

Strike action today by BC ship and dock foremen averted by “rescind” decision ordered by Canada Industrial Relations Board

by [Leo Ryan](#) about 16 hours ago

A strike slated to start today by 600 unionized ship and dock foremen in British Columbia has been averted because of a decision announced Sunday by the Canada Industrial Relations Board.

The decision was qualified as “a spanking” by an industry source who asked to remain anonymous.

Following a case management conference after the British Columbia Maritime Employers Association (BCMEA) requested urgent CIRB intervention to stop the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 514 (ILWU) from proceeding with the work stoppage, the CIRB ruled that the strike action contravened the Canada Labour Code and ordered it to be rescinded.



Centerm Ballantyne Terminal at the Port of Vancouver

Rapidly, the BCMEA withdrew its industry-wide lockout notice of “defensive action” for potential effect as of July 9.

The deadlocked waterfront labour negotiations are being anxiously watched by Canadian business circles who do not want to see a repeat of the serious supply chain disruptions caused last July when 7,400 longshoremen went on strike. The conflict paralyzed cargo shipments through the ports of Vancouver and Prince Rupert – major Canadian Pacific gateways. An estimated C\$10 billion worth of Canadian trade was disrupted during the strike.

In its ruling, the Board stated: “After consideration of the parties’ submissions filed in these matters, the Board has determined that the union has declared or authorized a strike in contravention of the Code. More specifically, the Board finds that, in the circumstances of this case, the union failed to bargain in good faith when it conducted a strike vote amongst the employees of only one member employer of the BCMEA and issued a strike notice based on that strike vote.”

The “one member employer” referred to is DP World, which has been a special target of union concerns due to the automation plans for its significantly expanded Centerm container terminal in the Port of Vancouver.

The Board concluded that “the union has not met the requirements of section 89(1)b(ii) of the Code. Accordingly, pursuant to section 91(2) of the Code, the Board

directs the union to rescind its strike notice of July 5, 2024, and to advise its members forthwith that the strike notice is rescinded.”

The BCMEA commented it is “disappointed that these steps needed to be taken to ensure the stability of Canada's West Coast ports but is pleased with the outcome of the Board's decision.”

The CIRB hearing to address the outstanding DP World (Canada) Inc. manning proposal of the union, which the BCMEA has alleged to also be illegal, is scheduled to continue August 6-9. But in the meantime, no renewal of collective bargaining negotiations between the union and the BCMEA has been announced.

The BCMEA and ILWU have been negotiating on an industry-wide basis since November 2022. The BCMEA's latest offer included a 19.2% wage increase, which could have enhanced the median foreperson compensation from C\$246,323 to C\$293,617 annually, not including benefits and pension. The four-year proposal was in line with the negotiated 2023 longshore settlement and included:

- On average, eligible workers would have received a cumulative lump sum payment of approximately C\$15,000, inclusive of signing bonus and retroactive pay increases.
- An increased retirement benefit of C\$108,750, an increase of 16%. This lump sum retirement benefit is over and above employees' pension entitlements.

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