

# Dissolution

## A Guide for Alberta Not-for-Profits

© October 2010

Rev. 2015

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The Muttart Foundation

Charity Central gratefully acknowledges the support of The Muttart Foundation.

Special Thanks to the Board Development Program for their assistance and input into the development of this material.

ISBN: 978-0-919792-51-7

© October 2010, Centre for Public Legal Education Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta

This publication is available for download at [www.charitycentral.ca/node/622](http://www.charitycentral.ca/node/622)

Production of this booklet has been made possible by a financial contribution from the Canada Revenue Agency.



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# What is Dissolution?

Just like people, organizations have a life span; they come into existence on registration and pass on when they are dissolved. This document looks at what is involved for non-profit organizations at the end stage of an organization's life.

The technical details vary by statute but generally, dissolution is the last stage of liquidation; the process by which an incorporated organization or company is ended and its assets and liabilities are reconciled and any remaining property distributed. Liquidation is sometimes called winding-up, and dissolution usually refers to the last stage of that process. Liquidation itself can be either compulsory or voluntary. For example, liquidation may be compelled by creditors who want some compensation for debts. It may also involve a bankruptcy, in which case bankruptcy rules must be followed first. Or, the members or shareholders of a non-profit can decide that the organization is no longer required and take steps to end it.

This document reviews the various steps involved in the dissolution of a non-profit organization.

If your organization is a registered charity under the *Income Tax Act* you should review the information in this document under the heading "Registered Charities" first.

# The Need to Look at Governing Documents

## What are Governing Documents?

Governing documents are the legal documents that provide the framework for your organization. They include your incorporation document, certificate of incorporation, objects, bylaws and any policies your organization may have developed. They also include the legislation under which your organization was incorporated.

You should familiarize yourself with the legislation your organization was incorporated under.

A not-for-profit can be incorporated provincially or federally. The main statutes used to incorporate not-for-profit organizations in Alberta are:

- the *Societies Act*, ([www.qp.alberta.ca/Laws\\_Online.cfm](http://www.qp.alberta.ca/Laws_Online.cfm))
- the *Companies Act* as a Part 9 Non Profit Company or ([www.qp.alberta.ca/Laws\\_Online.cfm](http://www.qp.alberta.ca/Laws_Online.cfm))
- the *Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act (S.C. 2009, c. 23)* (<http://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-7.75/>)

- When your organization was approved for incorporation, the registrar issued a Certificate of Incorporation (provincial) or Letters Patent (federal).
- Check the Certificate to confirm under which legislation your organization was incorporated.
- Get a copy of the legislation. Read what it says to do to dissolve the organization.



### **Not sure what legislation your organization was incorporated under?**

If you are unsure of your organization's status, you can search the registries of provincially and federally incorporated organizations. See "Organizing your Corporate Documents" – Resources - "A Guide to Searching Government Registries". If you are still unsure you may want to consult with a lawyer for assistance with dissolving the organization.

## Provincial Incorporation

Under both the Alberta *Societies Act* and the *Companies Act* there is no requirement that an organization's bylaws describe the procedure for dissolution.

The *Societies Act* addresses dissolution under the following sections:

- Section 33 – Dissolution for cause
- Section 34 – Voluntary dissolution
- Section 35 – Winding Up – It refers the reader to Part 17 (Liquidation and Dissolution) of the *Business Corporations Act* ([www.qp.alberta.ca/Laws\\_Online.cfm](http://www.qp.alberta.ca/Laws_Online.cfm)).

The *Companies Act* sets out the requirements for dissolution (both voluntary and for cause) in Part 10 of the Act.

Both Acts refer to the completion of the dissolution process by filling in and filing of the form Articles of Dissolution ([www.servicealberta.gov.ab.ca/pdf/Forms/REG3038.pdf](http://www.servicealberta.gov.ab.ca/pdf/Forms/REG3038.pdf)), *Business Corporations Act* Sections 211 and 212. You will note there is no reference on the form to your incorporating Act. Not to worry; you have the correct form. (See more information provided under Forms on page 11)

Get a copy of your organization's bylaws.

- What, if anything, do your bylaws say to do in the event of dissolving the organization?
- Look at the information contained in the clause for dissolution. Follow the process outlined.
  - If your organization's bylaws do not address dissolution, you need to review the statute under which you were incorporated to determine the correct procedure. Go to the section "General Process" on page 7 of this guide and follow the steps.

If you are unable to locate a copy of your organization's bylaws contact a provincial Registry Office ([www.servicealberta.gov.ab.ca/1641.cfm](http://www.servicealberta.gov.ab.ca/1641.cfm)) and request a copy of your bylaws that are filed with Corporate Registries. For federally incorporated organizations you can contact Corporations Canada ([www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cd-dgc.nsf/eng/h\\_cs03991.html](http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cd-dgc.nsf/eng/h_cs03991.html)) to request a copy of your bylaws.

## Federal Incorporation

If your organization isn't incorporated under provincial legislation, then it may well be incorporated under federal legislation.

If you find that your organization is incorporated under the current federal legislation then the following applies:

*Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act (S.C. 2009, c. 23)*

Corporations Canada provides information on preparing a request to dissolve a not-for-profit corporation under the *Not-for Profit Corporation Act*.

The information is provided in the form of FAQs and can be found here:

<https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cd-dgc.nsf/eng/cs05167.html>

The webpage answers the following questions:

What is dissolution?

When can a corporation apply for dissolution?

Do members need to approve the dissolution?

How can a corporation dissolve if it owns property or has liabilities?

Can a corporation decide not to dissolve once a Certificate of Intent to Dissolve is issued?

What documents must be filed to dissolve a corporation?

The site also provides related information on how and where to file the application as well as what happens after the application is submitted.

## General Process

This suggested process generally addresses the steps for dissolving. However you must always bear in mind what your organization's bylaws and the applicable statutes say.

### **Who makes the decision to voluntarily cease the operations of the organization?**

- It is the general membership that has the authority to dissolve the organization.
- The board of directors should call a special general meeting according to the regulations and procedures in the bylaws.
- At this special general meeting a motion to dissolve the organization must be passed at a general meeting according to the regulations of the bylaw. This will include the required **notice for the meeting**, the **quorum** and **how many votes are required** to pass a motion.
- If you have classes of membership, each class needs to pass the special resolution for dissolution, even if that class cannot vote at regular meetings of the society.
- The board of directors acting on the vote(s) takes the steps necessary to dissolve the organization. Ensure that there is documentation/minutes to this effect. The organization should no longer carry out any business except to the extent necessary for the liquidation of the corporate entity.

## Reconciling Liabilities and Assets

Arrangements must be made to address all the liabilities (amounts owing) and assets (cash, property and equipment) before taking any further action towards dissolution. Of course, you are going to have to pay any monies that the organization owes and address any outstanding liabilities. Most bylaws will set out how assets are to be distributed.

- Follow your organization's bylaws when you dispose of any assets.
- If your bylaws do not indicate where the assets of the organization are to go upon dissolution, the general principal is to disperse to a group with a similar set of objectives as the organization that is dissolving. It is not recommended that the bylaws name a specific organization to receive the assets.
- Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission (AGLC) (<http://aglc.ca/>) and the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) ([www.cra.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/menu-eng.html](http://www.cra.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/menu-eng.html)) have definitions of who an eligible donee ([www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/chrts/plcy/csp/csp-e09-eng.html](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/chrts/plcy/csp/csp-e09-eng.html)) is in relation to depositing of assets acquired under their regulations



Equipment purchased with money earned from gaming revenue needs to have that asset or the funds from the sale given to an organization that meets the AGLC's definition of charitable. The same is true for registered charities. You must follow the rules set out by the CRA. See information under section title "Registered Charities" for disposition of the assets of a charity.

- If you are unsure who qualifies as an eligible donee, contact the appropriate agency for their specific guidelines.

Remember no individual member of the organization can receive any of the assets or profit from the dissolution of the organization.

# Statutory Liabilities

The board needs to address all staffing issues that arise from dissolution. Use the organization's policy and employment standards in dealing with the release and compensation of staff. If no policies exist, check the Alberta Employment Standards Code ([www.canlii.org/en/ab/laws/stat/rsa-2000-c-e-9/latest/rsa-2000-c-e-9.html](http://www.canlii.org/en/ab/laws/stat/rsa-2000-c-e-9/latest/rsa-2000-c-e-9.html)) to ensure that all requirements have been met.



The board is responsible for ensuring that the organization meets all its statutory obligations. The board should be aware of all legislation (provincial and federal) that directly affects the organization. Perhaps the most important statute to consider is the *Income Tax Act*.

## What Happens in the Event of Bankruptcy?

Like liquidation or dissolution, bankruptcy can be either voluntary or compelled. If your organization is forced into bankruptcy or voluntarily chooses it, then the **bankruptcy process takes precedence and must happen first** before anything else is done under the statute which you are incorporated.

A non-profit organization can file for bankruptcy. If bankruptcy is declared, the trustee takes possession of all of the organization's assets and deals with all of the creditors. The directors co-operate with the Trustee in Bankruptcy and might assist, but are relieved of their operating duties and dealing with creditors.



This is not an easy process to undertake. You may want to seek professional assistance with this process.

For general information on bankruptcy see links in "Additional Resources"

# Registered Charities

Upon dissolution, a registered charity is required to distribute its remaining assets to other registered charities. If you are a charitable organization as defined by the Canada Revenue Agency, these are the actions that you need to take.

Write to CRA to request revocation.

- a. Follow the requirements provided by CRA in the response to your revocation request.
- b. Ensure that you disperse your organization's assets according to CRA requirements (see Summary Policy CSP - D15) [www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/chrts/plcy/csp/csp-d15-eng.html](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/chrts/plcy/csp/csp-d15-eng.html) (Dissolution clause) and related policies. Your organization is liable to pay a revocation tax ([www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/chrts/plcy/csp/csp-r24-eng.html](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/chrts/plcy/csp/csp-r24-eng.html)) unless you transfer the organization's assets to an eligible donee ([www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/chrts/plcy/csp/csp-e09-eng.html](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/chrts/plcy/csp/csp-e09-eng.html)) as defined by the *Income Tax Act*.
- c. You will receive a *Notice of Intention to Revoke a Charity's Registration* (Form T2051A) advising your organization of the official revocation date by registered mail. Complete the T2046 ([www.cra-arc.gc.ca/E/pbg/tf/t2046/README.html](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/E/pbg/tf/t2046/README.html)) and return it to CRA including the final financial statements within one year of receiving the *Notice of Intention to Revoke*.
- d. A notice will be published in the *Canada Gazette* ([www.gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p1/2008/2008-02-16/html/notice-avis-eng.html](http://www.gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p1/2008/2008-02-16/html/notice-avis-eng.html)) and a listing will be put on the CRA website.



You must still complete the process outlined for dissolution provincially or federally, whichever is applicable.

Go to the section on "General Process" and follow the steps outlined.

# Forms

## Provincial

Voluntary dissolution requires that notice of the organization's intention to surrender its incorporation certificate be provided to the Corporate Registry for a society or Part 9 non-profit company. This means you must complete the form "Articles of Dissolution", Alberta *Business Corporations Act* Sections 211 and 212.

- This form is available online at [www.servicealberta.gov.ab.ca/840.cfm](http://www.servicealberta.gov.ab.ca/840.cfm)
- Complete sections 1, 2, 3, and 5 of the form; most organizations are not dissolved under Section 212 of the *Business Corporations Act* so you do not need to complete section 4.
- For section 3 of the form, you will only need to check boxes (a) and (b) unless you are dissolving under Section 212.

You should receive a Certification of Dissolution from Corporate Registries. Contact Corporate Registries ([www.servicealberta.gov.ab.ca/contact.cfm](http://www.servicealberta.gov.ab.ca/contact.cfm)) to find out the "turn around time" for the certificate.

## Federal

Information on dissolving a not-for-profit corporation can be found on this Corporations Canada webpage:

<https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cd-dgc.nsf/eng/cs05167.html>

To obtain a Certificate of Dissolution a completed and signed copy of Form 4017 - Articles of Dissolution must be submitted to Corporations Canada.

This form is available online at:

[https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cd-dgc.nsf/vwapj/FRM-4017-e.pdf/\\$file/FRM-4017-e.pdf](https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cd-dgc.nsf/vwapj/FRM-4017-e.pdf/$file/FRM-4017-e.pdf)

Information on how to file your application is available here:

<https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cd-dgc.nsf/eng/cs04968.html>

Information on what happens after submission of the application is available here

<https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cd-dgc.nsf/eng/cs04969.html>

There is no filing fee. Copies of the directors' resolution or members' special resolution should not be submitted with the application.

# Books and Records

Under both the *Income Tax Act* and your organization's incorporating statute the following steps must be taken.

- Arrange for the storage of the records and document of the organization. This information is required for the Articles of Dissolution Form. The form is available from [www.servicealberta.gov.ab.ca/pdf/Forms/REG3038.pdf](http://www.servicealberta.gov.ab.ca/pdf/Forms/REG3038.pdf)
- Books and Records include records of meetings, the general ledger, all governing documents (objectives and bylaws), financial statements, invoices/ vouchers, T3010's for a CRA registered charity, any any other accounting records and books. See more information at [www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/bsnss/tpcs/kprc/menu-eng.html](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/bsnss/tpcs/kprc/menu-eng.html)
- Books and records must be kept for six years according to the Alberta *Business Corporations Act* and two years for the federal *Income Tax Act* (see Books and Records – Retention/Destruction at [www.cra-arc.gc.ca/E/pub/tp/ic78-10r5/](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/E/pub/tp/ic78-10r5/))

# Additional Resources

Alberta Corporate Registries

[http://www.servicealberta.ca/Corporate\\_Registry.cfm](http://www.servicealberta.ca/Corporate_Registry.cfm)

Canada Revenue Agency– Charities Directorate

[www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/chrts/menu-eng.html](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/chrts/menu-eng.html)

*Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act* – Operating a Federal Not-for-Profit

[https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cd-dgc.nsf/eng/h\\_cs04953.html](https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cd-dgc.nsf/eng/h_cs04953.html)

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[www.muttart.org/sites/default/files/downloads/publications/legal\\_and\\_ethical\\_1\\_organizing.pdf](http://www.muttart.org/sites/default/files/downloads/publications/legal_and_ethical_1_organizing.pdf)

You can download provincial legislation from the Alberta Queen's Printer Laws

Online Catalogue site at [www.qp.alberta.ca/Laws\\_Online.cfm](http://www.qp.alberta.ca/Laws_Online.cfm)

The *Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act* (S.C. 2009, c. 23) is available online at

<http://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-7.75/>

Canadian Legal FAQs - Bankruptcy

<http://www.law-faqs.org/national-faqs/bankruptcy/>



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