

2023 year-end tax planning checklist for business owners





Our team of financial planning experts, who specialize in tax, insurance, estate planning and more, created this tax planning tool to help you identify strategies that could help you reduce your taxes this year and possibly into the future.

Even though financial planning is a year-round activity, certain issues become especially important as year-end approaches.

The following checklist will help identify and explain strategies that could reduce your taxes this year or next.

- Business owners
- Saving for retirement with RSPs
- Planning your retirement income
- Investment planning and income splitting
- Tax-Free Savings Accounts (TFSAs)
- Charitable gift planning
- Registered Education Savings Plans (RESPs)
- Home Buyers' Plan (HBP)
- Maximizing deductions and credits
- Registered Disability Savings Plans (RDSPs)

Please note: This document is for federal tax purposes only. The tax information provided in this document is general in nature and each client should consult with their own tax advisor, accountant, or lawyer before pursuing any strategy described herein as each client's individual circumstances are unique. If you require additional tax planning guidance specific to your province or territory, please contact your accountant or IG Wealth Management Consultant.

Business owners

Did family members provide any services to your business this year?

Yes No

Consider paying family members (spouse and/or children) a salary to shift income into the hands of those who may pay tax at lower tax rates. Bonus: this income-splitting strategy helps those family members build RSP contribution room. You must ensure that the salaries are reasonable based on the services provided by the family member to the business.

Have you compensated yourself from your corporation?

Yes No

The optimal mix of salary and eligible or non-eligible dividends can only be determined after considering the financial and tax position of both you and your corporation. There are advantages to both types of compensation and your tax advisor can help you assess what is best for you. Before declaring dividends to yourself or any family members who may be shareholders of the corporation, ensure that the dividends will not be considered “split income” and subject to the highest marginal tax rate for the recipient.

Are you planning the purchase or sale of capital assets?

Yes No

If you're considering selling depreciable assets that would result in recaptured depreciation that would be taxable, consider delaying the sale until early next year if it makes sense for your business. This will allow the business to claim one more year of capital cost allowance deduction and defer the tax on the recaptured depreciation by one full year.

If you're considering purchasing a depreciable asset that could be deferred until next year, consider accelerating the purchase into the current year. If the asset is available for use in the current year, acquiring the asset late in the year will allow you to claim a capital cost

allowance deduction (typically at half the CCA rate) this year and the full rate next year, accelerating the tax deductions.

Do you have a shareholder loan outstanding?

Yes No

If your corporation loaned you money, you must repay the loan within one year of the end of the corporation's tax year in which the loan was made. If the loan is not repaid within this time limit, you will have to include the value of the shareholder loan as income on your personal tax return in the year you received the loan. This means, for example, that you would have to repay the loan by the end of this year if your corporation has a December year-end and it loaned you money last year, otherwise the full amount of the loan would be taxable last year. If, instead, you have loaned your corporation money, that amount can be repaid to you tax-free anytime.

Are you planning to provide a non-cash gift or award to employees?

Yes No

If the fair market value of the gift or award exceeds \$500, including HST/ GST and PST, then the amount over \$500 must be included in the employee's income. There are special rules for long-term service awards, which can be given out every five years.

Are you considering selling your business or transitioning it to the next generation?

Yes No

Although not necessarily a year-end tax planning issue, the time to start planning is now as you will want to ensure the process is handled as seamlessly and tax efficiently as possible. Things that you need to consider include: whether it will be a share or asset sale; whether you will be able to use your lifetime capital gains exemption; and whether you wish to implement an estate freeze. It is best to start to plan well in advance so that you get the best possible result from the sale/transition.



Saving for retirement with RSPs

Aside from making your 2023 RSP contribution by the February 29, 2024 deadline, be sure to take the following into consideration.

Do you have unused RSP contribution room?

Yes No

If you have contributed less to your RSP than the maximum permitted in prior years or you had earned income in 2022, you should have unused RSP contribution room available. Look at how your marginal tax rate compares to future years and consider topping up your RSP to the maximum allowed. In many cases, individuals are in a lower tax bracket in retirement than during their working years, meaning you not only get a tax deduction from your RSP contribution today, but the deduction may be at a higher tax rate than the rate that will eventually apply to the RSP withdrawals. The result — tax deferral and tax savings — a win/win. You may even want to consider borrowing to make your

contribution. Your IG Consultant can help you maximize your RSP contribution room to take advantage of all the benefits RSPs have to offer.

Would a spousal RSP contribution make sense?

Yes No

Once you've decided to make an RSP contribution, you have to decide if it is best to contribute to your own plan or a spousal RSP for your spouse or common-law partner. You receive the tax deduction either way, but the difference lies in who pays tax on the withdrawals. As a general rule, your spouse or common-law partner would pay tax on withdrawals from a spousal plan as long as you have not contributed to a spousal RSP in the year of the withdrawal or the previous two calendar years. If you have, the withdrawals could be taxed to you under what are referred to as the attribution rules. If you plan to contribute to a spousal RSP, make your contribution before year-end to minimize the possibility of attribution rules applying on future withdrawals.

Under another strategy, if your spouse passed away this year, you can still consider making a final contribution to a spousal RSP on their behalf with you as the annuitant, if your spouse has unused RSP contribution room. The contribution can be deducted against income on your spouse's final tax return.



Planning your retirement income

Have your retirement income needs changed? Are you receiving excess retirement income (such as RIF income) that is not required for your lifestyle?

Yes No

Consider contacting your IG Consultant to discuss options such as basing your RIF withdrawals on the age of your spouse or common-law partner. The minimum annual withdrawal increases with age, so basing the RIF minimum withdrawal on the age of a younger individual reduces the taxable amount that must be taken into income.

Do you qualify for the pension income credit?

Yes No

Claiming this credit may allow you to substantially reduce federal taxes (provincial credit amounts vary)

on the first \$2,000 of your pension or RIF income. The same income that qualifies for the pension income credit can also open up certain planning strategies such as pension income splitting with a spouse or common-law partner. The keys to both planning opportunities are your age and the type of retirement income received. Not sure if you qualify? Contact your IG Consultant to find out.

Did or will you reach age 71 this year?

Yes No

RSP contributions are allowed to your own RSP until the end of the year in which you reach age 71. This means that if you have or will reach age 71 this year and have unused RSP contribution room, you should make your RSP contribution by December 31.

If you're still working and have earned income in the year you reach age 71, this will create RSP room for next year. Since you wouldn't be able to contribute next year, consider making an RSP over-contribution in December based on your anticipated RSP room for next year. This strategy means that you will over-contribute for one month and be subject to a 1% per month penalty tax; however, you will also be entitled

to an RSP deduction for next year that will provide tax savings that should far outweigh the penalty tax. Your earned income from this year will generate additional RSP contribution room as of January 1 that will, with proper planning, eliminate the overcontribution made in December of this year.

If you have a younger spouse or common-law partner, an alternative would be to continue to make tax-deductible contributions to a spousal RSP next year and beyond, as long as the contributions are made before the end of the year in which they reach age 71.

Investment planning and income splitting

Have you realized, or do you plan to realize capital gains this year?

Yes No

If yes, consider triggering a capital loss prior to the end of the year. Capital losses can be used to offset capital gains in the current year, reducing any taxes that would otherwise be associated with the gains. Did you also know that if your realized capital losses exceed your capital gains realized in the year, any excess can be applied against gains in any of the three prior calendar years? If you paid tax on capital gains realized in any of the last three years, consider realizing capital losses even if you have not realized gains this year in order to recover taxes paid in those years. This strategy can help you minimize taxes for this year and potentially help you recover taxes paid on previously reported capital gains. Note also that any unused capital losses may be carried forward indefinitely to be applied against future capital gains.

Care should be taken to ensure any realized capital loss is not denied due to purchasing the same or similar property within prescribed timelines before or after the disposition. Speak to your IG Consultant about these rules prior to realizing a capital loss to ensure your loss planning proceeds as planned.

Are you triggering capital gains as a tax-efficient form of income?

Yes No

If yes, consider delaying the sale of the investments until after December 31 of this year. This will allow you to push the gains and the related tax bill to April 2025 when you file your 2024 tax return. Just remember that taxes should not be the only factor in making investment decisions.

Note that there will be an increase in the capital gains inclusion rate in the alternative minimum tax (AMT) calculation that will come into effect January 1, 2024. This change may affect individuals in higher tax brackets and should be considered when realizing significant capital gains. Speak with your IG Consultant and tax advisor when considering this strategy.

Do you have investment-related expenses that can be used as a deduction on your personal tax return?

Yes No

If you have non-registered investments for which you are charged an advisory fee, those expenses will generally be deductible for income tax purposes. You cannot deduct advisory fees for TFSAs, FHSAs, RSPs, RIFs, RESPs or RDSPs. Interest paid on certain loans where the proceeds are used to earn income from a business or investments can also be tax deductible.

Would income splitting opportunities with a spouse or your children improve your overall tax situation?

Yes No

If you have family members who are in a lower tax bracket, consider the use of a spousal loan or funding a family trust with a prescribed rate loan. The interest rate on the loan is set for the duration of the loan and the interest must be paid to the lender by January 30 of the year following the calendar year to which the interest relates in order to avoid the attribution rules. If attribution applies, the purpose of the loan would

be defeated. If paid on time, the lender will have to include the interest income from the loan on their tax return, while any income earned from the borrowed funds would be taxable to the borrower. Depending upon the use of the borrowed funds, the interest on the prescribed rate loan may be deductible for the borrower.

The prescribed interest rate for Q4 2023 is 5%. This is the highest it has been for a number of years and it will increase further to 6% in Q1 2024. A higher prescribed rate reduces the effectiveness of the strategy. You should consult with your tax advisor to determine whether this strategy would be advisable in the current environment and in your particular circumstances.

Tax-Free Savings Accounts (TFSA)

Have you made a TFSA contribution yet this year?

Yes No

Consider contributing to a TFSA to take advantage of tax-sheltered savings. Contributions to a TFSA are not tax deductible, but income and growth inside the plan along with contributions can be withdrawn tax-free. The contribution limit this year is \$6,500, but don't forget about any unused contribution room that is carried forward from year to year. If you have never contributed to a TFSA, you may be able to contribute up to the accumulated limit of \$88,000 in the current year. The sooner you contribute to a TFSA, the faster your investments can grow tax-free. Talk to your IG Consultant to calculate your unused contribution limit today.

Will you be withdrawing funds from a TFSA?

Yes No

If so, a withdrawal before December 31 will create contribution room of an equal amount in January of next year. If you delay the withdrawal until the new year, you will not get the contribution room created

from the withdrawal until the following year, delaying by a full year how quickly you can replenish your TFSA for the amount withdrawn. Note that the amount added to your contribution room is the full amount of the withdrawal, not simply the amount of your original capital withdrawn.

Have you considered using TFSAs for income splitting?

Yes No

In many cases, gifting money to a spouse or common-law partner will result in any related investment income and gains being taxed to you, not them. One of the few exceptions to this rule relates to TFSAs. You can gift money to a Canadian resident spouse or common-law partner who can then use those funds to make contributions to their own TFSA, with future withdrawals tax-free to them and no tax consequences to you.

Charitable gift planning

Are you considering a donation to a charity this year and next?

Yes No

Donating to a registered charity by the end of the year provides valuable tax credits. The first \$200 of donations you claim on your tax return receive a lower donation tax credit rate than donations claimed above \$200 (except in Alberta). To limit donations subject to the lower \$200 credit rate, consider bringing forward donations planned early in the new year and make them prior to December 31 in order to combine them onto your current year tax return. Spouses and common-law partners resident in Alberta should split donations in order to maximize the amount each can claim under \$200. In addition, the federal donation tax credit is enhanced if your income is in the top tax bracket. Rules vary by province, but there may also be an increase to the provincial donation tax credit based on your income.

Do you have publicly-traded securities or mutual funds with accrued gains?

Yes No

If you have the option of donating cash or publicly-traded securities/mutual funds that have appreciated in value, consider donating the latter “in-kind”. You will receive a tax receipt equal to the market value of the investment and any resulting capital gain will be exempt from tax. If you wish to donate securities before the end of the year, don’t wait until the last minute as additional time may be required for the financial institution and charity to process the request.

Note that there will be a decrease in the charitable donation credit in the alternative minimum tax (AMT) calculation that will come into effect January 1, 2024. This change may affect individuals in higher tax brackets and should be considered when making significant charitable donations and donating securities “in-kind”. Speak with your IG Consultant and tax advisor when considering this strategy.

Registered Education Savings Plans (RESPs)

Do you have children for whom you could create an RESP? If you are already an RESP subscriber, have you contributed yet this year?

Yes No

Contributions to an RESP entitle you to a Canada Education Savings Grant (CESG) of up to \$500 per year or \$1,000 if there is unused grant room from previous years. If your child has available grant room that exceeds \$1,000, consider making a contribution for them to an RESP prior to year-end to not only maximize the grants received this year, but allow for more grants to be received next year as well. In addition, if the

beneficiary of your RESP is turning 15 this year, certain factors must be satisfied by the end of the year to remain grant eligible to the end of the year they turn 17. Speak with your IG Consultant to help you maximize your CESG.

Home Buyers’ Plan (HBP)

Are you planning an HBP withdrawal soon?

Yes No

The Home Buyers’ Plan allows you to borrow funds from your RSP to purchase your first home, provided a multitude of conditions are met. Consider these HBP rules when deciding when to withdraw via an HBP:

- 1 | You must purchase a qualifying home by October 1 of the year following the withdrawal.
- 2 | All withdrawals must be made in the same calendar year.
- 3 | Repayments of the withdrawal(s) must begin two years following the year of withdrawal.

Delaying your withdrawal to next year will allow you more time to purchase a home, make more withdrawals if necessary (up to a maximum of \$35,000), and extend the time before you have to begin repaying the funds.

Have you made an HBP withdrawal in the last two years?

Yes No

The HBP requires that repayments of withdrawals begin two years following the year of withdrawal. Be sure to make your required RSP repayment and designate the contribution as a repayment on Schedule 7 of your personal tax return to avoid any unnecessary income inclusion. Check your Notice of Assessment from the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) for more information if you’re unsure of your repayment requirement.



Maximizing deductions and credits

In order to be able to claim a tax deduction or a tax credit, many items need to be paid by December 31. These include:

- Attendant care costs
- Childcare expenses
- Employment expenses
- Interest costs and investment counsel fees
- Interest on student loans

- Moving expenses
- Political donations
- Professional membership fees
- Spousal support
- Tuition fees
- Union dues

Ensure you pay all these amounts prior to the end of this year to get maximum value on your current year tax return.



Registered Disability Savings Plans (RDSPs)

Do you or a loved one qualify for the Disability Tax Credit (DTC)?

Yes No

If you do, consider establishing an RDSP to assist in securing the financial future of a beneficiary with a disability. While contributions to an RDSP are not tax deductible, RDSP investment returns grow on

a tax-deferred basis for as long as the funds are in the plan. While there is no annual contribution limit, there is a lifetime contribution limit of \$200,000 while the Canada Disability Savings Grant (CDSG) and the Canada Disability Savings Bond (CDSB) can significantly increase the total RDSP value. Depending upon family income levels, an individual can generate between \$1,000 and \$3,500 of CDSG and up to \$1,000 of CDSB each year. You are eligible to make an RDSP contribution for any year the beneficiary is eligible for the DTC, however CDSG and CDSB room can only be carried forward 10 years. This means making a contribution prior to the end of the year may allow you to receive CDSG or CDSB that would otherwise be lost. Talk to your IG Consultant to determine the contributions needed to maximize the CDSG and CDSB.

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