PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS BOARD FOR THE PLANNING PROFESSION IN CANADA

Section 3: Ethical Standards

3.1 SCOPE

This section applies to the Ethical Standards for the planning profession in Canada, embodied in the Code of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct, for use in certification and for maintenance of membership in good standing (hereinafter "maintenance of membership"). The application of these Ethical Standards shall be interpreted in a manner proportionate to the member's role, scope of work, and statutory authority.

3.2 NATIONAL, AND PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL INSTITUTES AND ASSOCIATION (PTIA) STANDARDS

The Ethical Standards serve as national standards for use by the Professional Standards Board (PSB) and signatory PTIAs. Under exceptional circumstances (such as in response to provincial and territorial legislation) and at its own discretion, a PTIA may supplement or modify one or more specific standards while maintaining the meaning and intent of these standards as per its agreement with the PSB.

Any supplemental PTIA ethical standards should be structured consistently with the national Code of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct to the greatest extent possible. Any additions or modifications to the national standard by a PTIA shall be submitted to the PSB for information purposes.

3.3 THE CODE OF ETHICS AND CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

The Code of Ethics and the Code of Professional Conduct both deal with ethical issues, although they have different purposes:

- The **Code of Ethics** establishes the fundamental principles that are integral to the planning profession across Canada. These principles are aspirational and broadly construed, lending themselves to a wide range of interpretations, and therefore are not intended as a basis for disciplinary action by PTIAs.

- The **Code of Professional Conduct** consists of rules that describe how professional planners are expected to behave in a narrower range of situations; violations of this code may result in a PTIA investigation of a professional planner and disciplinary sanctions. While it endeavours to cover the most common situations, the Code of Professional

Conduct does not cover all conceivable situations that might arise in the professional life of a professional planner. In anomalous or unusual situations, an act or act of omission by a professional planner may be judged as unethical or unprofessional and subject to disciplinary action even if it does not explicitly violate one of the rules found in the Code of Professional Conduct. Disciplinary action is the responsibility of the PTIA.

3.3.1 Code of Ethics

Professional planners should, by word and action, demonstrate the highest ethical standards in all their professional work.

To uphold these standards, professional planners shall:

1. Serve the public, the profession, employers and clients with integrity.

2. Recognize and uphold the public interest in all planning activities, ensuring planning processes are fair, transparent, and reflect community needs and democratic values.

3. Practice only in areas in which they are competent and offer well-informed planning advice. A professional planner may, with disclosure and consent, accept work beyond their competence under supervision of a qualified professional.

4. Exercise professional judgment independently and objectively.

5. Provide full, clear and accurate information on planning matters while respecting confidentiality obligations and avoid knowingly misrepresenting facts or omitting material information in public or professional communications.

6. Identify, disclose and address real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest to uphold public trust and fairness in decision-making.

7. Acknowledge and respect the intellectual property and contributions of others, and ensure appropriate attribution in all professional work.

8. Uphold the dignity and reputation of the profession through ethical conduct and by fostering respect for the role of planners in society.

9. Advance reconciliation and meaningful relationships with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples through planning practices grounded in mutual respect, trust, learning, and decision-making that support Indigenous rights and self-determination.

10. Promote inclusive, transparent and accessible planning practices that respect human rights, reflect diverse lived experiences, and address systemic barriers.

11. Balance the interests of communities with the interests of individuals.

12. Practice evidence-based, sustainable, and climate-conscious planning that responsibly uses current resources, recognizes the interdependence of human and natural systems and mitigates risks to current and future generations.
13. Recognize the interconnected impacts of planning decisions across jurisdictions and ecosystems, fostering regional collaboration to address cross-jurisdictional boundary challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss and social equity.

14. Act toward colleagues with professional courtesy, fairness and consideration, and avoid uninformed or ill-considered criticism of another colleague.

15. Commit to an equitable and respectful work environment, promoting workplaces free from harassment, violence and discrimination.

16. Foster and support a respectful and supportive professional culture and environment by promoting well-being, physiological safety and mental health collaborators and colleagues and oneself.

17. Engage in Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) to sustain and enhance professional competencies, deepen planning expertise, and stay informed on emerging issues, topics, innovations, and perspectives. Professional planners shall use CPL to critically reflect on and strengthen their ethical, cultural, and technical practice in alignment with current professional standards.

18. Deepen personal and professional knowledge of Indigenous histories, governance systems and land rights, and the impacts of colonial planning practices.

19. Strengthen awareness and understanding of climate change science, risks and responsibilities, to support informed and responsive planning practice. .

20. Mentor and support emerging planners and colleagues to strengthen the profession.

21. Cooperate with any disciplinary proceeding as required by professional codes of conduct.

3.3.2 Code of Professional Conduct

1. The Planner's Responsibility to the Public Interest

Professional planners shall:

1.1 Treat all individuals with dignity and respect, including clients, colleagues, interested parties, and the public. This includes refraining from discriminatory, harassing or exploitative behaviour.

1.2 Provide full, clear and accurate information and advice on planning matters to decision-makers and members of the public, recognizing the diverse needs, identities and lived experiences of different people and their communities.

1.3 Acknowledge the inter-related nature of planning decisions and the long-term consequences for natural and human environments.

1.4 Endeavour to engage with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples and communities in a manner that is sustained, meaningful, and culturally appropriate whenever planning activities may affect Indigenous rights, interests, or lands. Engagement should be initiated early, carried out respectfully, and informed by Indigenous knowledge and guidance.

1.5 Provide opportunities for education and inclusive participation in planning processes for members of the public, equity-deserving communities, underserved populations, and those who have been historically marginalized, ensuring that engagement is accessible, transparent and responsive to diverse perspectives, lived experiences and knowledge systems.

1.6 Exercise professional judgement and integrity by raising concerns about planning practices or decisions that may be inconsistent with this Code, and by supporting the public interest in a respectful and evidence-informed manner, appropriate to the member's role and context.

1.7 Ensure digital tools, data systems and emerging technologies are used in ways that are transparent, accurate, equitable and accountable, and do not reinforce systemic bias or discrimination.

2. The Planner's Responsibility to Clients and Employers

Professional planners shall:

2.1 Provide independent professional opinion to clients, employers, the public and tribunals.

2.2 Respect the values and objectives of the client or employer, while ensuring that professional advice and conduct remain consistent with this Code.

2.3 Respect clients' and employers' right to confidentiality of information gathered through a professional relationship, unless such rights conflict with other aspects of this Code or the Code of Ethics.

2.4 Disclose all potential, perceived and actual conflicts of interest in a transparent and timely manner.

2.5 Inform the client or employer in the event of a conflict between the values or actions of the client or employer and those of this Code in a transparent and timely manner.

2.6 Not accept any financial, personal or other benefits that could reasonably be perceived as influencing, or attempting to influence, the professional planner's judgment, planning advice or conduct.

2.7 Not offer or provide any financial or other inducement intended to improperly influence, or that could reasonably be perceived as improperly influencing, professional decisions or opportunities, beyond standard compensation or employment practices.

2.8 Not, as an employee of a public agency, give professional planning advice for compensation to a private client or employer within the jurisdiction of the public agency without disclosure to the agency and receipt of written consent.

2.9 Not, as a consultant to a public agency during the period of contract with the agency, give professional planning advice for compensation to others within the jurisdiction of the agency without disclosure to the agency and receipt of written consent in situations where there is the possibility of a conflict of interest arising.

2.10 Use digital platforms, data analytics and emerging technologies responsibly and transparently, ensuring that clients and decision-makers are informed of any limitations, assumptions and risks, and that all uses comply with applicable privacy, consent and data protection standards.

2.11 When using artificial intelligence or automated tools, remain fully responsible for the accuracy, integrity and ethical use of outputs.

3. The Planner's Responsibility to the Profession and Other Professional Planners

Professional planners shall:

3.1 Ensure that advertising, promotional materials and public representations accurately reflect the professional planner's qualifications, credentials and affiliations. A professional planner must not misrepresent or imply credentials they do not hold.

3.2 Undertake planning services with diligence, and render services with appropriate due diligence and preparation.

3.3 Act toward other professional planners and colleagues in a spirit of fairness and consideration, and not falsely or maliciously injure the professional reputation, prospects or practice of another professional planner or other colleagues.

3.4 Respect colleagues in their professional capacity, and when evaluating the work of another professional planner, show objectivity and fairness and avoid ill-considered or uninformed criticism of the competence, conduct or advice of the professional planner.

3.5 Refrain from soliciting or attempting to take over a contract, client, or employment opportunity that another professional planner is already engaged in or retained for, unless the arrangement has been formally ended or a new competitive process has been initiated. In doing so, professional planners shall avoid any actions that would undermine or disparage that professional planner's work or credibility.

3.6 Only sign or seal a final drawing, specification, plan, report or other document prepared or checked by the professional planner.

3.7 Not deliberately, nor with reckless indifference, commit a wrongful act that may cast doubt on the professional planner's competence or integrity, or that may reflect adversely on the integrity of the profession.

3.8 Engage in good-faith discussions with a colleague regarding a suspected breach of this Code, where appropriate and feasible. If the matter cannot reasonably be raised with the colleague or is not adequately resolved by the colleague, and the professional planner has reasonable grounds that the colleague materially breached this Code, the professional planner shall report such a breach to the PTIA. This must be done in a timely, confidential, professional manner, and in accordance with PTIA procedures.

3.9 Only make public statements on behalf of a PTIA, CIP, or affiliated organizations such as the Professional Standards Board if authorized to do so.

3.10 Cooperate with a PTIA or CIP on professional inquiries and disciplinary processes.

3.11 Respect the process and decision of any disciplinary proceeding affecting a professional planner.

3.12 Refrain from participating in unethical or unlawful practices by clients, employers or colleagues.

3.13 Not engage in conduct, whether in professional practice or otherwise, that could reasonably be expected to undermine public confidence in the professional planner's integrity, professionalism, or fitness to practice.

3.4 REVIEW AND AMENDMENT OF THE ETHICAL STANDARDS

The Ethical Standards are developed through a PSB-led national process with input from PTIAs. They are intended to support consistency across jurisdictions while respecting the legislative authority of PTIAs.

The Ethical Standards shall be reviewed at least every 5 years by the PSB, in accordance with PSB Service Agreements, and subject to such policies and processes as PSB shall have in place from time to time. PSB may initiate earlier reviews where circumstances warrant.

Where significant issues or emerging topics arise, PTIAs may bring forward proposed amendments or clarifications to the PSB. The PSB may consider such requests and, where appropriate, refer them to the Standards Advisory Committee for review and recommendation, including outside of the regular review cycle.

During its review, the PSB shall consider:

- The Code of Ethics
- The Code of Professional Conduct
- The parameters of PTIA disciplinary processes, as outlined in section 3.6.3

As a result of its review, the PSB may determine that no changes are required or may adopt amendments as updated national standards in accordance with PSB Service Agreements.

Upon completion of any review that results in proposed amendments to the Ethical Standards, the PSB will, in accordance with PSB Service Agreements, undertake consultation with PTIAs prior to adoption. Following this process, the PSB may adopt the amendments as updated

national standards. Once adopted, the revised standards come into effect and are referred to PTIAs for consideration, implementation, and/or alignment in accordance with their jurisdictional processes and applicable legislation.

3.5 CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Each PTIA shall establish minimum annual requirements for Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) that certified and candidate planners must meet. Candidate and certified planners who fail to meet these requirements will be held accountable according to the processes specified in the PTIA's bylaws or policies. Failure to meet such requirements is not a disciplinary matter within the scope of the parameters outlined in section 3.6.3.

3.6 OPERATIONAL MATTERS

3.6.1 Implementation and Administration of the Ethical Standards

The national Ethical Standards as they relate to the certification process shall be implemented and administered by the PSB.

For matters related to the ongoing maintenance of membership for candidate and certified planners, the implementation and administration of the Ethical Standards is the responsibility of the respective PTIA. PTIAS will comply in accordance with provincial legislation in their respective jurisdictions.

3.6.2 Application of the Ethical Standards for Certification

PSB shall apply the national Ethical Standards through the preparation, revision and administration of the Ethical Foundations course and test, the Professional Examination, and the Sponsorship and Mentorship programs outlined in section 4.2 of the PSB's Membership Standards Policy Manual.

3.6.3 Application of the Ethical Standards for Maintenance of Membership

Each PTIA is responsible for establishing and maintaining its own disciplinary process in accordance with applicable provincial or territorial legislation and regulatory frameworks.

These processes are used to apply and enforce the PTIA's Code of Professional Conduct and are typically established through statutory and regulatory requirements within the PTIA's jurisdiction.

Nothing in this section of the PSB Membership Standards Policy Manual shall be interpreted as requiring a PTIA to investigate a particular complaint.

3.6.4 Interpretation

A PTIA may request written or verbal interpretation of any section of the Ethical Standards from PSB. The PSB shall provide interpretation(s) of the Ethical Standards to a signatory PTIA or CIP within sixty (60) days of receipt, or such further time as the requesting Party or Board may agree, as described in PSB Service Agreements.