

THE LINKS BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Intellectual Property legislation grants rights to creators in order to increase the incentives for creativity. The three major types of intellectual property are patents, copyrights and trademarks; each of which has its own unique characteristics.

While laws vary from country to country, generalizations regarding these characteristics can be made. Patents generally protect new and useful inventions for a limited term (e.g. 17 years in Canada). Copyright generally protects the the expression of original literary, artistic and musical works for a much longer period of time (e.g. life of the author plus 50 years for most works in Canada). Finally, trademarks typically involve the granting of rights to the use of a distinctive name or symbol for an indefinitely long period of time (e.g. periodic renewal is required in Canada).

Individual national laws governing intellectual property are tied together by a number of international conventions. The central feature of all such conventions is "national treatment" by which Canada is required to treat