

## Containers halted as Montreal dockworkers locked out

Employers had warned union they would act if contract proposal was rejected

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(Photo: Termont)

No contract talks were slated between union longshore workers locked out by employers at the Port of Montreal Sunday in an escalation of the labor crisis at Canada's second-busiest container gateway.

The Maritime Employers Association (MEA) on Thursday [warned of the lockout](#) if the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 375 rejected what MEA termed a "final, comprehensive" contract offer.

The proposal calls for a 20% pay raise spread over the six years of the contract. But the union rejected the proposal, saying it doesn't address work-life balance concerns or the introduction of automation technology that would [eliminate checker jobs](#) now held by its members.

"This lockout affects not only the 1,200 longshoremen directly impacted by the work stoppage, but it also impacts over 10,000 workers in the logistics sector, from trucking and railway employees to maritime agents and pilots," said Montreal Port Authority Chief Executive Julie Gascon, in a statement posted to the port's website.

Gascon added that as shipping lines prepare to divert to other ports, exporters and importers of all sizes are forced to find alternatives that are often more costly or non-existent.

"At the moment, we have to wait and see, since there is no deadline to the lockout," said a spokesperson for liner operator Hapag-Lloyd (XETRA: [HLAG.DE](#)), in an email. "We are monitoring the situation and are in close contact with our local stakeholders. Within this uncertainty we remain committed to providing the best service possible and will continue to update our customers as the situation evolves."

In a statement posted to its website, CUPE called for a “fair deal” and said the MEA proposal would create a two-tier workplace that threatened the job security of younger workers.

The union, which since Oct. 31 had conducted a targeted strike against Termont’s container terminals, insisted it would drop its walkout if employers agreed to a partial deal on scheduling.

“Nothing in this hostile offer reflects the union’s demands. If the employer had respected the negotiation processes, we would have found solutions and avoided a conflict at the Port of Montreal,” said Michel Murray, SCFP/CUPE representative and spokesperson for the union, in a release Monday. “

Canadian railroads CN and CPKC previously suspended intermodal services to the four Montreal container terminals.

The work stoppage comes at the same time as a lockout of union forepersons by employers that has halted container traffic at ports in British Columbia.

Marc Cadieux, president of the Quebec Trucking Association (ACQ) in the port’s statement said the contract dispute will cascade down to affect jobs associated with maritime transportation.

“Nearly 2,000 trucks move through the Port of Montreal every day,” Cadieux said. “The freezing of its activities will have an immediate impact on many carriers who may have to consider layoffs. The ACQ strongly urges the responsible stakeholders to find a solution to restart commercial activities at this crucial point of global trade as soon as possible and avoid compromising our reputation on the international stage.”

*This article was updated Nov. 12 with comments from Hapag-Lloyd.*

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