

For immediate publication

Charbonneau Commission: the testimonial of engineer Karen Duhamel will not go unheeded by the Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec

Montreal, Wednesday, May 14, 2014 – The Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec would like to pay tribute to the courage shown by engineer Karen Duhamel, who testified yesterday before the Charbonneau Commission. Although the OIQ was unfortunately unable to help her in 2003, it guarantees that her testimony before the commission will not go unheeded.

“This engineer did not hesitate to blow the whistle on the activities she witnessed in 2003. She stayed true to her values and personal ethics, and that’s what we expect from a professional. To receive these types of disclosures the OIQ set up the 1 877 ETHIQUE hotline and was one of the first organizations to demand a commission of inquiry on the construction industry,” explained Isabelle Tremblay, Eng., Vice President of the OIQ as well as its Vice President of Finance and Treasurer.

The OIQ reiterates that all testimonies heard by the Charbonneau Commission involving engineers, including Karen Duhamel’s, will be followed up by the Office of the Syndic. To date, more than 180 inquiries directly related to the commission have been opened. It should be noted that there is no limitation period for investigating the actions of an engineer or former engineer.

The OIQ would also like to point out that the events experienced by Duhamel date back to 2003, a period when Quebec society – its police force, the Chief Electoral Officer, etc. – did not have the specialized resources or investigative powers to deal with situations of corruption, collusion or illegal political party contributions. Unfortunately, the OIQ was no exception, and the fact that its annual membership dues were frozen at \$180 for a period of 15 years (1990-1991 to 2004-2005) definitely contributed to the lack of resources required to deal with the situation.

Since then, society as a whole has begun to rectify the situation, and this includes the Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec. For instance, the Marteau squad and the Permanent Anti-Corruption Unit (UPAC) were created. At the OIQ, a number of changes have been made, such as creating a specialized inquiry unit in the Office of the Syndic. New processes have been set up; all calls and inquiry requests are now documented, whether they lead to an inquiry or not. The Office of the Syndic has also set up the 1 877 ETHIQUE hotline to assist engineers who are in similar situations to those experienced by Duhamel; more than 1,200 calls were processed by the hotline last year.

Furthermore, to better supervise the organizations that hire engineers, the OIQ is now developing an business practice audit program in partnership with the Bureau de normalisation du Québec. The committee in charge of establishing the normative framework that will serve as the basis for the audits includes observers from two government departments and four public bodies: Autorité des marchés financiers (AMF), Québec’s Lobbyist Commissioner, Transports Québec, Office des professions du Québec (OPQ), Secrétariat du Conseil du trésor and UPAC.

About the Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec

Founded in 1920, the Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec has a membership of approximately 60,000 engineering professionals in all fields, except forest engineering. The mission of the OIQ is to ensure the protection of the public by supervising the practice of the profession within the framework of its constituent laws and ensure that the profession serves the public interest. For more information, go to <http://www.oiq.qc.ca>.

– 30 –

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