



# The Canadian Merchant Service Guild

## Western Branch

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AFFILIATED WITH

INTERNATIONAL MARITIME PILOTS' ASSOCIATION

INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS FEDERATION

# Western Branch Update

**TO: CMSG WB Members**

**Date: December, 2021**

Dear Guild Members,

The past months have been perilous and challenging for all of us; and during these difficult times, the Guild has continuously been addressing members' concerns about safety, working conditions, vaccinations, health benefits and pension issues.

A number of informative bulletins have been posted on the Guild's website, and we encourage you to access it on a timely basis to be informed on very important issues:

<https://www.cmsg-gmmc.ca>

Due to these unprecedented times we have not been able to meet with many of you in person to provide you with an update on the different bargaining units, and as the uncertainty continues it is unknown at this moment when we will be able to meet again, therefore, we are providing you with an update report:

### **AMIX MARINE SERVICES LTD.**

**September 30, 2025**

Most of the members' inquires generally revolve around pay and scheduling.

### **CITY of PRINCE RUPERT**

**June 30, 2023**

The City of Prince Rupert has done a commendable job in managing the pandemic. While Air Canada had cancelled many if not all of their flights in and out of Prince Rupert, the City kept the airport ferry crewed and operational. There has been zero curtailment or discussion on reduction of crews or hours as a result of the pandemic.

### **D. H. TIMBER TOWING & SALVAGE**

**September 30, 2027**

Members at DH Timber have experienced significant challenges in maintaining adequate work due to a lack of business at DH Timber. Members are hopeful that an uptick in work is expected in the new-year.

### **FMW TOWING LTD. & PACIFIC TOWING SERVICES LTD.**

**September 30, 2025**

We have been able to resolve issues of enrolling members in the benefit plan in a timely manner and pay close attention to their pension contributions, to ensure compliance.

### **FRASER RIVER PILE & DREDGE (GP) INC.**

**June 30, 2021**

Bargaining proposals have been exchanged and we will attempt to set up bargaining dates in January 2022.

**GSO – CCG / DND****March 31, 2018**

There are a number of issues the Guild is working on with regards to both the Canadian Coast Guard and DND. Both groups continue to experience challenges with pay. Despite the attempts to repair the Phoenix payroll system, there continues to be errors for people who take on acting assignments, relief, take leave or vacation. In some cases, members have been randomly affected, without any cause or reason.

This is especially complicated as both groups continue to suffer from significant staffing shortages, both in the office and on the vessels. Members are continuously being asked to work on their off cycles, or relieve in higher capacities – thus creating uncertainty when it comes to pay. To add to these issues, and the shore staffing working from home, or managing other COVID issues, hiring of new Officers seems to be much less of a priority – further compounding the issues.

The Collective Bargaining that was underway throughout 2021 reached an impasse in November and the Guild has requested that a mediator be appointed by the Public Service Labour Relations Board. GSO members have been kept informed of developments using the Guild website. The Employer has implemented a mandatory vaccination policy across the entire federal public service, which has resulted in some GSO members being unable to work or access their leave. The Guild is actively working to ensure the rights of members are being protected and members are supported.

**HARBOUR CRUISES LTD.****December 31, 2020**

Bargaining with the company continues. Harbour Cruises had not operated during the past two years, and we hope 2022 will provide an opportunity to resume operations.

**HARKEN TOWING****September 30, 2025**

Harken has had some challenges with regards to vaccinations. One of their largest customers has a mandatory vaccination requirement, which is a polarizing issue (vaxed or unvaxed). While Harken itself does not fall under the current TC requirements, their customer has adopted a blanket policy for all contractors, sub-contractors etc.

**HODDER TUGBOAT CO. LTD.****September 30, 2026**

Hodder has experienced and continues to experience a number of issues. The CMSG is following up on members' complaints and investigating those issues as they arise.

**INTERFOR****September 30, 2021**

The Guild is in the process of finalizing our proposals for bargaining. The company has had a number of changes to management, which brings in a number of challenges with regards to terms and conditions and employment, via inexperience and new interpretations of the collective agreement. This is very challenging and has created a number of issues for the Guild in recent months. It is hoped the Guild will tackle these new issues and some of the older issues via negotiations.

**ISLAND TUG AND BARGE (ITB)****September 25, 2022**

ITB has also suffered from management personnel migration, resulting in new interpretations and practice; when this issue is coupled with new customers, new hires and the loss of seasoned veterans on the boats; it create some chaos with regards to training, scheduling and crewing.

**JONES MARINE SERVICES****September 30, 2025**

No significant issues to report

**LAFARGE MARINE****December 31, 2019**

The Guild has already started negotiations with Lafarge after a hiatus due to COVID. The Guild is pushing members concerns on the terms and conditions of employment (conditions onboard the vessels) and issues such as wages and compensation. Unlike other Tug Boat Companies, where the boats are the "bread and butter" of the organization, the marine division is ancillary to Lafarge's core business, which is aggregate and cement. This has created some challenges with regards to understanding of the CSA, STCW and the work environment onboard a vessel.

**LAX KW'ALAAMS FERRY CORPORATION****March 31, 2023**

The bargaining unit certificate only contains three members (two full time and one relief captain). The balance of the crew has approached the CMSG to represent them. An application is before the CIRB to obtain this certification of new members.

**NORTH ARM TRANSPORTATION****September 30, 2025**

Negotiations for a new Collection Agreement were successfully and concluded on January 21, 2021. One of the main issues was bringing the North Arm Benefit Plan up to the level of the Guild Plan. This was accomplished after the Agreement was ratified.

**ORSI (GNWT)****December 31, 2020**

The members have completed the 2021 shipping season without a new collective agreement in place. Bargaining proposals have been completed and exchanged, bargaining started on Wednesday, December 8, 2021, and we will resume negotiations in January 2022.

**PPA – FRASER RIVER PILOTS****March 31, 2023**

Due to the retirement of some Pilots, the new apprenticeship program has started and examinations will be conducted by the Pacific Pilotage Authority, in April 2022, to establish a list of applicants eligible to become Apprentice Fraser River Pilots in Area 1 (FRASER RIVER) of the Pacific Pilotage Region.

**PPA – LAUNCH MASTERS, ENGINEERS, SVMO'S****March 31, 2023**

The PPA built and launched "The Pacific Guardian", a new Pilot Launch vessel in Victoria. There are some concerns about the cabin doors and the recording devices on the new vessel, which the Guild is investigating. The PPA has also introduced a Mandatory vaccination policy, as mandated by the federal government to apply to all federal employees. This has resulted in a number of members being held out of service and on unpaid administrative leave.

**SAAM TOWAGE CANADA (PRINCE RUPERT)****September 30, 2025**

In April, 2021 the Company transferred the Vancouver based SST Capilano to Prince Rupert as the designated tug to service the tankers at the new propane facility at Watson Island. Both the AG propane terminal in Prince Rupert and the Watson Island facility require tug standby twenty-four (24) hours a day while the tankers are loading.

In October, 2021 the Company transferred the Westminster based tug SAAM Spirit to Kitimat to assist the ships arriving and departing the LNG plant currently under construction.

The increased workload on the Prince Rupert Officers remains an issue as there are complaints of not enough leave time. Training of certificated Deck Hands and the hiring of a SAAM Vancouver Master are a couple of ways the Company is attempting to address the personnel shortfall.

**SAAM TOWAGE VANCOUVER**

**March 31, 2025**

Work volumes remain steady with two (2) twelve (12) hour shifts operating over a period of twenty-four (24) hours per day, seven (7) days per week. The remainder of the work is done by callouts. All work is related to ship assists and tanker escorts. The main source of competition is Seaspan ULC, minor source of competition, at this point, is Group Ocean.

**SAAM TOWAGE WESTMINSTER**

**SEPTEMBER 30, 2025**

According to the third quarter report of the Pacific Pilotage Authority, ship traffic in the Fraser River has increased seven (7) percent over the same period in 2020. This has helped SAAM Westminster to maintain service levels, however, competition in the river is a major factor. This coupled with the removal of the SAAM Spirit, now a Kitimat vessel, and replaced with the SAAM Hunter has exacerbated the Westminster crews from achieving a stable workload. The Hunter is frequently refused by the Pilots as the tug is under-powered for the size of ships using the Fraser River.

Talks continue between the Company and the Guild regarding a merger of the SAAM Vancouver and SAAM Westminster operations.

**SEASpan FERRIES CORPORATION**

**September 30, 2020**

The collective agreement has expired and numerous bargaining sessions have taken place, both with and without a mediator. Negotiations have reached an impasse and a strike is likely to take place early in the new year. Meetings have been held with the BC Labour Board to establish the level of essential services to be provided once the strike is underway.

**SEASpan ULC**

**September 30, 2019**

The Guild and the Employer have started negotiations. Unfortunately, the employer has suffered from a significant change in senior staff due to resignations. New interpretations of the collective agreement, past practice, the CSA and general safety has been maddening. It's frustrating when the employer doesn't have common knowledge or understanding that a marine employer should have and worse, tries to tell seasoned veterans, "We've always done it this way". The bargaining committee and the Guild are working hard to get the employer to a common understanding of some fundamental knowledge of the marine transportation industry and trying to raise the bar on the terms and conditions of employment.

**VALLEY TOWING LIMITED**

**September 30, 2023**

Valley Towing continues to have work for members that is difficult to schedule thus resulting in many scheduling concerns.

**WESTERN PACIFIC MARINE LTD. (LASQUETI)**

**March 31, 2023**

No issues to report.

## **STAFF**

The staff of the Western Branch is fully engaged in working from our premises. Subject to the directive from health authorities, we hope to open our office doors to the general membership in January 2022.

Mike van der Gracht and Dave Kattler continue to assist the Guild on a part time basis, assisting when different issues arise, while Trevor Lang has been tied up in contract negotiations.

We have placed an advertisement to recruit a new Business Agent in January 2022, which has also been posted on the Guild's website.

## **TRANSPORT CANADA**

Transport Canada asked to have a Guild representation on a newly established advisory group titled Pacific Tug and Workboat Safety Advisory Group (PCTAG). The group's focus will be to seek to enhance safety in the domestic tow and workboat fleet and reduce the potential for injuries and fatalities. Members of the Advisory Group consists of representatives from the Council of Marine Carriers (CMC), CMSG, ILWU, ITF, Transport Canada, Canadian Coast Guard and WorkSafe BC. The first meeting is set for January 11, 2022.

## **BENEFIT PLAN**

A notice was sent recently to all active members participants of the plan, informing them of adopted changes and improvements to the benefit coverage enhancement, effective January 1, 2022.

## **CMSG-WB TOWBOAT PENSION PLAN**

During these difficult times where investment portfolios have been impacted significantly it is recommended that you pay special attention to your pension fund and investment allocation. We encourage you to access your pension plan account, using the information Sunlife has previously provided. If you don't have online access, please contact the Sunlife - Members Care Centre at 1.866.733.8612 to obtain the information required.

## **CONCLUSION**

As the end of the year approaches, we take this opportunity on behalf of the Guild staff and officers, to thank you for your support and collaboration during this year. We look forward to working with you in the New Year.

## **THE CMSG WESTERN BRANCH**