

New Courtready Study Finds Canadian Courts Have Caught 210+ Fake Cases Cited as Real Law Since 2024

Courtready launches citation verification tool, CaseCheck, as new study finds fake case law flagged across 42 Canadian courts and tribunals.

TORONTO (March 17, 2026) – A new study by [Courtready](#), a legal tech company that helps Canadians navigate the legal system with practical tools and educational courses, has found that, since January 2024, Canadian courts and tribunals have flagged **at least 211 non-existent cases** in parties' legal submissions across **111 decisions**.¹ This finding is a sign that fabricated case law is becoming a systemic challenge for the Canadian legal system.

In the majority of those decisions, 82 of 111, the court either found or presumed that artificial intelligence (AI) tools generated the non-existent cases. In the remaining 29 decisions, courts did not conclusively establish the source of the non-existent cases.

Key Findings

- **Decisions flagging non-existent cases have risen significantly, from 7 identified in 2024 to 80 in 2025 and 24 so far in 2026.**
- **The issue is spreading nationwide:** Non-existent cases have now been flagged across 42 different Canadian courts and tribunals.
- **Self-represented Canadians are most at risk:** In 87 of 111 decisions (78.4%), the person who submitted non-existent cases was navigating the system without a lawyer.
- **AI is the primary driver:** In 82 of the 111 decisions, courts found or presumed that AI tools generated the non-existent cases.

To address the problem, Courtready has developed [CaseCheck](#),² a Canadian legal citation verification tool designed to flag fictitious citations before they reach the court.

The 211 non-existent cases represent a conservative floor, not a ceiling. In nearly half the decisions where the court flagged non-existent cases (54 of 111), courts noted that parties had submitted non-existent cases but did not mention the specific citations in the decision. Therefore, each of those decisions may involve the parties submitting several non-existent cases. The data also underscores who is most affected: of the 111 decisions

¹ Updated weekly every Sunday: <https://courtready.ca/fictitious-citations-in-canadian-courts>

² <https://casecheck.courtready.ca>

where the court flagged non-existent cases, 87 (78.4%) involved self-represented Canadians navigating the system without a lawyer.

Moreover, these findings reflect only cases where a judge or adjudicator *detected and remarked on the issue* in a written decision. Non-existent cases that go undetected by courts, opposing counsel or the parties themselves are absent from this data.

“This is likely the tip of the iceberg. What we are seeing in these decisions is only what the courts or tribunals have caught,” said Tom Macintosh Zheng, a former commercial litigator and co-founder of Courtready. “For every non-existent decision flagged by a court, there may be others that were never detected. That’s exactly why we built **CaseCheck**, so that lawyers, litigants, and courts have a way to verify citations before fake cases become real law in Canada.”

CaseCheck works by allowing users to upload the list of cases they intend to rely on in their submissions. The tool extracts the individual case citations and prepares them for verification. Users can then quickly cross-reference each citation against a Canadian case law database with a single click, rather than manually copying and pasting each citation into a search. Critically, CaseCheck is designed to keep a human being in the loop. Rather than letting AI check AI, the tool ensures that a real person makes the final call on whether each case exists. The result is a faster, more reliable verification process that puts human judgment where it matters most.

Courtready has also published a [Fictitious Citations in Canadian Courts](#) database,³ Canada’s comprehensive public tracker of decisions where courts flag non-existent cases in parties’ legal submissions, updated weekly. This database is freely accessible to researchers, journalists, and the legal profession, and it is bilingual in English and French.

Whether you are representing yourself in court, a lawyer verifying your own submissions, or court staff screening filings, CaseCheck can help ensure that every case cited in a Canadian courtroom actually exists. Visit casecheck.courtready.ca.

Methodology

Courtready manually conducted targeted keyword searches of decisions published on the Canadian Legal Information Institute (CanLII) from January 1, 2024, to March 10, 2026. Search terms were designed to capture judicial language indicating that a cited authority could not be verified, as well as decisions that explicitly discuss the use of artificial intelligence in legal proceedings.

The findings represent a conservative estimate. Decisions not published on CanLII, or that do not use language captured by the search methodology, would not be reflected in this data. Not all fictitious citations identified in the study are necessarily AI-generated: in

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82 of 111 decisions, courts found or presumed AI involvement. In the remaining 29 decisions, courts did not conclusively establish the source of the non-existent cases.

About Courtready

Courtready provides practical tools and plain-language legal education to help Canadians navigate courts and tribunals with confidence, including CaseCheck, a Canadian legal citation verification tool designed to flag fictitious citations. Courtready.ca has received over 20,000 visits since its launch in July 2025. The company's co-founder, Tom Macintosh Zheng, is this year's recipient of the Ontario Bar Association Foundation's "OBA Foundation Award", which recognizes "exceptional contributions to the improvement of the justice system through public legal education, innovative research, or other means". Visit courtready.ca.

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