

Montreal port employers pressure striking union

Terminals, carriers will suspend salary guarantees

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Maisonneuve Terminal at the Port of Montreal. (Photo: Port of Montreal)

Maritime employers at the Port of Montreal warned that they will suspend salary guarantees for striking union members in an escalation of the longshore labor dispute.

Saying it has “no other choice,” the Maritime Employers Association (MEA) said in a statement posted to its website that it will suspend salary guarantees as of Tuesday “for all longshore workers not working,” as a means of mitigating “the cumulative financial impact of repeated strikes and lower volumes at the Port of Montreal.”

The work stoppage comes as employers at Canada’s West Coast ports [locked out union members](#) represented by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union.

The [strike over scheduling](#) by Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 375 last Thursday against two of the port’s four box terminals halted 40% of Montreal’s container handling.

The MEA said it cannot change hours without formal negotiations and said the “shift and relay” schedules called into question by the union are stipulated in the current contract in force and cannot be used as a bargaining chip for targeting a single operator, in this case Termont Terminals’ Viau and Maisonneuve facilities.

The union rejected an MEA proposal for negotiations with a federal mediator. The employers have asked Labor Minister Steven MacKinnon to intervene to help restart bargaining.

Employers said container volumes have dropped in the months since CUPE began a series of overtime strikes, forcing them to “make some cuts within the organization,” and warned there may be more to come.