

Shutdown of Canada's largest ports begins

Following the start of a strike by the foreman's union at Canada's West Coast ports employers are shutting down all container operations in a lockout impacting \$800 million in trade daily.

[Marcus Hand](#), Editor

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Fairview Container Terminal Credit: Prince Rupert Port Authority

Members of the foreman union ILWU Local 514 started a strike at [Canadian](#) West Coast ports at 8am (PT) on 4 November, in response employers, represented by the BC Maritime Employers Association (BCMEA) said they would start a lockout at 4:30pm on 4 November, "to facilitate a safe and orderly wind-down of operations".

"ILWU Local 514's strike action has already begun to impact to B.C.'s waterfront operations and strike activity can easily escalate, including a complete withdrawal of labour without notice," the BCMEA said.

The lockout does not impact cruise or grain terminals. Employers said that their final offer made to the unions on Wednesday remains open.

Despite the BCMEA and ILWU Local 514 having been engaged in talks for nearly two years over negotiating a new collective agreement which expired in March 2023, a new deal has failed to be reached.

In a statement last week ILWU Local 514 President Frank Morena said, "Our members have repeatedly tried since our contract expired on March 31, 2023 to bargain a new contract without any job action but the BCMEA employers have refused to move and now want to create a crisis instead of negotiating."

A full-scale lockout by employers was seen as a way of getting the Federal Government to intervene.

Related: [Canada West Coast ports respond to dockworker strike with lockout](#)

Canada's Labour Minister Steven MacKinnon posted on social media platform X, "Federal mediators are on site, ready to assist the parties. It is the responsibility of the parties to reach an agreement. Businesses, workers, and farmers are counting on them to get a deal."

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) called for Federal Government intervention to keep ports open. "The federal government must ensure BC ports remain fully operational during the current negotiation. Small businesses cannot bear the cost of another long strike or lockout. CFIB continues to call on government to make ports an essential service, so they remain operational at all times," said Jasmin Gu nette, Vice-President, National Affairs, CFIB.

On the impact of the shutdown Jena Santoro, Senior Manager of Intelligence Solutions at Everstream Analytics, commented: "Any port disruptions in Vancouver would have the most significant impacts on imported goods destined for markets in the western US Vancouver is a critical entry point for perishable food items like dairy, produce, and seafood, and manufactured goods like automotive components. Further, vessel diversions to US west coast ports could cause congestion to spike and could prompt cargo processing backlogs at ports like Seattle, Oakland, and even further south like Los Angeles-Long Beach."