



# The Bottom Line

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## PORT STRIKE IN MONTREAL RESULTING IN DIVERSIONS

### Summary

German container carrier Hapag-Lloyd rerouted one of its ships from Montreal to Saint John, New Brunswick as another strike by the Port of Montreal longshoremen's union threatened to further disrupt port operations.

### Background

The Port of Montreal longshoremen have been working without a contract since December 31, 2018. Over the past 21 months, these workers have three times voted overwhelmingly for strike action. After the first strike vote in December 2018, the Canada Industrial Relations Board convened to decide which, if any, of the various cargoes regularly loaded and unloaded at the port would be declared "essential." Federal regulations allow for any service necessary to "prevent imminent and serious danger to the health and safety of the public" to be designated as essential. The Maritime Employers Association insisted that all tasks performed at the port should be deemed essential, and therefore precluded from labor strikes.

The Canada Industrial Relations Board concluded last month that the employer's association had not demonstrated "imminent and serious risks to the health and safety of the public." At the beginning of July, longshoremen conducted a 40-hour strike to press their demands for a new contract that addresses the working conditions on the docks and provides enhanced job security. Longshoremen work up to 19 days out of 21 before earning two days off. While negotiations have continued, strikes resumed on July 27. During that work stoppage, managers from terminal operator Termont crossed picket lines to perform work normally handled by the union workers—an action described as a "declaration of war" by CUPE Local 375 official Michel Murray.

### Current Status

On July 31, the Port of Montreal Checkers Union's Executive committee announced a separate 24-hour strike, extending the work stoppage initiated by the longshoremen for another day. The longshoremen have now initiated work stoppages for three consecutive weeks. These combined walkouts will also effect operations at the port's Contrecoeur terminal, which serves both Canada and several U.S. states.

Responding to the strikes, the Association des Employeurs Maritimes announced August 4th that the hourly wages of longshoremen and maintenance working evenings, nights and holidays would be reduced. The president of the longshoremen union, Martin Lapierre, responded by announcing that longshoremen would only be working during shifts for which hourly wages match the last collective bargaining agreement.

### Impact

Importers, exporters, producers, and retailers all rely on an efficient flow of goods through Canada's second-biggest port. While products can move through alternate networks by truck and rail to reach their destinations, a snarled logistics chain would compel delays and higher prices for consumers, and could weigh on businesses already struggling amid the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### RESOURCES:

[Port of Montreal Longshoreman's 4-Day Strike](#) (Global News)  
[Dockworkers Escalate Strike Action](#) (World Socialist Web Site)  
[Employer Changes Salary Conditions for Longshoremen](#) (CTV)  
[Container Carrier Diverts Vessel Due to Labor Strike](#) (S&P)