

By M^e Sébastien Dyotte

Junior engineer, a hybrid status worth knowing

Junior engineers are full-fledged members of the Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec (hereafter the "Ordre") given that they are duly entered on the Ordre's roll. However, this status does not change the fact that junior engineers are enrolled in an internship: this transition period imposes limits which they are required to know and respect.

Among the limits that are inherent to their status, junior engineers cannot have their own seal¹. Junior engineers cannot in any way:

- claim to be engineers;
- use the title of engineer or its abbreviation "Eng." without including the word "junior" or its abbreviation "jr";
- allow themselves to be advertised or designated by the title of engineer without including the word junior, because the contrary would lead others to believe that they are engineers².

MAIN RISKS FACED BY JUNIOR ENGINEERS

It bears reminding that one will only obtain an engineer's permit when he or she has acquired relevant engineering experience³. Such experience must be acquired over a period of 36 months, consecutive or otherwise, at least 12 of which must be in Canada. Once completed, your training period will have allowed you:

- to carry out on a regular basis activities related to the subject matter covered in the program leading to the degree you hold;
- to solve problems requiring the application of engineering sciences in certain areas of practice;
- to participate in an administrative aspect of the profession;
- to progress to more complex problem-solving activities and take on increasing responsibilities⁴.

Even though they do not possess every privilege, junior engineers remain subject to every obligation imposed upon engineers, namely those under the Code of ethics of engineers. The major offences junior engineers are more likely to commit are those prescribed in the following sections:

Code de déontologie des ingénieurs

4.01.01. In addition to those referred to in sections 57 and 58 of the Professional Code (R.S.Q., c. C-26), the following acts are derogatory to the dignity of the profession:

- a) participating or contributing to the illegal practice of the profession;

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Regulation respecting other terms and conditions for the issuance of permits by the Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec

3. Provided that they are entered on the roll, holders of a junior engineer's permit may use the title of "Junior Engineer" in English or "ingénieur junior" in French.

They may use the abbreviation "Jr. Eng." in English or "ing. jr" in French.

They may not in any way:

- 1° claim to be an engineer;
- 2° use the title of "engineer" or its abbreviation "Eng." without it being preceded by the word "Junior" or its abbreviation "Jr.", or use a title, designation, abbreviation or initials which could imply that they are engineers;
- 3° allow themselves to be advertised or designated by the title "Engineer" or its abbreviation "Eng." without it being preceded by the word "Junior" or its abbreviation "Jr.", or by a title, abbreviation or initials which could imply that they are engineers.

Regulation respecting other terms and conditions for the issuance of permits by the Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec

8. Candidates or junior engineers shall not perform professional activities reserved by law for engineers except under the immediate control and supervision of an engineer.

Let us consider section 8 of the Regulation more closely. The internship requires that a junior engineer carry out professional activities reserved for engineers, such as those provided for in the Engineers Act, **under the immediate control and supervision of an engineer**⁵. It goes without saying that the latter must be a member of the Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec.

A first cautionary notice must be mentioned at this point. Beware of titles used by some organizations: most of the time, a "director of engineering" or a "network engineer" is not an engineer. It is your responsibility to make the necessary verifications.

Imagine that you are asked to carry out a professional activity reserved by the Engineers Act – for example, prepare plans and specifications – without being adequately supervised by an engineer. Although you are placed in a delicate position, it is imperative that you correct the situation, especially if your employer is unaware of the laws and regulations that govern the engineering profession.

On this point, here is a second warning: even if your directors or supervisors are not engineers, they are still governed by the Professional Code. In that respect, section 188.2.1 of the code provides that:

188.2.1. Every person who knowingly helps or, by encouragement, advice or consent, or by an authorization or order, but otherwise than by soliciting or receiving professional services from a member of an order, leads a member of a professional order to contravene a provision of the code of ethics adopted under section 87 is guilty of an offence and is liable, for each day the code of ethics is contravened, to the fine prescribed in section 188.

In other words, whoever intentionally forces you to violate your code of ethics could also face a penal complaint. This argument is sometimes enough to solve a problematic situation.

WHEN IN DOUBT, WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

As you can see, the title of junior engineer comes with important ethical obligations. Should an ethical violation occur, you alone will face the Disciplinary Council and even if you act in good faith, you risk seeing your disciplinary record tarnished.

In order to avoid such problems, remember the following advice:

- You have doubts regarding how well you are being supervised? Do not hesitate to notify the Ordre to make sure that your engineering experience will be properly recognised and that you will not have to start your training period all over again.
- You believe you are in a situation of unlawful practice? Notify your supervisors and contact the Ordre.
- You believe you are in a situation which may potentially be problematic with respect to the practice of your profession? Regardless of the nature of the doubt you are having, take the time to speak to one of the advisors assigned to the Ordre's ethics hotline, by dialing 1 877 ÉTHIQUE (384-4783).

1. Regulation respecting other terms and conditions for the issuance of permits by the Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec (hereafter the "Regulation"), section 2.
2. Section 3 of the Regulation.
3. Section 6 of the Regulation.
4. Section 7 of the Regulation.
5. Section 8 of the Regulation.