

**Canadian Citation Committee**  
**Canadian Guide to the Uniform Preparation of Judgments**  
**Executive Summary**

[1] Electronic publication of judgments offers clear advantages to courts, publishers, lawyers and the general public. It is characterized by:

- Wider distribution;
- More timely publication;
- Reduced reproduction, distribution and storage costs;
- Information that is better structured and lends itself to search and hypertext functions;
- Facilitated citation.

Together, these elements contribute to achieving compliance with the principles of openness and transparency promoted by the Canadian judiciary.

[2] In order to make the most of these advantages, Canadian courts have adopted common standards for preparing judgments. The *Canadian Guide to the Uniform Preparation of Judgments* (the “Guide”), approved in September 2002 by the Canadian Judicial Council (CJC), is a revised version of the 1996 *Standards for the Preparation, Distribution and Citation of Canadian Judgments in Electronic Form*. It also integrates the *Neutral Citation Standard for Case Law*, adopted by the CJC in 1999. Like the two sets of standards that preceded it, the Guide is designed to disseminate best practices in judgment preparation and distribution and to simplify the publication of case law. It reflects a better understanding of electronic documents and the conditions that must be met to use them to their full potential. The most recent version of this Guide is available at the following URL: <<http://www.cjc-ccm.gc.ca/english/publications/Guide.en.pdf>>.

[3] The Guide was prepared for the CJC by the Judges Technology Advisory Committee (JTAC) with the help of the Canadian Citation Committee (CCC). In addition to the JTAC’s technical advisors, the CCC brings together various Canadian experts on legal information who wish to help the CJC develop technical standards for legal documentation.

***Scope and application***

[4] The Guide applies to all judicial decisions from superior courts in Canada and any other court or tribunal that adopts the standards. It sets out best practices regarding the electronic format of judgments distributed in file form.

***File naming and processing***

[5] For distribution purposes, the Guide describes a method for naming files. Each file distributed by a court is given a unique, meaningful name, which makes it easier to manage and distribute. The Guide also sets out standards for processing non-text files, such as pictures, and various kinds of documents issued by courts, such as multiple reasons, versions in different languages, supplementary reasons and corrections to judgments.

***Typesetting and formatting judgments***

[6] The Guide also describes best practices for typesetting and formatting electronic texts, while leaving visual presentation largely up to the courts’ discretion. The guidelines are designed to ensure the intelligibility of information contained in tables and other ways of organizing information that are increasingly found in reasons prepared by Canadian courts. More specifically, the Guide recommends systematic use of word processing features and tools. For instance, it proscribes the use of tabs and spaces

to design tables and promotes the use of the software “Table” function. The Guide also reiterates the paragraph numbering system that is already widely used by courts.

### ***Judgment structure and content***

[7] A careful analysis has been conducted of the Canadian judgments distributed in recent years. Based on the findings, the Guide suggests a common structure for Canadian judgments and standardized labels for the most important identifying elements in order to facilitate automated recognition.

[8] In compliance with the current practices of Canadian courts, the Guide states that the most important pieces of identifying information must appear at the beginning of all judgments. It also sets out the order in which the mandatory elements must appear:

1. Name of the court;
2. Neutral citation;
3. Judgment date;
4. Docket number;
5. Registry (where applicable);
6. Full style of cause;
7. Translation notice (where applicable);
8. Publication restriction notice (where applicable);
9. Correction notice (where applicable);
10. Name(s) of the judge(s) hearing the matter.

[9] It should be noted that standardization of the preceding elements allows systematic identification of publication ban and correction notices. This makes the essential information easier to manage for court staff who are in charge of judgment dissemination.

[10] In addition to the mandatory elements, the Guide describes some optional elements that may appear in a judgment. The order in which these elements appear is generally at the court’s discretion.

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[11] In short, the Guide is a synthesis of best practices in Canadian courts regarding electronic preparation of judgments. It formalizes and documents the know-how in order to bring it into general use. By proposing a common model, the Guide will help courts wishing to modernize their judgment preparation methods. It will also contribute to the continuous improvement of case law dissemination.

### **For further information:**

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