



Checklist for Personal Representatives (Executors) in Alberta

This checklist provides steps for managing an estate, along with explanations of why each step is critical.

Before Accepting the Role

- Understand the full scope of responsibilities and time commitment.
 - Consider seeking legal or professional advice to understand your obligations and risks.
 - Ensure you have the capacity to manage financial, legal, and communication tasks effectively.
 - Confirm that you're comfortable with the personal liability associated with the role.
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Step 1: Preliminary Steps

1. **Locate the Will:**
 - Find the most recent Will and confirm its validity. You will need the original Will.
 - Check for instructions regarding funeral or cremation arrangements.
 - Identify witnesses if the Will needs validation.
2. **Arrange the Funeral:**
 - Follow the Will's directives (if provided).
 - If the person is a member of the Cooperative Memorial Society, be sure to use one of their contracted funeral service providers to save money on discounted plans for members. Visit www.coopmemorial.org for details.
 - Cover expenses with personal funds (to be reimbursed later) or estate funds.
3. **Obtain Death Certificates from the Funeral Home:**
 - Secure multiple copies for legal, financial, and administrative matters.
4. **Assess Immediate Financial Needs:**
 - Ensure dependents have funds for living expenses.
 - Review joint accounts or short-term financial options for dependents.
5. **Redirect Mail:**
 - Notify Canada Post to forward mail to your address to prevent loss or fraud.
6. **Cancel Subscriptions and Utilities:**
 - End recurring services like utilities, memberships, and streaming subscriptions to reduce unnecessary expenses.

7. **Notify Interested Parties:**
 - Inform beneficiaries, family members, and professional advisors about the process.
 8. **Arrange Pet Care:**
 - Ensure pets are cared for, including finding them a temporary or permanent home.
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Step 2: Safeguard Assets

1. **Verify Insurance:**
 - Confirm and update insurance for real estate, vehicles, and valuables to prevent loss or damage.
 2. **Secure Property:**
 - Change locks and safeguard any vacant property.
 - Obtain a vacancy permit for unoccupied real estate if necessary.
 3. **Redirect Utility Bills:**
 - Transfer ongoing utility expenses like electricity, heat, and water to the estate account.
 4. **Notify Financial Institutions:**
 - Provide death certificates to banks and freeze accounts to prevent unauthorized transactions.
 5. **Open an Estate Account:**
 - Use this account to handle estate-related income, expenses, and distributions.
 6. **Safeguard Valuables:**
 - Protect items like jewelry, artwork, and documents by storing them securely.
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Step 3: Inventory Assets

1. **Identify Assets:**
 - Locate bank accounts, investments, real estate, and personal property.
 - Review tax returns, statements, and safe deposit boxes for asset details.
2. **Claim Benefits:**
 - **Apply for CPP Death Benefits:** File the application within **60 days of the date of death** to ensure eligibility.
 - Claim other pensions, life insurance, or group insurance benefits.
3. **Cancel Benefits:**
 - Notify Service Canada and Alberta programs to cancel CPP, OAS, Alberta Seniors Benefits, and Alberta Health Care.
4. **Cancel Government IDs:**
 - Return or cancel the deceased's SIN, passport, driver's license, and health card.
5. **Appraise Assets:**

- Obtain professional valuations for real estate, investments, and personal property for tax and distribution purposes.
6. **Notify Creditors:**
- Publish a formal notice to creditors to identify and address claims against the estate.
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Step 4: Obtain Grant of Probate (if required)

1. **Consult a Lawyer:**
 - Work with legal counsel to prepare the necessary court documents and affidavits.
 2. **Submit Application:**
 - File the probate documents with the Surrogate Court to confirm the Will's validity and authorize the executor.
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Step 5: Administer the Estate

1. **Close Accounts:**
 - Transfer funds from the deceased's accounts to the estate account for better management.
 2. **Distribute Specific Bequests:**
 - Fulfill specific gifts or instructions outlined in the Will.
 3. **Manage or Sell Securities:**
 - Transfer, sell, or manage stocks, bonds, and other investments according to the Will.
 4. **Handle Real Estate:**
 - Sell, transfer, or rent properties in line with the Will's instructions.
 5. **Settle Debts:**
 - Assess creditor claims and pay debts from the estate account, keeping receipts for all payments.
 6. **Invest Surplus Funds:**
 - Place unallocated estate funds in safe, interest-earning accounts until final distribution.
 7. **Finalize Benefits:**
 - Complete or transfer employment and pension benefits.
 8. **Complete Administration:**
 - Ensure all debts are paid, claims resolved, and assets prepared for final distribution.
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Step 6: Handle Taxes

1. **File Final Tax Returns (T1 Terminal Return):**
 - Submit the deceased's final tax return by April 30 of the year following the death or within six months of the date of death, whichever comes later.
 2. **File Previous Returns:**
 - Ensure compliance by reviewing and filing any outstanding tax returns.
 3. **Obtain CRA Clearance Certificate:**
 - Confirm that all taxes owed by the estate are paid before distributing assets.
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Step 7: Distribute Remaining Assets

1. **Allocate Final Distributions:**
 - Distribute remaining assets to beneficiaries according to the Will.
 2. **Obtain Signed Releases:**
 - Ensure beneficiaries sign releases confirming receipt of their inheritance, protecting the executor from future claims.
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Additional Tips

- **Keep Records:**
 - Maintain detailed records of all transactions, communications, and decisions to protect yourself from disputes.
- **Seek Professional Advice:**
 - Consult lawyers, accountants, or financial advisors for complex tasks like probate, tax filings, or resolving disputes.
- **Be Prepared for Delays:**
 - Recognize that estate administration can take months or even years for complex estates.

This comprehensive checklist ensures personal representatives fulfill their legal and financial duties while respecting the deceased's wishes.