

Problems do occur. It may be that a custom evaluation is felt to be unfair. It may be that import permits are difficult to obtain. It may be that a Canadian product received is not the one ordered, or has been damaged in transit. Or more often, it may be that the Canadian exporter wants to know the credit rating of a foreign importer who wants short term credit. Trade Commissioners can help you solve all of these situations, and more.

They know how to get credit information. They will advise you on disputes if they arise and in many cases they will negotiate a fair settlement (which is still yours to accept or not). Their strength is in their knowledge of local conditions, local practice and local laws -- and most important, their physical presence in those far flung places, their feelings for the environment and for the contacts they have developed. They represent Canadian interests and therefore will always take the side of the Canadian firm, unless the firm has knowingly done something quite illegal or contrary to good business practices. Trade Commissioners quite naturally lose some motivation in representing bad apples. Companies that knowingly break the law, or cheat their customers, could give all Canadian exporters a bad name.

Trade Commissioners are also the link in commercial and industrial cooperation activities between the Canadian government and foreign governments. As officers responsible for maintaining our access to these markets, they make representations, negotiate the removal of non-tariff barriers, and ensure that the international rules of trade are observed. This link becomes even more essential in the case of centrally controlled economies (including Eastern Europe and many developing countries) where almost everything is imported by the government. These countries prefer to deal on a government-to-government basis, and their interlocutor for Canadian deals is the Trade Commissioner.

Trade Commissioners also do the real marketing job of analysing and evaluating the market, and reporting back to Canada on which imports will be required, together with specifications, design, prices and quantities.

This work is conducted from studies of foreign consumption and production patterns, and also from general expression of interest on the Canadian side, or on behalf of Canadian firms asking for specific information on the potential for Canadian products and services.