

April 22, 2019

Hon. Patricia A. Hajdu

Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour

House of Commons

Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Hajdu:

The Canadian International Freight Forwarders Association (CIFFA), and its Member firms, are concerned about the status of negotiations between the BC Maritime Employers Association (BCMEA) and the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), representing approximately 4,500 longshore workers at BC Ports, including the major Ports of Vancouver and Prince Rupert. The previous collective agreement expired on March 31, 2018 and as of today's date, we understand that a settlement does not appear imminent after a year of negotiations.

The Port of Vancouver is Canada's largest port and vital to the Canadian economy, and should a work stoppage happen, it will have far-reaching negative consequences for the Canadian economy and for the workers in many Canadian industries.

A work stoppage at the west coast ports will cause a major disruption on supply chains. In some cases, customers will be lost permanently due to rerouting cargo through the west coast ports in the United States.

Today we are writing to underline the potentially catastrophic impacts to Canada's trade, to our ports and to our economy of the current labour negotiations between the BCMEA/ILWU and to urge the Government of Canada to take any necessary action to keep the ports operating.

Year after year we write sentences such as "this appalling situation could not possibly come at a worse time," and go on to describe why in that particular year a work stoppage would be terrible for the Canadian economy. The threat and uncertainty of labour disruption causes Canadian traders, the importers and exporters who drive our economic engine, to experience months of delay and disruption of schedule integrity in their supply chains. Timing is everything. Canada's freight forwarders are agile and flexible, but in order to divert freight on time and to ensure that cargo moves as smoothly as possible throughout the supply chain, we need more reliable forecasts and information about the potential for disruptions and how these will be handled.

A stoppage of labour at this time will most certainly contribute to congestion, delays, increased costs and a growing sense of unreliability in Canada's supply chains.

We urge the Government of Canada to assist in bringing negotiations to a successful and rapid conclusion, whether through mediation, binding arbitration or any other means. Canadians must have certainty in our intermodal marine transportation, and in the labour forces at our ports.

On behalf of our members and their customers, we urge the Government of Canada to take immediate action to ensure that Canada's cargo moves during this challenging time.

Please contact the undersigned if you or your officials wish to discuss in more detail, the far-reaching impacts of west coast port labour disruptions.

Minister Hajdu, we look forward to your continued leadership in this area and to a swift and decisive conclusion to these matters.

Yours sincerely,

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Cc: Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister

Hon. Marc Garneau, Minister of Transportation,

Hon. Navdeep Singh Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi, Minister of Natural Resources

Hon. James G. Carr, Minister of International Trade Diversification

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food

Mike Leonard, President and CEO, BC Maritime Employers Association

Robin Silvester, President & CEO, Vancouver Fraser Port Authority

Canadian International Freight Forwarders Association (CIFFA)

The Canadian International Freight Forwarders Association (CIFFA) represents some 260 regular member firms from the largest of global multi-national freight forwarding firms to small and medium sized Canadian companies. CIFFA member companies employ tens of thousands of highly skilled international trade and transportation specialists. As a vital component of Canada's global supply chain, CIFFA member companies orchestrate the movement of goods around the world. International freight forwarders are the foremost experts in cargo transportation solutions and an essential partner in advancing the Canadian economy and the economic prosperity of Canadians.