



News Release

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Opening the Door – bringing hospitals under FOI is a major step for openness and transparency, says Commissioner Ann Cavoukian

TORONTO – Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner, Dr. Ann Cavoukian, called today's introduction of legislation to bring hospitals under Ontario's freedom of information legislation "a major step forward for openness and transparency, leading to greater accountability."

The Commissioner praised the government for bringing forward the new rules under the proposed *Broader Public Sector Accountability Act* and ushering in an era of greater openness and transparency for the citizens of Ontario.

In her latest annual report, released in May 2010, the Commissioner urged the government to move quickly to bring hospitals under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)* – a step she has repeatedly advocated for in her Annual Reports since 2004.

"In a free and democratic society such as ours," said Commissioner Cavoukian, "it is vital – for the purposes of transparency and accountability – to have access to information about institutions that are primarily funded by public dollars. The public has a right to know."

The Commissioner had repeatedly stressed to the government that Ontario was the only province in which hospitals were not covered under FOI.

Ontario's *Personal Health Information Protection Act* provides, among other things, individuals with access to their own personal health information, including hospital records. Designating hospitals as institutions under FOI legislation will now complete the circle, providing wide access to administrative records, said the Commissioner. "It will provide access to hospitals' general records, including records relating to administrative, operational and financial functions."

The Information and Privacy Commissioner is appointed by and reports to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and is independent of the government of the day. The Commissioner's mandate includes overseeing the access and privacy provisions of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, as well as the *Personal Health Information Protection Act*, which applies to both public and private sector health information custodians, in addition to educating the public about access and privacy issues.

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