



Information and Privacy
Commissioner/Ontario
Commissaire à l'information
et à la protection de la vie privée/Ontario

News Release

September 15, 2011

Commissioner urges hospitals to be proactive with the release of public information

Commissioner Cavoukian hosts hospital event in recognition of "Right to Know Week 2011"

TORONTO, Sept. 15, 2011 /CNW/ - Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner, Dr. Ann Cavoukian, will today urge Ontario hospitals to take a proactive approach to releasing information, as they prepare for a new era of transparency and accountability. Commissioner Cavoukian will host an informative session on Freedom of Information ("FOI") legislation for hospital staff today in the spirit of *Right to Know Week 2011*. Hospitals will fall under Ontario's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)*, for the first time, as of January 1, 2012.

"In a free and democratic society such as ours it is vital to have access to information about institutions that are primarily funded by public dollars - the public has a right to know," says Commissioner Cavoukian. "What's more, with the right planning and by taking a proactive approach to releasing information, FOI need not be a burden to hospitals."

Ontarians' Personal Health Information will Continue to be Protected Under PHIPA

Since 2004, hospitals have been covered under the *Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA)*, which governs the collection, use and disclosure of personal health information, and provides individuals with the right to access their health records. The introduction of *FIPPA* doesn't change the protection of personal health information, but will give the public a broader right to access records under a hospital's custody or control, including those relating to administrative and operational functions, policy and financial considerations.

"The introduction of FOI legislation will complete the circle - it will complement *PHIPA*, which was put into place for the protection of our personal health information," says Commissioner Cavoukian. "Ontario is the last Canadian province to include hospitals under FOI - this has been a long time coming and represents a major step forward for openness and transparency, leading to greater accountability."

Commissioner Cavoukian will stress to hospitals the benefits of taking a proactive, rather than a reactive, approach to public disclosure, in line with her concept of [Access by Design](#). "The key word here is *default* - where public institutions proactively release information as part of an automatic process - by default."

Event Details: Today's event commemorates "*Right to Know Week*," celebrated by freedom of information organizations from across the globe for nearly a decade, promoting an individual's right of access to public information.



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Location: Mount Sinai Hospital Auditorium
Date & Time: Thursday, September 15, 2011, 2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

Presenters include:

- Dr. Ann Cavoukian, Information and Privacy Commissioner, Ontario
- Tom Closson, President and CEO, Ontario Hospital Association
- A panel of Ontario hospital CEOs: Dr. Bob Bell (University Health Network), Joseph Mapa (Mount Sinai Hospital), Michelle DiEmanuele (Credit Valley Hospital), Rob Devitt (Toronto East General Hospital).

IPC activities planned to celebrate "*Right to Know Week 2011*"

In the spirit of educating the public and hospital staff about FOI legislation, the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner (IPC) has a number of activities planned during *Right to Know Week* (September 26-30, 2011) including education outreach tables at hospitals throughout the province. See details of *Right to Know Week 2011*, including an IPC outreach schedule, [here](#)

About the IPC

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. The Commissioner's mandate also includes helping to educate the public about access and privacy issues.

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