

SINGLE WINDOW INITIATIVE (SWI) INFORMATION SHEET

Frequently asked questions about SWI



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As we've been preparing for CBSA's Single Window Initiative, Livingston's customs and trade experts have fielded a number of questions from our customers, and the trade community in general, about the initiative and what importers can expect. We've compiled a few of these questions below.

What is SWI, and what are my responsibilities as an importer?

SWI stands for Single Window Initiative, a program that allows the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) and Participating Government Agencies (PGAs) to receive electronic data associated with an entry transaction.

Importers are responsible for providing the required data elements to their customs broker. The broker then transmits the data and, where required, submits documents to the CBSA via the Integrated Import Declaration (IID).

What are the benefits and downfalls regarding the SWI?

Transitioning to Single Window reduces paper burden and expedites the release of your shipment. For some PGAs, the data submitted on the Integrated Import Declaration (IID) eliminates the requirement for post-accounting reporting, such as for some Natural Resources Canada products. For vehicles, the entire paper-based Form 1 process is eliminated, and the vehicle information is electronically transmitted to the provincial Motor Vehicle Office, streamlining and accelerating the entire vehicle registration process.

However, although the SWI reduces the manual handling of paper documents and streamlines the CBSA process once the entry is submitted, the initiative also significantly increases the amount of pre-arrival electronic data required for many commodities.

In order to meet deadlines, ensure readiness for the new data requirements, and ensure compliance with the program overall, Canadian customs brokers need to make significant system and process changes. Importers will also need to adjust their own internal processes, to account for the added data requirements.

Livingston has invested significant resources to ensure our systems are ready to meet the new process requirements ahead of the deadlines, and that our customers and employees are informed, trained and prepared.

Will Single Window change the current Participating Government Agency (PGA) processes that we have today?

Yes. With Single Window, the PGA processes for the Accelerated Commercial Release Operations Support System (ACROSS) will become obsolete.

Will the SWI eventually replace ACROSS? When does the CBSA plan to do this?

Yes, this initiative will replace ACROSS in the future. However, the CBSA has not provided any definitive information on the subject yet.

What are the mandatory SWI dates?

The CBSA has scheduled the decommissioning of the existing Pre-Arrival Review System (PARS) and Release on Minimum Documentation (RMD) service options for Participating Government Agencies (PGAs) for April 1st, 2020.

The CBSA has not yet announced the date for the decommissioning of the existing Pre-Arrival Review System (PARS) and Release on Minimum Documentation (RMD) service options for PGAs.

Effective the decommissioning date, brokers and importers will be required to use the Integrated Import Declaration (IID) for all release requests that were previously requested through the ACROSS PGA service options.

How long prior to shipment do I need to submit PGA-related forms?

PGA-required forms are due at the time of submission of PGA-related release data elements. The Canada Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), for example, requests a four-hour advance notice for processing, and your customs brokers needs time to prepare the images for electronic submission. We recommend that you submit your paperwork to your broker at least three hours before the driver's estimated time of arrival.

Will having multiple Cargo Control Numbers (CCNs) change the way I declare data to the CBSA?

Yes, in the ACROSS environment, CCNs were not tied individually to the Canada Customs/Commercial invoice (CCI) information. In the Integrated Import Declaration (IID), each CCN must be tied to its own distinct set of CCIs.

After I've submitted PGA-supporting documents, can I access them through the Document Image Functionality (DIF)?

The elements of certain documents will be converted to electronic data sets and transmitted to CBSA/PGA. Importers will not have visibility to the specific documents sent via the Document Image Functionality (DIF), however Livingston customers can access those documents in the full image packages that are available for viewing on My Livingston Portal.

What contingency plans are in place if SWI is not available?

Just as in today's environment, the CBSA will have a contingency plan identifying downtime procedures, which will be provided to all trade participants.

Are there U.S. government agencies involved in this initiative?

The Single Window Initiative (SWI) deals with Canadian Participating Government Agencies (PGAs) only. The United States has its own program, the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE), that deals with U.S. PGAs. While similar in objectives, the two programs are separate and do have differences. For example, ACE has the Document Imaging System (DIS) and SWI has the Document Imaging Functionality (DIF). Essentially, however, both countries are focused on risk assessment, streamlining low-risk shipments and modernization.

Contact Livingston

Have questions or need help with your SWI imports?

Contact your Livingston client services representative.

Write to us at: clientserviceCanada@livingstonintl.com or give us a call at **1-855-225-5544**.