



Code of Ethics for Members FAQ

What is the Code of Ethics?

The Code of Ethics is a tool to increase professional standards for members of the Ontario College of Trades (College). It is meant to educate our members and the public about the standards of conduct expected of College members as professionals, and to help our members meet those standards.

Included in the College's general by-law, the Code of Ethics provides members with clarity on how to practise their trades in the most professional and ethical way—recognizing that the great majority of members already display high levels of professionalism and pride in their certification.

How does the Code of Ethics benefit College members?

The Code of Ethics strengthens College members' high level of professionalism and helps to elevate the skilled trades profession by increasing public confidence in their integrity and professionalism. It also gives College members a competitive advantage—consumers want to hire tradespeople who are held to the highest professional standards.

How does the Code of Ethics benefit Ontarians?

The Code of Ethics is another means to fulfill the College's legislated duty to serve and protect the public interest. The Code of Ethics lets the public know that our members are expected to live up to high standards of conduct, that they are accountable to the College as regulator, and that a fair complaints and discipline process is in place to handle any complaints.

Who does the Code of Ethics apply to? Who needs to follow the Code of Ethics?

The Code of Ethics applies to all College members, including members whose certificate of qualification or statement of membership is suspended. The Code also applies to former members whose Certificate of Qualification or Statement of Membership has expired or has been revoked or cancelled, if the conduct in question occurred after the release of the Code and while the person was a member of the College.

College members are to refer to the Code of Ethics for guidance on how to conduct themselves in the most professional and ethical way possible during their interactions with clients, fellow members, the College, and other tradespeople and professionals.



Do the Code of Ethics' obligations apply to all College members in all sectors and trades?

The Code of Ethics applies to all members, but not every obligation in the Code of Ethics will necessarily apply to the circumstances of every College member in every sector or in every trade. The Code has been drafted as a general document that is not specific to a single sector or trade. Depending on the context and the way in which the trade is practised, some obligations may apply to members in some sectors or trades but not in others.

Why does the College need a Code of Ethics?

The College needs both a Professional Misconduct Regulation and a Code of Ethics to effectively govern its members in the public interest as required by the *Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009* (Act). Together, the Regulation and the Code of Ethics set out the standards of professionalism that the public may expect of the College's members as regulated professionals.

The College has had a Professional Misconduct Regulation since April 8, 2013. The Code of Ethics is a natural next step for the College as it matures as a regulatory body. The Code of Ethics will help consolidate the College among more established professional regulators by elevating the profile of its members as skilled trades professionals held to the highest standards of conduct. It will also let the public know that our members are accountable to the College and that a fair process is in place to handle any complaints.

Do other regulated professions have a Code of Ethics?

Yes. Like professional misconduct regulations, codes of ethics are a standard feature of the more than 40 professional regulatory bodies in Ontario.

What is the difference between the College's Professional Misconduct Regulation and the Code of Ethics?

The Professional Misconduct Regulation lists the various types of conduct that constitute professional misconduct and describes them at a very high-level. In contrast, the Code of Ethics is much more specific and focuses on the member's relationships with their clients, fellow members, the College, and other tradespeople and professionals. The Code of Ethics builds on the professional obligations already applicable to all members under the Professional Misconduct Regulation. The Code of Ethics is a way for the College to supplement the existing Professional Misconduct Regulation and strengthen its members' already high level of professionalism. The Code of Ethics provides greater clarity and guidance to College members about how they should conduct themselves in their daily practice. For instance, the Regulation



makes it professional misconduct to act in a “disgraceful, dishonourable or unprofessional” manner while practising a trade, and the Code provides specific examples of what that means (i.e. duty to not engage in abusive behaviour toward a client).

Why is the Code of Ethics being introduced now?

Prior to opening its doors on April 8, 2013, the College’s Board of Governors decided to prioritize a Professional Misconduct Regulation that covered the most serious professional breaches, and to develop a complementary Code of Ethics later on, once the College had the benefit of experience. After applying the Professional Misconduct Regulation for the past four years, the College has gained the experience that it needed to develop the Code of Ethics.

How was the Code of Ethics created?

The development of the Code of Ethics was led by the Board of Governors’ Governance and Nominations Committee. With support from the College’s four divisional boards—construction, motive power, industrial and service—the Board amended the College’s general by-law on August 22, 2017 to include the Code of Ethics. The Code of Ethics reflects the College’s experiences in regulating the trades as well as the best practices of relevant regulators.

Did tradespeople have a say in the development of the Code of Ethics?

The College’s governance structure is made up of tradespeople from across the province who represent the four trade sectors—construction, motive power, industrial and service. Those who developed and supported the Code of Ethics represent Ontario’s tradespeople and understand the realities and challenges of practising in the trades.

With the introduction of the Code of Ethics, what changes in enforcement?

The Code of Ethics will be enforced in the same way as the Professional Misconduct Regulation. The introduction of the Code of Ethics will not change the way in which compulsory certification is enforced under sections 2 and 4 of the Act.

What if I choose not to follow the Code of Ethics?

The Code of Ethics is fully enforceable by the College: the Code of Ethics is a by-law, and contravening a by-law constitutes professional misconduct under the Act. This means that if a College member is believed to have contravened the Code of Ethics, a complaint could be made and an investigation launched under a robust complaints and discipline process set out in the Act. The College is committed to respecting a member’s right to a fair process while ensuring that a complainant’s concerns are



addressed fully and fairly. If after this process a member is found guilty of professional misconduct, then the member could be disciplined and their ability to practise their trade could be affected.

Where can I find the Code of Ethics?

The Code of Ethics can be found in the College's general by-law, posted on the College's website—collegeoftrades.ca.