

Customs Brokers & Freight Forwarders

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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1. Working as a Customs Broker & Freight Forwarder [NOC 2021: 13200 & 64101 / NOC 2016: 1315 & 6411]

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, <https://noc.esdc.gc.ca/>

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, <https://noc.esdc.gc.ca/>

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. Approximately 600 people work in this occupation in British Columbia.

Employment as a customs broker in BC is almost entirely (90%) concentrated in the Lower Mainland. The employment outlook is expected to be good in BC for the 2021-2023 period.

Sources:

- Canadian Society of Customs Brokers
<https://cscb.ca/content/what-customs-broker-why-do-you-need-one>
- Job Bank Canada, Job Prospects
<https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/trend-analysis/search-job-outlooks>

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.

Job Outlook in BC

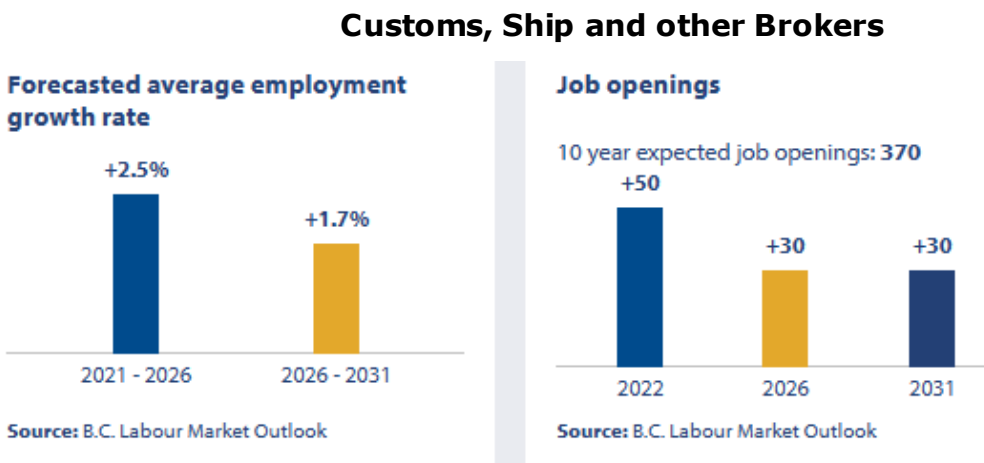
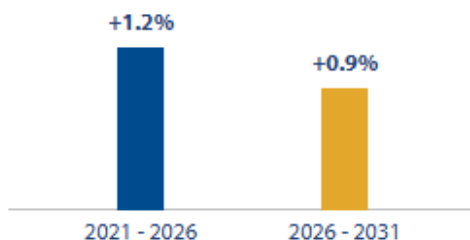


Chart from WorkBC (from NOC)

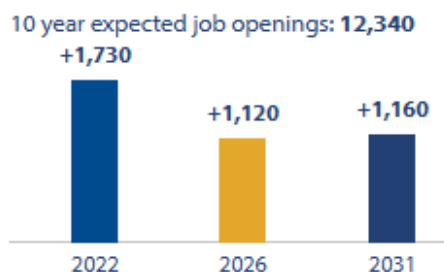
Freight Forwarder, Sales Representatives – Wholesale Trade

Forecasted average employment growth rate



Source: B.C. Labour Market Outlook

Job openings



Source: B.C. Labour Market Outlook

Chart from WorkBC

Employment Outlook by BC Region:

Region	Employment in 2021	Average Annual Employment Growth 2021-2031	Estimated Number of Job Openings 2021-2031
Vancouver Island <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Custom Brokers ▪ Sales Representatives Wholesale Trade (Non-Technical) 	30 3,630	3.0% 0.8%	20 1,300
Lower Mainland / Southwest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Custom Brokers ▪ Sales Representatives Wholesale Trade (Non-Technical) 	600 25,960	2.1% 1.1%	330 9,270
Thompson-Okanagan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Custom Brokers ▪ Sales Representatives Wholesale Trade (Non-Technical) 	20 3,360	1.6% 1.2%	10 1,330
Kootenay <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Custom Brokers ▪ Sales Representatives Wholesale Trade (Non-Technical) 	- 450	- 1.2%	- 180
Cariboo <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Custom Brokers Sales Representatives Wholesale Trade (Non-Technical) 	- 830	- 0.9%	- 170

North Coast & Nechako <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Custom Brokers ▪ Sales Representatives Wholesale Trade (Non-Technical) 	<p>-</p> <p>130</p>	<p>-</p> <p>1.4%</p>	<p>-</p> <p>30</p>
Northeast <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Custom Brokers ▪ Sales Representatives Wholesale Trade (Non-Technical) 	<p>-</p> <p>220</p>	<p>-</p> <p>1.2%</p>	<p>-</p> <p>50</p>

Source: WorkBC

You can learn more about working in this industry from:

- **Work BC Career Profile for Customs Broker**
<https://www.workbc.ca/Jobs-Careers/Explore-Careers.aspx>
- **Freight Forwarding Services Sales Representatives** (Sales Representatives - Wholesale Trade [Non-Technical])
<https://www.workbc.ca/Jobs-Careers/Explore-Careers.aspx>
- **Career Cruising database** (Profiles for Customs Broker & Sales Representative)
<https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising>
 Available from VPL Digital Library | Explore our Digital Library

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. You may also be 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)

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 median annual salary for customs, ship and other brokers is \$50,722. 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 your own benefits.

Sources: WorkBC & *Career Cruising*

In BC regions, **Customs Brokers** can expect to earn:

Community/Area	Wages (\$/hour)		
	Low	Median	High
British Columbia	15.65	24.32	48.35
Lower Mainland–Southwest Region	15.65	24.47	48.26

Source: Job Bank Wage Report, <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/trend-analysis/search-wages>

Freight Forwarders/Sales Representatives

The median annual salary for sales representatives in BC is \$57,354. Your salary depends on the industry and employer, as well as the location. Many sales representatives are paid through a combination of salary and commission, or salary plus bonus.

Sources: WorkBC & *Career Cruising*

In BC regions, **Sales representatives, wholesale trade (non-technical)**, which include **freight forwarders**, can expect to earn:

Community/Area	Wages (\$/hour)		
	Low	Median	High
British Columbia	16.00	27.50	43.27
Cariboo Region	16.00	27.50	43.27
Kootenay Region	16.00	27.50	43.27
Lower Mainland–Southwest Region	16.00	27.00	43.27
Thompson–Okanagan Region	20.83	28.85	42.07
Vancouver Island and Coast Region	17.86	25.00	44.71

Source: Job Bank Wage Report, <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/trend-analysis/search-wages>

Working Hours

Most **customs brokers** work a standard 40-hour work week, although you may need to be available on weekends and evenings to meet scheduled shipments. At border crossings, you 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

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 (<https://cscb.ca/>)
- 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: WorkBC

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 experience may be required for employment with companies that import or export goods or services
- Voluntary certification is available from the Canadian Professional Sales Association (<https://www.cpsa.com/>)

Source: WorkBC

Qualifications

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 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:

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

For more information on **licensing requirements**, see:

<https://www.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.

Online Job Postings

- **Indeed.com**
https://ca.indeed.com/advanced_search
Find jobs posted on a multitude of company career sites and job boards.
- **Talent.com**
<https://ca.talent.com/>

Professional Associations' Career Resources

- **Supply Chain Canada Jobs**
<https://www.supplychaincanada.com/careers>
- **Canadian Professional Sales Association Jobs**
<https://www.cpsa.com/jobs-board>

Identifying the Right Position

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

For **Customs Brokers** look for these and other related job titles:

- cargo broker
- licensed customs broker

For **Freight Forwarders (Sales Representatives - Wholesale Trade (Non-Technical))** 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**
<https://ciffa.com/member-directory/>
- **Canadian Society of Customs Brokers (CSCB)**
<https://cscb.ca/directory>
Searchable membership directory.

- **Licensed Customs Brokers, Canada Border Services Agency**

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

- **Reference Canada**

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, <https://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 guides which are available in print at the Central Library or online:

- **Writing Resumes and Cover Letters**

<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/writing-resumes-and-cover-letters>

- **Networking for Employment**

<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/networking-for-employment>

- **Getting Canadian Work Experience**

<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/getting-canadian-work-experience>

- **Learn More About Working in BC and Canada**
<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/learn-more-about-working-in-bc-and-canada>
- **Fastest Growing Industries: Supply Chain**
<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/industry-profiles/fastest-growing-industries-supply-chain>

5. Getting Help from Industry Sources

Industry Associations

Associations for customs brokers in BC and Canada can provide information and assistance. Registrations and fees are required for membership.

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

Industry Journals

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

- **CanadExport**
The Canadian Trade Commissioner Services
<https://www.tradecommissioner.gc.ca/canadexport/index.aspx?lang=eng>
- **Inside Logistics**
Available at the Central Library, 658.705 I59 and online at:
<https://www.insidelogistics.ca/>
- **Cargo Business News**
<https://www.cargobusinessnews.com/>

**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 <https://www.vpl.ca/siic>.*



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