



Project Information Forms

An Administrative Bulletin for Archaeologists in Ontario

**Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport
2017**

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ISBN 978-1-4606-9271-4 (PDF)



Contents

1	Overview	3
2	Project Information Forms	4
2.1	PIF numbers	4
3	When to submit a PIF	5
4	How to submit a PIF	6
4.1	Combinations of activities allowed on a PIF	6
4.1.1	Research projects	6
4.1.2	Consulting projects	7
4.2	Maps and supporting documentation.....	7
4.2.1	Maps.....	7
4.2.2	Permit	7
4.3	Borden numbers for work on archaeological sites	7
4.4	Site data searches	8
4.4.1	Reports about previous fieldwork within 50 metres of your project area	8
5	How the ministry processes PIF requests	10
5.1	Timelines for PIF processing.....	10
5.1.1	Report and Site form filing deadlines.....	10
5.2	Your planned project and fieldwork strategy	10
6	How to make changes to a PIF	11
6.1	Changes before fieldwork has begun	11
6.2	Changes after fieldwork has begun	11
7	How to cancel a PIF number	12
8	Your planned fieldwork: requesting advice from the ministry	13
8.1	Following previous report recommendations.....	13
9	Glossary.....	14

1 Overview

This bulletin contains information about Project Information Forms (PIF). It is intended to help you, as a licensed archaeologist working in Ontario, meet the terms and conditions of your licence as you plan new archaeological projects.

Before starting any new fieldwork project or stage of archaeological assessment in Ontario, you must notify the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (ministry). To do this, you must fill out and submit a PIF to the ministry using Ontario's Past Portal (PastPort). This is required under the terms and conditions of your archaeological licence.

PastPort is the ministry's secure online archaeology licensing portal. All licensed archaeologists must have a PastPort account. For information about PastPort accounts see our [website](#).

Information for consultant archaeologists

Information about PIFs intended for archaeological assessment consulting projects will be found formatted in this way throughout this document.

Contact us: if you have any questions or concerns about the information in this document, please email us at archaeology@ontario.ca.

2 Project Information Forms

A Project Information Form (PIF) provides the ministry with information about archaeological projects being planned in Ontario.

The ministry uses the information that you provide on the PIF to:

- ensure that your licence is in good standing when you start a new project,
- confirm that any field directors that you have assigned to the project have an Applied Research or Professional licence in good standing; and,
- establish a deadline for the report (and any site forms) that you will need to file with the ministry to document the project and inform the public record.

Underwater Fieldwork

A PIF is required only for fieldwork that will be carried out on land. If you are planning underwater fieldwork, you will need a marine licence for the project. For information about marine licences, email the ministry at archaeology@ontario.ca.

2.1 PIF numbers

If the information on your PIF is complete, accurate and meets the licensing requirements above, the ministry will assign a tracking number (called a “PIF number”) to your project. You **must** obtain the PIF number before you begin work. Carrying out fieldwork without a PIF number **will** affect your record of licence compliance and your ability to renew your licence when it expires.

From the Standards and Guidelines for Consultant Archaeologists:

“The PIF number must be used in all correspondence and reports relating to the project.” (Section 7.1, Standard 4)

Your PIF number only applies to the specific fieldwork activities, stages of archaeological assessment and archaeological sites that you have described on your form. If you want to undertake additional activities or stages of assessment, or to work on a different site, you must submit a new PIF.

Once you have filed a report under your PIF number and it has been entered into the *Ontario Public Register of Archaeological Reports*, no further fieldwork or reporting may be carried out under the same PIF number. The only exception is for a preliminary excavation report (PER). If you have filed a PER, a final Stage 4 report must be filed under the same PIF number by the report filing deadline. This is the case no matter the outcome of the ministry’s review of the PER.

3 When to submit a PIF

You must submit a PIF to the ministry (and have received a PIF number) **before** starting any new fieldwork project or stage of archaeological assessment. This applies to **all** licensed archaeologists and types of projects (avocational, research or consulting).

From the Standards and Guidelines for Consultant Archaeologists:

“A PIF must be filed with the ministry for each archaeological fieldwork project, and the PIF number must be received by the licensee before beginning the fieldwork.” (Section 7.1, Standard 1)

You must submit your PIF at least five days before you intend to begin fieldwork. This gives the ministry enough lead time to process your PIF and issue you a PIF number before the work begins.

PastPort will prevent you from submitting a PIF more than 15 business days before your fieldwork start date. This helps to ensure that the PIF contains the most up-to-date information about the project. [See section 6](#) for how to make changes to a PIF after you have submitted it.

4 How to submit a PIF

You must submit PIFs to the ministry using PastPort. Quick reference guides with step-by-step instructions for using PastPort, including *How to Submit a PIF*, can be found in PastPort's Resource Centre.

Please read the instructions found on every page in PastPort. You are responsible for ensuring that your PIF is complete and accurate before you submit it.

Information for consultant archaeologists

Section 7 of the Standards and Guidelines lists the standards for completing and submitting a PIF to the ministry.

You may need to submit several PIFs for the archaeological assessment of a single property. Depending on the circumstances of the project, a separate PIF may need to be submitted for:

- each individual stage of archaeological assessment
- different areas of the property, if these are being assessed at different times

4.1 Combinations of activities allowed on a PIF

PastPort classifies archaeological projects and divides PIFs into two categories depending on the planned activities:

1. avocational and research projects
2. consulting projects

All defined stages of archaeological assessment (Stage 1, Stage 2, etc.) are consulting projects. All consulting projects must follow the *Standards and Guidelines for Consultant Archaeologists*.

You may only submit a PIF for types of projects and fieldwork activities allowed under the terms and conditions of your licence. PastPort will prevent you from selecting activities not allowed under your licence.

4.1.1 Research projects

Any combination of fieldwork activities listed under 'Avocational and Research Projects' may be selected so long as they are allowed under the terms and conditions of your licence.

4.1.2 Consulting projects

Only Professional licence holders can select stages of archaeological assessment under ‘Consulting projects’.

Only Stages 1 and 2 can be combined on a single PIF. Each Stage 3 and each Stage 4 requires its own PIF number. Stage 3 and Stage 4 PIFs can only be for work on a single archaeological site.

Information for consultant archaeologists

Fieldwork done in certain combinations of assessment stages can be reported together in reports. See the [Archaeological Reports bulletin](#) for details.

4.2 Maps and supporting documentation

In order to submit a PIF, you must provide electronic copies of the project area map and any additional supporting documents. You must upload these as attachments to the PIF in PastPort. The ministry may request other supporting documentation on a case-by-case basis.

4.2.1 Maps

You must upload a map showing the location of the property. Depending on your project, this could be one or both of the following:

- **Subject area map:** This map must clearly show the geographic location of the project area. The scale should be large enough so that the project area is clearly outlined.
- **Development map:** For consulting projects, this is the proposed development plan. It should be available from your client.

4.2.2 Permit

- If your project involves a site designated under section 52 of the *Ontario Heritage Act* and listed in regulation 875 or 880, you are required to obtain a separate permit to conduct any fieldwork on the site. Please email the ministry at archaeology@ontario.ca before submitting your PIF for information on obtaining a permit.

4.3 Borden numbers for work on archaeological sites

PastPort requires you to enter the Borden number of the site you are working on when submitting a PIF for fieldwork on any archaeological site. This can include, but is not limited to:

Consulting Projects

- Stage 3 – Site Assessment
- Stage 4 – Site Avoidance and Protection
- Stage 4 – Site Excavation

Avocational and Research Projects

- Site condition inspection
- Controlled surface pick-up
- Test unit excavation
- Site excavation

4.4 Site data searches

Research information from the **Ontario Archaeological Sites Database** is an important component of all archaeological projects, especially archaeological assessments consulting projects.

From the Standards and Guidelines for Consultant Archaeologists:

The background study must include research information from the following sources:

The most up-to-date (as of the submission of the Project Information Form) listing of sites from the ministry's archaeological sites database for a radius of 1 km around the property (Section 1.1, Standard 1)

To help ensure that you get the information you need to fulfill this standard, PastPort requires you to perform a site data search when submitting a Stage 1 or Stage 1 and 2 PIF. Your site data search will provide you with the most up-to-date (as of the date of your search) listing of sites on file with the ministry. You may also want to repeat the site data search at Stage 3 or Stage 4 when requesting a PIF to ensure you are aware of all sites (that is, newly discovered ones) around the property.

The PastPort quick reference guide *How to Search for Site Data* has step-by-step instructions. Find it in PastPort's Resource Centre.

4.4.1 Reports about previous fieldwork within 50 metres of your project area

You can also use the results of your search to find reports about previous archaeological fieldwork that documents sites within a radius of 50 metres around your project area.

From the Standards and Guidelines for Consultant Archaeologists:

The background study must include research information from the following sources:

- Reports of previous archaeological fieldwork within a radius of 50 m around the property (Section 1.1, Standard 1)

The PastPort quick reference guide *How to Search for Reports about previous fieldwork* has step-by-step instructions. Find it in PastPort's Resource Centre.

5 How the ministry processes PIF requests

5.1 Timelines for PIF processing

The ministry processes PIFs within five business days of receipt. When you submit a PIF through PastPort, you will receive an automatic email from PastPort@ontario.ca to let you know that the system has received the request.

Within five business days, you will receive a second email that will:

- provide you with the PIF number assigned to your project
- request additional information
- inform you that the ministry is unable to process the PIF. The reasons for the decision will be provided in the email

The reasons a PIF may not be processed may include the following:

- The PIF contains inaccurate or inconsistent information.
- The field director listed on the PIF is ineligible to undertake new fieldwork projects because they have failed to meet the terms and conditions of their licence.
- Conditions that affect visibility and may impact the results of the fieldwork (e.g., snow cover) might exist at the time the project is scheduled to begin.

5.1.1 Report and Site form filing deadlines

If your PIF is processed and a PIF number assigned, the email you receive will also include the deadline by which you must file the report and any site forms for the project.

For more information about:

- report deadlines, see the [Archaeological Reports](#) bulletin
- site form deadlines, see the [Archaeological Site Forms](#) bulletin

5.2 Your planned project and fieldwork strategy

The ministry does not generally comment on the information provided on a PIF. The fact that the ministry has assigned a PIF number to your project does not in any way guarantee ministry support for your planned project or fieldwork strategy. For guidance on fieldwork strategies for archaeological assessment projects, [see section 8](#).

If you are unsure whether your planned fieldwork will meet ministry requirements, including the *Standards and Guidelines for Consultant Archaeologists*, you may request ministry advice before or during fieldwork, [see section 8](#).

6 How to make changes to a PIF

Unexpected changes to your project may occur that could result in the information in your eventual report not matching the information that you provided on your PIF.

6.1 Changes before fieldwork has begun

If changes to your project occur and fieldwork has not yet begun, or if fieldwork is delayed, cancel the PIF number and submit a new PIF when the work is about to begin. [See section 7](#) for more information.

6.2 Changes after fieldwork has begun

If a change has occurred and fieldwork has already begun, please notify the ministry at archaeology@ontario.ca.

Such changes may include:

- the location information or boundaries of the study area
- the responsible licensee or field director
- a change of proponent or the proponent's contact information

The ministry will update the PIF with the new information provided and may request additional information.

Any changes to the stage of fieldwork will require a new PIF to be submitted.

From the Standards and Guidelines for Consultant Archaeologists:

“A licensee taking over responsibility for an ongoing project, either during a stage or between stages, must file a new PIF for the remainder of the project.”
(Section 7.1, Standard 3)

7 How to cancel a PIF number

A PIF number may be cancelled only if **all** of the following are true:

- fieldwork has not yet begun, and
- no archaeological report has been prepared or filed with the ministry, and
- no archaeological assessment report that makes recommendations has been provided to a development proponent

To cancel a PIF number, please email the ministry at archaeology@ontario.ca. The email must include the reason for the cancellation.

If any fieldwork has begun on the project, including a Stage 1 optional property inspection, you must file a report to document all of the fieldwork that has taken place.

If you require a due date extension for your report, please submit a 'Request for Due Date Extension' from the associated PIF's Overview page in PastPort.

From the Standards and Guidelines for Consultant Archaeologists:

"If no fieldwork is undertaken (e.g., the project is cancelled or delayed) the licensee must notify the ministry in writing prior to the report filing deadline, or the ministry will consider the report to be overdue" (Section 7.1, Standard 7).

Email us at archaeology@ontario.ca.

8 Your planned fieldwork: requesting advice from the ministry

Before and during fieldwork, artifact analysis and report production, you may consult the ministry for advice on whether it will deem a proposed method or approach to fieldwork appropriate. Please email your requests for advice to archaeology@ontario.ca.

When requesting advice, please provide as much information as possible, including:

- the associated PIF number (if available)
- status of work and findings to date
- an up-to-date map of the most recent results
- descriptions, photographs or images of fieldwork or fieldwork conditions
- your preferred next steps

Any advice provided by the ministry must only be considered valid to the degree that the information provided by the licensee is accurate. Any advice provided should be considered to apply only to the project in question and not as a precedent for other projects. Please include a PDF copy of this advice as supplementary documentation to your project report package.

The ministry will strive to provide a response to your request in a timely manner; however, response time may vary depending on the nature and complexity of the question.

8.1 Following previous report recommendations

The information in this section applies to archaeological assessment consulting projects.

When undertaking later stages of archaeological assessment, you are expected to follow the recommendations for fieldwork set out in the reports for the earlier related stages of assessment. For example, if you plan to undertake a Stage 3 assessment for a project begun by a different licensee, the ministry expects you to review and follow the recommendations made in the earlier Stage 1 and 2 reports prepared by the other licensee.

Exceptions include cases where:

- You intend to use an alternative fieldwork strategy that meets the *Standards and Guidelines*.
- The earlier recommendations do not meet the *Standards and Guidelines* (e.g., the earlier report was prepared under the 1993 [Archaeological Assessment Technical Guidelines](#)). In these cases, your stage of assessment must meet the *Standards and Guidelines*. To assist you in handling such cases, you can consult us for advice.

9 Glossary

archaeological assessment

For a defined project area or property, a survey undertaken by a licensed archaeologist within those areas determined to have archaeological potential (the possibility that the property contains archaeological resources) in order to identify archaeological sites, evaluate their cultural heritage value or interest, and determine their characteristics. Based on this information, the archaeologist recommends the appropriate means to mitigate impacts to the sites, if any.

archaeological project

Any aspect of the archaeological assessment (Stages 1-4), including background study, property survey, archaeological site assessment, mitigation and reporting.

archaeological site

Defined in Ontario regulation 170/04 as “any property that contains an artifact or any other physical evidence of past human use or activity that is of cultural heritage value or interest”.

avocational archaeologist

A person who carries out archaeological studies and fieldwork for no pay. In Ontario, this person requires an Avocational licence issued by the ministry to carry out fieldwork.

consultant archaeologist

Defined in Ontario regulation 170/04 as “an archaeologist who enters into an agreement with a client to carry out or supervise archaeological fieldwork on behalf of the client, produce reports for or on behalf of the client and provide technical advice to the client.” In Ontario, these individuals also are required to hold a valid professional archaeological licence issued by the ministry.

guideline

In the context of the *Standards and Guidelines for Consultant Archaeologists*, an optional instruction or good practice. Consultant archaeologists can carry out the stated activity if they want to or if circumstances indicate the practice is an acceptable alternative to the standard. Generally uses the word “may”.

licensee

A person holding an archaeological licence.

Ontario Public Register of Archaeological Reports

The collection of reports on licensed archaeological fieldwork in Ontario, as prescribed by Section 65 of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

PastPort

Ontario’s Past Portal. The ministry’s web-based archaeological licensing portal.

project area

The lands to be impacted by the project, such as, the area of a development application under the Planning Act, the area to be licensed under the Aggregate Resources Act, or the area that will be physically altered as a result of the activities associated with the project. This may comprise one or several properties, which may or may not be adjoining. However, all the properties must be part of one project that is being undertaken by one proponent.

Project Information Form (PIF)

The form archaeological licence-holders must submit to the ministry upon deciding to carry out fieldwork.

property

A piece of land with a defined boundary and an owner. See *project area*.

proponent

An entity, consisting of individuals, private corporations or government bodies, that is undertaking a development project.

standard

In the context of the *Standards and Guidelines for Consultant Archaeologists*, it describes the mandatory instruction or practice that the archaeologist is required to carry out if doing the stated activity. The mandatory instruction will use the words “must” or “should”.

project report package

The information package to be submitted to the ministry for each archaeological project undertaken by a licensee. This package includes a report and supplementary documentation, including maps.