



The Regional Municipality of Durham

Works Department

**Guidelines for Writing Specification Documents
for Facilities DCAM's Projects**

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1. Introduction

This document provides guidelines for use in preparing specifications for tenders administered by the Region of Durham's Works Department, Facilities DCAM Division.

Specification document formatting shall be in accordance with the Region's document "Guidelines for formatting of tender and quotation documents for Facilities DCAM's projects".

2. Use of Region's Master Specification Section Templates

The Specifier must always use the Region's master specification Section templates for Divisions 00 and 01 for all projects. Use the Region's master specification Sections for Division 32 when such work is applicable to the project. **Always download the latest templates prior to starting to develop the specifications for every project.**

Refer to the Region's "Design Specifications for Engineering and Architectural Submissions" for further mandatory requirements when preparing specifications.

3. Use of Third-Party Master Specifications Products

The Region encourages the use of the Canadian Master Specifications (CMS) templates in preparing specifications. Use of National Master Specifications (NMS) is also acceptable.

Note that the CMS template specifications use the same Paragraph Style names as the Region's Paragraph Styles, however, the Region's Paragraph Styles are slightly different in their formatting.

When using specification-writing tools and software, ensure that all formatting complies with the Region's formatting requirements. Some spec-writing software are known to create headers that use tables. Tables in headers are not acceptable and the Consultant is responsible to convert all such tables to text.

4. Specifier Notes and Editing Master Specifications

Throughout both the Region's master specification Section templates and the CMS, the writer of the specifications is referred to as the "Specifier". "Spec Notes" may be provided in "hidden text" that can be displayed by clicking on the MS Word "Show/Hide"

(¶) button on the Home tab. Delete all Spec Notes before submitting draft specifications to the Region.

The Region's templates may be edited as required but ensure that the Track Changes function is turned on.

In general, the Specifier must thoroughly review all clauses in the applicable master specification templates and revise, delete and add wording as necessary for the individual project.

If a paragraph in a Region master specification Section template is not applicable to the project, the Specifier is permitted and encouraged to delete that paragraph but ensure that the Track Changes function is turned on when doing so.

5. Use of Ontario Provincial Standards for Roads and Public Works

The Region encourages the use of [Ontario Provincial Standard Specifications \(OPSS\) and Drawings \(OPSD\)](#) for Site and Infrastructure Subgroup Divisions (Divisions 31 to 35 inclusive).

Note that to accommodate differences in contract administration practices between MTO and municipal contracts, OPS has recently decided to phase out "common" construction and material specifications and split them into municipal ("MUNI") and provincial ("PROV") versions. Use MUNI specifications whenever both MUNI and PROV specifications are available. MUNI specifications are found in Volumes 7 and 8 of the OPS. OPSD standard drawings are still common to MTO and municipalities.

All revisions to OPS Specifications should be written using phrasing according to the following examples:

"Section 102.02 of OPSS.MUNI 102 is amended by the addition of the following:"

OR

"The second sentence of Subsection 314.04.01 of OPSS.MUNI 314 is deleted and replaced with the following:"

6. Imperative Writing Style

Use the “imperative” writing style for all specifications.

The imperative writing style uses action verbs as the first word of all sentences and points. Avoid “shall”, “must” and similar terms that have to be preceded by a subject. Note that all requirements in the specifications are mandatory in nature unless an option is specifically noted.

Say:	Do not say:
supply and install (or provide)	supply and installation of
grade and compact	grading and compaction of

Use of numbered and bulleted lists is encouraged for simplicity.

7. General Rules for Writing Specifications

A good specification is clear, concise, and easily understood. The Specifier should use the following principles when writing specifications:

- Use simple words and short sentences.
- Avoid duplication. Say it once and then reference that statement every other time.
- Provide clear, enforceable requirements that will be easily interpreted the same way by both the Consultant and the Contractor. If more than one meaning can be interpreted, the Contractor will make an interpretation that is most favorable to them. Further, often the courts will interpret ambiguity in favour of the Contractor.
- All work specified is to be done by the Contractor. If work is to be done or products supplied by others (e.g. the Owner), then that must be specified expressly. Do not infer that any work or any Section is to be performed by a Subcontractor, trade or supplier.
- Only specify what will be enforced. Delete template statements that will not be enforced.
- Provide clear instructions. If a specification is silent on a point, the Contractor cannot be expected to meet unspecified requirements without extra compensation.

- Provide specific directions, not suggestions, explanations or reasons.
- Include only what is needed to obtain the desired result.
- Use present tense.
- Avoid negative statements. Phrase requirements in the positive. For example, say “make changes only with approval of the Consultant” rather than “do not make changes without the approval of the Consultant”.
- Avoid using gender-specific terms and pronouns. The Contractor is a firm not an individual so terms like “he” and “his” are not appropriate. Use terms like “the Contractor” and “their” instead, as appropriate.
- Avoid use of abbreviations except for units of measure. Acronyms are acceptable as long as they are defined first.
- Use simplified, preferred expressions:

Say:	Do not say:
according to	in accordance with conformance with conforming to
at no additional cost to the Owner	at no additional compensation at no expense to the Region at no cost to the Region at no additional expense to the Region at the Contractor's expense
except	excluding
if (except use <i>when</i> in reference to time and <i>where</i> in reference to location)	when where subject to in case in the event that

Say:	Do not say:
instead of	in lieu of
obtain	get procure secure
while	during such time as

- For tenders, use the word “Owner” rather than “Region” or “Project Manager” for consistency with the CCDC 2 Definitions.
- There is no need to specify compliance with the law and regulations. It’s the law!
- For quantities without a unit of measure, use the numeral and the word (e.g. “five (5)”).
- Use the words “first”, “second”, “third” and so on rather than “1st”, 2nd and “3rd” with superscript text.
- Use a non-breaking space between a number and its units of measure. For example, use “23 °C”, not “23°C” and not “23 ° C” (For a non-breaking space, use the MS Word Hot Key: Ctrl + Shift + Space Bar).
- For time, use lower case “a.m.” and “p.m.” (with periods). Use of the 24-hour clock is also acceptable if it is used consistently throughout the entire specification.