



### J12 Trends in Forensic Document Examination in Québec, Canada

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**Learning Overview:** After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the types of criminal cases which are submitted to the Québec Forensic Provincial (state) Laboratory, over the past ten years. Some questions had arisen concerning the shift in the types of analysis that may have taken place in recent year in forensic document examinations in relation to police investigative practices and judicial practices. Ultimately, some changes were observed.

**Impact on the Forensic Science Community:** This presentation will impact the forensic science community by presenting an overview of the capacities of a francophone forensic document examination unit in North America, over a period of ten years.

Over the past ten years, there seems to have been a rising pressure on the Canadian justice system in terms of delays. These delays may be attributed to different factors: the lack of rooms for the trials, the shortage of staff in the judicial system, the prosecutors, the defense lawyers, and the overload of the judges' agendas. These delays have also been ascribed to the forensic analyses.

The Laboratoire de Sciences Judiciaires et de Médecine Légale wanted to find out if this intangible pressure would result in a shift in police investigators' requests for analysis in the forensic document examination unit. In all, several individual investigative requests (in forensic document examination only) were examined, pertaining solely to criminal cases over a period of ten years (2006 to 2017). The Statistical Package for Social Sciences data-collecting software was used to compile the studied elements. Civil and private cases were not retained for this study.

The cases were assessed under different criteria, including the time of year the request was received and completed, the type of offenses, the number of documents to analyze in each case, the time taken to entirely process the case, the complexity of the examinations, etc.

Originally, approximately 30 different criminal offenses were listed. These had to be grouped into main categories for this research: financial crimes, misdemeanor and threats, crimes against the persons—major crimes, crimes against property, organized crime, terrorism, and other infractions.

In July 2016, the Canadian Supreme Court rendered a judgement, *R. v. Jordan*, which stated new delays under which criminal and civil cases had to be dealt with diligently—from the beginning to the end of the judicial process—before being detrimental to the accused.<sup>1</sup> Although this judgement is fairly recent, a shift in requests has already been observed, resulting in more pressure being imposed upon all forensic analysts.

This research ultimately demonstrated that a slight change in forensic document examination requests has been observed during recent years, in the type of cases submitted, the complexity of the cases submitted by the combined investigations joint task forces, and the gravity of the offenses.

**Reference(s):**

<sup>1</sup>. *R. v. Jordan*, 2016 SCC 27 [2016] 1 S.C.R. 631

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**Document Examination, Trend, French-Speaking**