

LIFELINE

A PUBLICATION OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR PERSONAL RESOURCE PLANNING (APRP)SM

Estate Planning Essentials

According to a poll conducted by the Angus Reid Institute (ARI), 50% of Canadians say they don't have a last will and testament¹. Some people may feel that estate planning is something that only applies to the wealthy or if there are large properties or expensive assets in play. The reality is that everyone can benefit from having an estate plan, no matter the size of your estate.



What is estate planning?

Estate planning refers to the process of designating who will receive your assets and handle your responsibilities when you die or become incapacitated. It typically involves creating a will and power of attorney, appointing an executor, outlining who you want to take care of minor children and pets and how you would like to have your assets distributed. Other aspects of an estate plan can also include things like making your wishes known about your funeral and adding a life insurance policy.

Why is it important?

If you pass or become incapacitated without an estate plan in place, you risk leaving what happens to you and your assets to someone, which means your belongings will be administered and distributed according to the laws of the province or territory you live in. This can place added emotional and financial burdens on your surviving loved ones.

Key things to know about estate planning

The estate planning process can feel a bit overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be difficult. To start, here is a list of some essential things you will want to consider when you're ready. And remember, you don't have to do it yourself and can lean on your financial, legal advisors or utilize one of the many self-serve estate planning tools available to help you draw up all the legal documentation that goes into an estate plan.

- Catalog all your assets, debts, expenses and investments and any life insurance proceeds
- Appoint an executor for your estate and outline how, and to whom, you wish your assets to be distributed
- Think about who you want to be guardians of minor children and pets, as well
- Consider who you will handle your financial and personal care decisions (may be different than who you wish to have as your estate executor)
- Understand the tax implications of your estate and how these might impact your asset disbursements
- Once you have a good understanding of your estate health, consider whether you will need to purchase life insurance as a complement of your will

Fine tuning the plan as you go

Having an estate plan in order is a great first step that your family will appreciate being taken care of. Keeping it updated as life circumstances change ensures that your plan remains relevant and reflects any major in your life. Some of the type of changes that can impact your estate plan include things like birth of a child, marriage, divorce and death. Anytime a key life change happens, updating your estate plan can help limit any surprises that might be felt by your heirs after you pass.

Estate Planning checklist

While having your estate plan in order goes a long way towards creating peace of mind for you and your family, something else to consider is organizing all your key files, account information and documents in a safe place that your executors can access.

This can help make the process of closing out accounts and accessing key information at the time of death easier for your executor(s).

Here is a list of the types of information you might consider collating:

- Estate planning documents (Will, Trusts, Power of Attorney, etc.)
- Advance Directives (DNR, Living Will, Health Care Proxy)
- Insurance Policies
- Pension Plans and Retirement Benefits
- Mortgages, Rental and Loan Agreements
- Tax Returns
- Government Issued ID (Driver's License, SIN #, Birth Certificate, etc.)
- Safety Deposit Box (plus location of the keys)
- Bank Accounts
- Credit Cards
- Investment Portfolios
- Property Deeds and Titles
- Email/Social Media accounts
- Household Utilities (account info)

¹Angus Reid Institute (ARI) poll: Lacking the Will: Half of Canadians say they don't have a last will and testament, including one-in-five aged 55+ <https://angusreid.org/canada-will-testament-intestate-dying-without-will/>

Sharing your Legacy

Your legacy is what you leave behind when you are gone. It is about the things that mean the most to you, your family, or your community. It is about how you will be remembered.

Thinking about what you may want to share about yourself, and your experiences is a personal process to undertake, but can be a very rewarding one. It often includes things that might traditionally be missed in paperwork, but that may hold special meaning to your family and friends.

Here is a list to help spark some ideas about what you might want to collect to honour your legacy:

- Stories** of your life and family that you would like to share
- Traditions** that are important to you that you would like to continue to be celebrated
- Recipes** that you would like to be passed on
- Favourite **memories**
- Cataloging some of your **proudest accomplishments**
- Your favourite **songs**
- Items that hold special meaning** that you are leaving behind (not included in your will)
- Special messaging/words of advice** you would like to leave your loved ones with



Consider putting these in one place so that it can be shared more easily between family and friends. This can be a physical scrapbook or binder or even a digital memory book. Regardless of how you would see this legacy book take form, the important part is getting started!



Taking the Time to Heal

The grieving process is a journey, thinking about your needs throughout can help.

Grief is often a singular experience, unique to everyone. It can be unnerving, with many ups and downs. However, there are some actions you can take to walk through the process with strength.

- If you are typically on the go, take some time to look at your schedule. Make an effort to create more balanced periods of activity during your day in a way that works for you.
- There is power in the word, 'no.' Lighten your commitments and allow yourself time to rest.
- In addition to mental and emotional stress, physical health may also come into question. Make eating well and moving well among your top priorities. It may help introduce a more positive energy and outlook.
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The Association for Personal Resource Planning (APRP)SM is an association dedicated to providing education and exploring programs for seniors to address their final expenses which may include a funeral.

Your local funeral service provider can offer advice and guidance to preplanning.