

# MANITOBA OMBUDSNEWS



Ombudsman, Access and Privacy Newsletter

## JOHN REID TO CELEBRATE RIGHT TO KNOW WEEK IN MANITOBA

Mr. John Reid will be speaking in Winnipeg and Brandon during Right to Know Week (September 28 to October 5, 2007) on the topic, "Twenty Years Later: The Increasing Importance of Access to Information Legislation."

Mr. Reid was Canada's Information Commissioner from 1998 to 2006. As an independent ombudsman, he considered complaints and compliance under the federal *Access to Information Act*.

Mr. Reid has long been a passionate advocate of the critical importance of access to information for a healthy democracy. He is a dynamic speaker, known to candidly express his views, such as:

**You Shouldn't Have to Ask:  
When Access to Information  
Becomes Routine**

**A Panel**

Moderated by  
**Tom Brodbeck**  
Winnipeg Sun

Panelists  
**Sue Bishop**  
Manitoba Culture,  
Heritage and Tourism  
**Irene Hamilton**  
Manitoba Ombudsman  
**Steve Lambert**  
The Canadian Press  
**Gale Whelan Ems**  
Manitoba Volunteers

**Tuesday, October 2  
12:00 noon - 1:00 p.m.  
Portage Place, Edmonton Court**

11:45 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. FPPA 101, Adrienne Batra, Canadian Taxpayers  
Federation (Manitoba)

Sponsored by

Manitoba Ombudsman

Manitoba Taxpayers Federation

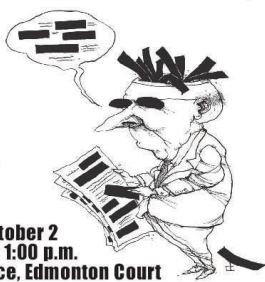
Manitoba Bar Association

Manitoba Women's Association

Winnipeg Free Press

Winnipeg Free Press

SUN



- *More than ever, I am convinced that secrecy brings out the worst in governments and public officials. Good, honest, democratic governance requires transparency.* (2005)
- *The clear lesson of these past years is that governments, even very new governments, continue to distrust and resist the Access to Information Act and the oversight of the Information Commissioner.* (2006)
- *Vigilance, by users, the media, academics, the judiciary, Information Commissioners and Members of Parliament, must be maintained against the very real pressures from governments to take back from citizens the power to control what, and when, information will be disclosed.* (2006)

Mark your calendars for Mr. Reid's presentation:

**Thursday, Oct. 4, 2007, 3:30-4:30 p.m.**  
University of Winnipeg  
Theatre B (Rm 447), Manitoba Hall,  
  
(Ellice entrance, take yellow elevator at your immediate left to 4th floor, turn left and go to the end of hall, turn right to find Theatre B)

**Friday, October 5, 2007,  
12:00 noon – 1:00 p.m.**  
Brandon City Hall,  
410 – 9<sup>th</sup> Street,

These events have been arranged by the Manitoba Right to Know Committee, having representatives from Manitoba Ombudsman, the Canadian Association of Journalists (Man.), Canadian Taxpayers Federation (Man.), Manitoba Bar Association and Provincial Council of Women of Manitoba. The University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg Free Press and Winnipeg Sun are also co-sponsoring the Winnipeg event.

Curious about the poster above? Check out the article on page 3 about another Right to Know event.

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## OMBUDSMAN SUPPORTS TAXPAYERS' RIGHT TO BE HEARD



When a hundred people were turned away from a municipal council meeting where they wanted to voice their concerns about a local improvement plan, some of them complained to the Ombudsman.

A local improvement plan is one way a municipality can raise additional taxes for a special project. In this case, residents were concerned about the cost of a \$10 million project, and the impact this could have on their property taxes. They also felt that they had not been given an opportunity to express their views to their elected representatives.

After an investigation, the Ombudsman issued a preliminary report recommending that the municipality immediately hold a special meeting to hear residents' concerns before proceeding with the project. The municipality accepted the recommendation and over a

hundred people attended the meeting to get detailed information about the cost of the project and to voice their concerns.

The investigation also resulted in recommendations to Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs designed to ensure compliance with the requirements for public notice about local improvement plans. Those recommendations were also accepted.

In a final report the Ombudsman commended the municipality for acting promptly upon receiving her recommendation and thanked the Department (and the Municipal Board) for initiating changes that would "... improve the transparency and accountability of this important process."

Our report on this issue, "Report Regarding the Municipality of Killarney-Turtle Mountain Local Improvement Plan" is available on our website.

## OMBUDSMAN AND OFFICE TEAMS TO VISIT DAUPHIN, THE PAS AND FLIN FLON

The Ombudsman and representatives from our Intake Services, Ombudsman and Access and Privacy teams are planning to meet with public sector bodies and local media in Dauphin, The Pas and Flin Flon during the week of October 29, 2007. We will be discussing the role and function of our office.

Public sector bodies may not always be aware of the various ways (other than investigations), the Ombudsman can assist them in serving the public. It is also essential that the public knows that our office exists so that they may seek an independent review of the actions or omissions of public sector bodies.

Our visits around Manitoba will definitely enhance our understanding of the challenges to governance – distance and isolation, for example – and the service needs of individuals in particular geographic regions.



## OUR BRANDON OFFICE



A project to develop and implement a systemic investigation program for Manitoba Ombudsman is one of several new initiatives underway at our Brandon office. Staff are also developing an outreach program for municipal government officials, boards or agencies that work closely with municipal governments, and provincial government departments.

The Brandon office has been serving rural and urban communities outside a 50-mile radius of Winnipeg since June 1998 and is located at:

Scotia Towers

Room 603-1011 Rosser Avenue Brandon, Manitoba  
R7A 0L5

Telephone (204) 571-5151 or toll free

1-888-543-8230



## PRIVACY COMMISSIONERS AND OMBUDSMEN CALL FOR CHANGES TO NO-FLY LIST PROGRAM

The annual meeting of federal, provincial and territorial Privacy Commissioners and Ombudsmen was held on June 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> in Fredericton, New Brunswick.

At the meeting, the privacy officials issued a joint statement calling for the Federal Government

to suspend the Passenger Protect Program, better known as the no-fly list. The program which came into effect on June 18, 2007 prevents people who have been deemed an immediate threat to aviation security from boarding a flight from Canada or boarding an aircraft destined to Canada.

The Privacy Commissioners and Ombudsmen also outlined reforms to the program which they

believe are urgently required. These reforms would ensure that use of such lists in the interest of airline security only occurs in a way which would respect the privacy and other rights of Canadians.

Further details are available on the web site of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, [www.privcom.gc.ca](http://www.privcom.gc.ca).

## RIGHT TO KNOW PANEL, "YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TO ASK: WHEN ACCESS TO INFORMATION BECOMES ROUTINE"

A Right to Know panel will focus on routine disclosure at:

**Portage Place Shopping Centre,  
Edmonton Court Tuesday, October 2, 2007,  
11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**

The event will be moderated by the Winnipeg Sun's Tom Brodbeck, with panelists Irene Hamilton (Manitoba Ombudsman), Steve Lambert of the Canadian Press (media perspective), Gaile Whelan Enns of Manitoba Wildlands (citizen perspective) and Sue Bishop from the Manitoba government. Adrienne Batra of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation (Manitoba) will make an introductory presentation called "FIPPA 101".

The panel topic recognizes that public sector bodies and trustees can provide information outside of the formal access to information process set

out in FIPPA and PHIA.

As a best practice, a public sector body or trustee may choose to release information by active disclosure (for example, on a web site or in an annual report) or by routine disclosure (for example, when a person attends their office and asks for information). At times, the formal access to information process is the only reasonable approach because, for example, consent would be needed for release of third party information or because other sensitive information might require severing.

This event helps celebrate Right to Know Week. See our front page for details on other Right to Know events, featuring John Reid.



## NEW FACES IN OUR OFFICE

This past summer we were once again fortunate to employ STEP students.

They started in May and finished their employment at the end of August. Three students were

hired for administrative support and various outreach activities. Their enthusiasm, energy, and contribution to our office were a definite asset.

We are also pleased to have an intern placed with us through the Civil Service Commission's Aborigi-

nal Public Administration Program. This learning opportunity is mutually beneficial to our staff and the intern. The intern has been with us for nine weeks now and we are looking forward to her continued involvement in the work of our office in the months ahead.

**Winnipeg Office**

750 - 500 Portage Ave.  
Winnipeg, MB R3C 3X1  
Phone: 204-982-9130  
Fax: 204-942-7803  
Toll Free in MB: 1-800-665-0531

**Brandon Office**

603 - 1011 Rosser Ave.  
Brandon, MB R7A 0L5  
Phone: 204-571-5151  
Fax: 204-571-5157  
Toll Free in MB 1-888-543-8230

WEB SITE: [www.ombudsman.mb.ca](http://www.ombudsman.mb.ca)

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

- **October 2, 2007** – panel on Right to Know, “You Shouldn’t Have to Ask: When Access to Information Becomes Routine”, Portage Place Shopping Centre, Edmonton Court, 11:45 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
- **October 4, 2007** – presentation on Right to Know by John Reid, “Twenty Years Later: The Increasing Importance of Access to Information”, University of Winnipeg, Theatre B (Room 447), Manitoba Hall, 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.
- **October 5, 2007** – presentation on Right to Know by John Reid, “Twenty Years Later: The Increasing Importance of Access to Information”, Brandon City Hall, 410 - 9<sup>th</sup> Street, noon – 1:00 p.m.
- **October 17, 2007** – Brown Bag Talk, “Extending the Time Limit for Responding under FIPPA”, for Access and Privacy Officers and Coordinators (call 982-9139 to register)
- **November 21, 2007** – Brown Bag Talk, “Use of Personal and Personal Health Information under FIPPA and PHIA”, for Access and Privacy Officers and Coordinators (call 982-9139 to register)

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*Manitoba Ombudsman: Ombudsman and Access and Privacy Divisions*