
Corporation Records of the Government of Ontario

217 Research Guide

Most Recent Update:
March 2011

This research guide describes government records in the Archives of Ontario collection that document the creation and existence of Ontario corporations. Please note that:

- The Indexes and records that this research guide describes are available in the Archives of Ontario's Reading Room only. If the records you need are NOT on microfilm (i.e., they are original documents), it usually takes one or two business days to retrieve them.
- The Archives of Ontario does not hold information on the value of shares of defunct corporations.

All descriptions for records mentioned in this guide are available in our online Archives Descriptive Database. You will find the database and all guides mentioned in this guide in the "Start Your Research" section of our website.

GETTING STARTED

Step 1: Confirming the Type of Business that Is the Focus of Your Research

In conducting your research, you need to confirm whether the records you are looking for relate to a business that is a partnership, a sole proprietorship, a corporation or a benevolent society:

- A **partnership** is a business where the co-owners are responsible for the assets and debts of the business (i.e., if the business goes bankrupt, the co-owners also go bankrupt). Partners in a **limited partnership** have various levels of involvements and liabilities in the business.
- A **sole proprietorship** is similar, with only one owner. A sole proprietorship may also be called an "unincorporated business."

If you are researching a partnership or sole proprietorship, see *Research Guide 218: Partnership and Benevolent Societies Registration Records*.

- A **corporation** (also called a company) is legally separate from its shareholders or “owners”, who are not responsible for its liabilities and assets. Depending on its corporate structure, the name of a corporation includes one of the following words or abbreviations: “Corp.”, “Corporation”, “Inc.”, “Incorporée”, “Incorporated” “Limited”, “Limitée”, “Ltd”, “Ltée.”
- **Benevolent societies** were mutual assistance organizations. They provided various social and economic services to their members, including collective insurance. These societies included the Ancient Order of Foresters, the Canadian Order of Foresters, the Chosen Friends of the Grand Council of Ontario, the Loyal True Blue Associations, the Knights of Pythias, the Oddfellows Independent Order Lodge and many others.

Business name registrations are found with partnerships and sole proprietorship registrations. A corporation must register any business name that is different from the corporation name (e.g., a corporation named “Smith Shoes Ltd.” would have to register the business name “Smith Shoes”).

At the end of this research guide are some other words and terms that you may come across in your research on corporation records.

THE RECORDS

Step 2: Finding the Information You Need to Retrieve a Corporation File

To find the records you want to use, you need to know the dates that the corporation existed. If you know that a corporation **was dissolved before 1907**, go to Step 3, below.

To find out when a corporation existed or to retrieve the corporation file, you need to consult the Corporation Index. This index lists all corporations created in Ontario since 1867. It is available in two locations:

- on microfiche in the Archives of Ontario Reading Room (see the end of this guide for our contact information), and
- at the Companies and Personal Property Security Branch of the Ministry of Government Services. The Branch contact information is:

393 University Avenue, Suite 200
 Toronto ON M5G 2M2
 Telephone: 416-314-8880 Fax: 416-314-4806
 Toll Free Phone 1-800-361-3223
 TDD Phone 416-314-0843
 E-Mail: infomgs@mgs.gov.on.ca
 Website: www.mgs.gov.on.ca/english/business/index.html

The Corporation Index is arranged alphabetically by keyword (each word in the company's name). Information in the index may include the date of incorporation and dissolution, the type of corporation and the reasons for the dissolution. The Corporations Index binder contains information about the index and its contents. Table 1, below, shows what to look for when you use the index. After checking the index, go to step 3.

Table 1

Column No.	Information	What to Do
2	Indicates the unique Ontario Corporation Number	Make note of the number in this column if it exists.
11	Indicates the type of corporation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9: Refers to corporations created before 1908 that did not file statutory documents (such as annual returns) with the Government after 1906 meaning that there is no corporation file • T: Refers to "Inactive corporations" that submitted some filings after 1906 but was dissolved before 1978 (these file numbers have a "TC" prefix) • No code: Refers to "Active" corporations, still in existence in 1978 or created since (these file numbers have a "C" prefix) 	Write down the information you find, including the dates of creation and dissolution. Once you have consulted the Index, go to Step 3 to decide which part of this guide you need to consult next, based on the information you have found, so far. If your research is limited to learning when a corporation existed, you may not need to consult any other records.

Step 3: Finding the Records You Need

To find the records you need, use Table 2 (below), to determine which section of this research guide you need to consult to find the records you need.

Table 2

Corporation was created	Corporation was dissolved	
	Before 1907	After 1907
Before 1907	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For corporation files and letter patents, go to Step 4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For active and dormant corporation files (C and TC files), go to Step 5.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For letter patents only, go to Step 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For corporations with no-post 1906 filing ("9" in the last column of the Corporations Index), go to Step 4.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For indexes to corporations created by law, go to Step 7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For letter patents, go to Step 6.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For indexes to corporations created by law, go to Step 7.
1907 to 1971		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For corporation files, go to Step 5.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For letter patents, go to Step 6.
1972 to 1978		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For corporation files, go to Step 5.
After 1978		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact the Companies and Personal Property Security Branch, Ministry of Government Services (see contact information in Step 2.)

Step 4: Using the Index to Corporations, 1867 to 1906 (Series RG 55-6)

The Index to Corporations, 1867 to 1906 (Series RG 55-6) is on index cards. It lists corporations that was dissolved before 1907 OR that filed no records after 1906.

The index provides a reference to:

- the **charter book** containing the letter patent. **Please read note 2 below.**
- the **incorporation file**, including applications, correspondence and other records pertaining to the incorporation
- annual returns**, up to 1906
- miscellaneous records and correspondence** filed with the Ontario Department of the Provincial Secretary, up to 1906.

The information is located on microfilm reels MS 480, reel 1 (A to P) and reel 2 (Q to Z). Both reels are available in the Archives' Reading Room.

Figure 1 shows an example of an index card. When you find the name of the corporation, write down all the information on the index card. Then, see below for instructions on where to go from there.

Figure 1

Dupont Gold Mining				
INC	18 Oct. 1899	1889	1898	
LIB	58-20	1890	1899	255
FILE	5299	1891	1900	1043
MISC	5588/99 By-Law	1892	1901	1752
	Re Stock	1893	1902	
	5599/1900 By	1894	1903	
	Law re Stock	1895	1904	
	Defunct 7559/05	1896	1905	
		1897		

Here are explanations of the words and abbreviations you will find on the index cards and the steps to take:

INC: refers to the date the corporation was incorporated or was issued an extra-provincial licence.

LIB: refers to the liber (book) and book entry for the charter book (e.g., Liber 58, entry 20). For instructions on retrieving the charter book itself:

- If there is no letter before the liber number, go to the description for [Series RG 55-1](#), Company Charter Books.
- If the letter “L” comes before the liber number, go to the description for [Series RG 53-41](#), Licenses for Extra-Provincial Corporations.
- If the letters “GS” come before the liber number, go to the description for [Series RG 53-18](#), Great Seal Books.

FILE: refers to the incorporation file, which may contain incorporation correspondence, applications and other documents.

YEAR with file number: refers to annual reports that the corporation submitted.

MISC: refers to miscellaneous records that the corporation submitted to the Department of the Provincial Secretary (e.g., by-laws, copies of prospectus, notice of dissolution).

Note 1: The records above, except for the charter books, are part of the general correspondence of the Department of the Provincial Secretary ([Sub-Series RG 8-1-1](#)). Request the records by quoting the reference code, corporation name, file number and year. For files in the years columns, you need to quote the year after the one written down on the card [e.g., for the file with the entry 1901 – 1752, request file 1752, year **1902**]. There is restricted access to this sub-series for preservation reasons. This means that there may be a delay in making these records available. Contact the Archives (see our contact information at the end of this guide) or consult the reference staff for more information.

Note 2: Even if a corporation did not submit new filings after 1906, **patent books** may still document the cancellation or surrender of the charter after that date.

Step 5: Finding and Using Dormant and Active Corporation Files

Active corporations are those that exist today, or have existed as some point after 1978 (including those that existed before 1979). Dormant corporations are those that ceased to exist before 1979.

The Archives holds dormant corporation (TC) files **TC 1 to TC 3155, TC 3221 and TC 21293 to TC 23885**. See the description for [Series RG 55-5](#), Dormant Corporations Files for more information on how to order these records.

The Companies and Personal Property Security Branch, Ministry of Government Services has:

- other dormant corporation files
- active corporation files (Step 2 for instructions and the ministry's contact information).

Please note that for some active and dormant corporations created between 1908 and 1959, the file may be split into two files. The reason for that is:

During the 1970's, the Companies Branch of the former Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations microfilmed "essential" documentation from some files. The "essential" material (which forms the active or dormant corporation file as it exists now) included documentation verifying the incorporation of the company, supplementary letter patents, changes of name and alterations to the by-laws. The ministry transferred "non-essential" records, like routine correspondence and annual returns, to the Archives. Please see the description for [Series RG 55-4](#), Active Corporations Files for an online finding aid listing file numbers for these records.

Step 6: Accessing Letter Patents

If you have found a charter book number and page number using [Series RG 55-6](#), Index to Corporations (described in Step 4 above), you do not need the indexes in Table 3, below, unless you want to check if the corporation charter was cancelled after 1908.

To retrieve the letter patents (and the surrenders and cancellation of company charters, change of names, and licenses for extra-provincial corporations), you first need to consult one of the following indexes. See the descriptions for information on how to use them.

Table 3

Dates	Indexes
For corporations that <u>was dissolved before 1908</u>	See Sub-series RG 55-15-1 Index to Company Charters, 1868-1908
For corporations incorporated <u>before 1908 and active after 1908</u> , and corporations <u>created between 1908 and 1946</u>	See Sub-series RG 55-15-2 Index to Company Charters, 1868-1946
For corporations created <u>between 1946 and 1971</u>	See Series RG 55-2 , Index to Company Charters
<u>After 1971</u>	No letter patents were issued and a certificate of incorporation is kept in the corporation file.

Once you have a book and page number, go to the appropriate description for the series listed below for microfilm listings. The series descriptions for the indexes will tell you how to decide which one you need.

- [Series RG 55-1](#) Company Charter Books (1869-1971). It includes the surrenders, cancellations, change of names and licenses for extra-provincial corporations, except for the dates of the next three series

- [Series RG 55-23](#) Surrenders and Cancellation of Company Charter Books (1919-1929)
- [Series RG 55-28](#) Companies Change of Name Books (1919-1928)
- [Series RG 53-41](#) Licenses for Extra-Provincial Corporations (1868-1928)
- [Series RG 53-18](#) Great Seal Books. It has incorporations that the Lieutenant Governor made through proclamation.

Step 7: Published Indexes to Corporations Created before 1902 by an Act of the Legislature

For a complete alphabetical listing of all bodies incorporated through legislation between 1771 and 1896 in Canada, see P.H. Beaudoin, *Incorporated Bodies: Private and Local Law (1896)* and the *1901 Supplement* covering the years 1897-1901. Both books are available on microfilm at the Archives (microfilm reel MS 292 reel 1).

For a list specific to railway companies, see R. Dorman, *A Statutory History of the Steam and Electric Railways of Canada, 1836-1927*. There is a copy in our library (Call Number: 385 Dor).

Step 8: Other Corporation-Related Records

Regulatory records: Various government ministries and agencies have been and still are regulating corporations, depending on their line of business. Check the [Archives Descriptive Database](#) (use the Advanced Search Option, "Search Groups of Archival Records") for records series from the following ministries and agencies (the list is not exhaustive):

- Liquor Licence Board of Ontario (enter RG 36-* in the Archival Reference Code field)
- Ontario Security Commission (RG 70-* in the Archival Reference Code field)
- Registrar of Loan and Trust (RG 83-* in the Archival Reference Code field)
- Superintendent of Insurance (RG 82-* in the Archival Reference Code field).

Bankruptcy Files: The Archives of Ontario holds court records on bankruptcies over 20 years old. Please contact the Archives for more information about these holdings and retrieving them.

Corporations' Own Records: The Archives of Ontario has the records of some corporations. Check the [Archives Descriptive Database](#) using the name of the corporation.

Federal Government Incorporations: If you are unable to find a corporation, the incorporation may be with the federal government. Visit the Corporations Canada website (<http://corporationscanada.ic.gc.ca>) for more information.

WORDS AND TERMS FOR FINDING CORPORATION RECORDS

Charter books:

The books have letter patents, surrenders and cancellation of company charters, change of names, and licenses for extra-provincial corporations (authorizing them to operate in Ontario) up to 1971.

Corporation files:

These files originally included forms, applications and correspondence pertaining to the incorporation. Later, they also included records like annual returns. For corporations created after 1971, they also included a certificate of incorporation. They may include information about the dissolution of the corporation.

Letter patents

They were issued to corporations created before 1972, giving corporations the right to exist. Letter patents were copied into books called charter books.

MAKING CONTACT

Ready and Willing

Although unable to do your corporation records research for you, our reference staff are waiting to assist you. You may telephone or write to them by mail or email or — best of all — visit the Archives of Ontario.

Contact us

Telephone: 416-327-1600 Toll free (Ontario): 1-800-668-9933

Fax: 416-327-1999

Email: reference@ontario.ca

Address: Archives of Ontario, 134 Ian Macdonald Blvd., Toronto, ON M7A 2C5

Website

For information about the Archives' holdings, as well as access to research guides and other customer service materials available through the Archives of Ontario, please visit our website www.ontario.ca/archives.

Customer Service and Research Guides

The Archives of Ontario has published a series of in-depth research guides on a variety of specific topics. For more information, please see “Research Guides and Tools” under “Start Your Research” on the home page of the Archives website.

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This document may contain references to electronic links that can be activated only by using the HTML version found on the Archives of Ontario website.

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