THE ONTARIO

Estate Planning Checklist

The 7 things every Ontario adult should have in place — and the costly mistakes that catch families off guard.

If you're an adult who lives in Ontario, owns anything, or has people who depend on you, this checklist is for you. Work through it honestly. Every box you can't tick is a gap that could cost your family time, money, or control at the worst possible moment.

1. A Valid, Up-to-Date Will

In Ontario, a will must be signed by you and witnessed by two people who are present with you — and those witnesses cannot be beneficiaries (or spouses of beneficiaries), or the gift to them can fail.

- ☐ I have a will that reflects my current wishes, family, and assets.
- ☐ My two witnesses were not beneficiaries.
- ☐ I've reviewed it after any marriage, separation, birth, or major asset change.
- ☐ I named a backup (alternate) executor and backup beneficiaries.

2. Powers of Attorney (Two of Them)

Ontario has TWO separate documents: a Power of Attorney for Property (finances) and a Power of Attorney for Personal Care (health and living decisions). A will does nothing while you're alive — these protect you if you become incapable.

- ☐ I have a Power of Attorney for Property.
- ☐ I have a Power of Attorney for Personal Care.
- ☐ My attorney(s) are people I trust and who are willing to act.
- ☐ I've named alternates in case my first choice can't serve.

3. Beneficiary Designations That Match Your Plan

RRSPs, RRIFs, TFSAs, pensions, and life insurance pass by the beneficiary form — NOT your will. A form you filled out years ago can quietly override everything in your will.

- ☐ I've reviewed every beneficiary designation in the last 2 years.
- ☐ My ex-spouse is not still named anywhere by accident.
- ☐ I understand naming 'my estate' can expose funds to probate and tax.

4. A Plan for Probate & the Estate Administration Tax

Ontario charges an Estate Administration Tax (probate fee): $0 on the first $50,000, then $15 per $1,000 (1.5%) on everything above that. On a $1,000,000 estate, that's roughly $14,250 — before legal and accounting costs.

- ☐ I have a rough estimate of my estate's value and probate exposure.
- ☐ I've considered strategies that may reduce probate (where appropriate).

5. Guardianship for Minor Children

If you have children under 18 and haven't named a guardian, a court decides who raises them — and money left directly to a minor can be tied up by the court until they turn 18.

- ☐ I've named a guardian for my minor children in my will.
- ☐ I've set up a trust so minors' inheritances are managed responsibly.

6. The Right Executor — and a Backup

Your executor (estate trustee) has real legal duties and personal liability. Choosing the wrong person — or someone out of province — can create delays, bonds, and family conflict.

- ☐ My executor is organized, trustworthy, and willing to serve.
- ☐ I've named an alternate executor.

7. Special Situations Most Plans Miss

Blended families, common-law relationships, disabled beneficiaries (ODSP), business interests, cottages, US assets, and crypto/digital accounts all need specific planning. Generic templates routinely get these wrong.

- ☐ I've flagged any blended-family or common-law issues.
- ☐ I've planned for any disabled beneficiary (e.g., a Henson Trust).
- ☐ I've addressed business interests, a cottage, or out-of-province property.
- ☐ Someone can access my digital and crypto accounts if I'm gone.

Couldn't tick every box?

That's exactly what a proper estate plan fixes. If any section above raised a question — reach out. Send me a message or email (link in my bio) and tell me which number you got stuck on, and I'll point you in the right direction.

Your family's peace of mind is worth one conversation.