

Big projects, important clients... be careful!

Even though they offer engineers very interesting business opportunities, the Plan Nord (now known as Le Nord pour tous) and other big projects sometimes come with hidden pitfalls, from an ethical standpoint. The same danger can creep up on engineers called upon to deal with clients who are likely to award major contracts, such as municipalities, government authorities or multinationals: the lure of money can derail the most spotless of career paths.

When offers become overly abundant, human nature being what it is, it is possible that engineers, in order to ensure they don't miss out on anything, make the mistake of letting the client dictate how they should carry out their work. What's more, this problem seems to get increasingly worse when the client is an important player in its industry. It is unfortunate to realize that some engineers have the wrong and costly reflex of casting their code of ethics aside, for fear of missing out on these business opportunities.

Never forget that regardless of a project's magnitude, productivity demands and short timelines, the Code of ethics of engineers is with you at all times and in every aspect of your work.

Once the onslaught of advantageous opportunities has passed, you could find yourself alone to face the consequences of actions or omissions you may have committed based on sometimes clouded motives.

Consequently, before jumping into big projects, take a few minutes to review the main principles spelled out in sections of the Code of ethics of engineers to which we refer most often in disciplinary cases:

2.01 – In all aspects of his work, the engineer must respect his obligations towards man and take into account the consequences of the performance of his work on the environment and on the life, health and property of every person;

2.04 – Be certain of having sufficient knowledge before providing opinions, even verbal ones;

3.02.01 – Always place integrity at the heart of your practice;

3.02.08 – Make sure you practise your profession honestly and avoid lending yourself to or participating in doubtful practices;

3.05.03 – Avoid any situation which would put you in a conflict of interest and safeguard your professional independence at all times.

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Comme l'a récemment montré la commission Charbonneau, les actes répréhensibles apparemment commis par une poignée d'individus peuvent nuire à l'ensemble des membres d'un ordre professionnel. Rappelez-vous qu'en tant que membre de l'Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec, vous êtes également le gardien des valeurs de la profession : la compétence, le sens de l'éthique, la responsabilité et l'engagement social. À vous d'y voir!