

Shipping Federation of Canada

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You will find below the most recent updates related to the B.C. longshore strike, which is now in its fourth day:

Status of Negotiations

The main point of contention between the BCMEA and the ILWU is the union's desire to expand its jurisdiction over maintenance work on terminals, which the MEA believes would result in immediate and significant impacts to terminal operations and skilled labour availability. As reported in CL 11547, the lack of any substantive progress on this issue, as well as escalating ILWU demands as relates to compensation, led the BCMEA to withdraw from the bargaining table yesterday evening.

In a briefing provided to Canadian Chamber of Commerce members earlier today, the BCMEA indicated that it is ready to return to the bargaining table pending a signal from the ILWU that it is willing to engage in a genuine discussion of the maintenance issue, particularly as relates to the development of a framework for more fully examining the issue outside the bargaining process.

It is our understanding that the ILWU is meeting with the federal mediator who has been assisting with the negotiations this afternoon, with a view to determining whether there is a viable path forward. Labour Minister Seamus O'Regan also remains in Vancouver, and although he met briefly with both parties on Friday afternoon, he has not had any direct intervention in the process since then. All of the Minister's public comments to date have reiterated the view that the negotiating table is the best place at which to reach a deal.

Operational Impacts

Transport Canada resumed its daily stakeholder call on the operational impacts of the labour disruption earlier today. Below are the key points of interest arising from today's meeting:

- The Port of Vancouver is closely monitoring anchorage usage, which is at 78 percent capacity for VFPA anchorages (English Bay, the Inner Harbour and Indian Arm), and at 43 percent capacity in the Southern Gulf Islands. Of the vessels at anchor, 18 are coal ships and 12 are grain ships. Although the port has changed anchorage assignment protocols to prioritize terminals that are still operational, it is also asking vessels to slow down and adopt a near-time arrival process as an additional measure to minimize congestion and delays. The port also reports that there are twelve container vessels and four car carriers that are currently drifting offshore, which it is closely monitoring.
- The Port of Prince Rupert reports that although its two container terminals are non-operational, coal and grain shipments continue to move and anchorages remain fluid. The Port also handled two cruise ships over the weekend without any incident.
- Both CN and CP are beginning to see significant operational impacts from the labour disruption. CN is reviewing capacity allocation for its international services to BC ports, and will notify customers individually in this respect.
- From a shipper / cargo perspective, there appears to be some discontent over the government's very positive stance on the ILWU/BCMEA agreement to continue servicing cruise ships, in a context where essential goods such as perishable reefer cargo is at significant risk due to the ongoing disruption. This issue may gain more prominence in the advocacy efforts of some shipper groups over the next several days.

We will continue to monitor all of the above and provide members with updates on a daily basis. We would also ask members to keep us informed of any operational impacts arising from the labour disruption, so we can raise these with the TC stakeholder group as appropriate.