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.ca Domain Rules: CIRA Canadian Presence Requirements

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What the Canadian Presence Requirements are

Anyone can buy a .com. A .ca is different. The Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA) runs the .ca registry, and since November 8, 2000 only people and organizations that meet its [Canadian Presence Requirements for Registrants](#) (version 1.3) may register, hold and keep a .ca domain. CIRA says the rule exists so that .ca can be "a key public resource for the social and economic development of all Canadians."

Three practical consequences:

- You never apply to CIRA directly. Under CIRA's [General Registration Rules](#), you go through a CIRA Certified Registrar, which submits the request for you.
- At registration you accept CIRA's [Registrant Agreement](#) (version 2.3, August 2025) and [pick a Canadian Presence Requirements \(CPR\) category](#) that shows your connection to Canada.
- The requirement lasts as long as you hold the domain. In the Registrant Agreement, you promise that you meet the requirements and "shall continue to meet" them. CIRA may suspend or delete the domain if you stop qualifying.

This article explains the rules as they stand in October 2026. It is general information, not legal advice.

The 18 categories in plain language

The policy lists [eighteen categories](#). For a Montreal founder, the first six and number 17 are the ones that matter.

#	Category	Who it covers (short version)
1	Canadian citizen	A citizen of the age of majority in the province where they live or last lived

#	Category	Who it covers (short version)
2	Permanent resident	A permanent resident under the <i>Immigration and Refugee Protection Act</i> who is "ordinarily resident in Canada" and of the age of majority
3	Legal representative	An executor, administrator or other legal representative of a person in 1 or 2
4	Corporation	A corporation under the laws of Canada or of any province or territory
5	Trust	A trust under provincial or territorial law where more than 66.6% of trustees qualify under 1 to 4
6	Partnership	A partnership registered under provincial or territorial law where more than 66.6% of partners qualify under 1 to 5
7	Association	An unincorporated organization or club where at least 80% of members qualify and at least 80% of directors, officers, employees, managers or other representatives are ordinarily resident in Canada
8	Trade union	Recognized by a Canadian labour board, with its head office in Canada
9	Political party	Registered under a Canadian electoral law
10	Educational institution	Universities, colleges and schools located in Canada and recognized or licensed by Canadian authorities
11	Library, archive or museum	Located in Canada and not for profit
12	Hospital	Located in Canada and licensed under provincial or territorial law
13	The Crown	Her Majesty the Queen and her successors (the policy's wording)
14	Indian band	As defined in the <i>Indian Act</i>
15	Aboriginal Peoples	Inuit, First Nation, Métis or other Indigenous peoples of Canada, their members and collectivities
16	Government	Federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments, their agents and Crown corporations
17	Trademark registered in Canada	A person who meets no other category but owns a trademark registered in Canada, limited to the exact word component of that mark
18	Official marks	A public authority that had an official mark published under subsection 9(1) of the <i>Trademarks Act</i> , limited to the word component of that mark

What is **not** on the list matters just as much. There is no category for "has a Canadian address," "has a Quebec enterprise number (NEQ)," "holds a work permit" or "is a sole proprietor." Eligibility depends on who you are (citizenship or permanent residence), what legal form you use (corporation, partnership, trust) or a registered Canadian trademark. Where you receive mail is not part of the test.

Individuals: citizens, permanent residents and "ordinarily resident"

Canadian citizens qualify wherever they live. The policy imposes no residence condition on citizens, so a Canadian living in Paris can register a .ca in their own name.

Permanent residents must also be "ordinarily resident in Canada." The policy [defines this](#) as residing in Canada "for more than 183 days in the twelve month period immediately preceding" the application, "and in each twelve month period thereafter for the duration of the domain name registration." Two consequences for newcomers:

- A permanent resident who landed recently and has not yet spent more than 183 days in Canada does not meet the individual test on the policy's wording.
- The test continues to apply after registration. A permanent resident who later spends most of each year abroad can stop qualifying while still holding the domain.

Temporary residents (work permit holders, international students, visitors) are not on the list, even if they have lived in Montreal for years. The 183-day rule is not a category of its own. In the individual categories, it is an extra condition for permanent residents.

Corporations: the usual route for a business

A corporation "under the laws of Canada or any province or territory of Canada" qualifies under [category 4](#). That covers a Quebec company incorporated under the *Business Corporations Act* (a société par actions, or "inc.") and a federal corporation under the *Canada Business Corporations Act*.

The policy text sets no condition on who owns, controls or directs the corporation. This is the cleanest route for a non-resident founder. Incorporate in Quebec or federally, then register the .ca with the corporation as registrant. Use its exact legal name in the registrant organization field, not your personal name and not an informal brand. The Registrant Agreement [defines the registrant](#) of a non-individual domain as the person in the "Registrant Organization" field. If you are still planning the company, see [Quebec incorporation for non-residents](#).

A foreign company (for example a Delaware LLC or a French SAS) is not "a corporation under the laws of Canada" just because it is registered to do business in Quebec. Unless it owns a registered Canadian trademark, it has no category of its own.

Sole proprietors and partnerships

The policy has no sole proprietor category, and its definition of "Person" covers individuals, corporations, partnerships, trusts and other entities, not business names. A sole proprietorship is not a separate legal person: the business is you. The Registrant Agreement makes the registrant either the individual in the "Registrant Name" field or the Person in the "Registrant Organization" field. So you register as an individual under category 1 or 2, in your own legal name, and you qualify only if you personally are a citizen or an ordinarily resident permanent resident. Registering an enterprise with the Registraire des entreprises and getting an NEQ (see the [NEQ guide](#)) does not create a new CPR category.

A **partnership** qualifies only if it is registered under provincial or territorial law **and** more than 66.6% of its partners meet one of categories 1 to 5. A partnership of three, with two Canadian citizens and one foreign partner, meets the threshold (66.7%). A partnership of two, with one citizen and one foreign partner, does not (50%).

Non-residents: what works and what does not

Situation	Can it hold a .ca?	Basis
Foreign founder, no Canadian entity, Montreal mailing address	No	An address is not a CPR category
Foreign founder with a Quebec or federal corporation	Yes, in the corporation's name	Category 4
Foreign sole proprietor with an NEQ	No, unless personally a citizen or ordinarily resident PR	Categories 1 and 2 only
Foreign company owning a trademark registered in Canada	Yes, limited to the mark's exact word component	Category 17
Foreign company with only a US, EU or Madrid trademark not registered in Canada	No	CIRA says international trademarks are not valid
Canadian citizen living abroad	Yes	Category 1 has no residence condition

Watch out for the "friend registers it for me" shortcut. CIRA's own registration tips say to [always register the domain name yourself](#) and not let a third party do it on your behalf. The registrant, not whoever pays, is the holder in CIRA's records, and the Registrant Agreement requires registration information that is "true, complete and accurate and not misleading."

The trademark route and how long it takes

Category 17 lets a person with no other connection to Canada register a .ca, but only one "consisting of or including the exact word component" of a trademark **registered** under the Canadian *Trademarks Act*. A pending application does not count. When CIRA validates, it asks for a [copy of the Canadian trademark registration](#), and "the registered trademark owner must be the Registrant of the .CA domain name." If the mark belongs to your parent company, the parent must be the registrant.

Timing is the catch. The Canadian Intellectual Property Office (CIPO) says that for an application filed in October 2026, the [forecast wait for examination](#) is approximately 8.2 months. That is only the wait until an examiner first looks at the file. Registration comes later, after examination and any further steps. If you need a .ca within weeks, a Canadian corporation is usually faster than waiting for a trademark registration. Filing details and address questions are covered in [our trademark filing guide](#).

When CIRA checks: Registrant Information Validation

CIRA does not check documents at registration. It [regularly reviews registrations](#) through Registrant Information Validation (RIV), and "selection for validation is at CIRA's discretion." What happens once you are selected:

1. **Lock.** As soon as the process begins, CIRA locks the domain. It cannot be transferred to another registrar or registrant, and its contact information cannot be updated.
2. **First notice.** It goes to the administrative contact and/or the registrant and asks for documents proving your category.
3. **Second notice.** It is sent ten business days after the first. You then have five more business days to submit documents.
4. **Suspension.** Without documents, the domain is suspended for up to 30 days. Your website **and email** stop working, but you can still submit documents.
5. **Cancellation.** If nothing arrives, the domain is cancelled and released "to the public for registration on a first come, first-served basis."

For domains suspected of malicious activity, CIRA suspends after one day without a response instead of the standard 15 business days.

Documents CIRA lists for common categories:

Category	Document CIRA accepts
Canadian citizen	Canadian birth certificate or valid Canadian passport
Permanent resident	Permanent Resident Card
Corporation	Corporate profile or certificate of status: federal (Corporations Canada) or provincial (for Quebec, the Registraire des entreprises; registries may charge a fee)
Trademark registered in Canada	Copy of the Canadian trademark registration, in the registrant's name

CIRA says it uses the documents only to check CPR compliance and that the copy of your identification "will be destroyed once the validation process is finalized." Notices go by email, so a stale administrative contact address is the most common way to lose a domain without noticing. CIRA recommends keeping contact information up to date through your registrar.

WHOIS privacy

For individuals, CIRA states that the contact information provided at registration is **not displayed on the .CA WHOIS**, so you do not need to buy a privacy add-on from a registrar. Corporations do not get the same default. CIRA's [Privacy Policy](#) says a non-individual registrant's WHOIS shows the registrant name, mailing address, email, phone and fax, plus the administrative and technical contacts. A corporation can ask CIRA in

writing to hide them, but must certify that disclosure would likely cause harm, and CIRA decides. Use a business address and a role email for those fields. The Registrant Agreement also states that CIRA has no control over how anyone uses information it does disclose through WHOIS.

Choosing a registrar and registering

CIRA's three-step process is short:

1. Search for an available name with CIRA's domain search tool.
2. Choose a CIRA Certified Registrar. CIRA suggests comparing what you need (for example email hosting or support in French), reading reviews, and shopping around on total cost, since many registrars sell bundles.
3. Complete the purchase on the registrar's platform, accepting the Registrant Agreement and selecting your CPR category.

CIRA puts a .ca at "around \$10-\$20 per year" in its FAQ (as of October 2026). Registrar prices, renewal prices and bundled extras vary, so compare the renewal price, not just the first-year promo. You can register for 1 to 10 years. .ca also supports French accented characters, which helps if your Quebec business name has accents. CIRA says the accented variations of a name you register are reserved for you.

Transfers, change of registrant and renewals

The General Registration Rules set the mechanics:

- **Change of registrar.** Get an authorization code from your current registrar, which must provide it within five calendar days. No registrar change is allowed within 60 days of registration or of a previous registrar change. CIRA adds one year to the term on transfer, up to the 10-year maximum.
- **Change of registrant.** You can move the domain to another person at any time through your registrar, but the new registrant "must be an existing CIRA Registrant and meet all the requirements," including the CPR, and agree to the Registrant Agreement. This is how you move a domain from yourself to your new corporation after incorporating.
- **Renewal.** Renew through your registrar before expiry. If the domain expires, CIRA auto-renews it for one year and the registrar has a 45-day window to delete it. A deleted domain has a 30-day redemption period before it goes to the To-Be-Released list.

Common mistakes

- **Picking "Canadian citizen" or "Permanent resident" when you are neither.** The Registrant Agreement lets CIRA suspend or delete a domain whose registration information is false or misleading.
- **Registering in your personal name, then incorporating.** This works if you personally qualify. If you do not, register in the corporation's name from the start.
- **The trademark owner and registrant don't match.** A mark held by a holding company does not support a domain registered to an operating company or a person.

- **Relying on a Montreal address alone.** It is useful for a bank, a non-resident company setup or mail, but it is not a CPR category.
- **Ignoring CIRA email.** Over the RIV timeline above, missed notices can lead to suspension and then cancellation.

If you are setting up a Montreal company and need a civic business address for the rest of your paperwork, 2727 Coworking offers a mailing address at 2727 Rue Saint-Patrick in Griffintown, on the Lachine Canal.

Sources

- [Canadian Presence Requirements for Registrants \(version 1.3\) — CIRA](#)
- [Canadian Presence Requirements \(Keeping .CA Canadian\) — CIRA](#)
- [Registrant Information Validation — CIRA](#)
- [Registrant Agreement \(version 2.3\) — CIRA](#)
- [General Registration Rules \(version 3.22\) — CIRA](#)
- [How to register a .CA domain — CIRA](#)
- [Privacy Policy \(version 2.1\), WHOIS section — CIRA](#)
- [Trademarks \(processing times\) — Canadian Intellectual Property Office](#)

Source links

Links cited in this article, in order of first appearance. Full addresses are provided for readers using extracted text.

1. <https://www.cira.ca/en/resources/documents/domains/canadian-presence-requirements-registrants>
2. <https://www.cira.ca/en/resources/documents/domains/general-registration-rules>
3. <https://www.cira.ca/en/resources/documents/domains/registrant-agreement>
4. <https://www.cira.ca/en/legal-policy-and-compliance/canadian-presence-requirements>
5. <https://www.cira.ca/en/legal-policy-and-compliance/registrant-information-validation>
6. <https://www.cira.ca/en/ca-domains/register-your-ca>
7. <https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/canadian-intellectual-property-office/en/trademarks>
8. <https://www.cira.ca/en/privacy-policy>

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