



## Information Bulletin

Planning and Program Integration Division – Program Services

# PRECIOUS METALS – BULLION AND COIN TARIFF CLASSIFICATION AND HST EXEMPTION

In recent months, there has been an increase in the buying and selling of precious metals with many people looking to this commodity as an investment strategy, a "hedge" or safe haven against economic, political, social or currency issues. Gold is the most popular metal with silver, platinum and palladium the other major investment metals. All have risen in price over the past several years as demand has increased around the globe.

When imported into Canada, precious metals in certain forms are duty-free and GST/HST exempt. They will be duty-free by the application of the proper tariff classification and tax exempt by means of the Non-Taxable Imported Goods (GST/HST) Regulations (paragraph 3(a)). **Please note:** currently, the Travelers Entry Processing System (TEPS) is applying GST/HST to imported precious metals. This error is due to be corrected with the next release but until this takes place, the TEPS user can change the default GST/HST field. A Cross-Border Currency or Monetary Instrument Report (E667 or E677) is not required to be filed for precious metals importation at this time.

The purpose of this bulletin is to provide information to port-of-entry personnel that will assist them in identifying, classifying and documenting goods made of precious metals.

## What is a Precious Metal?

A metal is deemed to be precious if it is rare. A precious metal is defined in the Excise Tax Act as:

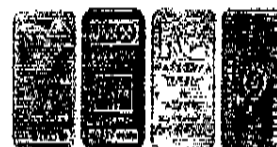
...a bar, ingot, coin or wafer that is composed of gold, silver or platinum and that is refined to a purity level of at least:

- (a) 99.5% in the case of gold and platinum, and
- (b) 99.9% in the case of silver.

A precious metal in the form of a bar, ingot or wafer at the required purity levels must be recognized and accepted for trading on Canadian financial markets. They will bear markings indicating their purity level and will also have an identification mark of the issuing financial institution or refinery. With respect to coins, only those metals at the required purity levels that have been issued by a government authority and that may be used as currency will qualify. (Although not specifically named in the Excise Tax Act, the accepted purity level for palladium is 99.5%.)

## Is There a Difference Between 'Bullion' and 'Coin'?

The bulk quantity of precious metals are referred to as **bullion** which describes a precious metal formed into bars, ingots or other forms, generally as distinguished from coins. Bullion is assessed by weight and purity level, and is traded on its intrinsic metal value. The weight of bullion is usually measured in troy ounces, where one troy ounce is equal to approximately 31g. A recognized bullion bar is one that was minted by a major, well-known refinery, such as the Royal Canadian Mint or Johnson-Matthey, and is accepted for trading on Canadian financial markets.



A coin is a piece of metal intended for use as legal tender and stamped with marks or inscriptions which show that it was issued by an authority that guarantees its weight and purity. The word 'bullion' is also used to refer to coins and many mints issue bullion in coin form. Although a precious metal coin is produced with a negotiable face value (also known as the denomination), the bullion content is typically much higher than the face value and such coins are bought and sold based on how much bullion they contain and the current market rates for the metal.

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Bullion coins are not to be confused with numismatic coins which are old or rare currencies that are collected for their historical significance and aesthetic quality. A numismatic coin can be a regular-issue coin or commemorative coin, token or trade dollar. Examples of this would be antique coins, such as the Greek coin or special Christmas issue of a Canadian 50-cent piece, pictured at right. They are collectible but the worth of these coins is generally determined by the finish, rarity, and design. Although numismatic coins can include precious metal coins that were once legal tender, the market is quite different than that for bullion coins which is based entirely on the value of the precious metal itself.



### Identifying Precious Metals

- **Manufacturer** – The entity that casts the bullion is identified on the surface. On bars, this is usually a company or government. On coins, it is a country's government mint.
- **Weight** – The weight of the bullion is listed in either ounces or grams. The weight refers to the weight of the metal contained in the bullion and not the overall weight of the coin or bar.
- **Purity** – The purity is listed as a decimal. For example, gold is shown as .9999 pure, or in karats like 24K, both of which are considered pure gold. If the gold bullion purity is not marked, it is 22K gold or 91.3 percent gold. Platinum will also show .9999 while silver and palladium will be marked from .995 (minimum) to .9999.
- **Date** – The year a bullion coin is minted is usually stamped on it. Most bullion bars do not have dates.
- **Identification** – Many bars have identification numbers stamped on them. Most coins do not.



Examples of precious metal. Left to right: Canadian \$50 gold coin; silver bullion bar; Royal Canadian Mint gold ingot; Credit Suisse platinum wafer.

### Tariff Classification

When imported, precious metals in bar, ingot or wafer forms are to be treated as goods for customs purposes and classified accordingly. Coins are also to be treated as goods and not as currency. Although the coins technically have legal tender status in Canada, the face value of a gold, silver or platinum bullion coin is purely symbolic and much lower than its actual market value. Only those coins minted with metals at the required purity levels and issued by a government authority qualify. A Cross-Border Currency or Monetary Instrument Report (E667 or E677) is not required to be filed by an importer or exporter at this time.

The following tariff classifications are recommended:

Silver bullion	7106.91.00.11	Silver bullion, unwrought forms, containing by weight 92.5% or more of silver
Gold bullion	7108.12.00.11	Gold bullion, unwrought forms, containing by weight not less than 99.95% of gold
Platinum bullion	7110.11.00.00	Platinum, unwrought or in powder form
Palladium bullion	7110.21.00.00	Palladium, unwrought or in powder form
Gold coins	7118.90.00.10	Gold coin, being legal tender
Silver or Platinum Canadian coins	7118.90.00.91	Canadian coins, other than gold, being legal tender
Silver, Platinum or Palladium coins	7118.90.00.99	Coin, other than gold or Canadian, being legal tender

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## Niagara / Fort Erie

### Document Completion and Applying Tax Exemption

It is advisable to complete a B15 Casual Goods Import Document for declared importations of precious metals. Given the values of such importations, it is in the importer's best interests to have documentation of such goods.

When completing a B15, go to the TEPS screen and select a commodity or enter a tariff item. When the calculation page opens up, the selected commodity or tariff item will be shown, along with the appropriate rate of duty (which should be nil) and an HST rate of 13%. At the bottom of the screen, it will say "Do you need to update any of the above information?" Enter Y for yes. Tab over to the GST/HST and enter zero. Tab down until the Declared Value box comes up, at which time a value should be entered and the process can continue as usual. (Please note that all B15s that are overridden in this manner will appear on the end of day report.)

For enforcement actions, in the Allegation area, select the appropriate allegation (i.e. non-report) and level then click Continue to proceed to the Commodity screen. From the drop-down commodity menu, select **Unconditionally Duty Free & Tax Exempt Goods**. At this time, this is the selection that will apply the appropriate Terms of Release for precious metals of this type, as outlined in the Enforcement Manual – Part 5, Chapter 2, section 101. Selecting the Metal Products, Precious Metals commodity will apply the grouping principle of calculating terms of release based on a percentage of combined rates of duty and taxes.

**In the event of a seizure of precious metals, Border Services Officers and Superintendents are requested to contact the Intelligence Unit at 905-354-6595, or after hours by using the duty-pager 1-800-263-1420, unit 352801.**

### Determining Value in the Absence of Receipts or Documentation

Legitimate importers of precious metals will most likely have sales receipts showing the purchase price of their goods, as well as full descriptions that will aid in classification. However, it does happen that receipts are lost or, in the case of undeclared goods, that documentation is not available or expected.

Should a receipt or other documentation not be available, it is suggested that an Internet search for current prices of precious metals be conducted. Such prices will not be available from the Bank of Canada as this agency does not provide them, unlike the daily currency exchange rates. It will, therefore, be necessary to rely on commercially-based websites. Some websites that are currently available and can be used for research are shown below. These sites report daily market quotes but it is suggested that more than one website be checked to determine an accurate and/or average price.

[www.scotiamocatta.com](http://www.scotiamocatta.com)

Scotia-Mocatta is the global bullion banking division of the Bank of Nova Scotia, formed in 1997 by the bank's acquisition of Mocatta Bullion from Standard Chartered Bank in London. Currently, up-to-the-minute prices for gold, silver, platinum and palladium are shown in a bar at the top of the home page. Prices are also available by going to Tools then Precious Metals Pricing and selecting the desired metal.

<http://www.kitco.com/market>

Kitco is an American-based precious metals retailer, with a location in Montreal. On the home page, a precious metals chart provides a Canadian dollar link to a one-page summary of current gold, silver, platinum and palladium prices.

<http://goldprice.org/>

Goldprice is an Australian website providing free gold information – they do not buy or sell precious metals. Prices for other types of precious metals can be accessed by clicking on the appropriate links on the website's home page or using their affiliated addresses: <http://silverprice.org/> - <http://platinumprice.org/> - <http://palladiumprice.org/>

### Further Information

For additional information or guidance, please contact Julia Cossitt, Program Services at 905-354-6595, ext. 241.

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