

Newsletter



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Lessons From Generational Resilience

One of our modern-day challenges is that technology has ushered in an era of instant communication and connectivity that seems to amplify awareness and sensitivity. There is never a shortage of negative news and today is no exception. Despite economic resilience and growth that has exceeded expectations, we may be distracted by new uncertainties: deleverage, slower growth (ironically the goal of the central banks by raising rates!) and higher rates, to name a few.

Yet, we should be reminded that time changes all things. Consider the Millennials (born 1980 to 1994): For many years, they were said to be the first generation worse off financially than those before. As they have started to turn 43, purportedly the age when we ‘stop feeling young,’ they have outpaced previous generations. Millennial household income has surpassed that of prior generations at the same age: \$9,000 more than the median GenX (1965 to 1979) household income and \$10,000 more than the Boomers (1946 to 1964). Despite soaring real estate prices, Millennials are only slightly behind: 48 percent owned a home as 25- to 39-year-olds, compared with 50 percent of Boomers.¹ As they enter their peak earning years, the future looks bright.

The narrative wasn’t much different for the generations prior. Just 30 years ago, there were “dire predictions” about the economic prospects of GenX. They entered the workforce into an economy recovering from a recession described as “the deepest since the Great Depression.” Unemployment soared to 11 percent in the early 1990s after interest rates were aggressively raised to fight inflation. Canada’s future economic prospects looked bleak. An editorial in 1995 referred to “Bankrupt Canada” as “an honorary member of the Third World.”² And yet, to end the 1990s, Canada would end up taming its budget crisis to post strong GDP growth.

Likewise, many Boomers came into the job market in the 1970s, a period plagued by significant inflation, increasing unemployment (hence, stagflation) and low economic growth, as well as a stagnating stock market. Let’s not forget that in 1979, the front page of *BusinessWeek* magazine declared the “Death of Equities.”³ However, the Boomers have lived through one of the most fortuitous periods in investing history. If you were to have invested in the stock market in this seemingly bleak period, the total return today would be over 4,100 percent!⁴

Indeed, economic cycles come full circle and the rebound of the Millennials, and the generations before, serves as a reminder that time changes most things. We have no control over the stock market, the economy and other macroeconomic events; to a certain extent, many prove to be cyclical. Much of long-term investing success relies on the ability to accept this inevitable cyclical nature by making the appropriate adjustments along the way, rather than attempting to evade it.

As one market strategist reminds us: *“A good bet in economics: the past wasn’t as good as you remember, the present isn’t as bad as you think, and the future will be better than you anticipate.”*⁵

1. www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2023/05/millennial-generation-financial-issues-income-homeowners/673485/
2. www.reuters.com/article/us-crisis-timeline-idUSTRE7AKoFF2011121
3. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-08-13/it-s-been-40-years-since-our-cover-story-declared-the-death-of-equities>
4. S&P/TSX Composite Index Total Returns, 8/31/1979 - 1,911.69; 7/31/2023 - 81,536.38
5. <https://collabfund.com/blog/everything-is-cyclical/>

Do You Have Power of Attorney Documents in Place?

According to a recent survey, only 35 percent of Canadians have appointed a power of attorney (POA).¹ How about you? Do you have power of attorney documents in place? While the names/obligations vary by province, generally there are two types of POA intended to protect an individual should they become incapacitated: i) POA for property, which includes managing finances and other assets on behalf of the incapacitated; and ii) POA for personal care, which includes making healthcare decisions.

Here are some reasons why the POA should be a consideration:

- › On average, we will live with good cognitive health to around age 77.² However, our average life expectancy is well beyond this age.
- › Those over age 85 have a 1-in-4 likelihood of suffering from some form of dementia.³
- › Regardless of age, life is unpredictable: accidents or unexpected health issues can occur at any time.

Even if a POA exists, consider reviewing your documents from time to time as circumstances can change. There may also be situations which may warrant revisiting your POA, including:

Personal wishes or specific instructions have not been discussed. Engaging in conversations with family members and your “attorney” (the person(s) designated to make decisions under the POA) while you are “capable” can go a long way in maintaining familial harmony and ensuring your wishes are carried out. Recent surveys suggest the vast majority aren’t having these critical discussions. In one unfortunate case that led to litigation, two brothers couldn’t agree on the type of care for their mother – one wanted life-prolonging care while the other wanted hospitalization only for comfort.⁴

Multiple attorneys have been appointed. Many parents feel the need to treat children fairly by jointly naming them as attorneys; however, consider that in some situations the greater the number of attorneys appointed, the greater the opportunity for conflict.

How Well Are We Planning for Our Incapacity?

Here are a few surprising outcomes from recent surveys:

24% Have a plan for financial expenses in the event of dementia.¹

25% Believe there are no consequences to not having a POA.²

34% Have a plan for assets if unable to make financial decisions.¹

1. www.bloomberg.com/press-releases/2023-05-15/ig-wealth-management-estate-planning-study-despite-aging-population-most-canadians-lack-estate-plan
2. www.rbcwealthmanagement.com/en-ca/insights/estate-planning-report-reveals-many-canadians-are-not-prepared

Attorneys have not been updated. Have your designated attorney’s circumstances changed? Updates may be needed to address the incapacity or death of a named attorney. Or, there may be complications if an appointed attorney moves outside the country, i.e., a non-resident attorney for property may be subject to rules that prohibit a financial advisor from receiving instructions. Often, there is value in naming a contingent attorney who can step in.

Underestimating the cost of care. While the appointed attorney for personal care is not personally responsible for funding the financial obligations of your desired care, if the associated costs are not properly planned for, this can unfairly complicate the attorney’s role. Alternate care may need to be considered, possibly against your wishes. Consider that the cost of care associated with incapacity, such as long-term care (LTC), can be extensive; on average around \$36,000 per year for a private room at a care facility, or in excess of \$130,000 at home.⁵ Planning ahead can help protect family members from an unexpected financial burden. Often when children are appointed as POA attorneys, they feel pressure to contribute.

If you have yet to give your POA the thought it deserves, why not make this a priority? Please consult an estate planning professional.

1. www.niageing.ca/canadian-perspectives-on-estate-planning
2. www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/research-shows-that-the-prevalence-of-dementia-has-fallen-in-the-united-states/2018/06/15/636d61ac-6fd1-11e8-bf86-a2351b5e99_story.html
3. www.cihi.ca/en/dementia-in-canada/dementia-in-canada-summary
4. *White v White*, 2017 ONSC 4550
5. Based on \$33,349/yr. (2021), grossed up by 4% per year. www.advisor.ca/news/industry-news/most-canadians-arent-planning-for-long-term-care-costs-survey/. At home, based on avg. cost of care of \$30/hr., 12 hrs./day, 365 days/yr.

Billions Remain Unclaimed: Keep Your Assets Working Hard for You

For those of us who manage wealth on a regular basis, it continues to be surprising to see the growing number of assets that are forgotten or just not optimally put to work. Here are two actions we can all consider to ensure our assets keep working hard for the future:

1. Consolidate financial accounts. The latest data suggests at least \$2.5 billion of funds remain unclaimed: the Bank of Canada holds \$1.1 billion of unclaimed balances¹ and the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) has 8.9 million uncashed cheques, with a value totalling \$1.4 billion.² This sheer magnitude of funds should remind us of the benefits of consolidating financial accounts to ensure assets do not become orphaned over time. Consolidation can also provide other benefits, including better visibility to optimize asset allocation and tax efficiency, greater simplicity and improved legacy planning, among others.

Do any unclaimed funds belong to you or your loved ones? To search for unclaimed assets, see: www.unclaimedproperties.bankofcanada.ca/app/claim-search. Check your CRA “My Account” for unclaimed cheques at: www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/uncashed-cheque.html.

2. Fully maximize tax-advantaged accounts. Investing in tax-advantaged accounts can make a significant difference down the road. Consider an investor who invests \$50,000 today at an annual rate of return of 6 percent. In 25 years, this investor would have almost \$215,000 if invested in a TFSA. Investing the same amount in interest-bearing investments in a non-registered account would yield only \$104,000 after taxes.³

Do you have available RRSP or TFSA contribution room? The latest statistics suggest that there is over \$1 trillion of unused RRSP contribution room available.⁴ Equally surprising, the vast majority of TFSA holders, at all wealth levels (even high-net-worth taxpayers!) have not maximized their contribution room.⁵

1. nationalpost.com/news/canada/how-to-know-if-you-own-any-of-the-1-8b-in-unclaimed-bank-accounts-in-canada
2. www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/news/2022/08/approximately-14-billion-in-uncashed-cheques-is-sitting-in-the-canada-revenue-agencys-coffers.html
3. Assuming a marginal tax rate of 50.25% on interest income
4. At 2016; Stat Canada T: 111-0040 “RRSP Room”
5. www.canada.ca/content/dam/cra-arc/prog-policy/stats/tfsa-celi/2020/table1c-en.pdf

Year-End Financial Housekeeping, Buffett Style

As we approach the final months of the year, why not derive inspiration from one of the greatest investors of our time? Here is some sage advice from Warren Buffett as it relates to your year-end financial housekeeping:

"Predicting rain doesn't count, building the ark does."

Don't allow current media commentary to dissuade you from continuing to build your portfolio for the future. Time in the market, not timing the market, can be key to investing success. One important way to build wealth for the future is to use tax-advantaged accounts. Have you fully maximized these accounts?

For the Tax-Free Savings Account (TFSA), if you're in need of funds and are looking to withdraw from your TFSA, consider doing so before year end. Contribution room resets on January 1st of each year, so a withdrawal made after the new year would mean this contribution room will not be available until the start of 2025.

For the Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP), while you have until February 29, 2024, to make a contribution to impact your 2023 taxes, contributing now can get funds working hard for you as soon as possible.

"Do not save what is left after spending; instead spend what is left after saving."

Improve your savings by employing potential tax strategies. Consider reviewing asset location; there may be opportunities to be more tax efficient. Depending on your circumstances, it may be possible to lower a couple's overall income taxes through income-splitting strategies with a spouse¹ in a lower marginal tax bracket. For example, if you are a business owner and a spouse assists with the business, paying a reasonable salary to the spouse could lower overall family taxes. If you receive pension income, it may be beneficial to elect to split eligible pension income on your tax return. If you are 65 years old or older and not receiving eligible pension income, consider purchasing an annuity or opening a small Registered Retirement Income Fund (RRIF); income from these sources may allow you to claim the federal pension income tax credit.

"The most important thing to do if you find yourself in a hole is to stop digging."

Where prudent from an investment perspective, consider realizing capital losses to offset capital gains realized in 2023, or make use of the loss carry-back rules to recover taxes paid on taxable capital gains realized in three preceding taxation years (or carry forward this loss indefinitely).

"I believe in giving my kids enough so they can do anything, but not so much that they can do nothing."

Fund a Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) to support a child's higher education. Consider making a contribution before year end to potentially benefit from the Canada Education Savings Grant (CESG) in the current year.²

"If you're in the luckiest one percent of humanity, you owe it to the rest of humanity to think about the other 99 percent."

Charitable donations made before December 31st may be eligible for deductions for your 2023 taxes. Gifting publicly-traded securities with accrued capital gains to a registered charity not only entitles you to a tax receipt for the fair market value, but also eliminates the associated capital gains tax. However, the shares must be donated in kind – do not sell them first and donate the proceeds, as part of the tax benefit will be lost.

"The most important quality for an investor is temperament...You need a temperament that neither derives great pleasure from being with the crowd or against the crowd."

Being a disciplined investor often means resisting the temptation to act on emotion: during bull market times, it may be greed; during bear market times, it is often fear. Markets will always have ups and downs; your plan has been put in place to meet your goals throughout the inevitable cycles. Look forward with confidence.

Please call for assistance. For tax-loss selling or gifting publicly-traded securities, let's discuss taking action well before year end.

Thank you to Warren Buffett for permission to use his quotations.

1. Or common-law partner;
2. Unclaimed CESG entitlements can be carried forward; however, you may only catch up one year at a time, for a maximum CESG of \$1,000 per year.



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