

What's in a Title?

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Social Convention and University Degrees

The appropriate application or use of a title (conventional or professional designation) is sometimes confusing, for both the user and/or someone interpreting what the title stands for. This is not surprising because there are many different types of titles. For example, Mister (Mr.) may be used by anyone as a respectful form of address for a male. Doctor (Dr.) may be used by graduates of medical or dental programs. Dr. may also be used by an individual who has graduated from any university program offering a Doctoral degree. This latter situation has arisen because these titles are originally university designations indicating a level of accomplishment. Today they may be used by all of those who have been conferred with the required degree.

Authorized by Legislation

Another situation, and one perhaps less well understood, is where a title is authorized by provincial legislation. These types of protected titles are usually issued as a result of provincial statute establishing either a trade or professional regulatory organization. The professional organization, for example, is charged by the legislation, to self-regulate and oversee the entry and practice standards of the profession and the quality of the work undertaken by members of that profession. In return for this oversight of the profession, the organization is authorized by the legislation to award the exclusive right to use specific titles to those of its members who continue to meet the membership requirements of the organization. The organization in turn is responsible to ensure that the integrity of the title is maintained. All this is done in the interest of public protection for the quality of service to be provided by the profession.

The RPF Designation for Professional Foresters

The practice of professional forestry is governed by provincial legislation, as is the management of forests. Thus, an individual who uses the title "Registered Professional Forester" (R.P.F. or RPF) ("ingénieur forestier" (ing.f.) in Quebec) must be in compliance with the legislation, or bylaws, establishing the membership requirements of the professional association in that jurisdiction. In some jurisdictions, the legislation establishes a right to practice as well as a right to title, while in others there is only a right to title. Whichever is the case, an individual must ensure that they are in compliance with the provincial legislation before using the protected title in the jurisdiction.

The professional foresters associations in Canada have reviewed the transferability of, and proper use of protected titles, across jurisdictional boundaries and have agreed that:

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- Where there is a professional organization in the jurisdiction, the title must be used in conformance with the provincial legislation.
- The use of title for business purposes, for example on business cards or in social media, should be done in a way that reflects the jurisdiction in which the person is registered.
- If a person lives in one jurisdiction, and is registered/licensed to practice in another jurisdiction, any use of title must clearly state the jurisdiction(s) in which the person is registered/licensed to practice.

Further information on this topic may be obtained from your provincial Professional Foresters Association. Contact information for the provincial associations can be found on the national website at www.cfpfa-fcafp.ca