

## THE NEW REGULATION TO IMPROVE BUILDING SAFETY

# The engineer: a pivotal player!

**Last March, the Régie du bâtiment implemented the new Regulation to improve building safety, on behalf of the Québec government. Even though it specifically applies to building owners, managers and users, many engineers practising in the construction and structure industries will no doubt be solicited as a result of this regulation.**

Québec is known for its harsh climate, often uncertain and changing, cumulating multiple freezing and thawing periods within a few months, and subject to various adverse weather conditions. Also worth noting is the fact that these meteorological conditions severely affect the efficiency and durability of the structures that have to withstand those conditions.

If we do not pay proper attention to this issue, there is a real risk of collapse – sadly, some of the tragedies that we've witnessed during the last few years have reminded us of this fact.

The risk of collapse is addressed in two of the new Regulation to improve building safety's five components, namely those that deal with building façades rising five stories or more as well as multi-level parking structures. In both cases, new maintenance and operating standards apply to building owners and managers given that they are responsible for the safety of the buildings' occupants as well as those who circulate around the buildings.

Consequently, the owner of a building rising five stories or more (above ground) must periodically inspect façades exposed to adverse weather conditions. The owner must also keep a record of information and documents gathered in that respect. Finally, every five years, he or she must obtain an assessment report prepared by an engineer certifying that the façades do not present any danger.

Similarly, the owner of a multi-level underground or above ground parking structure must maintain the structure, have it verified annually and keep a record of observations pursuant to such verification. Again, the owner must obtain an assessment report prepared by an engineer certifying that the parking structure does not present any danger.

### ACCORDING TO TRADE PRACTICES

Engineers are perfectly equipped for this type of mandate since, pursuant to the Engineers Act:

2. Works of the kinds hereinafter described constitute the field of practice of an engineer:

[...]

e) the foundations, framework and electrical and mechanical systems of buildings the cost of which

exceeds \$100,000 and of public buildings within the meaning of the Public Buildings Safety Act (chapter S-3);  
h) soil engineering necessary to elaborate engineering works;

[...]

And again:

3. The practice of the engineering profession consists in performing for another any of the following acts, when they relate to the works mentioned in section 2:

a) the giving of consultations and opinions;

b) the making of measurements, of layouts, the preparation of reports, computations, designs, drawings, plans, specifications;

## ENGINEERS ASKED TO CARRY OUT ASSESSMENT MANDATES MUST HAVE ADEQUATE AND SUFFICIENT SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE.

[...]

As part of the engineering practice, a thorough evaluation of the façades of a five-story or more building or a multi-level parking structure will surely become a common mandate for engineers, even a frequent one given that it is now required under the Québec Safety Code.

It goes without saying that engineers who are asked to carry out this type of mandate must have adequate and sufficient skills and knowledge. In fact, the Code of ethics of engineers states that:

2.04. The engineer shall express his opinion on matters dealing with engineering only if such opinion is based on sufficient knowledge and honest convictions.

3.01.01. Before accepting a mandate, an engineer must bear in mind the extent of his proficiency and aptitudes and also the means at his disposal to carry out the mandate.

Finally, it is important to note that engineers who perform such assessments have a duty to immediately report any danger or risk of danger they may uncover to the owner, the person responsible for the works and the Régie du bâtiment du Québec. It's a question of public safety!

For everything you need to know about the Regulation to improve building safety, visit [www.rbq.gouv.qc.ca/secureite](http://www.rbq.gouv.qc.ca/secureite).