



# Practice Guideline: Use of the Architect's Seal

August 2026

---

## Table of Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Definition of Seal
- 3.0 Legal Foundation
- 4.0 Who Can Apply the Seal
- 5.0 Misuse of the Seal
- 6.0 Practical Use of the Seal
  - Seal Formats and Application
  - Building Size, Type & Project Stage
  - Qualifications, Disclaimers
  - Documents that Must Be Sealed
  - Documents that Should Not Be Sealed
  - Sealing Best Practices/ Recommendations
  - Translation of Sealed Documents
- 7.0 Delivery of Digitally Sealed Documents
  - General Requirements
  - Computer Applications
  - Digital Certificate Process
  - Digital File Types
  - Multiple Sheet Documents
  - Multiple Formats (Digital and Hard Copy)
- 8.0 Care and Control of the Seal
- 9.0 Appendix A: Quick Reference Table – When a Seal Is Required

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Practice Guideline supplements the Professional Standards under heading 8.0 in Schedule A: Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (“Code of Ethics”) and AIBC Bylaws 4.96 to 4.99. It provides procedural and administrative information regarding the use of the Seal, both physical and digital formats.
- 1.2 Capitalized terms in this document are defined terms in the [AIBC Bylaws](#) and have the same meaning.

## **2.0 Definition of Seal**

- 2.1 “Architect’s Seal” or “Seal” is defined in the AIBC Bylaws to mean “the physical or digital Seal issued by the AIBC to be used by an Architect in accordance with the Bylaws including applicable Professional Standards”.

## **3.0 Legal Foundation**

- 3.1 An Architect’s Seal is a representation to the public – including Clients, other consultants, approval-granting entities such as local governments and other authorities, builders, and suppliers – that the Architect who applied it not only takes responsibility for the document, but that the document was prepared by that Architect, or under their Direct Supervision.
- 3.2 **The Seal is a solemn confirmation that a qualified Architect is sufficiently aware of the relevant considerations that went into the document such that, in the Architect’s opinion, the document is ready for publication and intended to be relied upon and used by others for the purposes intended.**
- 3.3 The Professional Standards under heading 8.0 ‘Architectural Services: Use of the Seal’ in the Code of Ethics establish the basic level requirements for use of the Seal, and AIBC Bylaws 4.96 through 4.99 establish the requirements for issuance of the Seal, and the return or revocation of the Seal when circumstances warrant.

## **4.0 Who May Apply the Seal**

- 4.1 Professional Standards 8.1 and 8.3 in the Code of Ethics require that an Architect’s Seal only be applied by the Architect to whom it was issued to documents prepared by them or under their Direct Supervision.
- 4.2 To provide architectural services in British Columbia, an Architect must practise through a Firm holding a Certificate of Practice. Therefore, the Seal can only be applied to documents issued through that Firm’s Certificate of Practice. Individual Architects sealing on behalf of a Firm do not require an additional Certificate of Practice.
- 4.2.1 Per Bylaw 4.36, employees of the federal government do not require a Certificate of Practice when sealing federal government work. However, all other sealing requirements apply. This is a narrow exception that applies only to federal government employees. It does not apply to federal government contractors, nor does it apply to contractors or employees of the provincial government or local governments.
- 4.3 The Architect’s Seal must never be applied by an Architect (whatever the Architect’s title or role) simply upon a perfunctory check. The Seal indicates the Architect who has applied it is aware of the

design criteria, sources relied upon, and the regulatory compliance requirements, and accepts full responsibility for the documents sealed.

- 4.4 Professional Standard 8.3 in the Code of Ethics specifically requires the application of the Architect's signature and the date to the Seal. No person, other than the Architect named on the Seal, may sign on behalf of the Architect. The Architect who applies the Seal must be the same Architect to apply the signature.
- 4.5 The digital Seal must be applied by the Architect. An Architect cannot share passwords or other security information with anyone else that would enable them to apply the digital Seal on the Architect's behalf. See heading 8.0 in this Practice Guideline - Care and Control of the Seal.
- 4.6 Two Architects cannot seal a single document. If two Architects collaborate, they must determine which Architect applies the Seal. In some circumstances, particularly when one of the Architects is with another Firm, the Architect not sealing may provide 'Schedule S-B', confirming their contribution, to the sealing Architect. For more information regarding use of Schedule S-B, please refer to the [Joint Professional Practice Guideline: Professional Design and Field Review by Supporting Registered Professionals](#).
- 4.7 There is no requirement that a single Architect seal every document on a Project. However, a single Architect is expected to seal **each component** (i.e., multiple sealed sheets in a single document must be sealed by the same Architect). Drawings and specifications for the same Project may be sealed by different Architects, provided they have coordinated their work.
- 4.8 The Architect AIBC working with an architect registered in another jurisdiction under an AIBC Temporary Licence must seal any documents issued. All sealing requirements in the Professional Standards under heading 8.0 in the Code of Ethics remain applicable. There is no alternate standard for sealing documents under a Temporary Licence.

## **5.0 Misuse of the Seal**

- 5.1 Misuse of the Architect's Seal is considered among the more serious breaches of an Architect's duty to the public. Many of the admonitions relating to misuse of the Seal are found throughout this Practice Guideline, including the fundamental expectation that the Architect who prepared the document or provided Direct Supervision of its preparation must apply the Seal.
- 5.2 An Architect's Seal is not for sale, and the term 'trained seal' is a legitimately derogatory term to describe any Architect who applies a Seal to documents for which they did not provide Direct Supervision. Requests to do so are often sparked by Clients looking to have their 'in-house' design (or that provided by a non-architect consultant) sanctioned by an Architect. Such misuse of the Seal brings the architectural profession and the validity of the Seal as a public representation of professional qualifications and responsibility into disrepute. The stakes are even higher when an

Architect applies a Seal to a non-architect's drawing, since it appears to legitimize, aid, and abet the unauthorized practice of architecture by unregistered individuals and businesses.

- 5.3 Incomplete, uncoordinated, non-compliant with zoning or building regulations, or otherwise inadequate sealed documents submitted for permit application is unacceptable practice. Inadequate drawings sealed and issued for the purpose of 'getting in the permit queue', with the intention of replacement later, is unacceptable, and constitutes misuse of the Seal. A sealed document is complete and correct for its intended purpose, and documents issued for any permit application, be it rezoning, development permit or building permit, must be sealed.

## **6.0 Practical Use of a Seal**

### Seal Formats and Application

- 6.1 The Seal is issued in three formats: rubber stamp, embossing Seal, and Digital Certificate Seal (digital Seal). The rubber stamp is available in two sizes. The Seal can only be obtained from the AIBC and remains the property of the AIBC. The Seal is to be returned to the AIBC when the Architect is no longer authorized to use it. Physical Seals are to be returned to the AIBC upon the death of an Architect.
- 6.2 The embossing Seal is still legally valid, but it is rarely used today, as the rubber stamp Seal and the digital Seal are more practical and convenient. When using an embossed Seal, it is safer to sign first and then apply the Seal over the signature, to avoid ripping the paper.
- 6.3 In October 2009, the AIBC first issued the digital Seal. Applying a digital Seal is a specific, highly secure protocol that requires purchase of a licence authorized by the AIBC. The simple application of a graphic image of a Seal to digital documents **does not** constitute sealing of such documents - it is a breach of Professional Standard 8.5 in the Code of Ethics and invites considerable civil liability exposure.
- 6.4 The date must be on or adjacent to the Seal. On digital documents, the digital Seal includes the date, and the application should be set up to print the date, so it appears on the document. When using a physical Seal, it is permissible to use a date stamp rather than hand write the date. In either case, the Architect must make sure that the date is legible. The date appearing as part of a document, for example a 'date of issue' or 'revision date' in a title block, or a 'date of issue' on the cover of a report, do not constitute a date for purposes of application of the Seal. The date is to be applied at the same time as the Seal itself is applied.
- 6.5 The date must be the date of application of the Seal. No backdating or forward-dating is permitted.
- 6.6 There is no requirement that every sheet in a set of documents be sealed with the same date, nor is there any requirement that the date of the Seal on documents match the date on a Letter of Assurance.

- 6.7 The use of initials with the Seal is only permitted if such initials have become the Architect's 'usual signature' (i.e., the signature used by the Architect in their standard business practice).
- 6.8 A document consisting of a bound set of pages, such as specifications or a report, may be sealed on one page with a physical Seal, provided all pages are numbered and a table of contents is provided, and the binding is of a permanent type. It should be clear to the reader the extent of the document to which the Seal applies. Large format drawing sets bound with staples should be sealed on each page. A single Digital Certificate may be used to Seal a single sheet or a multiple sheet document.

#### Building Size, Type and Project Stage

- 6.9 An Architect's essential obligations with respect to the Seal are not affected by the size or type of the building or the stage of approval. The fact that a building, such as a single-family home, may not require an Architect's services under the *Architects Regulation*, is not relevant. The fact that there may be no requirement for the provision of Letters of Assurance under the *BC Building Code* or the *Vancouver Building Bylaw* – whether because of the Project's stage or building type – is not relevant. **If the architectural services are provided by an Architect (through the required Certificate of Practice), the Architect's responsibilities and the public's expectations are no less on a building that does not require an Architect than on a building that does require an Architect under the *Architects Regulation*.**
- 6.10 Similarly, the Architect's responsibilities to seal documents, and the public's expectations, are no less at earlier stages of application than building permit, such as for rezoning or development permit applications. A feasibility study is a report that requires a Seal.
- 6.11 Under a staged building permit process, architectural documents must be provided and must be sealed at each stage. The purpose of the documents, i.e. the stage they are being provided to document, should be noted. The one possible exception to this is excavation and shoring permits which may proceed without architectural documents. Foundation to grade permits usually require sealed architectural documents.

#### Qualifications, Disclaimers

- 6.12 The authority of the Seal should not be diminished with disclaimers. For example, sharing a document with an engineer and limiting the Seal to 'architectural only' is not acceptable. An Architect issues their own documents. It is acceptable, and good practice, to state the purpose of a document. For example, stating on the sealed document 'issued for development permit' or 'issued for construction', or to state on an unsealed document the reason for it not being sealed, for example 'preliminary for discussion only'.

### Documents that Must be Sealed

- 6.13 Professional Standard 8.3 in the Code of Ethics establishes the documents that require the application of a Seal by the Architect who prepared them or who provided Direct Supervision of their preparation.

8.3 An Architect must apply a Seal, with signature and date, to the following documents prepared by or under the Direct Supervision of the Architect:

- (a) drawings and specifications issued for approval or reliance by any party;
- (b) Letters of Assurance including but not limited to those issued under the *BC Building Code* and *Vancouver Building Bylaw*;
- (c) certificates for payment and certificate as to construction performance when acting as a payment certifier under contract; and
- (d) formal reports, including expert reports, building code or zoning analysis reports, building assessment reports, and written opinions.

**Note that it is not relevant to an Architect's statutory and professional conduct obligations whether an authority (or Client) has a Seal requirement or expectation that differs from the obligations outlined above.** For example, it is not acceptable to dispense with the sealing requirements merely because, for example, a particular authority does not require development permit drawings to be sealed, whether that "requirement" derives from advice, policy, or customary practice. The correct use of an Architect's Seal is a matter for the AIBC's Professional Standards and this Practice Guideline, not expectations established by authorities, Clients, or anyone else.

- 6.14 When acting as an administrator of a construction contract, documents issued with respect to that contract such as change directives, change orders, supplemental instructions, certificates for payment, certificates of substantial performance, certificates of ready-for-takeover, must be sealed. While an Architect might not want to seal a paper document issued in the field, a follow-up version issued from the office, with Seal, should be issued as soon as reasonably possible.

6.14.1 Communication that does not amend the construction contract or revise the Architect's sealed documents is not required to be sealed, such as RFIs (requests for information) from a builder during construction. A response to a query asking, 'what product is to be used', that refers to the already issued and sealed specification, does not require the Seal. A response that amends the issued specification by adding a new product specification requires the Seal.

- 6.15 When acting as an administrator of a construction contract, documents issued pursuant to the *Builders Lien Act*, such as the "Certificate of Completion", are to be sealed.

- 6.16 Architects must seal **‘final design drawings’** which are drawings produced by the Architect that incorporate changes approved by the Architect that occurred during construction. Refer to paragraph 6.23 for **‘as-built drawings’**, which are *not* to be sealed.
- 6.17 The application of the Seal to architectural reports reinforces the solemn confirmation that an Architect has applied professional judgment in the preparation of the document and that it is intended for reliance for the purpose, and by the party, intended. It is acceptable to restrict the use of sealed reports to a particular purpose or party.

#### Documents that Should Not be Sealed

- 6.18 Professional Standard 8.4 sets out documents that must not be sealed.

8.4 Architects must not apply their Seal:

- (a) to documents not prepared by them or under their Direct Supervision;
  - (b) to blank documents, including drawing templates, title blocks, Letters of Assurance or other incomplete or unchecked documents;
  - (c) to any document not prepared under the Architect’s direction and control such as as-built drawings from contractor mark-ups or shop drawings;
  - (d) as a commercial or business seal;
  - (e) on correspondence, such as fee proposals and business letters, that do not constitute professional advice; or
  - (f) to declarations on professional liability insurance.
- 6.19 Given the importance of an Architect’s Seal – symbolically, professionally and from a liability point of view – it should not be used indiscriminately. The Seal is intended for application on documents produced in connection with rendering architectural services. It should not be confused with a corporate business seal, which is intended for entirely different purposes, including application on certain contracts such as Client-Architect Contracts executed ‘under (corporate) seal’. Application of an Architect’s Seal when corresponding with authorities or with the AIBC is inappropriate and signifies a lack of understanding of the essential nature of the Seal. The mere fact that a document is issued from an Architect’s office is insufficient to warrant application of the Seal.
- 6.20 Requests or demands by third parties that the Architect apply the Seal to documents that are not mandated for sealing should be refused.
- 6.21 An Architect must never apply a Seal to other consultants’ documents.
- 6.22 Review of shop drawings by an Architect may be confirmed with a ‘stamp’ indicating review has taken place, but the Seal cannot be used for this purpose.

- 6.23 **‘As-built drawings’** from contractor mark-ups are not drawings prepared by the Architect or under the Architect’s Direct Supervision. An Architect cannot use the Seal to confirm information provided by others, information that is neither design advice, nor verified by the Architect. Refer to paragraph 6.16 for the use of the Seal on **‘final design drawings’**.

#### Sealing Best Practices/Recommendations

- 6.24 Drawings used for internal purposes within the Architectural Firm need not be sealed. Similarly, drawings prepared solely for discussion purposes between an Architectural Firm and authority, Client, contractor, or consultants need not be sealed. Drawings prepared and delivered for the purpose of seeking fee proposals from consultants, including other Architects, need not be sealed.
- 6.25 Drawings not required to be sealed should include a notice to indicate the specific purpose behind their preparation and delivery. For example, noting ‘preliminary issued for discussion’ is good practice. It provides clarity to the reader of the documents, and it reduces unnecessary liability exposure for the Architect. The lack of the Seal on a documents issued by an Architect should be clear, intentional, and appropriate, rather than appear as a failure to meet the Professional Standards.
- 6.26 As a general statement, it is unnecessary, unduly burdensome (and impractical) to Seal, sign, and date multiple sets of documents, such as multiple runs of drawings or specification binders. However, any **set(s) intended for submission for approvals and/or for reliance by third parties must be signed and sealed appropriately**. Where photocopies of sealed documents are made, or where unsealed copies of multiple runs are distributed, such documents should clearly be marked “copy”. Where copies of originals are being reviewed and circulated among multiple parties, it is good practice to indicate on such copies that that an original, sealed set is available, and where it is located. In keeping with this guidance, it remains good practice for a Firm to:
- i. Seal the set(s) required for submission to the authority and Client;
  - ii. retain a sealed set for the Firm; and
  - iii. for construction contract drawings and changes, one sealed set must be provided to the contractor, one sealed set must be provided to the Client, and one set is retained by the Firm.

#### Translation of Sealed Documents

- 6.27 If a Client requires drawings in a language other than one the Architect uses, the Architect may provide sealed drawings in another language. As with any aspect of architectural practice where the Architect may lack sufficient expertise, the Architect must seek the assistance of appropriately qualified consultants.
- 6.28 Architectural drawings and specifications are highly technical. A translator, even a specialized technical translator, cannot be expected to understand the highly coded language of architectural drawings and specifications. Therefore, for an Architect to seal translated documents, they must be either produced by, or reviewed by, an Architect proficient in both the language of the translation and the original language.

- 6.29 Option one is for the Architect to either retain another Architect or have an Architect on staff, proficient in both the original language and the language of translation, to translate the documents.
- 6.30 Option two is to retain a qualified technical translator and then either retain an Architect, or have an Architect on staff, proficient in both the original language and the language of translation **to review the work of the translator.**
- 6.31 In either case, for the Architect to seal the translated documents, the Architect must rely upon another Architect. A translator alone would not be sufficient.
- 6.32 In the case of translation of documents, an architect registered in any province or territory in Canada, with the requisite language proficiency, would meet the requirement for ‘Architect’ review. For purposes of translation only, the reviewing architect need not be an Architect registered in BC.

## **7.0 Delivery of Digitally Sealed Documents**

### General Requirements

- 7.1 **Any document required to be sealed by an Architect and transmitted electronically must be signed, sealed, and dated with a Digital Certificate as required in Professional Standard 8.5. No other means of sealing an electronically transmitted document is acceptable.**
- 7.2 Portage CyberTEch, formerly Notarius, is the AIBC’s service provider for the Digital Certificate. They issue the Digital Certificate on behalf of the AIBC. No other service provider of digital certification is acceptable. Portage CyberTech provides both security for the digital document itself, as well as control over who can use the Digital Certificate (i.e., only the Architect to whom it has been issued).
- 7.3 No document bearing one or more image(s) of an Architect’s Seal in digital form is a validly sealed document unless the Architect applies an AIBC Digital Certificate issued by Portage CyberTech to that document.
- 7.4 The process of applying the Digital Certificate and adding an image of the Architect’s Seal, signature, and date is referred to as ‘digital sealing’.
- 7.5 Architects must not disclose any personal information enabling other persons to use their digital Seal, including passwords, activation codes or verification codes, log-in information or security questions. Failure to comply with this obligation may result in the immediate revocation of the Digital Certificate and may constitute a breach of Professional Standards, with disciplinary consequences.
- 7.6 To apply for a Digital Certificate, visit the AIBC section on the Portage CyberTech website: [notarius.com/AIBC](http://notarius.com/AIBC).

### Computer Applications

- 7.7 Architects may seek assistance from their IT staff or consultants, or from Portage CyberTech technical help, in setting up or troubleshooting their Digital Certificate processes without disclosing their secure personal information.
- 7.8 Portage CyberTech provides a free application, ConsignO, used for applying the digital Seal to a document, and provides support for this product.
- 7.9 Although Portage CyberTech is the sole provider of the Digital Certificate to the AIBC, applications other than ConsignO, such as Bluebeam and Adobe Acrobat Pro, may be used to apply the digital Seal. Support for these applications is provided by their developers, and not by the AIBC nor by Portage CyberTech.

### Digital Certificate Process

- 7.10 Applying an image of an Architect's Seal is not the same as digitally sealing that document with a Digital Certificate. An image alone of a Seal is not secure, and any such document is vulnerable to being seamlessly modified by others without the issuing Architect's knowledge. It is fundamental to the protection of the public that the Seal applied by an Architect is secure, i.e. that it can be reasonably relied upon as being authentically applied by the Architect, and not having been tampered with. **For electronically transmitted documents, the only acceptable means of sealing is with the AIBC Digital Certificate,** issued through Portage CyberTech.
- 7.11 The Digital Certificate is a security tag which identifies the sender and secures the document. When an Architect applies a Digital Certificate to a document, it prevents anyone else from making unauthorized or undetected changes to that document. Because the certificate is unique to the user Architect, who controls its use through a secure password, the Digital Certificate verifies that the user (and only that user) is the person who sealed the document.
- 7.12 Although the security of the digitally sealed document is verified through the Digital Certificate, an image of the Architect's Seal, signature, and the date, is applied to the document as part of the digital sealing process.
- 7.13 Upon request, an Architect can obtain a digital image file of their Seal from the AIBC, for use in the digital seal process.
- 7.14 In addition to its mandatory use for the digital Seal, the Portage CyberTech Digital Certificate can also be applied to an image of an Architect's signature, or initials, or to other images such as the Certified Professional (CP) stamp. The use of the Digital Certificate is recommended for the Architect's initials on the Letters of Assurance, and for the CP stamp.

- 7.15 Once the PDF file has been created, then the Digital Certificate and image of the Seal and signature is applied. A time stamp is embedded when the document is digitally sealed; the application must be set to print this time stamp adjacent to the image of the Seal so that it appears on the document.

#### Digital File Types

- 7.16 The digital Seal is ***never*** applied to CAD files, BIM files, word processing files, spreadsheet files, or similar documents: It is ***only*** applied to PDF files.
- 7.17 Once a document is created, it must then be converted to PDF or PDF/A. PDF/A is an ISO-standardized version of PDF specialized for use in the archiving and long-term preservation of electronic documents, and it is recommended when digitally sealing documents.
- 7.18 The Portage CyberTech application Consigno Desktop allows users to convert documents into PDF/A format. Other PDF applications may also be used for this conversion.

#### Multiple Sheet Documents

- 7.19 When issuing a set of digital drawings that contains multiple sheets, there are two acceptable approaches to sealing. Approach one is to seal the entire file with a single Digital Certificate. Approach two is to seal each sheet with its own Digital Certificate, and then assemble into a single file for issue.
- 7.20 A specification book or a multiple page report may be assembled into a single PDF file and sealed with a single Digital Certificate.
- 7.21 Alternately, each individual sheet, or each specification or report section, can be a separate PDF file, digitally sealed, then the individual PDF files for each sheet or section can be assembled into a single file for transmission. The advantage of this method is that if a single sheet or section needs to be changed, that change can be made, the revision noted, and that sheet or section converted into a single PDF file and digitally re-sealed. That sheet or section can then be issued without having to convert and re-seal the entire set.
- 7.22 When sealing multiple-page documents such as specifications or reports, each page must be numbered, and the total number of pages indicated. Page numbering can be for the whole document, or by section or chapter, with a Table of Contents page, as is typical with specifications. The image of the Seal will only appear once in the set, but the Digital Certificate will apply to the entire document.

#### Multiple Formats (Digital and Hard Copy)

- 7.23 Issuing a hard copy of documents sealed in the traditional manner with a rubber stamp or embossed Seal, and then scanned and converted to PDF for ‘convenience’ is not acceptable. The Digital Certificate is required for **any** electronic transmission of documents required to be sealed.

- 7.24 While the AIBC recognizes that Architects cannot control what others may do with the hard copy documents that they deliver, an Architect cannot knowingly circumvent the digital delivery of documents requirements by having others scan their documents, then transmit the documents digitally.
- 7.25 If a document is provided in hard copy form as well as transmitted digitally, wording should be added to each sealed page or sheet indicating that it is a paper copy of the digital original, as well as the conditions upon which it can be relied. Adding the following wording is suggested:

**This document has been digitally certified with a Digital Certificate and encryption technology authorized by the Architectural Institute of BC and the Engineers and Geoscientists BC. The authoritative original has been transmitted to <name of party> in digital format.**

**Any printed version can be relied upon as a true copy of the original when printed from the digitally certified digital file provided by the Architect.**

- 7.26 A document that is not delivered digitally cannot be issued in hard copy form without a rubber stamp Seal or an embossing Seal. Digitally sealing then printing can only be used to supplement digital delivery of the document, it cannot be used instead of the physical Seal.

## **8.0 Care and Control of the Seal**

- 8.1 The public interest (and the legislation) demands that the Architect's Seal always remains the property, and under regulatory control, of the AIBC. An Architect can only obtain a Seal from the AIBC. As stipulated in AIBC Bylaw 4.98, an Architect's Seal must be returned when an individual ceases to be an Architect by whatever cause, including death, resignation, or cancellation from the register for disciplinary reasons. Suspension from practice may also include a requirement to return the Seal to the AIBC during the non-practising period. In these circumstances, the AIBC revokes the Digital Certificate that authenticates the digital Seal.
- 8.2 The physical Seal should be kept safely secured, particularly when travelling, or on vacation. The AIBC will also hold an Architect's Seal for safekeeping if requested, for reasons such as vacation, incapacity, extended leave, etc. Architects are expected to advise the AIBC promptly if the Seal is lost or stolen, and deliver a damaged Seal to the AIBC for replacement.
- 8.3 The Seal must never be altered for any reason.
- 8.4 Architects should use their computer equipment securely, remembering to close or log out of any Digital Certificate enabled application before leaving their workstation.
- 8.5 Architects must not disclose personal information enabling any other persons to use their digital Seal. Architects must inform Portage CyberTech and the AIBC immediately if they believe the confidentiality, security, or integrity of their certificate has been compromised.

- 8.6 Architects must follow the destruction method specified by Portage CyberTech if their Digital Certificate is cancelled, suspended, revoked, or otherwise is no longer valid or in use.

### **Practice Guideline Amendment History**

- 2026 August – Minor amendments to 6.14. 1 and 6.16 for clarity; revise ‘Notarius’ to ‘Portage CyberTech’.
- 2024 December 4 – First Edition. This Practice Guideline replaces Bulletins 60, ‘Signature, Seal and Delivery of Electronic Documents’ and 61, ‘Seal of an Architect’ and supplements the AIBC Bylaws and the Professional Standards found in Schedule A: Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct regarding use and issuance of the Architect’s Seal.

*The AIBC does not provide legal, accounting or insurance advice and expressly disclaims any responsibility for any errors or omissions with respect to legal, accounting or insurance matters that may be contained herein. Readers of AIBC documents are advised to consult their own legal, accounting or insurance representatives to obtain suitable professional advice in those regards.*

## Appendix A: When a Seal Is Required

| Document Type                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Internally Issued<br>(Not intended to be relied upon by others) | Externally Issued<br>(Delivered to external users - Clients, contractors, local governments) | Notes                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Preliminary or draft drawings                                                                                                                                                                                                   | No                                                              | No                                                                                           | If not sealed, it is recommended that documents state why they are not sealed. |
| Drawings                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | No                                                              | Yes                                                                                          | If not sealed, it is recommended that documents state why they are not sealed. |
| Specifications                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | No                                                              | Yes                                                                                          |                                                                                |
| Letters of Assurance                                                                                                                                                                                                            | No                                                              | Yes                                                                                          |                                                                                |
| Certificates for payment, change orders, change directives, supplemental instructions, certificates of substantial performance, certificates of ready for takeover or other documents when administering construction contracts | No                                                              | Yes                                                                                          |                                                                                |
| Formal reports – includes field review reports, feasibility studies, condition assessment reports, expert opinions, building code reports                                                                                       | No                                                              | Yes                                                                                          | A report is a document providing architectural advice.                         |
| Written opinions                                                                                                                                                                                                                | No                                                              | Yes                                                                                          |                                                                                |

| Document Type                                                     | Internally Issued<br>(Not intended to be relied upon by others) | Externally Issued<br>(Delivered to external users - Clients, contractors, local governments) | Notes                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bound sets of documents (book of details or specifications)       | No                                                              | Yes                                                                                          | To Seal on one page only, the pages must be permanently bound, pages must be numbered, and include a table of contents |
| Blank documents – templates, title blocks, Letters of Assurance   | No                                                              | No                                                                                           |                                                                                                                        |
| Documents not prepared under an Architect's direction and control | No                                                              | No                                                                                           |                                                                                                                        |
| As-built drawings                                                 | No                                                              | No                                                                                           |                                                                                                                        |
| Shop drawings                                                     | No                                                              | No                                                                                           | A stamp or note, but not the Seal, may be added indicating an Architect's review                                       |
| Final design drawings                                             | No                                                              | Yes                                                                                          |                                                                                                                        |
| Letters, fee proposals, or contracts                              | No                                                              | No                                                                                           |                                                                                                                        |
| Translated documents                                              | No                                                              | Yes                                                                                          |                                                                                                                        |
| Certificates issued per the <i>Builders Lien Act</i>              | No                                                              | Yes                                                                                          |                                                                                                                        |