

## ***NEWS RELEASE***

**For Release:** September 25, 2009

### **Ombudsman Attends Signing of Right to Know Week Proclamation by Brandon Mayor**

Ombudsman Irene Hamilton was present September 23, 2009, when Mayor Dave Burgess signed a proclamation declaring September 28 - October 2, Right to Know Week in Brandon. The City of Brandon has officially recognized Right to Know every year since 2006, when annual observance of this democratic right began in Canada.

Hamilton noted, "By proclaiming 2009 Right to Know Week, the City of Brandon is again showing that it promotes transparency in its operations." Since 2006, the Province of Manitoba has also issued a proclamation every Right to Know Week.

September 28th is Right to Know Day worldwide. It is a time to celebrate and scrutinize the laws and informal procedures that enable the individual to have access to records held by public sector bodies.

Over 100 countries around the world, Canada and its provinces and territories included, have right to know legislation. In Manitoba, the primary access laws are *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA) and *The Personal Health Information Act* (PHIA). These laws require provincial and municipal government, regional health authorities, school divisions, colleges and universities to allow a person, upon request and with limited exceptions, to see and obtain a copy of records. PHIA extends the obligation to medical clinics, laboratories, personal care homes and regulated private practice health professionals, to allow people access to their personal health information.

This year, more jurisdictions than ever in Manitoba are formally recognizing Right to Know Week. The Province of Manitoba and seven of Manitoba's nine cities have or will be declaring that they are marking September 28 - October 2, Right to Know Week in their communities. In addition to Brandon, they are the cities of Dauphin, Flin Flon, Portage la Prairie, Selkirk, Thompson and Winkler. Their proclamations or other written commitment to Right to Know will be posted on the Ombudsman's web site during Right to Know Week.

“Manitobans, however should not have to apply for information under FIPPA and PHIA where it is clear that the information they are requesting is fully releasable. In such cases, the information should be released over the counter.” said the Ombudsman, Irene Hamilton.

For more information on Right to Know, including Manitoba activities September 28 -October 2, visit:

- the Ombudsman's web site, <http://www.ombudsman.mb.ca> (Access and Privacy Division home page, then click button on the left side of the page, "Right to Know")
- the national web portal, <http://www.righttoknow.ca>

**For more information about this news release, phone Irene Hamilton at (204) 982-9130 or toll free in Manitoba, 1-800-665-0531.**

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