

# Customs Brokers & Freight Forwarders

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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## 1. Working as a Customs Broker & Freight Forwarder

### *Job Description*

Working as a **Customs Broker** you will perform some or all of the following duties:

- Answer questions about tax and duty requirements for shipping in or out of the country
- Arrange shipping and ensure the correct customs forms are filled out properly
- Sign import/export documents on behalf of clients, using power of attorney
- Arrange for payment of duties, taxes, storage, and transportation of imported goods and bonds to cover duty goods

Source: NOC, <http://www30.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/English/NOC/2006/Profile.aspx?val=1&val1=1236>

Working as a **Freight Forwarder** you will perform some or all of the following duties:

- Represent companies that export and import products or services to and from foreign countries
- Estimate or quote: prices, contract terms, warranties, and delivery dates
- Prepare or oversee preparation of sales or other contracts and provide ongoing support

Source: NOC, <http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/English/NOC/2011/QuickSearch.aspx?val65=6411>

## ***Industry Overview***

Importers dealing with the Canada Border Services Agency rely on a licensed **customs broker** to manage the documents necessary to get their shipments processed.

Employment as a customs broker in BC is almost entirely (90%) concentrated in the Lower Mainland.

This is a steady occupation sector with no dramatic change in demand expected prior to 2022. According to industry sources, finding qualified workers to fill openings in this field is difficult. Customs brokerage firms regularly train and promote existing staff and allow them to perform brokerage work once they are qualified.

Source: Canadian Society of Customs Brokers

<http://www.cscb.ca/content/what-customs-broker-why-do-you-need-one>

**Freight forwarding** is one of the common activities falling within the Canadian logistics industry. This industry is experiencing growth due to globalization.

In BC, the majority of freight forwarding jobs are in the Lower Mainland and on Vancouver Island.

Source: Canadian Trade Commissioner Services

<http://www.tradecommissioner.gc.ca/eng/home.jsp>

## *Job Outlook in BC*

### **Customs, Ship and other Brokers (NOC 1315)**

<b>0.7%</b> Expected annual demand growth rate (2014-2024)	<b>280</b> Job openings (2014-2024)
Occupation Outlook for B.C.:	
% of job openings from replacement	<b>80%</b>
% of job openings from expansion	<b>20%</b>
Average annual growth rate of employment (2014-2024)	<b>0.7%</b>
Expected cumulative job openings (2014-2024)	<b>280</b>

Chart from WorkBC (NOC 1315)

### **Freight Forwarder, Sales Representatives –Wholesale Trade (NOC 6411)**

<b>1.2%</b> Expected annual demand growth rate (2014-2024)	<b>7,920</b> Job openings (2014-2024)
Occupation Outlook for B.C.:	
% of job openings from replacement	<b>68%</b>
% of job openings from expansion	<b>32%</b>
Average annual growth rate of employment (2014-2024)	<b>1.2%</b>
Expected cumulative job openings (2014-2024)	<b>7,920</b>

Chart from WorkBC (NOC 6411)

## Customs Brokers & Freight Forwarding Services Sales Representatives A guide for newcomers to British Columbia

The **Employment Outlook for BC** provides job openings projections for customs brokers and sales representatives, wholesale trade (non-technical) within the BC regions:

Region	2010 Estimated Employment	2015 Estimated Employment	Avg Annual % Change, 5 Years, 2010 to 2015
<b>Vancouver Island</b>			
▪ Custom Brokers	30	30	1.5%
▪ Sales Representatives Wholesale Trade (Non-Technical)	2,170	2,350	1.6%
<b>Lower Mainland / Southwest</b>			
▪ Custom Brokers	580	630	1.6%
▪ Sales Representatives Wholesale Trade (Non-Technical)	13,830	14,780	1.4%
<b>Thompson-Okanagan</b>			
▪ Custom Brokers	20	30	1.0%
▪ Sales Representatives Wholesale Trade (Non-Technical)	1,600	1,720	1.4%
<b>Kootenay</b>			
▪ Custom Brokers	10	10	2.0%
▪ Sales Representatives Wholesale Trade (Non-Technical)	370	450	3.9%
<b>Cariboo</b>			
▪ Custom Brokers	10	10	0.3%
▪ Sales Representatives Wholesale Trade (Non-Technical)	460	500	1.7%
<b>North Coast &amp; Nechako</b>			
▪ Custom Brokers	10	10	0.3%
▪ Sales Representatives Wholesale Trade (Non-Technical)	210	270	6.2%
<b>Northeast</b>			
▪ Custom Brokers	-	10	-
▪ Sales Representatives Wholesale Trade (Non-Technical)	240	250	0.4%

Source: Regional Employment Projections, BC Stats. Projections for development regions.

<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/StatisticsBySubject/LabourIncome/EmploymentUnemployment/RegionalEmploymentProjections.aspx> [accessed October 2014]

You can learn more about working in this industry from Work BC Career Profiles.

- **Customs Broker**

Work BC, <http://www.workbc.ca/Careers/> [Search 1315]

- **Freight Forwarding Services Sales Representatives**

(Sales Representatives - Wholesale Trade [Non-Technical])

Work BC, <http://www.workbc.ca/Careers/> [Search 6411]

### ***Types of Employers***

#### **Customs Brokers**

Most customs brokers work for brokerage or importing firms that offer services on a contract basis. Others work for private companies or organizations. Some are self-employed and work on contracts made directly with clients. These services are in highest demand in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island.

Source: *Career Cruising* database (Profile for Customs Broker). Available from the VPL Online Articles, Encyclopedias & More page: [http://www.vpl.ca/electronic\\_databases/alpha/c](http://www.vpl.ca/electronic_databases/alpha/c)

#### **Freight Forwarders**

Sales representatives, wholesale trade (non-technical), including freight forwarding services sales representatives, work for wholesalers, producers of commodities, manufacturers, business service firms, hotels, and transportation companies.

Source: NOC

## Salary

### Customs Brokers

In BC, the average annual salary for Customs, Ship and other brokers is between \$44,000 and \$53,000. Salaries vary depending on experience, education, and employer. Brokers employed by private companies may earn more than those who work for brokerage firms.

Many salaried brokers receive benefits, such as dental plans and sick days. Self-employed brokers must provide their own benefits.

Source: *Career Cruising* database (Profile for Customs Broker).

### In BC, Customs Brokers (NOC 1236) can expect to earn:

Location	Wage (\$/hr)		
	Low	Median	High
British Columbia	10.73	21.57	39.00
<a href="#">Lower Mainland - Southwest Region</a>	10.72	21.49	36.88

Source: Job Bank, <http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/>

## ***Freight Forwarders/Sales Representatives***

Salaries for sales representatives depend on the industry and employer, as well as the location. The average annual salary for Sales Representatives in BC is between \$53,000 and \$66,000. Many sales representatives are paid through a combination of salary and commission, or salary plus bonus.

Source: *Career Cruising* database (Profile for Sales Representative). Available from the VPL Online Articles, Encyclopedias & More page: [http://www.vpl.ca/electronic\\_databases/alpha/c](http://www.vpl.ca/electronic_databases/alpha/c)

In BC, **Wholesale Trade (non-technical) NOC 6411**, which includes freight-forwarding services sales representatives in BC.

Location	Wage (\$/hr)		
	Low	Median	High
<b>British Columbia</b>	11.54	22.04	37.50
<a href="#">Cariboo Region</a>	11.54	22.04	37.50
<a href="#">Kootenay Region</a>	10.25	19.24	47.30
<a href="#">Lower Mainland - Southwest Region</a>	11.54	22.12	38.46
<a href="#">Thompson--Okanagan Region</a>	13.00	20.51	36.06
<a href="#">Vancouver Island and Coast Region</a>	12.00	20.67	37.50

Source: Job Bank, <http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/>

## ***Working Hours***

Most **customs brokers** work a standard 40-hour work week, although they may need to be available on weekends and evenings to meet scheduled shipments. At border crossings, they often work in shifts in order to provide 24-hour service to clients.

Most **freight forwarders** work a standard 40-hour work week.



## 2. Skills, Education and Experience

### ***Skills for Customs Brokers***

- Communication skills
- Computer skills
- Enjoy working with numbers
- Detail-oriented
- Organized

### ***Skills for Freight Forwarders***

- Determined
- Persuasive
- Good with people
- Communication skills

Source: *Career Cruising* database (Profile for Customs Broker)

### ***Education and Experience***

#### **Customs Brokers**

- Completion of secondary school is required
- Some post-secondary education in commerce or a related field may be required
- Customs brokers require several years of on-the-job training and completion of a customs brokers training program through the Canadian Society of Customs Brokers
- A customs broker licence, issued by the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, is required for an individual or company to operate a customs brokerage business.

Source: NOC,1236

## Freight Forwarders

- Completion of secondary school is required
- A university degree or completion of a college or other program may be required
- Experience in sales or in an occupation related to the product or service is usually required
- Fluency in a foreign language and/or foreign country work or travel
- Voluntary certification is available from the Canadian Professional Sales Association.

Source: NOC, 6411

## Qualifications

This profession is **not regulated** in British Columbia

### Licensing Requirements for a Customs Broker

Customs brokers who open their own brokerage business must be licensed by the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA).

While in most cases any duly authorized agent may transact business with the CBSA on behalf of clients, only a licensed customs broker may account for goods and pay duties under Section 32 of the *Customs Act* as an agent of an importer or owner.

For information on the Customs Brokers Professional Examination, see:

<http://cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/services/cb-cd/exam-eng.html> and  
<http://cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/publications/dm-md/d1/d1-8-3-eng.html>

For more information on licensing requirements, see:

<http://cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/services/cb-cd/menu-eng.html>

### 3. Finding Jobs

You'll find job advertisements in local newspapers, electronic sources, and through professional associations.

#### ***Local Newspapers***

You can look at the *Vancouver Sun* and *The Province* at Vancouver Public Library for free. Check the job postings daily, the careers section in the *Vancouver Sun* on Wednesdays and Saturdays and in *The Province* on Sundays.

#### ***Job White Pages***

- Available in print at the Central Library or online at <http://jobfreeway.com/memberdocs/vpl-home.htm>

**NOTE:** *You can only access this database from the Central Library or VPL branch libraries. Access is NOT available from home or outside the Library.*

#### ***Online Job Postings***

- **Indeed.com**  
[http://ca.indeed.com/advanced\\_search](http://ca.indeed.com/advanced_search)  
Find jobs posted on a multitude of company career sites and job boards.
- **Simply Hired**  
<http://www.simplyhired.ca/>

#### ***Professional Associations' Career Resources***

- **Supply Chain & Logistics Association Canada (SCL)**  
<http://www.sclcanada.org/index.php?id=478>  
SCL Career Centre with searchable index to job openings.

### ***Identifying the Right Position***

When you browse job advertisements, you'll find a range of different job titles that are relevant.

For **Customs Brokers** (NOC 1236), look for these and other related job titles:

- cargo broker
- licensed customs broker

For **Freight Forwarders (Sales Representatives - Wholesale Trade (Non-Technical, NOC 6411))** look for these and other related job titles:

- freight sales agent
- freight forwarding sales representative
- supervisor, wholesale trade representatives
- transfer company agent

## ***Creating a List of Potential Employers***

You can use directories to produce lists of companies in the Lower Mainland or BC in the customs brokerage and freight forwarding industry. Contact them directly to find out if they're hiring.

- **Canadian International Freight Forwarders Association**

[http://www.ciffa.com/members\\_directory.asp](http://www.ciffa.com/members_directory.asp)

Membership directory, contact information for freight forwarders across Canada

- **Canadian Society of Customs Brokers (CSCB)**

<http://cscb.ca/directory>

Searchable membership directory.

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- **Licensed Customs Brokers**

<http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/services/cb-cd/cb-cd-eng.html>

List of BC customs brokers provided by the Canada Border Services Agency.

- **Materials Management and Distribution**

Central Library, 658.7805 M425

- **Reference Canada**

[https://www.vpl.ca/electronic\\_databases/alpha/r](https://www.vpl.ca/electronic_databases/alpha/r)

Go to the *Reference Canada* database, choose the "Custom Search" button, and select both "Keyword/SIC/NAICS" under Business Type and "City" under Geography. In the top search box enter "Customs Brokers" or "Freight Forwarding" and click LOOKUP. Select the appropriate headings. Lower down, select the Province, choose the cities, and click the "View Results" button.

Available from the VPL Online Articles, Encyclopedias & More page

**NOTE:** *You can access this database from a Library computer. If you are using a computer from outside the Library, you will need a Vancouver Public Library card to login to this database. After clicking on the database name, you will be asked to enter your library card number and PIN (usually last four digits of your telephone number).*

## 4. Applying for a Job

In Canada, employers usually expect to receive a resume or curriculum vitae and a cover letter that identifies the position you are applying for and summarizes your relevant experience.

Use the library catalogue, <http://vpl.bibliocommons.com/> to find books on writing resumes and cover letters specific to your industry.

To learn about applying for jobs in Canada, use the following pathfinders which are available in print at the Central Library or online at <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca/>.

- **Writing Resumes and Cover Letters**  
Go to <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca>  
[Search Writing Resumes and Cover Letters]
  
- **Getting Canadian Work Experience**  
Go to <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca>  
[Search Getting Canadian Work Experience]
  
- **Networking for Employment**  
Go to <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca>  
[Search Networking for Employment]
  
- **Fastest Growing Industries: Supply Chain**  
Go to <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca>  
[Search: Fastest growing industries supply chain]
  
- **Learn More About Working in BC and Canada**  
Go to <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca>  
[Search Learn More About Working in BC and Canada]

## 5. Getting Help from Industry Sources

### *Industry Associations*

There are associations for customs brokers in BC and Canada. These associations provide assistance to organizations and individuals working in this sector.

- **Canadian International Freight Forwarders Association (CIFFA)**  
<http://www.ciffa.com>
  
- **Canadian Society of Customs Brokers (CSCB)**  
<http://www.cscb.ca/>
  
- **International Federation of Customs Brokers Association (IFCBA)**  
<http://www.ifcba.org/>
  
- **Supply Chain & Logistics Association Canada (SCL)**  
<http://www.sclcanada.org/>

A non-profit organization whose purpose is to advance business professionals interested in improving their supply chain and logistics skills through communication, networking, education, training, knowledge, and leadership.

## *Industry Journals*

Search the Vancouver Public Library catalogue for journals related to your profession. Examples at the Central Library:

- **CanadExport**

The Canadian Trade Commissioner Services  
<http://www.tradecommissioner.gc.ca/eng/canadexport/home.jsp>

- **Canadian Shipper**

Available at the Central Library, 385.05 C21 and online at:  
<http://www.canadianshipper.com/>

- **Cargo Business**

Available at the Central Library, 387.05 M338 and online at:  
<http://www.cargobusinessnews.com/>

- **Materials Management and Distribution**

Central Library, 658.7805 M425

**Questions? Please ask the Information Staff in the Central Library,  
Vancouver Public Library or telephone 604-331-3603.**

*Please note that the information in this guide is also available online through the  
Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre website at <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca/>.*