



FACT SHEET

RIGHT TO KNOW

The purpose of Right to Know (RTK) Week is to raise awareness about people's right to access government information while promoting freedom of information as essential to both democracy and good governance. In 2009, the Canadian RTK Week will take place from September 28 to October 2. This year marks the fourth year that Canadians have celebrated RTK Week, and there are a great number of events planned coast to coast.

HISTORY OF RTK DAY

Internationally, RTK Day began on September 28, 2002, in Sofia, Bulgaria at an international meeting of access to information advocates who proposed that a day be dedicated to the promotion of freedom of information worldwide. It is now celebrated globally and continues to grow and expand each year, both internationally and within Canada, with more participants and new exciting events being added.

WHY EXERCISE YOUR RTK?

- To find out more information about government priorities.
- To gain a better understanding of issues that are of particular concern to you.
- To actively participate in the democratic process.

Every citizen has the right to request access to government records – a right that is preserved through various federal, provincial and territorial laws across Canada. This right is essential to foster greater government accountability and transparency.

RTK WEEK EVENTS ACROSS CANADA

There are numerous activities planned at the federal, provincial and territorial levels during RTK Week. This year's celebrations include town hall meetings, public forums, guest speaker presentations, training sessions, media interviews and seminars, specialized panel discussions, and website activities. Please visit the calendar of events at www.righttoknow.ca for more details.

FAST FACTS

- Each year, more than 40 countries and 60 non-governmental organizations participate in RTK Day.
- As of 2009, over 80 countries have freedom of information legislation.
- Sweden passed the world's first freedom of information law in 1766.
- In Canada, the first jurisdictions to introduce their own access to information legislation were Nova Scotia (1977), New Brunswick (1980), Newfoundland (1981) and Quebec (1982).
- Today, all Canadian provinces and territories have freedom of information legislation and a commissioner or ombudsperson who is responsible for ensuring that the rights of information requesters are respected.

"The overarching purpose of access to information legislation, then, is to facilitate democracy. It does so in two related ways. It helps to ensure first, that citizens have the information required to participate meaningfully in the democratic process, and secondly, that politicians and bureaucrats remain accountable to the citizenry."

— Justice Gérard La Forest
Supreme Court of Canada, *Dagg v. Canada*
[1997]