

Partial strike underway shuts down two Montreal container terminals

by [Leo Ryan](#) 14 hours ago

While a devastating strike looms for tomorrow on the US East and Gulf coasts, Canada is dealing with its own labour conflict at the Port of Montreal, the largest Canadian container gateway on the Eastern Seaboard. But for the present the work stoppage has taken the form of a three-day partial strike that has shut down two of the port's five container terminals as of early today.

The Viau and Maisonneuve terminals are operated by Termont that the longshore union – Local 375 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees - targeted for initial industrial action. Termont handles about 40% of Montreal's total container traffic and employs some 350 dockers out of the port's 1,120 longshore workers.

The existing collective agreement expired on December 31, 2023.



The Maritime Employers Association (MEA) indicated it had tried all possible means of averting the planned strike but to no avail.

“The MEA's efforts through mediation, supported by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, and at an emergency hearing this afternoon (Sunday) at the Canada Industrial Relations Board, did not bear fruit,” the industry group stated. “The MEA had sincerely hoped to find common ground between the parties so that we could maintain operations. We are thus disappointed with this outcome.”

The MEA said its priority remains the conclusion of a negotiated collective agreement within the briefest possible delay.

A complete shutdown of the Port of Montreal, even for just one week, could have an impact of tens of millions of dollars on Canada's GDP and impact severely on supply chains.

Union spokesman Michel Murray had told a press conference last Friday the union would be willing to lift the strike notice if Termont, which has a long-term agreement to handle traffic from Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC), was willing to address two issues. One concerned the use of senior foremen during operations that has been greatly reduced. The other involved scheduling that was not supposed to be used frequently but has allegedly been abused by Termont.

In its demands with all maritime employers, the union is reportedly seeking a 20% wage increase over four years and a better work-life balance.

The union had filed a 72-hour notice on last Friday morning, saying that it would stop all work at the two terminals managed by Termont on Monday, September 30 starting at 7:00 am and finish on Thursday, October 3 at 7:00 am.

Whereas the strike has closed the Viau and Maisonneuve Termont Terminals, it's business as usual at all other Montreal terminals The Port of Montreal is emphasizing that work is expected to continue at its other terminals.

But the Montreal Port Authority (MPA) expressed "its disappointment that no agreement has been reached between the MEA and the Longshoremen's Union to avoid a work stoppage," adding that the interruption will cost \$90.7 million each day of the stoppage.

Though limited in duration and dimension, it is the third strike to hit the port of Montreal in recent years. The dockers were out for 12 days in 2020 followed by five days in 2021

Leo Ryan

CANADA CORRESPONDENT

[Contact Author](#)