

Ten Most Useful Features of the Canada Revenue Agency's Charity Directorate Website for Charities

By Mark Blumberg (August 25, 2009)

1) Quick Charity Search and Advanced Charity Search

<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/chrts/menu-eng.html>

- Has a list of 83,000 registered charities;
- Great for finding out if an organization is a registered charity;
- For foundations and other charities this list is helpful to know to whom you can grant funds (most of the qualified donees are registered charities and are listed on the site). A charity that gifts funds to a group that is not a qualified donee can lose its charitable status;
- Provides T3010 annual return information on all charities including revenues, expenses, whether they conduct political or foreign activities, employee compensation, etc.;
- T3010 information is only source of information available to compare all Canadian registered charities;
- Provides some information on charities whose status has been revoked.

2) Checklists for Charities

<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/chrts/chcklsts/menu-eng.html>

- If you want a quick overview the checklists are a great place to start;
- There are checklists for: [Basic Guidelines](#), [Activities](#), [Books and Records](#), [Receipting, Spending Requirements](#) (DQ), [T3010](#), [Legal Status](#), [Changes GST/HST](#) and the recently added [Terrorism](#).

3) Charity Directorate E-mail List

<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/esrvc-srvce/mlst/sbscrbchrts-eng.html>

- To subscribe, it is pretty complicated: "Enter your **email address** in the box below, and select **Subscribe**." There is no cost. You get about 1-2 e-mails per month. There is no humour in the e-mails – for that you need to go to <http://www.globalphilanthropy.ca>.
- Also really cool, if you want to unsubscribe: "If you are already a subscriber and wish to cancel, enter your **email address** in the box below, and select **Unsubscribe**." Is it really

possible with things made so simple that the Charity Directorate is actually part of the Canadian government?

- The e-mail list keeps you in the loop on major developments in the charity world – new policies, consultations, new checklists, new forms and, of course, those high profile revocation of abusive tax avoidance schemes.

4) Summary Policies

http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/chrts/plcy/csp/csp_mnn-eng.html

- Do you really want to read 50 pages on something or would you like to start with 3 or 4 paragraphs with links to other documents? Summary policies are a great place to start especially, if you are not really sure where to look for what you need;
- For lazy, I mean busy, people like me.

5) Operating a Registered Charity

<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/chrts/prtng/menu-eng.html>

- On one page you have links to most documents that you need to access to find out about operating a registered Canadian charity.

6) Issuing Receipts

<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/chrts/prtng/rcpts/menu-eng.html>

- 89% of charities that are audited do not handle receipts properly. So if you are in the 11% you don't need to look at these pages. Do you feel lucky? How do you know if you are in the 11% - here are a few suggestions – 1) Read these documents and see if you are complying; 2) If you are a little lazy call a lawyer and they can review your official donation receipts; 3) If you are very lazy and want to save money call up CRA and ask them to audit you!

7) CRA Information Sessions (In Person and By Webinar)

<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/chrts/cmmnctn/menu-eng.html>

- CRA offers information sessions in person throughout the country for free. These used to be called “Roadshows”.
- CRA is now also offering free webinars at: <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/chrts/cmmnctn/wbnrs/menu-eng.html>

8) CRA Registered Charity Newsletters

<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/chrts/cmmnctn/nwslttrs/menu-eng.html>

- Here is a list of all the CRA Registered Charity Newsletters which have a large amount of information that is useful for charities.
- There is an alphabetical index at the bottom of the page.

- <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/chrts/cmmnctn/nwslttrs/cnws-ndx-eng.html> is an index with some description of each newsletter.

9) CRA Charity Directorate Forms

<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/chrts/formspubs/tpctyp-eng.html>

- Every form from application to operation to revocation.

10) Contact Information for CRA

<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/chrts/cntct/cntct-eng.html>

- If you cannot find what you are looking for on the website you can always call CRA directly. They answer their phone within 30-60 seconds (a lot better than many businesses) and they don't bite unless you are calling to sell an abusive charity tax avoidance scheme!
- If you want general information you can call on a "no-name" basis.

11) RSS Feed on the CRA Charities Directorate

For the super geeks, there is a bonus at <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/esrvc-srvce/rss/chrts-eng.xml>

- Get all the news directly to your RSS feed;
- RSS feed are content fed directly from a website to your computer. Instead of going to your five favourite websites and checking what is new every day it can be fed directly to you, saving you time and being more reliable in terms of providing information. Geeks who have social lives, or jobs, like it because it allows them to remain a geek while earning a living and having fun. If you see that funny orange symbol you know a site has a RSS feed.
- By the way, if you are scared of new technology like RSS, you can also go to the What's New Page and you will get the same information: <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/chrts/whtsnw/menu-eng.html>

Once you get comfortable with the CRA website you will realize that it has a lot of useful information. Although you can always call CRA, in many cases you can more quickly find the information on their website. You should check back occasionally as CRA keeps on adding to the website.

Mark Blumberg is a lawyer at Blumberg Segal LLP in Toronto, Ontario and lead trainer for Capacity Builders' Charity Law Information Program (CLIP). He can be contacted at mark@blumbergs.ca or at 416-361-1982. To find out more about legal services that Blumbergs provides to Canadian charities and non-profits please visit <http://www.canadiancharitylaw.ca> or <http://www.globalphilanthropy.ca>

To communicate with CLIP, please contact the CLIP office at 1-877-484-3030 or 416-256-3010 ext. 232 or by email at clipreception@capacitybuilders.ca. For further information, please see <http://www.capacitybuilders.ca/clip>.

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