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BULLETIN 23: ARCHITECTURAL FIRM NAMES

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Every architectural firm's name is subject to approval by the AIBC Council, further to Bylaw 15(1) which reads as follows:

- 15(1) No architectural firm shall use a name which is misleading or unprofessional and all architectural firm names shall be subject to approval by Council.

One corollary to this is that an architectural firm is only permitted to offer and/or to provide professional services under the Certificate of Practice of its approved name. Recognizing that architectural practice continues to evolve with respect to forms of business; scopes of service; interdisciplinary arrangements; and mobility both across Canada and internationally, Council has developed a set of rulings. Their intent is to create clear and predictable, fair and appropriate conditions for approval so that the public is protected and all architectural firms have a level playing field.

Assisted by these rulings and in order to provide as timely and effective a response as possible, the Director of Registration & Licensing has the authority from Council to process and approve all applications for architectural firm names which are in compliance. Should an application seek to set a precedent, raise a new issue or be otherwise unconventional, that name will be brought to the Registration & Licensing Board, in the first instance for a ruling. An applicant who wishes to dispute the Board's ruling, may make application to the Registration and Licensing Review Panel (see Bulletin 24)

The following rulings deal with aspects of **description, identity, letterhead and transition.**

A. DESCRIPTION

Architects have an exclusive right to practise architecture and to the title "architect". To reinforce that, and in the interests of being clear as to how many people, of what qualification, are within an architectural firm, the name of an architectural firm:

1. **Must** include the word "**architect**" or an acceptable derivative word (architects, architecture or architectural) as is appropriate. The exception to the above is where a corporation or partnership practicing both architecture and engineering, registered as permitted by section 26(3) or section 65(2) of the *Architects Act*. If the architectural & engineering firm chooses not to use the word "architect":
 - (i) all letterhead, business cards, promotional materials, and documents of service used in the provision of architectural services must include a statement of the firm's right to practice architecture; for example "Holder of Certificate of Practice, Architectural Institute of British Columbia." Such letterhead is subject to AIBC approval; and

- (ii) the firm must comply with all other requirements.
2. May include words which denote **plurality**, provided:
- (i) for “**architects**” or “**associates**” to appear in the name of the firm, there must be at least two architect-principals, or at least one full-time architect-employee of the firm in addition to a single architect-principal; and
 - (ii) for “**group**” to appear in the name of a firm, there must be at least two architect-principals or at least one architect-principal and at least two other principals, shareholders or full-time employees who are members of the APEGBC.
3. May use “**descriptor**” words or initials in its name other than those indicated above provided that:
- (i) the descriptor refers only to firm type: sole proprietor, partnership, or corporation; and/or
 - (ii) composition: associates, architects, architects and engineers; and
 - (iii) the use of the initials will not be confusing, misleading or similar to any other architectural or non-architectural company name.

B. IDENTITY

In order to present its identity clearly; consistently with the requirements of the *Architects Act*; and to facilitate continuity of business while ensuring that the public is not misled and the profession is represented with dignity, the name of an architectural firm:

1. Must not:
- (i) be the same as or similar to that of an existing architectural firm; or
 - (ii) be a “numbered company” name; or
 - (iii) be scandalous, obscene or immoral; or
 - (iv) be self-laudatory; or
 - (v) imply geographic exclusivity by use of a BC regional or municipal name
 - (vi) be otherwise misleading.
2. May include the personal name(s) of:
- (i) members of the AIBC who are its principals (in a sole proprietorship or partnership) or shareholders (in an architectural corporation); and
 - (ii) (if the firm engages in the practice of professional engineering) members of the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of the Province of B.C. (APEGBC) who are

partners or shareholders (in a corporation).

3. May continue to include (in **legacy**) the personal name of a former principal (sole proprietor or partner) or shareholder of an architectural corporation who is or was a member of the AIBC (of APEGBC, as appropriate) provided that the former principal or shareholder:
 - (i) or his/her estate (if deceased) has granted permission for his/her name to be retained by the firm;
 - (ii) was not removed from the register of the AIBC (or APEGBC, as appropriate) for non-payment of fees or disciplinary reasons;
 - (iii) identity only appears in firm names which have been registered as Certificate of Practice holders for a minimum of 2 years immediately prior to the application for legacy privileges; and
 - (iv) the person is not active in another architectural firm.
4. May use an **anonymous** name (i.e. an acronym or a catch-phrase) providing that it can be demonstrated that the name conforms with all other rules. Names including initials and names of non-architects will also be considered anonymous. All letterhead and changes to letterhead of an anonymous firm must be submitted to the AIBC for approval prior to use.

C. LETTERHEAD

1. Firm letterhead must clearly indicate the architect(s) responsible for the practice of architecture in the firm;
2. All letterhead of anonymous firms must include the names and “MAIBC” designations of all the principals/shareholders who are members; and
3. The name of a firm may be known by a style or trade name but it must be used in conjunction with the approved name of the Certificate of Practice.

D. TRANSITIONAL

Architectural firm names which were previously approved and (as a result of this bulletin) are currently non-conforming are required to change to a name which is conforming where the firm proposes changes to its existing name and/or whenever it changes its principals or shareholders; its principals’ or shareholders’ registration status; or its staff size to the extent that the existing firm name no longer complies with these rulings.