Retirement planning should not be viewed as a one-time or standalone activity. Truly effective retirement planning should be part of a broader planning process that takes your financial and personal situation into account to develop a comprehensive, tax-efficient plan that supports and reflects your current status as well as your wishes for the future. Your “life plan” should include a blueprint for building and maintaining your assets—now and in retirement—along with a wealth-transfer strategy.

Most people appreciate the importance of having an up-to-date Will, but estate planning shouldn’t end there. Your estate plan should also include powers of attorney in case of incapacity. A power of attorney is a legal document in which you appoint someone else to act on your behalf. Should you become incapable of managing your financial affairs or making decisions about your personal care and you do not have these important documents in place, important decisions about your care or finances may go unmade and an application to court may be required to appoint someone to make these decisions for you.

Preparing a Will may seem like a simple task, but there are a multitude of statutes, regulations and a hierarchy of law that can impact what you may wish to accomplish. The smallest mistook could lead to your assets being distributed in a way that is contrary to your wishes or worse, it could even lead to your Will being contested. This can be a costly and emotionally trying mistake for your loved ones. Finally, attention to detail is important. Improper hand in a family often comes from sentimental items that were left out of a Will, not money, as most would think.

“Whether that’s in your late 20s or early 30s, you should be consciously putting aside a fixed amount on a weekly or monthly basis.”

From full-time to part-time Retirement doesn’t have to spell the end of your working life. Whether you choose to work part-time as a volunteer doing something that you feel passionately about or you seek paid work to supplement your retirement fund, having a job provides a structure that helps keep the mind and body active and healthy.

“According to an unofficial research, 85 percent of retirees continue to work on a part-time basis,” says Lieberman. “Most will work for money because they don’t have enough cash to have a retirement that is fulfilling and fulfills all their needs. But even for those who do have enough money, working part time fills a whole bunch of needs.”

Planning for Life

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Retirement planning begins before retirement, when the focus is on accumulating assets to eventually replace your income when you retire. Estate planning involves looking at your assets today and making choices on how you want them to be distributed through your Will to family, charities or otherwise. These are ongoing processes that are intricately linked. Significant changes in assets, income needs or whom you are obligated to support can impact your estate plan. So as your retirement plan changes, it is important to ensure that your Will continues to reflect your current assets and intentions.

An important estate plan is one that involves an assessment of your assets, ownership structures, and the people you have an obligation to or an interest in benefiting. Unfortunately, this assessment is often passed over in favour of keeping things simple—only considering the people to whom your estate should be distributed. The result is often a complex and difficult estate being left to your family, one that does not manage the hard issues and messes out on significant opportunities.

Financial sense “Financial planning isn’t a priority for many Canadians because they’ve focused on so many other issues during their lives that it’s just not on the agenda,” explains the Chief Executive Officer of Advo- cies, Greg Hilllock. But for two thirds of Canadians who don’t have work place pensions, being conscientious and thinking critically about the financial requirements of retirement is imperative. It’s never too early to start the financial planning of your retirement. Canadians are living longer than ever before. According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, there are more years to be enjoyed in 2014 than there were in 1940. So, it’s important to be as financially astute and confident as possible in planning for retirement.

A smooth transition Retirement planning isn’t just about finances, working out what you’re going to do with all of your spare time is just as important. Many new retirees throw themselves into the alarm clock and learning to relax, but after a while the novelty is replaced by something less well covered: boredom. “Retirees forget that they need a new life,” says the President of the Retirement Council, Gail Lieberman. “Most people are so focused on the money side of things that they don’t think about what they’re going to do in terms of finding something meaningful and satisfying to fill their time with.” There are so many options, and working out a new life structure that has new goals and challenges will help give a retiree real purpose and a reason to get out of bed in the morning.

Lieberman recommends new retirees enter into a transition pro- gram, which guides people through all of the new issues that arise with retirement. “It’s also a good idea to chat with other people who have already retired to get a han- dle on the challenges and pitfalls that you’re likely to face,” he says.