

Ontario Securities Commission

Companion Policy 52-108CP

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**COMPANION POLICY 52-108CP
AUDITOR OVERSIGHT**

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Introduction

CPAB is an independent oversight body for public accounting firms that audit financial statements of reporting issuers. The purpose of CPAB is to promote high quality external audits of reporting issuers. It is responsible for developing and implementing an oversight program that includes regular inspections of participating audit firms. CPAB's primary means of assessing the quality of audits is through the inspection of selected high-risk sections of audit files and elements of a participating audit firm's system of quality control.

The purpose of National Instrument 52-108 is to contribute to public confidence in the integrity of financial reporting by reporting issuers by requiring:

- a reporting issuer to engage an auditor that has entered into a participation agreement with CPAB in connection with CPAB's program of practice inspections and the establishment of practice requirements,
- a participating audit firm to be in compliance with specified remedial actions imposed by CPAB,
- a participating audit firm to deliver a notice to the regulator or, in Quebec, the securities regulatory authority, if CPAB imposes specified remedial actions, including the termination of an audit engagement or the engagement of an independent monitor to observe and report on compliance with professional standards, and
- a participating audit firm to deliver a notice to the reporting issuer's audit committee or the person or company responsible for reviewing and approving financial statements, of its reporting issuer clients if the firm failed to address a defect in the firm's system of quality control that was previously identified by CPAB.

The purpose of this Companion Policy is to state the view of the securities regulatory authorities on various matters related to the Instrument.

Section 1 - Definition of Participating Audit Firm

Many of the requirements in the Instrument are linked to the definition of participating audit firm in section 1. For example, section 5 of the Instrument imposes a notice requirement on a participating audit firm in a number of circumstances, including where CPAB requires the firm to terminate an audit engagement. CPAB may impose a remedial action on a participating audit firm that specifically pertains to one or more individuals involved in a professional capacity with the participating audit firm. If a remedial action imposed by CPAB on a participating audit firm specifically pertains to an individual acting in a professional capacity with the participating audit firm, this remedial action would be included in the content of a notice to the regulator or, in Quebec, the securities regulatory authority in accordance with paragraph 5(2)(c).

Section 1 - Definition of Professional Standards

The definition of professional standards refers to the standards listed in section 300 of CPAB rules, which are standards relating to auditing, ethics, independence and quality control.

Subsection 5(1) and Paragraph 6(1)(b) – Notice to the Regulator or the Securities Regulatory Authority

Both subsection 5(1) and paragraph 6(1)(b) of the Instrument require a participating audit firm to deliver a notice to the regulator or, in Quebec, the securities regulatory authority. "Regulator"

and "securities regulatory authority" are defined in NI 14-101 – *Definitions*. Each participating audit firm that is subject to either of these provisions must deliver the notice to the regulator or, in Quebec, the securities regulatory authority, in each jurisdiction in which the firm is appointed by one or more reporting issuers to prepare an auditor's report with respect to their financial statements. The securities regulatory authorities will consider the notice requirement in each of these provisions of the Instrument to have been satisfied if the notice is sent to auditor.notice@acvm-csa.ca and identifies each jurisdiction that is to receive notice.

Subsection 5(1) – Remedial Action Imposed by CPAB

Subsection 5(1) of the Instrument requires a participating audit firm to deliver a notice to the regulator or, in Quebec, the securities regulatory authority, of certain remedial actions imposed by CPAB. CPAB may refer to an item in subsection 5(1) of the Instrument as a recommendation, a requirement, a restriction or a sanction, or CPAB may use a different term. A participating audit firm must deliver the notice under section 5 of the Instrument if the remedial action is described in that section, without regard to how CPAB refers to it. For example, a notice is required by subparagraph 5(1)(a)(i) of the Instrument if CPAB requires a participating audit firm to terminate an audit engagement regardless of whether CPAB refers to it as a recommendation, requirement, restriction, sanction or uses a different term.

Subparagraph 5(1)(a)(iii) – Engagement of an External Reviewer or Supervisor

Subparagraph 5(1)(a)(iii) of the Instrument requires a participating audit firm to deliver a notice to the regulator or, in Quebec, the securities regulatory authority, if CPAB requires a participating audit firm to engage an external reviewer or supervisor to oversee its work. One example of when a participating audit firm would notify the regulator is when CPAB requires the firm to engage an external engagement quality control reviewer to perform a technical review of one or more audits performed by the firm.

Subparagraph 5(1)(a)(iv) – Limitation on a Participating Audit Firm from Accepting New Reporting Issuer Audit Clients

Subparagraph 5(1)(a)(iv) of the Instrument requires a participating audit firm to deliver a notice to the regulator or, in Quebec, the securities regulatory authority, if CPAB limits the type or number of new reporting issuer audit clients the firm accepts. The securities regulatory authorities consider this type of limitation to include restrictions on accepting audit engagements of reporting issuers in a particular industry. For example, a participating firm that is limited for any period of time from auditing the financial statements of mining companies is subject to subparagraph 5(1)(a)(iv) in the Instrument even if the firm may continue to audit reporting issuers in other industries.

The securities regulatory authorities also consider the term "new reporting issuer audit client" to refer to any reporting issuer the financial statements of which were not audited by the participating audit firm for the reporting issuer's most recently completed financial year. For example, if a participating firm was asked to audit the financial statements of a reporting issuer for the first time in respect of its 2013 fiscal year, that issuer would be a new reporting issuer audit client of the firm. Similarly, if a participating audit firm had audited the reporting issuer's 2011 financial statements but did not audit the 2012 financial statements, the securities regulatory authorities would also consider the issuer to be a new reporting issuer audit client of the firm in respect of the 2013 financial statement audit.

Paragraph 5(1)(b) – Notice Required at Discretion of CPAB

Paragraph 5(1)(b) of the Instrument requires a participating audit firm to deliver a notice to the regulator or, in Quebec, the securities regulatory authority, at the discretion of CPAB. One example of when CPAB may require a participating audit firm to notify the regulator is when the firm failed to comply with a remedial action within the period CPAB required.

Subsection 5(2) – Contents of Notice

Subsection 5(2) of the Instrument sets out the content requirements for a notice delivered to the regulator or, in Quebec, the securities regulatory authority, by a participating audit firm.

Paragraph 5(2)(a) requires a participating audit firm to include a description of how the participating audit firm failed to comply with professional standards. The description included in the notice should be substantially similar to the description CPAB has provided the participating audit firm. There may be situations in which the description may need to be modified to remove reference to information protected by professional secrecy in Quebec.

Paragraph 5(2)(c) requires a participating audit firm to include a description of each remedial action that CPAB imposed on the firm, as described by CPAB. This includes, but is not limited to, remedial actions referred to in subsection 5(1). For example, if CPAB requires a participating audit firm to engage an independent monitor under subparagraph 5(1)(a)(ii) of the Instrument and also imposes additional remedial actions on the firm other than those referred to in subsection 5(1), the notice must include a complete description of such other remedial actions.