



GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN LOGISTICS INC.

Shipping & Logistics FAQ

For Businesses New to Importing and Exporting

Plain-language answers for businesses that have never used a freight forwarder or 3PL/4PL company.

Mississauga, Ontario · globalscl.ca · 2026 Edition

A plain-language reference for businesses that have never used a freight forwarder or 3PL/4PL logistics company. Answers reflect Canadian rules current as of mid-2026. Confirm specifics for your goods with CBSA or your logistics partner before shipping.

Getting started

What is a freight forwarder?

A freight forwarder arranges the transport of your goods and coordinates the steps in between, including booking carriers, preparing documents, and managing customs clearance. You stay responsible for your goods and your obligations. The forwarder handles the logistics.

What is the difference between a 3PL and a 4PL?

A third-party logistics provider (3PL) handles physical services such as warehousing, distribution, and fulfilment in addition to transport. A fourth-party logistics provider (4PL) manages a wider network on your behalf, coordinating multiple providers and acting as a single point of accountability. GSCL operates across both models.

Do I need a logistics partner, or can I do this myself?

You can manage importing yourself. Many businesses do at first. A partner becomes worthwhile when the moving parts (carriers, customs, warehousing, delivery) start costing you more time and risk than they save. For a first international shipment, a partner reduces the chance of border delays and missed steps.

What does GSCL do?

GSCL is a freight forwarding and 3PL/4PL company in Mississauga, Ontario. We handle sea and air freight, cross-border Canada-US transport, customs clearance, warehousing, project logistics, temperature-controlled shipping, and e-commerce logistics for businesses across the Greater Toronto Area.

Importing into Canada

What is the first thing I need to import commercial goods?

A Canada Revenue Agency business number and an import-export program account, called an RM account. Set these up well before your shipment is due.

What is CARM and do I have to use it?

CARM is the CBSA Assessment and Revenue Management system. Since January 1, 2026, it is Canada's permanent system for accounting for imported goods and paying duties and taxes. Every commercial importer must have its own CARM Client Portal account. Yes, you have to use it.

Can my customs broker just handle CARM for me?

No, not entirely. Since January 1, 2026, a broker's business number can no longer be used to clear your goods. You are the importer of record. A broker or forwarder works with delegated access to your account. The account itself must be yours.

What does “importer of record” mean?

It means you are the party legally responsible for the import: the accuracy of the customs declaration and the payment of duties and taxes. This responsibility stays with you even when a broker or forwarder does the work.

What will I pay to import?

Goods are generally subject to 5% GST and may also carry customs duties. Duty depends on three things: the product's classification, its country of origin, and its value. You can estimate the total in the CARM portal before goods arrive.

What is an HS code?

It is the Harmonized System classification number for your product. The first six digits are shared across most trading countries; Canada adds four more to set duty rates. Your HS code determines what you pay, so accuracy matters.

What if I do not know my product's classification?

You can request an advance ruling from CBSA, which gives you a binding written answer before you import. The CARM portal also includes a tool to help you find a classification number.

Can I get my goods before paying all the duties?

Yes, through the Release Prior to Payment (RPP) program. Under CARM, RPP requires you to post your own financial security, either a surety bond or a cash deposit, through the portal. Most businesses use RPP to avoid paying everything up front at the border.

Are there goods I cannot import freely?

Yes. Some products need permits, certificates, or inspections from federal departments beyond CBSA. Food, plants, and animal products often require Canadian Food Inspection Agency approvals. Check your specific product before shipping.

I am based outside Canada. Can I still import?

Yes, as a non-resident importer. You must request your business number from the CRA before registering in the CARM portal, and there are additional requirements. A logistics partner can help you navigate them.

Exporting from Canada

How do I start exporting?

At a high level: confirm your product can be exported, identify your target market, prepare export documentation, and arrange transport. A logistics partner helps match the route and documents to your destination.

Do trade agreements help exporters too?

Yes. If your goods qualify under an agreement such as CETA, CPTPP, or CUSMA, your buyer's market may apply a reduced or zero tariff, making your product more competitive. You will need documentation proving the goods meet the agreement's rules of origin.

Which countries does Canada have agreements with?

Canada has agreements covering more than 50 countries, including the United States and Mexico (CUSMA), the European Union (CETA), and the Asia-Pacific bloc (CPTPP), plus agreements with Indonesia, South Korea, and the United Kingdom. The Trade Commissioner Service maintains the full list and a Canada Tariff Finder tool.

What are “rules of origin”?

They are the criteria that decide whether a good qualifies for an agreement's preferential treatment, based on where it was made or sufficiently transformed, not simply where it shipped from. Meeting them, and documenting that you meet them, is what lets you claim a reduced tariff.

Costs, timing, and documents

How long does an international shipment take?

It depends on mode and route. Air freight is fastest and most expensive; ocean freight is slower and more economical. Customs setup, classification, and any required permits add lead time at the front end. Plan registration weeks ahead of your goods, not days.

What documents will I need?

Typical commercial shipments involve a commercial invoice, packing list, bill of lading or air waybill, and customs declaration, plus any permits or certificates your product requires. Your forwarder will tell you exactly which apply to your shipment.

What is included in a freight quote?

Quotes vary. A complete quote should make clear what is covered: transport, customs handling, duties and taxes, warehousing, and final delivery. Ask what is not included so there are no surprises. We break this out clearly.

What is temperature-controlled shipping?

It is the handling of goods that must stay within a set temperature range, such as food and perishables, across the entire journey. This is called cold chain logistics. GSCL offers temperature-controlled movement and storage.

Working with GSCL

How do I get started with GSCL?

Request a quote through globalscl.ca or contact our team. We will walk through your specific goods and trade lane, flag any registration or classification steps you need, and lay out a path from origin to delivery.

Do you handle both importing and exporting?

Yes. We support Canadian businesses sourcing from abroad, international sellers entering the Canadian market, and Canadian businesses exporting to global markets.

What regions do you serve?

We are based in Mississauga and serve the Greater Toronto Area, including Toronto, Hamilton, Brampton, Oakville, Vaughan, Guelph, Markham, Ajax, and Oshawa, with global reach through our freight network.

Sources

- CBSA, “Get started with CARM” and “CARM: Assess and pay duties and taxes,” cbsa-asfc.gc.ca
- CBSA, “The CBSA shares tips on importing commercial goods to Canada,” March 2026
- CBSA, Customs Notice 25-32 (end of CARM transition measures, importer of record changes)
- CBSA, “Guide to importing commercial goods into Canada: Classifying your goods”
- Trade Commissioner Service, Global Affairs Canada, “Expand globally with Canada's free trade agreements”

This FAQ is general information, not legal or customs advice. Rules change. Confirm details for your situation with CBSA, the CFIA, or your logistics partner before shipping.