

legislation and juris- prudence

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THE SSPI

ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS...



“I finished my engineering studies and have a bachelor’s degree in engineering, but I am not an OIQ member. Can I add the abbreviation B. Eng. next to my name?”

The Unlawful Practice Supervision Department (SSPI) often receives reports about individuals who put the abbreviation “B. Eng.” next to their name in social networks or professional communications. To answer the question, let’s look at what the *Engineers Act* says. Section 22(2) states that anyone who assumes the title of engineer alone or qualified, or **makes use of any abbreviation of such title**, or of any name, title or designation **which might lead to the belief that they are an engineer or a member of the Order**, is guilty of an offence and is liable to the penalties provided in section 188 of the *Professional Code* (CQLR c. C26).

Similarly, section 32 of the *Professional Code* states that no one may use any abbreviation or title **which may lead to the belief that they are an engineer**, when they are not an OIQ member.

Using the abbreviation “Eng.” without being a member in good standing of the Ordre des

ingénieurs du Québec is therefore an offence in the eyes of the *Engineers Act* and the *Professional Code*.

“BUT WHAT SHOULD I DO IF THE ABBREVIATION ‘ENG.’ IS PART OF THE TITLE THAT APPEARS ON MY DIPLOMA?”

Anyone who has a diploma with the abbreviation “Ing.” or “Eng.” (for example B. Eng. or M. Eng.), but is not an OIQ member may use this abbreviation after their name, **provided that this is done in a context that does not lead others to believe that they are OIQ members or authorized to practice a professional activity reserved for engineers in Quebec**. Anyone who violates this requirement may be taken to court for unlawful use of the title.

The OIQ recommends that anyone who has these types of diplomas write out the title of



their university degree, such as “Bachelor of Engineering,” or “Master of Engineering,” to avoid any confusion.

CASE LAW

The context in which such titles are used is an important factor in judging whether the use of the abbreviation “B. Eng.” may “lead others to believe” that a person is an engineer. The decision rendered on appeal by the Superior Court of Quebec in the matter of *Bensoussan v. Ordre des ingénieurs* (2017 QCCS 2921) shed some interesting light on this topic.

In this case, the respondent was accused of leading others to believe that he was a member of the Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec because he had (among other things) used a business card with the abbreviation “B. Sc., B. Eng.” The Court concluded that the context in which he had used the abbreviation “B. Eng.” actually led others to believe that the respondent was an OIQ member.

What was the context? The respondent gave his business card to a real estate agent while working as an inspector for someone who wanted to buy a house. The rather technical aspect of this situation tainted his use of the abbreviation “B. Eng.” because it led others to believe that the respondent was an engineer, which was not the case.

The Court gave an example that, in its eyes, could lead to a different conclusion. According to the Court, someone who used the abbreviation “B. Eng.”

on their business card in the context of a florist’s shop would probably not lead anyone to believe that they were an engineer.

PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE

Business cards, email signatures, social media profiles, résumés, advertisements and even websites: People express themselves publicly in various forums. For the public, the distinction between the abbreviations B. Eng., P. Eng. and Eng. is perhaps not such an easy one to make. Everyone is responsible for ensuring that the information they present is true and complies with the laws and regulations in force, particularly laws concerning professional titles. The engineer title and its abbreviation “Eng.” are reserved by law because their holders have certain privileges and duties conferred upon them by law. The public needs to have a clear idea of who possesses the expertise required to practice the profession, given the risk of harm involved in the activities performed by the professionals who hold the engineer title.

If you have not yet acquired your engineer’s permit and you work in a professional environment where engineering is practiced, it is in your interest to follow the recommendation of writing out the full title of your university degree, such as “Bachelor of Engineering” or “Master of Engineering,” to avoid any confusion. ■



Do you have a question? Feel free to email it to us at pratill@oiq.qc.ca