

CANADIAN PAPER TARIFFS

WHAT DIFFERENCE CAN 1.5 POUNDS MAKE?

One paper change reveals why tariff exposure is a product-by-product question.

A new 50% tariff on specified Canadian goods is scheduled to take effect August 19, 2026. The headline is easy. The operational answer is not. The tariff applies to listed classifications - not to every Canadian paper product - and a duty assessed at 50% of customs value does not automatically become a 50% increase in a printer's paper price.^[1]

1 IN 3 OF U.S. CHAPTER 48 IMPORTS CAME FROM CANADA IN 2025

By value: \$6.59B of \$19.94B in the broad paper, paperboard and related-products category.^[5]

ONE MILL'S PROPOSED RESPONSE

On July 30, Kruger advised customers that it now expects its 50#, 55# and 60# coated-groundwood grades to be subject to the tariff. After reviewing the products and consulting trade experts, the mill proposed a temporary 48.5# basis weight that it says would not be subject. It also began pulling production forward and asking customers to consider earlier shipments.^[3]

Kruger's response is one proposed solution for one product line. What makes it useful here is not the company name; it is the demonstration of operational flexibility. The mill examined a technical boundary, changed what it could produce and created another choice before the tariff deadline.

THE TECHNICAL DIVIDING LINE

50#	72	48.5#
	g/m² LIMIT	
≈ 74.0 g/m ²		≈ 71.8 g/m ²

The HTS definition of lightweight coated paper includes a total-weight ceiling of 72 g/m². The 1.5# change appears designed to cross that line.^[2]

WHY THE ANSWER IS STILL COMPLICATED

- The tariff is classification-specific. "Canadian paper" is too broad to guide a purchase, quote or customer recommendation.
- Weight is only one condition. Coating, fiber content and other product characteristics also help determine classification.^[2]
- The official annex warns against shorthand. Its product descriptions are informational; questions about a particular HTS provision should be referred to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.^[1]
- Company-level exposure cannot be inferred from market data. It depends on the grades a printer buys, where they originate, when they enter the United States and how costs move through the supply chain.

THE POINT: A 1.5-POUND CHANGE MAY AFFECT TARIFF TREATMENT - AND IT MAY ALSO CHANGE THE PAPER, THE PRODUCTION PLAN AND THE CUSTOMER CHOICE.

WHAT PRINTERS CAN DO NOW

VERIFY BEFORE THE MARKET FORCES THE ANSWER

Printers do not need to become customs experts. They do need to know where exposure may exist, understand the tradeoffs behind an alternative and avoid turning a supplier change into a customer promise before it has been evaluated.

1 CONFIRM THE EXPOSURE

- Which regularly purchased or specified grades come from Canada?
- What HTS classification is being used for each - and who determined it?
- Did the product enter the United States before or after August 19?
- How long is the supplier's current price valid?

2 EVALUATE ALTERNATIVES

- What other weights, grades or sources are genuinely comparable?
- Could the change affect opacity, caliper, feel or press performance?
- Could it change ink, waste, finishing, postage or delivery?
- What is the total job cost - not only the paper price?

3 PREPARE THE CONVERSATION

- Which requirement is fixed: specification, appearance, timing or budget?
- Would the customer accept a lighter or differently sourced sheet?
- Could the piece be redesigned for paper, production or postal efficiency?
- What revised specification and approval must be documented?

MATCH THE OPTION TO THE PRIORITY

PRESERVE THE SPECIFICATION	Retain the original grade and recalculate price.
PROTECT THE BUDGET	Evaluate a lighter or alternate grade.
PROTECT PERFORMANCE	Test the alternative before recommending a change.
IMPROVE TOTAL ECONOMICS	Reconsider format, page count, production and postage together.

STAY OPERATIONALLY FLEXIBLE

Kruger's proposed 48.5# grade is one response to one part of a complicated tariff action. The broader lesson is to know where materials come from, understand which specifications are truly fixed, test alternatives before promising them and be prepared to ask the harder questions about cost, performance, supply and customer priorities as market shifts occur.

CITED RESOURCES

- [1] White House fact sheet and official tariff annexes - scope, 50% duty, covered-goods treatment and August 19 effective date. [whitehouse.gov](https://www.whitehouse.gov)
- [2] U.S. International Trade Commission, Harmonized Tariff Schedule, Chapter 48 - classification language for lightweight coated paper. [hts.usitc.gov](https://www.usitc.gov)
- [3] Kruger customer communication, July 30, 2026, republished by Midland - affected grades, temporary 48.5# proposal and production actions. [midlandco.com](https://www.midlandco.com)
- [4] American Forest & Paper Association - North American paper-industry supply-chain context. [afandpa.org](https://www.afandpa.org)
- [5] 2025 UN Comtrade data summarized by Trading Economics - U.S. Chapter 48 imports (\$19.94B total; \$6.59B from Canada). [tradingeconomics.com](https://www.tradingeconomics.com)

SCOPE NOTE

This briefing is based on information available August 4, 2026. It is intended to help printers identify operational and customer questions. It is not legal, customs or economic advice. Classification, costs, inventory status and contractual implications should be verified for each specific circumstance.