Accompanying Letter to a Person's Will

By: Rick Atkinson

Though most people know it is in their best interest to prepare a will, many have never thought about those to be notified at time of death, location of personal papers and where the keys to the cottage are hidden.

It is recommended you write a reference letter which accompanies your will. This reference document should include the following:

1. **People to be notified at the time of your death**
   Includes attorney, executor, trustee, accountant, financial advisor. List name, role (e.g. attorney), and phone number.

2. **Friends and relatives to be notified**. Show name, address, and phone number. Also indicate where someone can find names and contact information for others who will wish to know (e.g. 'See red address book in desk drawer)

3. **Prepaid funeral, cremation, or mortuary arrangements**
   Include contact information and relevant details. (e.g. 'Prepaid for simple casket')

4. **Location of important personal papers**
   Including birth and marriage certificates, military papers, deeds, certificates of insurance, current and old mortgage documents, and diplomas.

5. **Safety deposit box(es).** Exact location where the keys are kept. Show institution name and address of where the boxes are located**.**

6. **Bank and credit union accounts and locations** Show institution name, account numbers and type, address, and phone number. If you deal with certain service providers, show their names and numbers as well.

7. **Primary accounts used to pay bills.** Provide related on-line banking user name and password.

8. **Monthly household expenses and bills.** Note any that use automatic debit and should be cancelled immediately (e.g. health club dues).

9. **Income sources.** Including CPP/QPP, annuities, TFSA, etc. Show current monthly amounts. Be sure your partner knows how income will change at time of death.

10. **User names and passwords** of email accounts.

11. **Credit cards** with issuer name and service phone number. Indicate which ones you usually carry on your person.

12. **Where past income, property and business tax information is stored**. Include tax preparer's or advisor's contact information.

13. **Investments and investment accounts.** Include location of statements.

14. **Key valuables** and their locations. Include wishes for gifting these as appropriate.

15. **Trusts** other than a living trust as well as any loans outstanding. Include the contact information of trustees and borrowers as well as where to find the documents.

16. **Any household do's and don'ts**, such as general tips or wishes for caring for pets.

Gabrielle did not want to burden her family with undue hardship when she passed on. She wanted to make the settlement of her affairs as easy as possible. Gabriele updated her will every three years at which time she reviewed and modified the contents of her accompanying letter. She provided a best friend with a copy of her will and accompanying letter.

Though Gabrielle isn't planning to leave this earth anytime soon, she has the peace of mind that her last wishes will be followed. She also knows her family and friends will not be put through the anguish of trying to locate her personal papers and documents at a time that will be difficult enough.

Suggestions of items to add to these references? Please share by emailing me (ramgt75@rogers.com).

Rick Atkinson (http://whencaniretire.ca) is an expert in holistic retirement planning and bestselling author of *Strategies for Retiring Right! & Don't Just Retire – Live It, Love It!*