

---

## **Fact sheet: How to find information on your employer**

---

### **1. JOIN AN ORGANIZATION**

Often the by-laws of an organization prevent staff from becoming members. Some locals form exchanges so that a representative from each local joins the organization of the other. Members have the right to access by-laws, annual financial statements of the organization, as well as to attend the annual general meetings.

More information can be obtained if a member is able to run successfully for the board of directors of the organization or if connections are made with an existing board member. Detailed information such as minutes of meetings and financial information can be obtained as a board member.

### **2. TALK WITH YOUR CO-WORKERS**

Workers tend to have a good sense of what's happening with their employers and are an important source of information. You may want to gather a group of members together in your local to speak with members and map out their knowledge about your employer's finances, work locations, staffing, or ownership structure. You could use the Stand up for Fairness campaign model to have one-on-one conversations with members to map out this knowledge.

### **3. BROADER RESEARCH TOOLS**

#### **Internet research**

You can find information about your employer from the internet. More and

more employers have developed web pages that contain the name of their board of directors and annual reports. The web page for the employer's association can also contain valuable information. Also an internet search on the employer's name can often unearth a wealth of information such as major donors that could influence your employer.

#### **Registered charities**

For registered charities, information is easily available from the [Canada Revenue Agency \(CRA\) Charities Listings](#). Many social services agencies register as charities so donors can use their receipt as an income tax deduction. The registration number is often located on fundraising materials or on the web site if they have one.

Plenty of information is available on the CRA website such as members of the board of directors and detailed financial statements. However, some documentation, including by-laws, is only available by making a public document request to the CRA, which is free of charge. To do this, you can call the Charities Directorate at 1-800-267-2384 or email [charitylistings-ListeBienfaisance@cra-arc.gc.ca](mailto:charitylistings-ListeBienfaisance@cra-arc.gc.ca).

You can also check out the following website for a comparison of year-to-year [charity financial information](#) as

well as other material the charity may have uploaded.

### Provincial and federal corporations

Another option is to check if your employer is registered as a not-for-profit corporation either in your province or federally. \*You can check what [corporate registration information is available publicly in your province](#). The amount of information available publicly and whether there's a fee associated with it varies by province. For example, in Nova Scotia, you can search the corporate registry for free, whereas in British Columbia, there is a small fee.

Most social services organizations are incorporated provincially; however, some chose federal incorporation through Corporations Canada. You can find [information on boards of directors and dates of filings for federal corporations](#).

Materials including [by-laws and charter documents for federal corporations](#) can be accessed for a fee.

\* *It is rare, though possible, for social service organizations to register as for-profit corporations. If your employer falls into this category, you can find more information about how to do this research on the following website: <http://strategiccorporateresearch.org/getting-started-with-corporate-research/>*

### Freedom of information request

You may want to request information from municipal, provincial or federal government ministries, public agencies, boards, commissions or advisor boards under freedom of information laws. If you think your employer is a municipality or may receive funding from the municipal, provincial or federal government or want to request documents such as by-laws, you can make a request.

You can begin by contacting the department or agency that has the information as they may give it to you without a formal request. If access is denied, make a written request under freedom of information laws. You can find out how to submit a federal, provincial or municipal request on the following websites:

- [Federal](#)
- [Newfoundland and Labrador](#)
- [Prince Edward Island](#)
- [Nova Scotia](#)
- [New Brunswick](#)
- [Quebec](#)
- [Ontario](#)
- [Manitoba](#)
- [Saskatchewan](#)
- [Alberta](#)
- [British Columbia](#)

There are charges for searching and photocopying, so to save money it is often useful to confine your request to records relating to the funding and

financial information of your employer over a period of time such as going back two fiscal years. Freedom of information requests can be time-consuming and must be done well in advance as delay is a common tactic taken by ministries.

### Legal complaints

Another source of information may be legal decisions arising from legal complaints that have been brought against your employer. Often legal decisions include detailed information about your employer's operations. You can search for [legal decisions](#).

## 4. BARGAIN ACCESS TO INFORMATION

### Research helps build power

Take advantage of the many sources of information ranging from your co-workers to corporate documents to government sources.

Strategic research could help you:

- contest the financial picture your employer is painting during collective bargaining;
- prepare and mobilize if a merger or restructuring is on the horizon;
- realize your employer runs an associated organization with workers looking for a union.

Many CUPE locals have made access to information a priority. Building the right to information in the collective agreement can entrench regular access to information. Here are some of the areas where collective agreement language has been negotiated:

- the right to attend board meetings;
- the right to access the names, and addresses of board members;
- the right to access financial and staffing information;
- the right to access by-laws;
- the right to access board information, minutes, and other materials;
- the right for the union to make presentations to the board;
- the right to have a union representative on the board.

For sample collective agreement language on how to research your employer, see fact sheet [Researching your social services employer: collective agreement language](#).