THE 30-POINT FALL STEWARDSHIP REVIEW CHECKLIST

The Estate Owner's Master Winter-Proofing Audit & Last Call Calendar

THE "SHORTS & T-SHIRT" RULE

It's 25°C outside. The lake is warm, and winter feels like a distant problem for October. But in the Highlands, the best time to book your winter shutdown is while you are still wearing shorts and a t-shirt.

The biggest mistake cottage owners make is confusing booking a service with executing it. You don't need your septic pumped or your yard raked today, but you must get on the schedule now. By the time the autumn fleece sweaters come out, contractor calendars across Haliburton County are already at capacity.

Use this 30-Point Review Checklist to evaluate your fall transition, protect your asset, and secure your contractor slots before the snow flies.

THE "LAST CALL" BOOKING DEADLINES

These are not the dates the work happens—these are the absolute deadlines by which you must raise your hand to **guarantee** a professional service spot before freeze-up, we can take calls after, but spots are limited:

CALL BY: AUG 15 — DOCK REMOVAL: To schedule dock pulls, and anchor chain inspections before lake levels drop.

CALL BY: AUG 31 — FALL YARD CLEANUP: To secure leaf removal, and grounds protection before wet snow hits.

CALL BY: SEPT 30 — OFF-SEASON COTTAGE CARE & WINTER SECURITY LAST CALL: To book your pre-winter estate audit and reserve your off-season property monitoring route before frost sets in.

DELEGATION & SCOPE LEGEND

This checklist is a comprehensive audit tool designed to evaluate the total health of your property.
Tasks listed below fall into three categories:

General Care (Kacaba Team): Grounds, leaves, dock removal, fall deep cleaning and off-season monitoring visits.

Licensed Trades (Scheduled by Owner): Certified plumbing blowouts, HVAC furnace servicing, and septic hauling; key hold services available for KCC multi-season clientele.

DIY / Owner Checklist: Personal pantry cleanouts, mattress staging, and valuable storage.

NOTICE:
This review checklist is provided for general informational, educational, and resource-planning purposes only and does not constitute direct engineering or trade recommendations for any specific property.

THE 30-POINT REVIEW: PART 1 — EXTERIOR & GROUNDS

INSTRUCTIONS FOR OWNERS: True fall stewardship goes beyond raking leaves. Use these 15 exterior touchpoints to audit your roofline, foundation, and dock assets against winter ice, heavy snow, and wildlife intrusion.

ROOFLINE, SIDING & PESTS

- ☐ **1. Eavestrough & Downspout Cleanout:** Clear all wet leaves and organic pine needles. Clogged gutters freeze into heavy ice dams that tear soffits and force water under shingles.
- ☐ **2. Chimney Cap & Spark Arrestor Screen:** Verify the wire mesh screen is intact. Raccoons and squirrels frequently tear open unscreened caps in late summer to nest for the winter.
- ☐ **3. Exterior Mouse Audit (Foundation Sealing):** Walk the foundation perimeter and pack steel wool into any gap larger than a pencil width where wood meets stone or concrete.
- ☐ **4. Vegetation & Siding Clearance:** Trim back ferns, brush, and overhanging branches touching the siding. Wet leaves against wood rot paint and create carpenter ant highways.
- ☐ **5. Window & Door Caulking Inspection:** Check exterior frames for cracked sealant that could allow driving autumn rain or freezing wind to penetrate wall cavities.

DOCKS, DECKS & GROUNDS

- ☐ **6. Dock Pull & Chain Inspection:** Lift or remove seasonal dock sections. Inspect underwater chains and cables for rust or friction wear that could snap during winter ice movement.
- ☐ **7. Lawn Debris & Wet Leaf Cleanout:** Rake and haul away thick leaf mats. Leaving wet leaves on the lawn starves the turf of oxygen, causing severe snow mold come spring.
- ☐ **8. Outdoor Furniture Wrapping & Cushion Storage:** Wash and dry patio cushions before storing them in sealed, rodent-proof bins. Wrap outdoor tables and frames securely.
- ☐ **9. Firewood Stacking (20ft Rule):** Stack winter firewood a minimum of 20 feet away from the main cottage structure to prevent mice and ants from nesting against the walls.
- ☐ **10. Driveway Culvert Clearance:** Dig out silt and gravel from both ends of your driveway culvert pipe to prevent freeze-ups and spring washout.

SYSTEMS & WATERCRAFT

- ☐ **11. Exterior Hose & Spigot Draining:** Disconnect all garden hoses and shut off interior water valves feeding exterior hose bibs. Drain residual water to prevent burst pipes.
- ☐ **12. Boat Lift & Watercraft Winterization:** Remove boats, drain bilge pumps, and secure lifts above winter high-water marks.
- ☐ **13. BBQ Grease Trap & Propane Isolation:** Deep clean the grill grease catch tray to prevent winter animal attraction, turn off propane valves, and store tanks safely outside.
- ☐ **14. Septic Tank Level & Inspection:** Verify tank levels and schedule fall pumping with a licensed hauler if due to avoid freeze-overs during low-use winter months.
- ☐ **15. Outbuilding & Bunkie Roof Scan:** Inspect shed and bunkie roofs for damaged shingles or structural weaknesses before heavy snow accumulation.

THE 30-POINT REVIEW: PART 2 – INTERIOR & SYSTEMS

INSTRUCTIONS FOR OWNERS: Interior winterization is about hygiene, system safety, and freeze prevention. Complete or coordinate these 15 interior touchpoints before final lock-up.

PLUMBING & MECHANICALS

- ☐ **16. Main Water Shut-Off & Plumbing Blowout:** Turn off the main water pump. Ensure a certified plumber or experienced technician uses compressed air to blow out residual water in lines and traps.
- ☐ **17. Water Heater Isolation & Draining:** Turn off power/gas to the water heater before draining the tank to prevent element burnout.
- ☐ **18. UV Filtration & Filter Bowl Draining:** Turn off UV power, remove the sediment filter bowl, and drain residual water traps to prevent housing cracks.
- ☐ **19. Sump Pump Freeze Check:** Test the sump pump float and ensure the exterior discharge line slopes downward so standing water cannot freeze inside the pipe.
- ☐ **20. Heating System Service:** Have an HVAC technician replace furnace filters, test backup space heaters, and verify fuel levels (Propane/Oil) for winter freeze-protection.

INTERIOR HYGIENE & WILDLIFE DEFENSE

- ☐ **21. Refrigerator Deep Clean & Prop-Open:** Remove all perishable food, wipe surfaces with disinfectant, unplug, and prop doors open with towels to prevent mold.
- ☐ **22. Pantry & Dry Food Removal:** Remove all boxed goods, cereals, and pet food from cabinets. Staging an empty pantry removes the primary food source for mice.
- ☐ **23. Appliance Greasing & Oven Cleanout:** Deep clean crumbs from beneath the stove, toaster, and microwave to eliminate rodent attraction.
- ☐ **24. Interior Mouse Audit:** Place steel wool or copper mesh around pipe entry points under sinks, behind toilets, and inside utility closets.
- ☐ **25. Mattress & Linen Staging:** Lean mattresses on their sides or cover them with heavy plastic sheets to protect against dust and dampness.

LIFE SAFETY & FINAL LOCK-UP

- ☐ **26. Fireplace & Woodstove Damper Closure:** Tightly close all stove dampers and flue vents to block cold drafts and prevent birds or bats from entering.
- ☐ **27. Life Safety Detector Battery Audit:** Test all Smoke and CO detectors. Replace batteries so low-battery chirps don't ring in an empty cottage all winter.
- ☐ **28. Thermostat & Freeze-Monitor Set:** Set heat to minimum freeze-protection temperatures (typically 10°C / 50°F) or verify remote monitoring alarms.
- ☐ **29. Ceiling Fan Reverse Setting:** Set fans to rotate clockwise on low speed to push rising warm air back down toward the floor during winter visits.
- ☐ **30. Electrical Breaker Alignment & Perimeter Lock:** Turn off non-essential breakers (water heater, stove, pump), lock all windows/sliders, and complete final door lock-up.

Don't Panic. Delegate & Coordinate.
Does a 30-point fall review sound like a lot of heavy lifting? It is—but you don't have to manage it alone.

For our routine property maintenance clientele, our team handles the grounds, docks, and site winterization seamlessly, while helping coordinate local trade partners for specialized mechanicals.
Contact us at 705-809-0898 to discuss your fall route or set up off-season cottage checks.