



INTERNATIONAL LONGSHORE & WAREHOUSE UNION CANADA

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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

ILWU calls on marine employers to end dirty tricks campaign, return to bargaining table.

(Vancouver, BC) — Instead of negotiating to end the strike at the west coast ports, the BC Maritime Employers Association (BCMEA) has launched a smear campaign targeting their own workers, International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) president Rob Ashton said today.

“This is straight out of the strikebreaking playbook: Instead of sitting down and negotiating with workers, they’re funding a dirty-tricks media campaign, using anonymous sources to selectively leak misleading information to reporters,” Ashton said.

“They figure if they can ruin their own employees’ reputations, it’ll pave the way for back-to-work legislation, without having to dip into their massive post-pandemic profits to give their workers a little more. I urge reporters, the public and the federal government not to play their game.”

Ashton cited several news stories since the strike began that exaggerated the livelihoods dock workers earn — and noted the sources behind them didn’t seem as interested in revealing salaries and bonuses for senior managers and CEOs, or in talking about their own profits.

“The reality is, our people do hard work under difficult, often dangerous conditions, and they kept Canada’s economy moving through the worst of the pandemic,” he said. “That’s a long ways from the picture the employer wants to paint. It can be a good living, but it takes years of sacrifice to get there, and it’s still hard work.”

He pointed out that:

- A waterfront worker spends many years waiting on call to get one-off shifts at very short notice. Their income is sporadic, and the unpredictability of shifts makes it hard to supplement it with other jobs. Turnover is high in this period, as many workers can’t stick it out.
- Even once they have more secure employment, many waterfront workers don’t receive a shift for days or even weeks at a time. Most are dispatched on a day-to-day basis, and can’t count on regular hours or shifts.
- Earning pay rates at the high-end of the scale means working night shifts, six or seven days a week.
- Rates of injury are high, with several deaths recorded in recent years.

“Our members’ families are facing spiralling food bills, housing costs and interest rates. All we’re asking from employers is to share some of the wealth our labour is creating for them through a fair, reasonable increase in wages, and to ensure our members can continue to do that work with respect and dignity,” Ashton said.

“We’re telling the BCMEA to call off their attack campaign, and come back to mediation. We’re willing to look past the smears and insults if it means we can return to the place where respectful negotiations and an honest deal can happen: the bargaining table.”

Rob Ashton
President – ILWU Canada