



January 1, 2004

## **PRIVACY POLICY OF FARROW ARCHITECTS INC.**

1. Privacy of personal information is an important principle to Farrow Architects Inc. We are committed to collecting, using and disclosing personal information responsibly and only to the extent necessary for the goods and services we provide. We also try to be open and transparent as to how we handle personal information. This document describes our privacy policies.

### **What is Personal Information?**

2. Personal information is information about an identifiable individual. Personal information includes information that relates to their personal characteristics (e.g., gender, age, income, home address or phone number, ethnic background, family status), their health (e.g., disabilities affecting mobility) or their activities and views (e.g., residential building plans and preferences, religion, politics, opinions expressed by an individual, an opinion or evaluation of an individual). Personal information is to be contrasted with business information (e.g., an individual's business address and telephone number), which is not protected by privacy legislation.

### **Who We Are**

3. Our organization, Farrow Architects Inc., provides architectural advice and services to both residential and commercial clients. It includes, at the time of writing, two OAA licensed architects, one OAA intern architect, one OAAAS architectural technologist, three other architectural technical support staff and one support staff. We use a number of consultants and agencies that may, in the course of their duties, have limited access to personal information we hold. These include computer consultants, office security and maintenance, bookkeepers and accountants, payroll service, insurance companies, temporary workers to cover holidays, credit card companies, website managers, cleaners, our landlord and our lawyers. We restrict their access to any personal information we hold as much as is reasonably possible. We also have their assurance that they follow appropriate privacy principles.

### **We Collect Personal Information: Primary Purposes**

#### *About Clients*

4. Like most architects, we collect, use and disclose personal information in order to serve our clients. For our clients, the primary purpose for collecting personal information is to provide architectural advice and services. Where our client is an individual, we collect information about the client's building or renovations desires and intended uses, financial situation and, for residential services, family circumstances so that we can advise the client as to their options. We then carry out their instructions.
5. A second primary purpose might be to collect personal information from third parties (e.g., neighbours) about a client's architectural plans so that we can ascertain how the third party's views affect our client's architectural situation.
6. A third primary purpose is to obtain home contact information so that we can contact the client in private or in an emergency.

7. It would be rare for us to collect any personal information without the client's express consent, but this might occur in a case of urgency (e.g., the client is unavailable) or where we believe the client would consent if asked and it is impractical to obtain consent (e.g., a family member who appears to be aware of the project contacts us to provide additional information).

*About Members of the General Public*

8. For members of the general public, our primary purpose for collecting personal information is usually to gather and review information that is relevant to an architectural issue affecting our own clients (e.g., if they would object to a project). Thus, the personal information is usually incidental to our providing advice to our client. Normally this would be done with the consent of the individual.
9. Another primary purpose for collecting personal information about members of the general public is to provide notice of special events (e.g., a seminar or conference) or to make them aware of architectural services in general or our firm in particular. For example, while we try to collect work contact information where possible, we might collect home addresses, fax numbers and email addresses. We try to obtain consent before collecting any such personal information, but where this is not, for any reason, possible, we will upon request remove any personal information from our distribution list.
10. On our website, we only collect, with the exception of cookies (electronic markers identifying computers that have previously visited our website), the personal information you provide and only use that information for the purpose you gave it to us (e.g., to respond to your email message). Cookies are only used to help you navigate our website and are not used to monitor you.

*About Employees, Contract Staff, Students and Volunteers*

11. For employees and others who are contracted to do work for us (e.g., temporary workers, students and volunteers), our primary purpose for collecting personal information is to ensure we can contact them when necessary and for necessary work-related communication (e.g., group insurance, paycheques, year-end tax receipts). Examples of the type of personal information we collect for those purposes include home addresses and telephone numbers and performance information for a review or a reference letter. It is rare for us to collect such information without prior consent, but it might happen in the case of a health emergency (e.g., an outbreak of a contagious disease) or to investigate a possible breach of law (e.g., if a theft were to occur in the office).

*About Contractors, Suppliers and Project Security*

12. We collect personal information about contractors and other suppliers and their staff to assist us in assessing their performance, both for the specific project in issue and in respect of future projects. We may share this information in a reciprocal way with other architects and construction contacts. Often this information is collected with consent as a part of a written or verbal contract with the organizations involved. Sometimes the exceptions for collecting personal information without consent relating to publicly available information, breach of agreement and contravention of the law apply. Sometimes the information is business, not personal, information.
13. We may, on occasion, collect personal information in the course of monitoring projects through use of cameras. We try to make it known, through signs or the public nature of the cameras and personnel that we are doing so.

*Third Party Opinions*

14. When we are retained to provide an opinion about the work of another architect or a related professional, our primary purpose for collecting personal information is to gather the necessary information to express a sound opinion on the issue for our client. In such circumstances, we often act without the consent of the subject of the third party opinion because we are inquiring into an apparent breach of law or an agreement and obtaining consent would compromise the investigation.

**We Collect Personal Information: Related and Secondary Purposes**

15. Like most organizations, we also collect, use and disclose information for purposes related to or secondary to our primary purposes. The most common examples of our related and secondary purposes are as follows:
  - a. To invoice clients for goods or services that are not paid for at the time, or to collect unpaid accounts.
  - b. To advise clients and others of new developments in architecture (e.g., a newsletter sent to a home email of a client).
  - c. To advise clients and others of our services.
  - d. Our firm reviews client and other files for the purpose of ensuring that we provide high quality services, including assessing the performance of our partners and staff. In addition, external consultants (e.g., auditors, lawyers, information technologists) may on our behalf do audits and continuing quality improvement reviews of our firm, including reviewing client files and interviewing our staff.
  - e. Architects are regulated by the Ontario Association of Architects who may inspect our records and interview our staff as a part of its regulatory activities in the public interest. In addition, as professionals, we will report serious misconduct, incompetence or incapacity of other practitioners, whether they belong to other organizations or our own. Also, our firm believes that it should report information suggesting serious illegal behaviour to the authorities. External regulators have their own strict privacy obligations. These reports could include personal information about our clients, or other individuals, to support the concern (e.g., improper services), although we try to keep this disclosure to a minimum. Also, like all organizations, various government agencies (e.g., Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, Information and Privacy Commissioner, Human Rights Commission, etc.) have the authority to review our files and interview our staff as a part of their mandates. In these circumstances, we may consult with professionals (e.g., lawyers, accountants) who will investigate the matter and report back to us.
  - f. Clients or other individuals we deal with may have questions about the services they received. We also provide ongoing services for many of our clients over a period of months or years for which previous records are helpful. We retain our client information for a minimum of fifteen years after the last contact to enable us to respond to questions and provide these services (the Ontario Association of Architects also requires us to retain our client records).

- g. If Farrow Architects Inc. or its assets were to be sold, the purchaser would want to conduct a “due diligence” review of the firm’s records to ensure that it is a viable business that has been honestly portrayed to the purchaser. This due diligence may involve some review of our accounting and service files. The purchaser would not be able to remove or record personal information. Before being provided access to the files, the purchaser must provide a written promise to keep all personal information confidential. Only reputable purchasers who have already agreed to buy the organization’s business or its assets would be provided access to personal information, and only for the purpose of completing their due diligence search prior to closing the purchase.
- 16. You can choose not to be part of some of these related or secondary purposes (e.g., by paying for your services in advance). We do not, however, have much choice about some of these related or secondary purposes (e.g., external regulation).

**Protecting Personal Information**

- 17. We understand the importance of protecting personal information. For that reason, we have taken the following steps:
  - a. Paper information is either under supervision or secured in a locked or restricted area.
  - b. Electronic hardware is either under supervision or secured in a locked or restricted area at all times. In addition, passwords are used on computers. All of our cell phones are digital, which signals are more difficult to intercept (however, we still are careful on cell phones because sometimes they switch over to an analog service).
  - c. Paper information is transmitted through sealed, addressed envelopes or boxes by reputable companies.
  - d. Electronic information is transmitted either through a direct line or is anonymized or encrypted.
  - e. Staff are trained to collect, use and disclose personal information only as necessary to fulfill their duties and in accordance with our privacy policy.
  - f. External consultants and agencies with access to personal information must provide us with appropriate privacy assurances.

**Retention and Destruction of Personal Information**

- 18. We need to retain personal information for some time to ensure that we can answer any questions you might have about the services provided and for our own accountability to external regulatory bodies. However, we do not want to keep personal information too long in order to protect your privacy.
- 19. We keep our client files for about fifteen years. Our client and contact directories are much more difficult to systematically destroy, so we remove such information when we can if it does not appear that we will be contacting you again. However, if you ask, we will remove such contact information right away. We keep any personal information relating to our general correspondence with people who are not our clients, newsletters, seminars and marketing activities for about two years after the newsletter ceases publication or a seminar or marketing activity is over.
- 20. We destroy paper files containing personal information by shredding. We destroy electronic information by deleting it and, when the hardware is discarded, we ensure that the hard drive is physically destroyed. Alternatively, we may send some or all of the client file to our client.

**You can Look at Your Information**

21. With some exceptions, you have the right to see what personal information we hold about you. Often all you have to do is ask. We can help you identify what records we might have about you. We will also try to help you understand any information you do not understand (e.g., short forms, technical language, etc.). We will need to confirm your identity, if we do not know you, before providing you with this access. We reserve the right to charge a nominal fee for such requests.
22. If there is a problem, we may ask you to put your request in writing. If we cannot give you access, we will tell you within 30 days if at all possible and tell you the reason, as best we can, as to why we cannot give you access.
23. If you believe there is a mistake in the information, you have the right to ask for it to be corrected. This applies to factual information and not to any professional opinions we may have formed. We may ask you to provide documentation that our files are wrong. Where we agree that we made a mistake, we will make the correction and notify anyone to whom we sent this information. If we do not agree that we have made a mistake, we will still agree to include in our file a brief statement from you on the point and we will forward that statement to anyone else who received the earlier information.

**Do You Have a Question?**

24. Our Information Officer, James Farrow, can be reached at: 1350 Wellington Street, Ottawa, ON K1Y 3C1 Tel: 613-725-2294 x 24. Fax: 613-724-6632 Email: [jfarrow@farrowarchitects.com](mailto:jfarrow@farrowarchitects.com).
25. He will attempt to answer any questions or concerns you might have.
26. If you wish to make a formal complaint about our privacy practices, you may make it in writing to the Information Officer. He will acknowledge receipt of your complaint, ensure that it is investigated promptly and that you are provided with a formal decision and reasons in writing.
27. This policy is made under the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act. It is a complex Act and provides some additional exceptions to the privacy principles that are too detailed to set out here. There are some rare exceptions to the commitments set out above.
28. For more general inquiries, the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Canada oversees the administration of the privacy legislation in the private sector. The Commissioner also acts as a kind of ombudsman for privacy disputes. The Information and Privacy Commissioner can be reached at:

112 Kent Street, Ottawa, ON K1A 1H3  
Phone: (613) 995-8210  
Toll-free: 1-800-282-1376  
Fax: (613) 947-6850  
TTY: (613) 992-9190  
[www.privcom.gc.ca](http://www.privcom.gc.ca)