

Executor Checklist

The executor is the legal representative responsible for settling the deceased's tax affairs with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). Because executors carry personal financial liability for improper distribution of estate assets, no funds should be released to beneficiaries until the CRA issues a Clearance Certificate confirming all tax matters are complete.

This checklist outlines the key responsibilities to address during the administration of an estate.

1. Obtain the Death Certificate

Request several official copies from the funeral home. Most institutions require an original or certified copy before they will update or close accounts.

2. Establish Legal Authority with the CRA

Provide the CRA with the deceased's Social Insurance Number (SIN), a copy of the death certificate, and documentation confirming your legal authority. Acceptable

proof includes the will, letters probate, or letters of administration.

If no will exists, complete Form RC552 to register as the deceased's representative. Once processed, CRA will grant you access to the deceased's tax information.

3. Notify Key Agencies and Institutions

Service Canada: Call 1-800-277-9914 to stop CPP and OAS payments. Apply for the CPP death benefit within 60 days of the date of death.

Financial Institutions: Contact banks, credit card issuers, insurance companies, and investment firms to freeze, close, or transfer accounts.

Utilities and Subscriptions: Cancel or transfer cell phone plans, internet services, utilities, and memberships.

4. Secure and Inventory Estate Assets

Collect and document all physical property, financial records, investment statements, and real-estate information. This establishes the estate's total value and supports both tax filings and beneficiary distribution.

5. File the Final Personal Tax Return (T1)

Prepare the Final (Terminal) T1 for the year of death, along with any prior unfilled returns. Assess whether optional returns—such as a Rights or Things return—are appropriate to reduce the estate's overall tax burden.

6. File Estate Trust Returns (T3)

If the estate earns income after the date of death (interest, dividends, capital gains, rental income), file a T3 Trust Return for the period from death until the estate is fully wound up.

7. Apply for the CRA Clearance Certificate

After CRA issues Notices of Assessment for all required returns, submit the application for a Clearance Certificate. Do not distribute estate assets until this certificate is received. It protects you from personal liability for any outstanding or reassessed tax.

8. Distribute Estate Assets

Once the Clearance Certificate is issued, pay remaining estate debts and distribute the assets according to the will or provincial intestacy rules.

Executors: You Don't Have to Manage This Alone

A deceased taxpayer's Final T1 is not a standard return. It involves rules and calculations that are unique to terminal filings, including:

- date-of-death reporting requirements
- RRSP/RRIF collapse and rollover rules
- deemed dispositions of real estate and investments
- specialized credits and adjustments available only on terminal returns

Professional Assistance

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