

# Stopping counterfeit goods at the Canadian Border

June 02, 2023

Owners of intellectual property rights (the owner) should keep in mind the [measures provided](#) for in the Trademarks Act and the Copyright Act (collectively, the Acts) intended to address the importation and exportation of counterfeit goods in Canada as part of their enforcement toolbox. This can include, if the conditions are met, pharmaceutical products for example. The process provided for in these Acts arises from the general prohibition on importation or exportation of goods if the goods or their labels or packaging bear a trademark that is identical to, or that cannot be distinguished in its essential aspects from, the registered trademark,<sup>1</sup> or of works or other subject-matter in which copyright subsists.<sup>2</sup>

This process is only available in respect of a “protected mark”, which means a registered trademark or a protected geographical indication,<sup>3</sup> but there is no requirement to register the work or other subject-matter in which copyright subsists.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, when considering whether to apply to register a trademark or rely solely on unregistered rights, the ability to access this process if necessary should likely be a factor in the decision-making. A summary of the general process is set out below, but there are exceptions to the general process and additional relevant information in the respective legislation, so regard should be had to the legislation when determining how to proceed.

## Summary of the process

In respect of both trademarks and copyright, the process starts when the owner of the rights files with the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness (the Minister) a request for assistance in pursuing remedies under the Trademark Act or the Copyright Act (RFA).<sup>5</sup> Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) has developed an application to be filled out to make this request. Once the RFA is accepted by the Minister, it is valid for two years but can be extended, more than once, for two years.<sup>6</sup>

If a customs officer detains goods or works and the Minister has accepted a RFA with respect to the goods or works, the officer can provide to the owner a sample of the goods or copies of the works as well as information about the goods or works that could assist the owner in pursuing a remedy under the Trademarks Act or the Copyright Act.<sup>7</sup>

If the owner does not take action, the amount of time that the customs officer can detain **goods or works is limited - generally no more than 10 working days, or five days if the goods or copies are perishable.**<sup>8</sup> To extend the detention period, court proceedings have to be commenced and notice provided to the Minister before the goods or works are released.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, as the timeline shows, the owner must decide to pursue a **remedy and take the first enforcement step quickly. It is prudent to establish an internal process upon filing a RFA that sets out how to proceed if a RFA is engaged.** This could include a method for determining whether the goods or works are, in fact, likely to be **counterfeit. Ensure your Canadian counsel has sufficient information to draft a pleading** and that pre-approvals are in place. The goods or works will continue to be detained until one of several triggering events occurs, including the final disposition of the proceedings or the owner consents to the goods or works no longer being detained.<sup>10</sup>

The Trademarks Act and the Copyright Act each provide for liability, payable to His Majesty in right of Canada, for charges incurred relating to the storage of detained goods and works that should be reviewed for further information about a specific situation.<sup>11</sup> Damages can be awarded against the owner who commenced proceedings, payable to the party to the proceeding for losses, costs or prejudice suffered as a result of the detention. The Copyright Act additionally specifically allows for damages to be awarded to the owner as a result of the storage of the detained copies.<sup>12</sup>

If counterfeit goods are an issue for your business, consider an RFA and engaging local Canadian counsel as another useful tool for policing counterfeit goods or copyrighted works.

For more information, please reach out to one of the key contacts listed below.

## Additional LifeSigns Articles

[Accounting of profits remedy for patent infringement in Canada](#)

[Canada's new excess claims fees vs double patenting](#)

[Funding for IP strategy and protection for Canadian companies](#)

[Navigating against headwinds in the life sciences capital markets](#)

[Precision medicine in an AI world](#)

[Quantum computing in the life sciences](#)

[Québec adopts its first comprehensive health privacy legislation](#)

[The Canadian legal landscape on AI enabled medical devices](#)

[Virtual care article update - April 2023](#)

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Trademarks Act, s. 51.03.

<sup>2</sup> Copyright Act, s. 44.01.

<sup>3</sup> Trademarks Act, s. 51.02.

<sup>4</sup> [Copyright Act](#).

<sup>5</sup> Trademarks Act, 51.04; Copyright Act, s. 44.02.

<sup>6</sup> Trademarks Act, 51.04(3); Copyright Act, s. 44.02(3).

<sup>7</sup> Trademarks Act, s. 51.06(1); Copyright Act, s. 44.04(1).

<sup>8</sup> Trademarks Act, s. 51.06(2); Copyright Act, s. 44.04(2).

<sup>9</sup> Trademarks Act, s. 51.06(3); Copyright Act, s. 44.04(3).

<sup>10</sup> Trademarks Act, s. 51.09; Copyright Act, s. 44.07.

<sup>11</sup> Trademarks Act, s. 51.12; Copyright Act, s. 44.1(1).

<sup>12</sup> Copyright Act, s. 44.1(2).

By

[Chantal Saunders](#)

Expertise

[Intellectual Property, Trademarks](#)

## BLG | Canada's Law Firm

As the largest, truly full-service Canadian law firm, Borden Ladner Gervais LLP (BLG) delivers practical legal advice for domestic and international clients across more practices and industries than any Canadian firm. With over 800 lawyers, intellectual property agents and other professionals, BLG serves the legal needs of businesses and institutions across Canada and beyond – from M&A and capital markets, to disputes, financing, and trademark & patent registration.

[blg.com](http://blg.com)

### BLG Offices

#### Calgary

Centennial Place, East Tower  
520 3rd Avenue S.W.  
Calgary, AB, Canada  
T2P 0R3

T 403.232.9500  
F 403.266.1395

#### Ottawa

World Exchange Plaza  
100 Queen Street  
Ottawa, ON, Canada  
K1P 1J9

T 613.237.5160  
F 613.230.8842

#### Vancouver

1200 Waterfront Centre  
200 Burrard Street  
Vancouver, BC, Canada  
V7X 1T2

T 604.687.5744  
F 604.687.1415

#### Montréal

1000 De La Gauchetière Street West  
Suite 900  
Montréal, QC, Canada  
H3B 5H4

T 514.954.2555  
F 514.879.9015

#### Toronto

Bay Adelaide Centre, East Tower  
22 Adelaide Street West  
Toronto, ON, Canada  
M5H 4E3

T 416.367.6000  
F 416.367.6749

The information contained herein is of a general nature and is not intended to constitute legal advice, a complete statement of the law, or an opinion on any subject. No one should act upon it or refrain from acting without a thorough examination of the law after the facts of a specific situation are considered. You are urged to consult your legal adviser in cases of specific questions or concerns. BLG does not warrant or guarantee the accuracy, currency or completeness of this publication. No part of this publication may be reproduced without prior written permission of Borden Ladner Gervais LLP. If this publication was sent to you by BLG and you do not wish to receive further publications from BLG, you may ask to remove your contact information from our mailing lists by emailing [unsubscribe@blg.com](mailto:unsubscribe@blg.com) or manage your subscription preferences at [blg.com/MyPreferences](http://blg.com/MyPreferences). If you feel you have received this message in error please contact [communications@blg.com](mailto:communications@blg.com). BLG's privacy policy for publications may be found at [blg.com/en/privacy](http://blg.com/en/privacy).

© 2026 Borden Ladner Gervais LLP. Borden Ladner Gervais LLP is an Ontario Limited Liability Partnership.