Consumer Product Safety in Canada:

A guide to standards and conformity assessment options for manufacturers, importers and sellers

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Standards Council of Canada
Conseil canadien des normes

Canada

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About the Standards Council of Canada

The Standards Council of Canada (SCC) is a Crown corporation and a portfolio of Industry Canada. With the goal of enhancing Canada's economic competitiveness and social well-being, the SCC offers accreditation services to both standards development organizations (SDOs), and conformity assessment bodies. In the area of conformity assessment, it provides services to over 400 clients, including various testing and calibration laboratories. Its accreditation programs are based on internationally recognized standards and guides. For additional information on the work of the SCC visit www.scc.ca or email info@scc.ca .

DISCLAIMER:

This document is not an exhaustive reference; it is intended for introductory, informational purposes only. It is recommended that users of this guide consult with the Standards Council of Canada prior to pursuing specific standardization solutions and/ or conformity assessment activities.

1. Purpose of this document

This guide is intended to provide readers with a basic understanding of standards and conformity assessment, specifically with regard to the role these play in the consumer product safety landscape.

Readers will find an overview of the types of conformity assessment options that are available, including how the work of SCC-accredited conformity assessment bodies contributes to reducing the potential harm that consumer products could cause Canadians. In addition, readers of this guide will gain insight into how standardization and conformity assessment in particular contributes to Canada's broader economic goals and its national reputation as a credible force in the global markets.

2. Standardization and the consumer product safety landscape

2.1 What is consumer product safety?

Consumer product safety affects all Canadians. Every day, Canadians use products of all kinds and they require assurance that, when selected and used appropriately, these products will not cause serious damage, potential injury, or worse: loss of life.

Confidence in a product is dependent on a shared and continual commitment to quality and safety by all parties involved in the supply chain. Whether they are based in Canada or not, consumer product safety necessitates that businesses flag potential safety issues and that they employ necessary corrective measures at every stage of the design, production and/ or distribution cycle. A lot of effort and resources are implicated in the delivery of safe consumer products to the Canadian market. Whatever the type of product — whether it is a flat-screen television, a baby stroller or a tube of toothpaste — product safety considerations apply to all of its components, including accessories and packaging.

Navigating the landscape of consumer product safety can be a challenging experience for manufacturers, importers and sellers. In Canada, most businesses are unaware of their respective obligations to each other in terms of implementing appropriate safety measures. Despite the best of intentions, many businesses struggle to apply appropriate measures to decrease potential harm, which the products that they design, manufacture, deliver or sell, may cause to consumers.

As a trading nation, Canada understands the demands of an increasingly complex global product market. The Canadian government is working to strengthen and modernize legislation designed to address the risks and dangers posed by unsafe products brought to market in Canada.

The *Canada Consumer Product Safety Act (CCPSA),* which came into force on June 20, 2011, is a major component of the Government of Canada's *Food and Consumer Safety Action Plan (FCSAP).* It is an important step toward ensuring that the manufacture and importation of dangerous products is prohibited, and that the government has the power to enforce corrective action when products are found to be unsafe.

In order to protect Canadian consumers, the government has made a commitment to incorporate standardization into legislation. Leveraging Canada's standardization infrastructure is a means for the Government of Canada to reduce the burden of regulatory compliance faced by Canadian businesses.

Voluntary consensus-based standards and rigorous conformity assessment programs enhance the safety of products manufactured and sold in Canada. Standardization can provide greater accountability, foster trust, and contribute to reducing risks and building consumer confidence in products. Although not visible to the average Canadian, standards and conformity assessment activities contribute to our national economic growth. They provide a level playing field for industry and help build capacity in key sectors of the economy. Standardization activities also play a pivotal role in protecting the health and safety of Canadians in a wide number of sectors, including consumer products. **Figure 1** illustrates the many components of a basic "consumer product safety supply chain" and the role that standardization can play in the cycle.

Figure 1: The role of standardization in the consumer product supply chain
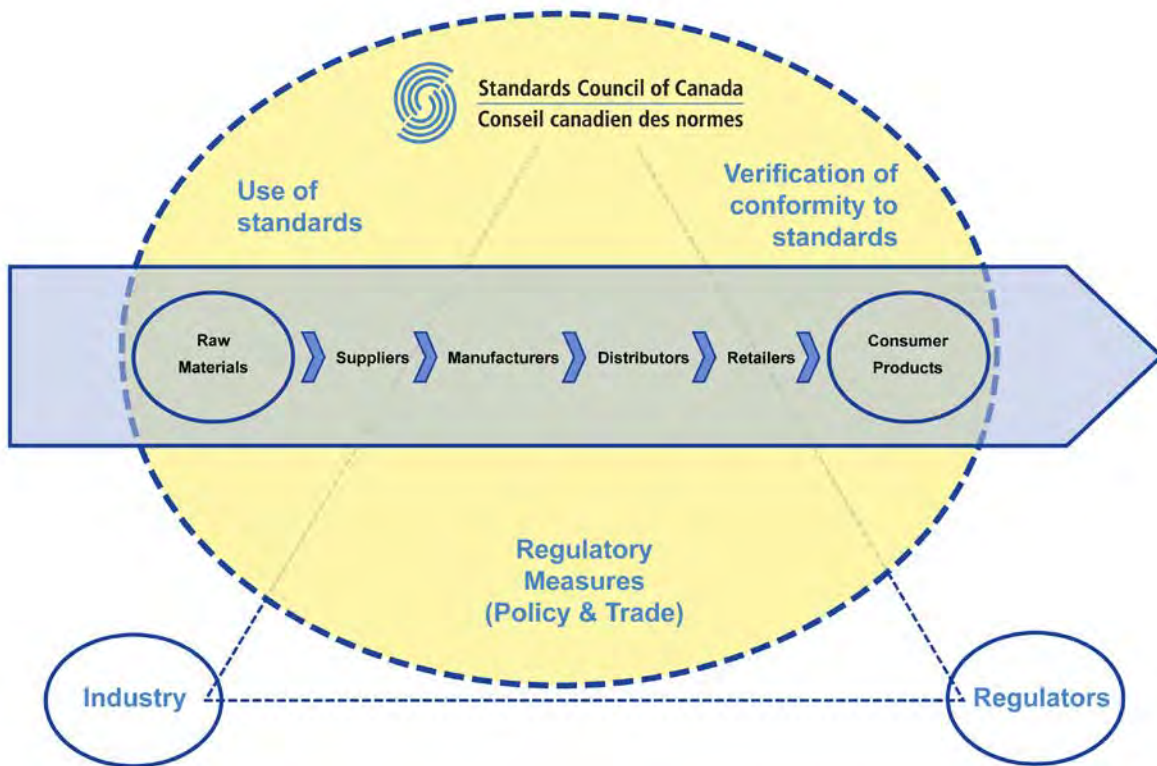
For more detailed information about consumer product safety legislation and your responsibilities as a business, consult Health Canada. You can find contact information for Health Canada in Annex D of this guide.

2.2 How does standardization fit into the consumer product safety picture?

Without standardization, there would be no uniform way of determining a product's safety. Products that have no credible way to show that they perform according to certain specifications, or have been made, imported or sold according to proven methods could pose significant risk to the health and well-being of those Canadians who use them.

Without standards, the risk of imported components not working together would also rise and could render your product completely unusable, not to mention unsafe. Your business' market efficiency, reputation and bottom line could end-up on the line.

Among the numerous ways that you can demonstrate that your business has taken all necessary actions and implemented the appropriate mechanisms to make your products as safe as possible, are:

- Following a verified, established process methodology for manufacturing, importing or distributing commercial goods to the general public. This will help your product accurately comply with the provisions of the *Canada Consumer Product Safety Act*.

- Applying a framework of voluntary standards that outlines requirements for safety and compatibility of consumer products. This will:

  o Prevent unsafe goods or counterfeited products from ending up in the hands of Canadians and causing potentially dangerous scenarios; and

  o Smooth channels for conducting business in today's global market.

- Testing and certification of your product through an SCC-accredited body. This enables you to demonstrate that your product adheres to product safety regulations and has been credibly certified.

2.3 How can standardization help businesses make consumer products as safe as possible for Canadians?

As a manufacturer, distributor or seller of consumer products, it is up to you to ensure that you do not manufacture, import or sell products that:

- Do not meet regulatory safety requirements in Canada; or

- Endanger the health and safety of Canadians.

Throughout all the stages and channels that a product undergoes — from the drawing board to the hands of Canadian consumers — it must be compliant with applicable federal and provincial/ territorial regulations. This applies regardless of whether the product itself or its components originate in Canada.

Canadian manufacturers, importers, sellers, and the Canadian government all have roles to play in safeguarding public health and safety, as do consumers. **Table 1** outlines some of the roles that each party plays (whether directly or indirectly) in the "consumer product safety supply chain" and how standardization can aid these roles.

Table 1: Standardization can support key players in the product safety supply chain.

Manufacturers	Standardization helps
- Consider safety in both function and form of product concept(s) and design at all stages of production; - Identify and report any potential safety hazards, material, structural or other weaknesses at any level of the production stage(s); - Monitor their product(s) on the market; - Field consumer comments, complaints and feedback; and - Assess, report (to the regulator), and address potential issues as appropriate.	- Boost efficiency by facilitating consistent methods of production and application of industry best practices for product manufacture; - Enable more efficient tracking/ record keeping, reporting and customer service via established work flow and quality management systems; and - Provide a means to ascertain product safety via recognized conformity assessment solutions.
Importers (of products or product components)	**Standardization helps**
- Check that their product(s) or product components are safe and meet the safety standards and requirements stipulated in Canadian regulations (for regulated sectors) or voluntary Canadian or international standards (for unregulated sectors); - Monitor their product(s) on the market; - Field consumer comments, complaints and feedback; and - Assess, report (to the regulator), and address potential issues as appropriate.	- Enable greater product and component interoperability on a global scale, thus improving market access and competitiveness; - Facilitate more effective trade and helps reduce red tape via international and/ or regional cooperation agreements, thus yielding reductions in cost and product transit time; - Enable more efficient tracking/ record keeping, reporting and customer service via established work flow and quality management systems; and - Provide a framework of prescribed evaluation methods to ascertain product safety via recognized conformity assessment solutions.
Sellers/ distributors	**Standardization helps**
- Maintain proper documentation of the origin of the product or its components; - Keep close track of all supplier and manufacturer relationships; - May choose to test the product for their own purposes; - Monitor their product(s) on the market; - Field consumer comments, complaints and feedback; and - Assess, report (to the regulator), and address potential issues as appropriate.	- Enable greater product and component interoperability on a global scale, thus improving market access and competitiveness; - Enable more efficient tracking/ record keeping, reporting and customer service via established work flow and quality management systems; and - Provide a framework of prescribed evaluation methods to ascertain product safety via recognized conformity assessment solutions.

Regulators	Standardization helps
- Develop guidance, policy and regulations that reference product safety standards; - Monitor and enforce compliance and safety issues at all levels of trade, including at the border; - Negotiate agreements with other countries that set safety parameters for international trade and conformity assessment of consumer products; - Field consumer comments, complaints and feedback; and - Provide health and safety information to the public.	Serve as an efficient and cost-effective complement and/ or alternative to drafting standards specifically for regulations, as referencing the use of existing standards, certification and/ or accreditation requirements makes use of an already well-established infrastructure.
Conformity assessors (e.g. product testers/ factory inspectors)	**Standardization helps**
Conduct as complete and unbiased an evaluation of the product as possible.	- Facilitate employment of practices that align with applicable recognized standards (national, regional and/ or international); - Enable more efficient tracking/ record keeping, reporting and customer service via established work flow and quality management systems; and - Provide (through accreditation) added assurance of a conformity assessment body's competence to complete its mandated tasks and certification/ testing/ inspection activities.
The consumer[1]	**Standardization helps**
- Selects and uses the product as directed, heeding any warnings and instructions; and - Reports health and safety issues to industry and to Health Canada.	Provide consumers with access to resources and information on product safety requirements, thus creating a savvier consumer base and greater demand for better quality consumer products and services.

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[1] The consumer is not legally accountable for the safety of a product.

3. The role of standards in consumer product safety

3.1 What is a standard?

A standard is a document that outlines an agreed-upon way of completing a task from A to Z. It often specifies the formula or set of instructions/ procedures that can be applied to achieve a consistent result (e.g. a safe product).

Standards may provide a set of performance requirements that a product must meet, and/ or a prescribed set of steps that manufacturers, importers and sellers can follow throughout all aspects of the production and distribution cycle. Users of specific standards are able to check that:

- The material for the shell of a hockey helmet is mixed correctly to achieve the right consistency and hardens properly in its mould;

- An imported, foreign-made sauce pan adheres to Canada's safety requirements and meets the unique needs of Canadian consumers; and

- A washing machine assembled in Canada with parts from another country functions as expected.

Together with key stakeholders, national and international standards are researched, developed, reviewed and agreed-upon via a consensus-based approach. The formal process of developing a standard is consistent among all recognized standard development organizations in Canada and around the world. The standards development process, in its simplest form, includes the following elements as outlined in **figure 2**:

Figure 2: The formal standards development process

Stakeholders identify need for a new standard

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A preliminary study to gather pertinent data is conducted

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A draft outline is developed

↓

A committee (new or existing) oversees content development

↓

Committee meets regularly to establish / maintain consensus

↓

Committee votes on completed draft standard

↓

When approved, standard becomes final and is published

Some standards, guidelines on how to use a particular standard, as well as accompanying technical documentation become mandatory when they are included by reference in government regulations. Wherever referenced in building and electrical codes for example, these are the standards and associated documents that must be applied.

Most standards in Canada, however, are voluntary, i.e. not mandated by law, in that industry and affected stakeholders choose to work together to develop a standard via the above-mentioned consensus process. This process can occur in both an industry-specific context, with the resulting standard(s) applying specifically to a particular industry, as well as a more formal basis through balanced representation of multiple stakeholder groupings (e.g. industry, regulators, consumers etc.). Standards that are developed via this formalized process will have broader applicability and greater potential to address the goals of a variety of interest groups, both in Canada and globally.

You can find information on how to locate the standard you need in ANNEX A of this guide.

3.2 Standards activities in Canada

The Standards Council of Canada (SCC) coordinates standardization in Canada, meaning it makes recommendations as to areas where standards add value to the Canadian economy. The SCC monitors trends, identifies gaps and challenges so as to maximize the existing standardization infrastructure. Although it does not develop standards, the SCC is responsible for approving standards as *National Standards of Canada.* Most importantly, however, the SCC accredits Canada's standards development organizations (SDOs).

In Canada, there are four SCC-accredited SDOs:

CSA Group	CGSB	ULC Standards / Normes ULC	BNQ BUREAU DE NORMALISATION DU QUÉBEC
Canadian Standards Association (CSA International)	Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB)	Underwriters Laboratories Canada (ULC)	Bureau de Normalisation du Québec (BNQ)

Canada's SDOs form and lead the work of committees of stakeholders, as they develop new Canadian standards, or work on adopting or adapting relevant international standards in a range of subject areas. Most SDOs, however, generally operate in agreed-upon specialty areas that best reflect their sectors of expertise.

Among the basic principles of standards development in Canada are that:

- Consensus must be sought from all involved parties;
- The process must be open and transparent;
- Standards development activities must be rooted in the national interest; and
- A new standard must not introduce unnecessary barriers to trade.

As the key steward of standardization activities in Canada, the Standards Council of Canada (SCC) provides necessary administrative, management, and policy research

support to Canada's national system. It provides a neutral platform for stakeholders, regulators and standards development bodies to come together at a national level to work towards beneficial outcomes and common agreements.

The SCC oversees a comprehensive network of standardization experts from across a range of stakeholder interests and industries, all of which contribute to progressing standards development in various key sectors.

For information about those standards development organizations (national and international) that are active in Canada, please visit SCC's [web site]*. You can find information on how to get involved in standards development in Annex B of this guide.*

3.3 Canada's involvement in international standards development

The Standards Council of Canada (SCC) represents Canada's interests on the global standards stage as a member of two organizations that develop international, non-governmental standards. Both are located in Geneva, Switzerland:

- International Organization for Standardization (ISO) — internationally recognized for standards development in a wide range of fields; and

- International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) — internationally recognized for standards development in the field of electro-technology.

SCC's involvement with these international bodies enables Canada to stay connected with the international standards community. Active participation by Canadians in the work of international committees provides a means for Canada's needs and interests to be considered during the development of those standards which are likely to be applied in Canada.

National "mirror" committees are established in order to help formulate a Canadian position or response to an international standard, and provide a means for Canada's interests to be considered. Stakeholder members are able to discuss requirements and technical specifications that are important for the particular sector to which the standard in question will apply. Mirror committees are composed of representatives from industry, government, the research community, as well as public interest and consumer groups. The SCC coordinates these activities and supports the national mirror committees through administrative, management and policy research support.

Canadian representatives also participate in various regional organizations that consider the impact of specific standards and the implications of these on groups and types of products that are manufactured, distributed and sold in their region.

Canada's four SCC-accredited standards development organizations (SDOs) determine whether to participate in mirror and/ or international committees based on their subject expertise, providing practical knowledge and input to the conversation.

Canada is a reputable player on the regional and international standards scene, operating with influence to help shape the global standards landscape. Through Canada's national system, Canadians are able to contribute to the development of internationally recognized best practices for the manufacture, distribution and sale of safer consumer products.

NOTE: Both ISO and IEC maintain international committees and project groups whose work focuses on consumer product safety- related issues. Some limited examples include:

- ISO TC 243 – Project Committee: Consumer Product Safety;
- ISO TC 240 – Project Committee: Product Recall;
- IEC TC 61 – Safety of Household and Similar Electrical Appliances; and
- IEC TC 34 – Lamps and Related Equipment.

You can find information on how to get involved in standards development in Annex B of this guide.

4. Conformity assessment and consumer product safety

4.1 What is conformity assessment?

Conformity assessment comprises a framework of prescribed evaluation methods, enabling a designated specialist to examine your product and ascertain its safety, functionality and quality. This will help you establish credible proof that your product has been manufactured, imported, and/or sold in accordance with applicable regulations and product safety standards.

A conformity assessment specialist may perform several types of checks pertaining to product safety, including:

- Tests of the finished product or product samples;
- Audits of the entire production cycle to check whether proper procedures are followed; or
- Inspections of the physical factory facilities to verify that the work environment is conducive to the proper application of standards.

Many products in Canada bear one or more marks — such as the sampling shown here — from toasters to blind cords, to children's toys. These marks are visible proof that a product conforms to a specified standard or standards. In other words, the product has gone through a series of validations and received certification that it has successfully met established requirements.

4.2 Benefits of conformity assessment

Certification provides a means of demonstrating your product's safety to all. If you obtain certification through proper conformity assessment channels, such as an SCC-

accredited certification body, consumers will have confidence in the integrity of your product.

Internationally recognized as a reliable indicator of technical competence, conformity assessment activities facilitate market acceptance for manufacturers, importers, and sellers by providing confidence that the applicable requirements are being met. This means that:

- Products manufactured in, imported into and/ or sold in Canada will be safe for consumers to use;
- All necessary components will work together;
- All parties are effectively managing the impact of their activities on health, safety and the environment; and
- Services are being delivered in a consistent fashion.

Your bottom line will reflect the confidence that consumers and trade partners will have in your product, and in your business' reputation in both the Canadian market and abroad. Consumer product safety and conformity assessment go hand-in-hand. Together they are vital to the growth of Canada's economy and to preserving and enhancing Canadians' quality of life.

4.3 What is the right conformity assessment approach for my business?

There is no one, definitive guideline that prescribes the conformity assessment practice which is most appropriate for a particular type of product or industry sector. The type of product certification scheme that is right for your product and your business greatly depends on:

- The level of risk to the consumer in the event of any safety incident; and
- The nature of your product.

If your product represents a fairly low safety risk to potential consumers, you may have more flexibility in your choice of conformity assessment solution. Conformity assessment activities can be undertaken at various stages of the production cycle and with varying levels of independence from parties involved in the supply chain. **Table 2** describes some of the methods applied in the assessment of products.

Table 2: Methods applied in product assessment

Testing
- Generally occurs at the end of a manufacturing cycle;   - Verifies that one or more characteristics of a product conform to a particular standard or standards; and   - Can be performed in-house or by an external testing body.

Factory audit / facility inspection
- Examines the physical manufacturing facility; and   - Reviews any or all stages of the production cycle, including product design, management process or installation of a product or system.

Implementation of a management system
▪ Provides infrastructure for proper production processes to be followed, proper documentation to be kept, and facilitates adherence to key project markers.

Product Inspection
▪ Offers an option for importers/ sellers who are bringing uncertified products into Canada; and ▪ Assesses products according to Canada's safety standards via non-destructive evaluation.

4.3.1 Types of conformity assessment

There are three main types of conformity assessment activities practiced in Canada and internationally (as outlined in **table 3**).

Table 3: The basics of the three commonly practiced types of conformity assessment

First-party conformity assessment	

▪ Is performed by a person or organization with direct involvement in the development and market supply of the product.
▪ A manufacturer may test and/ or inspect product in their own laboratory to determine whether one or more characteristics of the product adhere to applicable technical standards and requirements.
▪ Assessments can include any of the following:
   o Product designs;
   o Materials and production processes; and
   o Quality, usability and durability of the product.
▪ A manufacturer makes a *Supplier's Declaration of Conformity (SDoC)* upon completion of the production cycle and subsequent product testing.	

Benefits	Limitations

▪ SDoC method is performed in-house; no outsourcing is necessary.
▪ The process is simple for sectors with:
   o Established regulatory framework;
   o History of compliance; and
   o Effective deterrents to prevent violations.
	▪ Managing and administering conformity assessment procedures in-house can be resource-intensive.
	▪ It is not considered a reliable solution for products that pose higher potential risks to consumers.
	▪ The credibility of results is questionable as assessments may contain biases in favour of the manufacturer/ supplier.

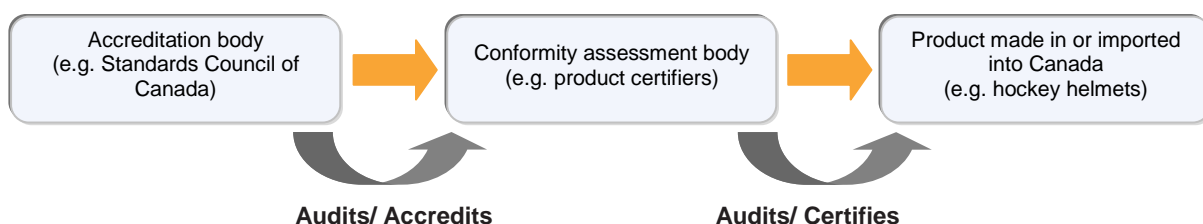| Second-party conformity assessment |
|---|
| ▪ Is generally performed at the end of a manufacturing cycle by a person or organization that has a user interest in the product.
▪ Buyers or users of the product and/ or potential customers test and inspect the product to determine whether one or more characteristics of the product adhere to applicable technical standards and requirements.
▪ Assessments can include any of the following:
   o Product designs;
   o Materials and production processes; and
   o Quality, usability and durability of the product. |

Benefits	Limitations
▪ There is improved reliability over first-party assessment as buyers may have a less direct stake in the results of the assessments. ▪ It can provide a factual basis for independent third-party assessment activities to build-upon.	▪ The outsourcing of assessment activities may be necessary (slightly higher costs and overhead). ▪ It is not a reliable solution for products that pose higher potential risks to consumers. ▪ The credibility of results is still questionable, as a buyer still maintains a stake in assessment results.

Third-party conformity assessment
▪ Is performed by an independent person or body that performs many such assessments and has no direct investment in the specific product/ person or organization that supplies the product.

Benefits	Limitations
▪ The third-party method provides demonstrated, credible results that are recognized by industry and regulators. ▪ It provides *unbiased* and *objective* results as third-party evaluators do not have stake in product/ company/ assessment outcomes. ▪ It is the most appropriate method for products that pose a potential high safety risk.	▪ It does not include data or results from first- or second-party assessments. ▪ It requires more resources than first- or second-party assessment activities.

4.3.2 The Canadian context

There is an intricate network of professionals, regulators and other stakeholders who work in the conformity assessment environment in Canada. Individuals and organizations who produce, import and market products, those who conduct conformity assessment, their clients, consumer advocate groups — as well as Canada's local, provincial/ territorial and federal governments — are all implicated in this network.

At the center of this network, considered one of the most comprehensive and well-coordinated national infrastructures in the world, the Standards Council of Canada (SCC) acts as a hub for standards and conformity assessment matters. The SCC facilitates open channels of communication between industry, conformity assessment bodies, and regulators on a national level. As Canada's national accreditation body, the SCC audits and accredits organizations that perform assessments of conformity to standards, including consumer product certification bodies. **Figure 3** outlines the process as follows:

Figure 3: Accreditation and its role in conformity assessment

| Accreditation body (e.g. Standards Council of Canada) | → | Conformity assessment body (e.g. product certifiers) | → | Product made in or imported into Canada (e.g. hockey helmets) |

Audits/ Accredits   **Audits/ Certifies**

Conformity assessment activities in Canada are based on a shared set of principles pertaining to:

- Safeguarding the health and safety of Canadians;

- Protection of the environment;

- Open, accessible and credible operations;

- Full cooperation with and support of regulatory requirements; and

- Methods rooted in international standards/ protocols and that do not create unnecessary obstacles to trade.

As a result of collective efforts, the Canadian conformity assessment system is strong. This strength comes from a solid foundation, the underlying international guides, standards and protocols upon which it is built, as well as the key leadership role that the SCC plays both at home and in the international arena.

4.4 How does conformity assessment affect consumer confidence?

An uncertified and thus potentially unsafe product can create negative public perception and shaky consumer confidence in your business. Product recalls are costly and disruptive to your operations, your company's reputation, and to your industry.

An environment in which all parties involved in the product supply chain "follow the rules" via proper conformity assessment practices fosters a savvier and more confident consumer base. It creates greater demand for better quality consumer products and services. Counterfeit and unsafe products are counter-productive to consumer confidence, and to the broader Canadian economy.

When products are properly assessed to examine their safety and quality, the Canadian market opens-up both at home and abroad. Products that are consistently brought to market (i.e. manufactured, imported and/ or sold) according to recognized standards and regularly assessed to verify conformance, contribute to Canada's reputation in the manufacturing and trade arena. Demonstrating safety, competency and quality, provides peace of mind for Canadian consumers.

4.5 What are the risks of not choosing conformity assessment solutions for your product?

Disregarding the importance of conformity assessment activities can be a sure-fire way to introduce a host of avoidable issues. **Table 4** outlines some avoidable risks of not choosing a conformity assessment solution.

Table 4: Key risks of not using conformity assessment for your product

Risk to consumers
- Potential for damage, serious injury, long-term health risks or loss of life through use of unsafe product(s); and   - Unsafe products may pose additional hazards that could also jeopardize health and well-being.

Risk of non-compliance with regulations
- Legal liability in case of incidents (e.g. fines, penalties or potential criminal action);   - Regulators may enforce corrective measures (e.g. recall orders);   - Potential seizure of assets; and

- Release of confidential business information that could affect your business's reputation and market standing.

Risk to your competitiveness/ market efficiency

- Loss of revenue in the event of a product recall;
- Lower consumer confidence in your product as consumers may choose competitor's product on basis of proven marks of certification;
- Your product may not be compatible with others in the same industry;
- Your product may not be compatible with certain components or accessories it may need; and
- Knowledge gap of what is current best practice in your industry could put your competitive edge at risk.

4.6 Cross-border product safety challenges

Health Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) have been effective in working from within Canada to prevent many prohibited, counterfeit or unsafe products from being brought into the country.

However, cooperation and consumer product safety enforcement on an international level pose many challenges. There is often no single overarching, governing body to provide parameters for universal trade and product safety approaches.

Some of the cross-border safety challenges include:

- Product safety sanctions and remedies that are not consistent across the board in every country;

- Divergent product safety requirements and regulations within a particular country (different provincial, territorial or district jurisdictions);

- Increased pressure on resources of product safety regulators as the diversity of manufactured products continues to increase;

- The regulatory complexity of other countries, which may add an additional layer of red tape;

- Harmonized international enforcement activities that are growing in demand as efforts to streamline trade flow between countries increase;

- Business obligations that are not consistent across the board in every country; and

- Product standards and technical requirements, which are often inconsistent in different countries.

Canada is working with regulators and industry stakeholders to find ways to facilitate product safety across borders. Some of Canada's main objectives in this regard are to encourage:

- Improved access to and exchange of policy information, warnings and alerts;

- Harmonization of standards and conformity assessment recognition on an international level; and

- Enforcement of regulations and associated penalties in cases of violation.

For more information on cross-border product safety challenges, consult [Health Canada](#) or [Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA)](#). You can find their contact information in Annex D of this guide.

4.7 If I am importing products from another country, will Canada accept foreign national certification?

The SCC is signatory to a number of international and regional agreements that focus on cooperation for the purposes of establishing a harmonized global system of conformity assessment procedures and accreditation recognition. These agreements are designed to reduce the need for duplication of certain conformity assessment activities such as product testing, inspection or accreditation of those bodies performing the conformity assessment tasks. As depicted in **table 5**, there are generally two types of such agreements.

Table 5: Types of international and regional recognition agreements

Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs)	Multilateral Recognition Agreements (MLAs)
▪ Binding agreements between governments ▪ Conformity assessment and accreditation procedures are accepted in high risk sectors that involve consumer safety or the integrity of major infrastructures (e.g. medical devices, telecommunications networks, power grids, etc.)	▪ Voluntary agreements between accreditation bodies (such as SCC) ▪ Mutual recognition of conformity assessment results from bodies that are accredited by an MLA member accreditation body ▪ Goods can more easily ship between countries that are part of an MLA, without having to go through multiple checks

Depending on your business sector, there may either be an MRA or an MLA in-place between Canada and other trade partner countries. The existence of such agreements, or lack thereof, will play a key role in your choice of conformity assessment solutions. Foreign certification and testing results are measured against Canadian standards and conformity assessment requirements as referenced in applicable regulations.

Results from non-accredited bodies may face limited recognition in Canada and around the globe. Among the available options, third-party conformity assessment solutions remove the resource burden of examining your product through your own channels and provide solid proof that your product has been reviewed by a credible independent/ objective party.

Regulators as well as market partners in Canada and abroad increasingly rely on conformity assessment performed by accredited bodies to verify that products sold to consumers meet the safety and performance requirements specified in national or international standards. Conformity assessment results obtained through an accredited third-party can facilitate this recognition and reduce the need for duplicate testing and re-assessments, thus reducing costs and transit time for your products.

Canadian manufacturers, importers, exporters and distributors all benefit from international and regional cooperation agreements. They are fundamental to the preservation of Canada's manufacturing sector and to its ability to participate in global supply chains. Ultimately, the goal is to arrive at a global accreditation regime that enables manufacturers, importers and sellers, for example, to use a single test, certification or registration to gain market acceptance anywhere in the world.

5. Putting it all together

Together, standards and conformity assessment form the backbone of the consumer product safety arena; they help enable accountability, foster trust, contribute to building consumer confidence in products and reduce the dangers of playing in the product safety field.

Equipped with the necessary knowledge, tools and information to help you navigate the consumer product safety arena in Canada and abroad, you and your business have the potential to make your products as safe as possible for Canadian consumers. Products that are consistently brought to market (i.e. manufactured, imported and/ or sold) according to recognized standards and regularly assessed to verify conformance, help establish Canada's reputation in the manufacturing and trade arena.

Understanding your standardization and conformity assessment options will not only improve your operations, facilitate compliance with regulations, but also expand your company's potential for growth and innovation. You are encouraged to research, acquire and apply relevant standards and conformity assessment solutions in your business practices.

As coordinator of Canada's active standardization network, SCC is a valuable resource to help your business reach its highest potential in the realm of consumer product safety.

You can learn about becoming involved in standards development and/ or choosing the standards and conformity assessment solutions that are right for you in Annexes A, B and C of this guide.

ANNEX A: Locate the standard you need

Are you interested in purchasing standards?

Whether you're looking for international, foreign national or Canadian standards, the SCC Standards Store offers a comprehensive catalogue of standards for a variety of sectors. It provides you with easy and efficient access to the standardization tools you need to compete in today's global markets. Browse the [Standards Store](#) site and find the standard that is right for you.

If you have specific questions about standards or would like help with locating the standard you need, contact the SCC.

Reach us by phone: 613 238 3222

Fax: 613 569 7808

Or by email: info@scc.ca

ANNEX B: Get involved in standards development

Overseen by the Standards Council of Canada (SCC), Canada's standardization network offers interested volunteers with opportunities to contribute to Canadian and international standardization. Made up of more than 400 organizations and approximately 15,000 volunteers, Canada's standardization network includes people and organizations from all walks of life and sectors that have an interest in developing, promoting and implementing standards. Among its members are included industry, consumer and non-governmental organizations, governments and organizations involved in standards development, calibration and testing, registration and certification.

As a volunteer, you will have the opportunity to:

- Influence how Canadian and international standards are developed;
- Network with others in your field;
- Learn skills that will give you an advantage in the work force;
- Raise your company's profile;
- Gain a reputation as a leader;
- Develop career and business opportunities;
- Promote awareness of standardization; and
- Bring Canadian interests to the international stage.

Your knowledge and experience are important to Canada's standardization network. Discover how you can contribute most, and at the same time, expand your professional opportunities.

You and your business can get involved at the ground level and become influencers and standards "makers". Joining the standards community will help your business shape the standards landscape and contribute to the development of recognized best practices for the manufacture and distribution of safe consumer products in Canada, as well as around the globe.

To learn more, visit www.scc.ca.

Reach us by phone: 613 238-3222

Fax: 613 569 7808

Or by email: info@scc.ca

ANNEX C: Find the right conformity assessment body for your product

The Standards Council of Canada (SCC) is your link to qualified product and service certification bodies. Full listings of all SCC-accredited certification bodies are easily accessible on our website. Browse for the latest certification news and information: www.scc.ca

Do you have specific questions?

Reach us by phone: 613 238 3222

Fax: 613 569 7808

Or by email: info@scc.ca

Accreditation is a valuable way for certification bodies to demonstrate to potential clients that they are dependable and committed to quality of service. If you are interested in becoming an SCC-accredited certification body, contact the SCC to find out more.

ANNEX D: Additional key contacts

Health Canada provides comprehensive regulatory information on consumer product safety. Browse the Health Canada web site for details about specific product sectors, for publications and additional resources.

Contact Health Canada's Consumer Product Safety Bureau toll free: 1 866 662 0666

Or by email: CPS-SPC@hc-sc.gc.ca

Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) is responsible for monitoring the traffic of commercial and non-commercial goods at Canada's borders. Browse the commercial sector section of the CBSA web site for further information on trade programs, customs requirements and cross-border issues of consumer product safety.

Contact CBSA toll free: 1 800 461 9999
French language service: 1 800 959 2036

Or by email: Contact@cbsa.gc.ca

Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (DFAIT) offers all the trade-related information you need to do business in Canada and abroad. Browse the DFAIT web site for the latest market reports, read about international trade agreements or find out about importing/ exporting goods.

Contact DFAIT toll free: 1 800 267 8376

Or submit an inquiry online.

If your browser does not support forms, send your email to: enqserv@international.gc.ca

ANNEX E: Glossary of acronyms and technical terms

Accreditation is the process of assessing the competence, monitoring performance and auditing organizations to ensure that they possess the necessary qualifications, capacity and appropriate tools to perform their mandated tasks correctly. Accreditation may be suspended or even withdrawn, should they fail to perform according to the required parameters.

Accreditation body is an organization that assesses and grants accreditation to conformity assessment bodies.

Adaptation (of a standard) is the process of altering the content of a standard (usually either an international or regional standard) to suit the needs and specifications of a particular nation. If a particular standard is of interest to Canada, a committee of stakeholder representatives can work to ensure that the standard is adjusted to meet Canada's unique ecological, economic, technical and social requirements before it becomes a nationally accepted standard.

Adoption (of a standard) is the process of accepting the content of a standard (usually either an international or regional standard) without change, because it suits the needs and specifications of a particular nation as-is. If a particular standard is of interest to Canada, the standard can be accepted by a committee of stakeholder representatives as a nationally recognized standard without any alteration of the content, if/when it aligns with Canada's ecological, economic, technical and social requirements.

Certification is the process used to confirm that a product, process or system conforms to the requirements of a particular standard. In the case of product certification, it is the process of certifying that a certain product has been assessed against specific performance and quality assurance tests or qualification requirements.

Conformity assessment is the practice of determining whether a product, service or system meets the requirements of a particular standard. A product, system or service that undergoes conformity assessment is reviewed by a certification body that, based on the particular parameters of the product, system or service in question, performs all necessary reviews, tests and inspections of the production cycle, processes and associated documentation. If the product, system or service meets requirements associated with a particular standard, it can then receive official certification.

Harmonization is the practice of aligning those standards and regulations used on an international or regional basis so as to facilitate the flow of goods between countries. This may include the mutual recognition of accreditations, certifications and other conformity assessment results.

Incident is any event involving a consumer product (in Canada or another country). It may involve a feature or defect of a product, and/or inaccurate or insufficient information on a label or instructions (or lack thereof) which has resulted in, or may result in, loss of life or serious adverse health effects, including injury.

Inspection is the examination of a product design, service, or process, and determination of its conformity with specific requirements; evaluation by observation and judgement accompanied as appropriate by measurement and testing.

National Standard of Canada (NSC) is a standard that has been approved by the Standards Council of Canada (SCC), as having met the necessary procedural criteria to address Canadian conditions.

Standard is a document that was researched, developed, reviewed and agreed-upon via a consensus-based process involving balanced representation of affected stakeholders on a national, regional and/ or international level. The standard describes the important features of that product, service or system and the essential requirements that must be met for the product, service or system to be considered developed or functioning in accordance with these predetermined requirements.

Standardization is the practice of developing and implementing standards. The process encompasses a wide range of activities, from the participation of subject matter experts in the drafting of standards, to the use of conformity assessment, certification and accreditation.

Supplier's Declaration of Conformity (SDoC) is a document (advertisement or leaflet), which is voluntarily released by a manufacturer that declares that a particular product, system or service has been developed and produced in accordance with a particular standard or standards.