**What’s in a Name?**

Companies are required under both the *Canada Business Corporations Act* (CBCA) and the Ontario *Business Corporations Act* (OBCA) to specify a corporate name at the very beginning of the incorporation process. Corporations that do not intend to carry on business with the public will often decide to use a numbered name (e.g. 1234567 Ontario Inc.). However, for a variety of reasons, many incorporators wish to integrate words or phrases into a unique business name. After settling on a name, some incorporators are dismayed to discover that their desired corporate name is prohibited. Some notable prohibitions include:

* Names using letters that are not from the Latin alphabet (e.g. “مطعم لبنان”)
* Names that are too general (e.g. “Grocery Store”)
* Names that are only descriptive of the quality or function of the goods or services (e.g. “The 100 Percent Polyester White Shirt Company”)
* The name or surname of a individual who has not been dead for at least 30 years (s. 11(1)(c)) (e.g. “The Donald Trump Bank”)
* A geographic name used alone (“Barcelona”)
* Names that are primarily punctuation marks or begin with punctuation marks (e.g. “#Hashtag Hotel”)
* Names that inaccurately include certain designations (e.g. “Tri-City University”, where the corporation is not a post-secondary educational institute)
* Names suggesting a connection to the Government of Canada or the Crown (e.g. “Royal Canadian Steel”)
* Names that inaccurately describe the place of origin of the goods (e.g. “Napa Valley Wines”, where the corporation produces wine in Niagara)
* Names exceeding 120 characters in length
* Names that are obscene

While many of the prohibitions included in the OBCA and CBCA are rational and expected, there are some that tend to catch people by surprise. As a result, it is important to consult the relevant statutes and regulations prior to deciding on a corporate name. Failing to do so may result in undue disappointment for the incorporator.