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News Release – Right-to-Know week starts Today

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The Yukon Information and Privacy Commissioner released the following statement today about Right-to-Know week.

WHITEHORSE – This is a special 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 also promoting freedom of information as being essential to democracy and good governance.

Under the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, Yukoners have the right to access most information in the custody or control of a Yukon public body. Public bodies are comprised of Yukon government departments, a number of public corporations (Hospital, Housing, Energy, Development, Liquor, and Lottery), the Child & Youth Advocate, Yukon College, and the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board.

Each of these public bodies have to meet a number of responsibilities when providing access to information under the ATIPP Act. They have a duty to assist applicants in obtaining access to the records they're seeking. They have to conduct an adequate search and provide access to these records within specified timelines. They have to remove certain personal or business information from these records. If they didn't, the disclosure might be an unreasonable invasion of a third party's personal privacy or harmful to businesses. They also have the discretion to refuse access to other kinds of information if they determine an exception applies.

The ATIPP Act has been in effect in the territory for more than 20 years. Despite this, there still appears to be confusion within public bodies about how it operates. This means Yukoners aren't getting the full benefit of their rights under the ATTIP Act.

On this 2016 Right-to-Know week, I want to encourage every public body to examine their access to information programs or procedures. Looking for problems that may impact access to information rights is always a best practice. I also encourage public bodies to provide better training on the access to information provisions in the Act. Adequate training for staff and enhanced training for those who are responsible for managing access to information requests is another best practice.

It's especially important to know that the ATIPP Act doesn't restrict public bodies from disclosing information, other than personal information, to Yukoners outside its access to information process. Many governments at all levels in Canada have started moving towards a more open model of providing citizens with access to public sector information. So I also encourage the Yukon government to explore how it can join this welcome trend.

The Right-to-Know week in Yukon is September 26th to October 2nd, 2016.

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For more information please contact:

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