

Executor Checklist

A step-by-step guide to settling an estate in Canada



The Executor’s Estate Settlement Checklist

Being named as an estate executor is both an honour and a significant responsibility. With a complicated array of legal responsibilities, obligations and duties, we understand that settling an estate can feel overwhelming. This Canadian Executor Checklist is designed to support you through this important process, helping you handle each step with confidence and clarity.

At ClearEstate, we’re here to help ease your burden, offering guidance and expertise so you can navigate your role as executor with less stress. With this checklist, we hope to provide you with the tools you need to settle the estate smoothly and efficiently, knowing you’re not alone in the process.

The Steps to Settling an Estate

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Step 1.

Funeral Arrangements

GOAL

Arrange for funeral

- ☐ Find the Will of the deceased, if applicable.

WHEN

Right after death

- ☐ Review the Will for any expression of funeral/burial wishes

DURATION

5 to 10 days

- ☐ Make funeral arrangements and understand the scope of services the funeral home will provide. Remember to request several copies of the Death Certificate.
- ☐ Coordinate care for dependents
- ☐ Arrange care for any pets
- ☐ Coordinate with family members to notify friends and family of the passing
- ☐ Contact the deceased's bank(s) to request an Official Holdings Report
- ☐ Confirm payment of funeral expenses

ClearEstate provides efficient probate support and end-to-end estate settlement solutions to help settle an estate with convenience and confidence.

- ☐ To learn more, speak to your advisor about booking a free 30-minute consultation with ClearEstate.

Step 2.

First Notifications

GOAL

Submit official paperwork to protect the estate

WHEN

0 to 10 days after the funeral

DURATION

A few days

REMEMBER

Depending on the funeral home's scope of services, some of the following steps may have already been completed. Ensure you confirm what they will and will not provide you with, as you will be responsible for the rest.

- ☐ Apply for CPP Death Benefits (a single payment of \$2,500)
- ☐ Apply for CPP Survivor's Benefits to transfer the pension to the spouse and provide benefits to children under 25 years old.
- ☐ Submit CRA Notification to Update Record
- ☐ Submit OAS/ CPP/ GIS notifications
- ☐ Submit Notice of Death to Equifax and TransUnion
- ☐ Cancel passport, driver's licence and health card (for identity theft protection)

Step 3.

Secure the Hard Assets

GOAL

Protect the estate by securing the value of the hard assets

WHEN

0 to 30 days after the funeral

DURATION

2 to 3 weeks

- ☐ Identify and secure all assets:
 - ☐ home
 - ☐ contents of the home
 - ☐ other real estate
 - ☐ business assets
 - ☐ vehicles
 - ☐ perishable goods
 - ☐ safety deposit boxes
 - ☐ other personal property
- ☐ Obtain insurance for any vacant real estate or other assets, where prudent
- ☐ Arrange for mail forwarding or mail pick up
- ☐ Notify all service providers (ex. utility companies, landlord, property management and/or maintenance, alarm company, etc..)
- ☐ Obtain a professional valuation of all assets over \$3,000 (e.g. jewelry, artwork, antiques, collectables, etc..)
- ☐ Find and review all hard asset-related documents: property insurance(s), mortgage(s), lease(s), business interests, etc..)
- ☐ Review all documents relating to financial obligations: contracts, divorce, or separation agreements, court orders, etc..)

Contact your advisor to discuss your insurance needs.

Step 4.

Secure the Financial Assets

GOAL

Prepare for probate by doing an inventory of all assets and liabilities

WHEN

10 to 45 days after the funeral

DURATION

1 to 2 weeks

☐ Identify and secure all financial assets (bank accounts, investment accounts, life insurance products, cryptocurrency wallets, etc.)

☐ Notify all holders of assets of the passing (banks, investment advisors and brokers, insurers, etc..)

☐ Determine ongoing expenses and debts

☐ Cancel credit cards and debit cards

☐ Stop all unnecessary expenses:

Subscriptions

- ☐ Cable/satellite
- ☐ Online media/websites
- ☐ Magazines/newspapers
- ☐ Professional subscriptions

Memberships

- ☐ Gym
- ☐ Sports
- ☐ Clubs
- ☐ Professional associations

Other

- ☐ Insurances (auto, disability, etc.)
- ☐ Telephone (landlines)
- ☐ Cell phone
- ☐ Internet
- ☐ Health care/home care recurring expenses

**Do not cancel the Social Insurance Number
until taxes have been filed!**

Step 5.

Inform Beneficiaries

GOAL

Create transparency for everyone and dramatically reduce the risk of litigation

WHEN

30 to 45 days after the funeral

DURATION

1 to 3 days

What is probate?

Probate is the judicial process whereby the deceased's Will and the estate representative's authority are legally verified in order to carry out proper distribution.

Executors are often entitled to compensation for their time and efforts spent on the settlement process, which is paid out by the estate.

Executors in Canada are typically entitled to compensation up to 5% of the estate's value.

- ☐ Finalize the inventory of all assets and their values as of the Date of Death.

- ☐ If you have the will, contact all the named beneficiaries individually to inform them of the following:
 - ☐ That you have completed the inventory of assets
 - ☐ That they have been named as a beneficiary
 - ☐ What they are entitled to, subject to settlement of all taxes and debts owing
 - ☐ Any existing issues (debts, time delays, etc..)
 - ☐ The next steps (probate application, settlement of debts, taxes, etc..)

- ☐ If there is no will:
 - ☐ Create a family tree
 - ☐ Follow the rules of distribution of an intestate estate in the estate's jurisdiction
 - ☐ Contact the beneficiaries who are entitled to an inheritance

- ☐ Remember that **probate** is required to transfer any and all assets.

- ☐ Inform beneficiaries of your intention to receive compensation (or not) for your role as executor

- ☐ Action any further notices required in the estate's jurisdiction

Step 6.

Probate Application

GOAL

Probate is the act of confirming the last will and testament of the deceased, and/or appointing an executor for the estate to carry out proper distribution.

WHEN

30 to 45 days after the funeral

DURATION

1 to 2 weeks

- ☐ Calculate the probate fee applicable in the estate's jurisdiction, if any
- ☐ Prepare the probate application
- ☐ File the probate application with the deceased's local courthouse. Ensure you include all required documents, including the will for testate estates
- ☐ Inform the beneficiaries that the probate application has been filed

How much are probate fees?

Use our probate fee calculator at clearestate.com/calculators

Note that probate application processing times vary depending on the filing location.

It can take up to 9+ months to receive a grant of probate. Manage the beneficiaries' expectations accordingly.

Settling estates is our priority and we can be with you every step of the way: We'll guide you from applying for probate and filing the right paperwork to taking care of taxes and closing the estate.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR SOLUTIONS](#)

Step 7.

While Waiting for the Grant of Probate

GOAL

While you wait for the grant of probate, address the following issues to keep things moving forward

WHEN

5 to 12 months after the funeral

DURATION

2 to 9 months

- ☐ Collect any money owed to the deceased.
- ☐ Review the will to determine how estate assets are to be gifted, sold or transferred.
 - ☐ For any specific gifts in the will, set them aside for later distribution in-kind.
 - ☐ For any real estate that is to be sold or transferred, arrange the services of any third-party service providers required (broker, lawyer, appraiser, etc.)
 - ☐ For personal belongings that are not specifically gifted to or requested by a beneficiary, determine how they are to be disposed of in a prudent manner.
 - ☐ For any life insurance products, prepare the required forms (to be filed after receiving the grant of probate).
- ☐ Though you may not have any new information to share with beneficiaries, communicate with them regularly for transparency and conflict avoidance.



“As the executor for the estate of my recently deceased friend, I was having a hard time navigating through the large to-do list – and particularly the probate process – when I came across ClearEstate’s website.

They have been patiently guiding me every step of the way. They’ve been there to answer questions quickly and knowledgeably in their friendly manner and I’ve even managed to learn a lot along the way. To have all documents and financial information in one place on the ClearEstate platform has been invaluable.

I would highly recommend anyone looking for any degree of estate assistance to consider ClearEstate. I could not have managed without them.”

– Georgina K.



Step 8.

Liquidate the Assets

GOAL

Liquidate the assets and aggregate under a single estate bank account

WHEN

Immediately after receiving the grant of probate

DURATION

2 to several weeks

- ☐ Arrange the opening of an estate account with a financial institution.
- ☐ Transfer all funds from the deceased's bank accounts to the estate account.
- ☐ Sell or transfer all financial assets and deposit the proceeds to the estate account.
 - ☐ RRSP
 - ☐ TFSA
 - ☐ Mutual Funds/ ETFs
 - ☐ Segregated Funds
 - ☐ Stocks and Bonds
 - ☐ Other non-registered investments
 - ☐ Life insurance proceeds
- ☐ Deposit any funds obtained from safes or safety deposit boxes to the estate account
- ☐ Sell or transfer all remaining physical assets and deposit the proceeds to the estate account
- ☐ Update the beneficiaries

Step 9.

Settle All Debts and Prepare Taxes

GOAL

Ready the estate for distribution by settling the debts and preparing taxes

WHEN

2 to 4 weeks after receiving the grant of probate

DURATION

1 to 2 weeks

- ☐ Schedule payment of all debts
- ☐ Compile and review all estate-related documents, including receipts, statements, T4, T4A, T5, etc..
- ☐ Prepare the [T1 Terminal Tax Return](#)
- ☐ Prepare the [T3 Estate Tax Return](#)
- ☐ Request the [Tax Clearance Certificate](#) upon receipt of the Notice of Assessment (NoA)
- ☐ Update the beneficiaries

ClearEstate can prepare the final tax returns and apply for the Tax Clearance Certificate on your behalf.

Speak to your advisor about scheduling a free 30-minute consultation with ClearEstate to learn more about our estate settlement services.

Step 10.

First Distribution

GOAL

Coordinate with beneficiaries to distribute some of the inheritance

☐

Prepare, document and distribute any specific gifts given in the will

☐

Prepare to distribute a percentage of the value of the estate (this amount varies in each case)

WHEN

1 to 2 weeks after filing taxes

☐

The remaining value should be retained in an interest-free account until you receive the Notice of Assessment

DURATION

1 to 2 weeks

☐

Have the beneficiaries sign a receipt of the distribution, and keep it for your records

Step 11.

Final Distribution

GOAL

Coordinate with beneficiaries for the final distribution of the inheritance

☐

Prepare to distribute the remainder of the estate

☐

Have the beneficiaries sign a Final Release

WHEN

1 to 2 weeks after filing taxes

☐

Close the estate bank account

☐

Cancel the Social Insurance Number

DURATION

1 to 2 weeks

Step 12.

Set Your Own Affairs in Order

GOAL

You've finally completed the estate settlement process. Consider taking time now to make it easier on your loved ones by making your own comprehensive estate plan.

WHEN

1 to 2 weeks

DURATION

1 to 2 weeks

Planning your estate is one of the most important things you can do in order to provide for your loved ones after you're gone. Thoughtful planning not only ensures that your wishes will be honoured; it will greatly reduce stress on your loved ones when the time comes.

Not only that, estate planning will ensure an efficient transfer of your wealth to your beneficiaries. Having a clear plan in place can help your executor settle your estate months faster than average, and can save your estate thousands of dollars that would otherwise get eaten up by taxes and fees, leaving more of your hard-earned dollars for your legacy.

Life (and death) is unpredictable. Don't delay planning your estate. Prepare now, for peace of mind tomorrow.



Start by downloading
a free Estate Planning
Checklist

[DOWNLOAD NOW](#)



We recently used ClearEstate to create an estate plan for our family. Knowing we have a plan in place and that our children will be taken care of in the worst-case scenario has been a tremendous peace of mind."

-Tatum B.

Google
Reviews ★★★★★

Verified Google Business review



Settle an estate with convenience and confidence with **ClearEstate**, your dependable, all-in-one hub for probate support and end-to-end estate settlement solutions.