

Longshore Worker

Load and unload the ships that carry almost everything you own. Union work, hard to get into, hard to leave.

TYPICAL PAY

\$68,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$40k to \$106k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

1 to 5 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Container terminals, grain and bulk docks, cruise berths, port wareho...

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
Helpful but not always required. Being 18 or older and physically capable is.
- 2 Get a port security clearance** Weeks to months
Working inside a marine terminal means a federal background check. A criminal record can end the plan here.
- 3 Get onto the casual list** The wait can be months or years
Casual hiring is run by the union hall or the employers' association at each port, and openings are posted rarely. Watch for them and apply the day they appear.
- 4 Work casual shifts** 1 to 5 years
You show up to the dispatch hall and take whatever work is handed out. Gangs, lashing, driving, hold work.
- 5 Union membership** Varies by port
Enough hours and seniority moves you onto the union board, which is when the pay, the pension and the steady hours start.

Pros and cons

- + Some of the best pay in Canada with no diploma required
- + Union pension and benefits once you are in
- + Seniority protects your schedule and your job
- Years of unpredictable casual work before that
- Getting onto the casual list at all is the hardest part
- Physically punishing and genuinely dangerous

Good to know

One union, twelve locals, over 7,200 members

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union Canada has represented dock and warehouse workers in British Columbia since 1948 and now covers more than 7,200 members across twelve auton...

The job has a waiting list, not an application form

Most Canadian ports hire casuals only when the list opens, which can be years apart. People check the union website daily for the notice.

Optional boosts

Container crane operator. Reach stacker and top pick. Forklift and mobile equipment. Lashing and checking.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Dockworker, wages (updated Nov 2025)
International Longshore and Warehouse Union Canada
Transport Canada: Marine transportation
Seaspan: Marine careers and union hiring halls

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/longshore-worker>



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