

Western Canada port strike ends after deal reached on tentative four-year contract



There were 14 container ships at anchor or offshore at the Port of Vancouver Wednesday, according to the port's website. Photo credit: Jeff Whyte / Shutterstock.com.

JOC Staff | Jul 13, 2023, 5:15 PM EDT

The 13-day longshore strike that hit the Western Canadian ports of Vancouver and Prince Rupert ended Thursday after the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Canada and waterfront employers reached a deal on a tentative four-year contract.

The end of the strike came less than two days after Canada's Minister of Labour ordered the federal mediator overseeing negotiations between the union and the British Columbia Maritime Employers Association to provide recommendations for a settlement. Those recommendations were presented to both sides on Wednesday, and they had 24 hours, or late morning Pacific time Thursday, to accept or reject the

proposed terms. Rejection by either side would have forced the matter into the hands of the Canadian Parliament.

“The tentative agreement is subject to ratification by both parties, and subsequently, details of the agreement will not be released at this time,” the BCMEA said in a statement.

It added that it was “working closely with ILWU Canada and their locals and supply chain partners to safely resume operations as soon as possible.”

Marine terminals at Vancouver and Prince Rupert were scheduled to reopen for Thursday’s evening shift.

ILWU Canada was not immediately available for comment.

Working to restore terminal operations

The strike caused multiple ships to divert from Western Canada to Seattle and Tacoma, while also prompting at least two blank sailings. It also created a vessel backlog off Vancouver and Prince Rupert. There were 14 container ships at anchor or offshore at the Port of Vancouver Wednesday, according to the port’s website.

The Prince Rupert Port Authority said in a statement Thursday two of its seven terminals -- DP World Prince Rupert’s Fairview Container Terminal and Drax’s Westview Wood Pellet Terminal – were “directly impacted” by the strike. PRPA added that five vessels are waiting at anchor or at sea to discharge at those terminals.

“PRPA, its terminal and rail supply chain partners and local labor will be working closely to re-establish fluidity and productivity so that we can begin to swiftly and effectively recover operations at the Port of Prince Rupert,” it said.

BCMEA said it “regrets the significant impact” the strike had on workers, customers and the Canadian economy. Earlier this week, the group said an estimated C\$800 million of cargo was being disrupted daily by the longshore strike, representing 25% of the country’s total traded goods each day.

“We must collectively work together to not only restore cargo operations as quickly and safely as possible but to also rebuild the reputation of Canada’s largest gateway and ensure supply chain stability and resilience for the future,” BCMEA said.

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