of the review, I will be calling on public bodies to take steps to ensure ATIPP Coordinators are situated at the correct level within public bodies and given autonomy to make decisions about access to information as a measure to ensure citizens receive the information to which they are entitled.

In recognition of the important role ATIPP Coordinators play in facilitating access to information, please take the time this week to thank an ATIPP Coordinator and the ATIPP Office staff for the hard work they do in facilitating access to information. From all of us here in my office, we would like to express our thanks to each ATIPP Coordinator and to the ATIPP Office staff for working effectively with us to resolve complaints and requests for review we receive under the ATIPP Act.

For more information contact:

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