



MARITIME EMPLOYERS ASSOCIATION  
ASSOCIATION DES EMPLOYEURS MARITIMES

# ANNUAL REPORT

# 2024



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# A WORD FROM **OUR LEADERS**



## **Nicola Dolbec**

Interim President and  
CEO and VP Industrial  
Relations

Several teams at the Maritime Employers Association completed major projects in 2024.

Industrial relations continued to play a central role in our daily activities, particularly due to the collective agreement negotiations in Montréal, Hamilton and Toronto. These critical discussions demonstrate our commitment to ensure the solid and lasting labour relations that are essential to the stability and growth of the maritime sector.

On the operational level, Hamilton had an exceptional year, while our Montréal teams showed remarkable resilience in relaunching activities following a labour dispute. In Trois-Rivières, the implementation of the new workforce management system, piloted jointly by the information technologies and Shared Services Centre teams, was a major step. The project also lays the foundation for a future deployment in Montréal.

Innovation was also evident, as virtual reality was incorporated into training, opening the door to new ways of learning and building expertise in our sector.

Despite a challenging financial situation, the organization was able to successfully complete a good number of strategic projects. Lastly, we had the pleasure of highlighting the MEA's 55-year anniversary by creating historical clips that told key events in our history.

We are pursuing our activities with drive and dedication to meet the challenges ahead and actively contribute to the development of maritime transport.

# A WORD FROM OUR LEADERS



**Chris Fournier**  
Chair of Our Board of  
Directors

On behalf of the Board, I am pleased to present our 2024 Annual Report.

First, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Mr. Robert Roy for his contributions during his tenure as President. His leadership played a significant role in advancing the MEA's position within the Canadian maritime industry.

I would also like to congratulate all teams for their hard work and commitment to our shared values and vision. This past year brought both challenges and opportunities.

MEA has firmly positioned itself as an essential partner in supply chains and the maritime transport industry. Our achievements reflect the high-quality work and dedication of the MEA team. We remain focused on modernizing our sector and supporting Canada's growth.

I extend my gratitude to our Board of Directors, member carriers, marine terminals, and agents for their invaluable support over the past year. Through their dedication and strategic oversight, MEA continues to effectively represent the interests of its membership and navigate both the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

# 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

## Industrial Relations

The year 2024 was notable for major operational advances, particularly with regard to workforce management, security and worker engagement. The MEA is pursuing its continuous improvement efforts, consolidating its position in the port industry.

### Longshoring Hours

	Montréal	Trois-Rivières and Bécancour	Toronto	Hamilton
2021	2,204,300	298,985	41,813	208,118
2022	2,374,076	396,695	49,366	186,764
2023	2,019,859	366,723	39,888	171,895
2024	1,806,136	320,475	25,904	189,075

### MONTRÉAL

In 2024, the MEA bargaining team continued the process of renewing the collective agreement with the Montréal Longshoremen’s Union, Canadian Union of Public Employees, local 375, which expired December 31, 2023. The mediation process, facilitated by two mediators from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, was central to these negotiations. Although the MEA presented two proposed collective agreements, they were both rejected by union members. On September 27, the union issued a notice of job action, which intensified over the following weeks to the point of a work stoppage, except for essential services.

On November 12, 2024, the minister intervened by asking the Canada Industrial Relations Board (CIRB) to order the resumption of work and to orient the parties toward arbitration. The CIRB rendered its decision November 14, ordering the resumption of

work on November 16. Furthermore, the CIRB imposed a three-month mediation period before the start of the arbitration. The parties committed to this mediation process in the hopes of reaching a negotiated agreement.

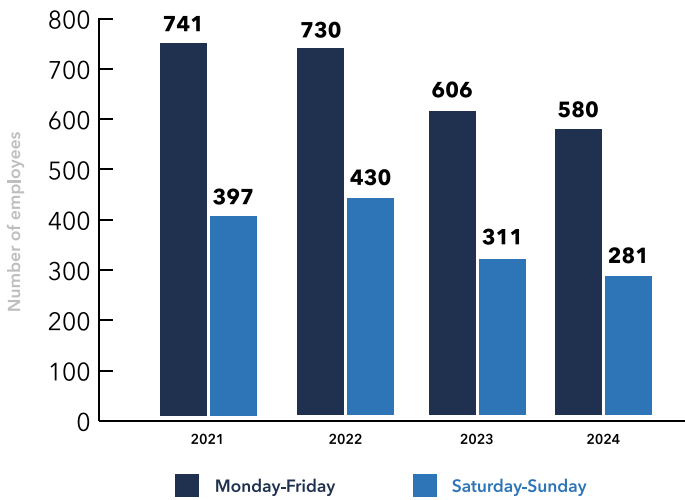
In parallel, the renewal of the collective agreement of Montréal checkers, International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) local 1657, which expired December 31, 2023, began. After an intense 48-hour bargaining session in February, an agreement was reached for a six-year contract that will assure stability over the long term. The two parties endeavoured to establish procedures to handle workforce demand fluctuations, while protecting the rights and entitlements of current employees.

In March, we introduced a new availability procedure for linesmen to ensure a constant and reliable presence at work, particularly on weekends. Since this procedure was implemented, absenteeism has declined and the use of an external supplier has been considerably reduced.

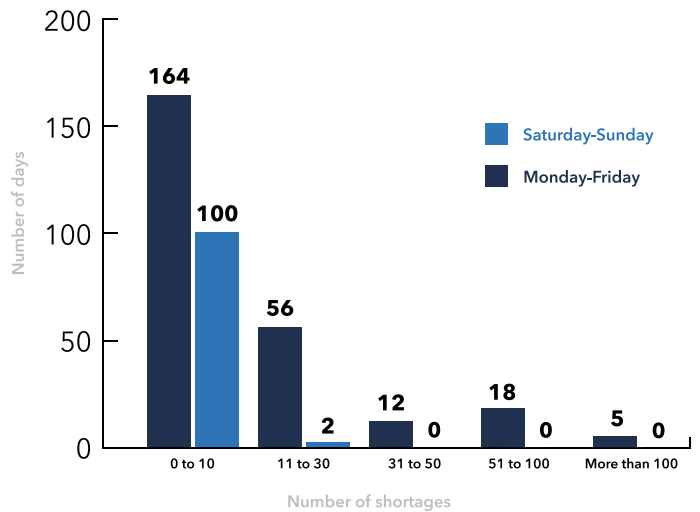
The industrial relations team supported the initiatives of the OHS team with our member companies to launch awareness campaigns on the terminals, highlighting the importance of wearing personal protective equipment (PPE). These initiatives proved to be crucial for addressing the concerns of employees and improving safety practices.



### Port of Montréal - Labour Orders



### Port of Montréal - Labour Shortages for 2024



Following an annual review with all employers, several measures were implemented to strengthen partnerships. They include establishing new communication channels with port operators, who will ensure regular oversight of the various situations encountered in their terminals. Moreover, efforts were made to increase the team’s presence on the ground, which strengthened relations with port employees and employers.

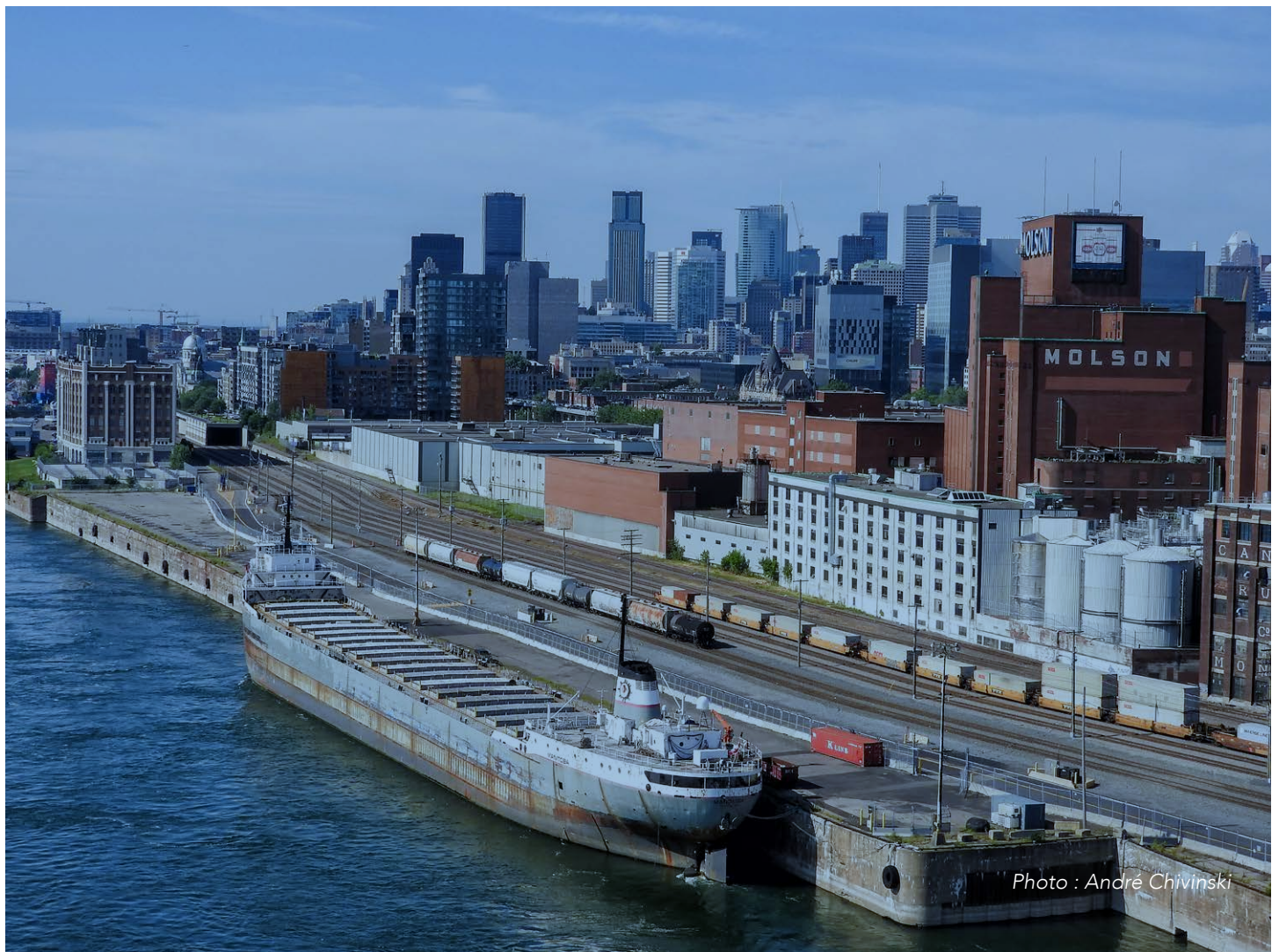


Photo : André Chivinski



## TROIS-RIVIÈRES AND BÉCANCOUR

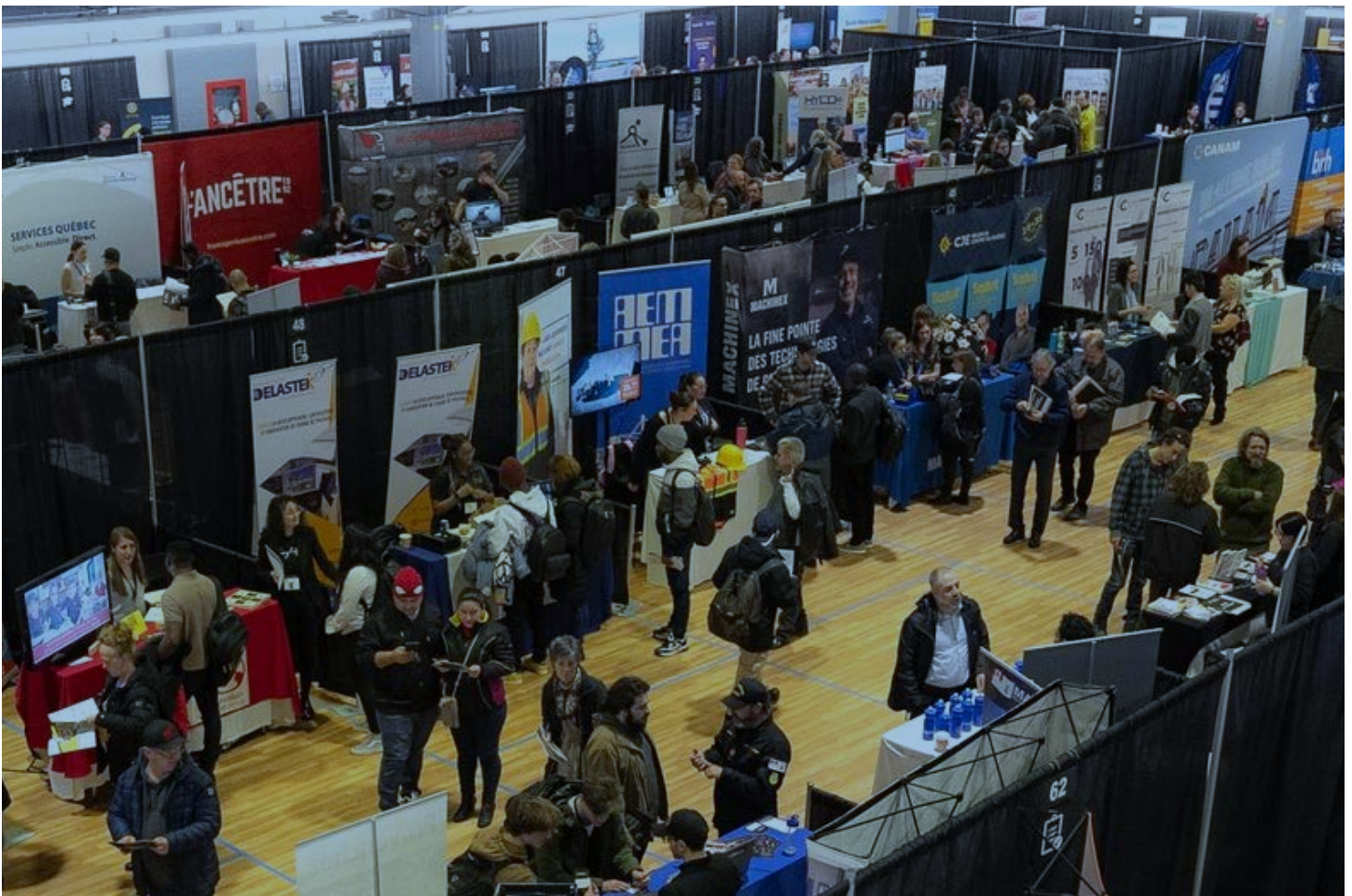
The rollout of the new MEA workforce management system in June was a major step in 2024. This ambitious project required incredible coordination, adjustments and continuous efforts from all stakeholders, including employers, dispatchers, time sheet managers and longshore workers. Despite some challenges, the MEA successfully maintained uninterrupted workforce dispatch and ensured that all longshore workers received their pay. Since it was launched, this new system has been continuously improved to enhance its functionalities and overall use.

We intensified our recruitment efforts in Trois-Rivières, by participating in the Trois-Rivières – Bécancour job fair and deploying a solid social media and radio communications strategy. Seventy port employees were hired in 2024.

A theory training program on the use of forklifts was launched in collaboration with Logistec to raise the stakeholder awareness of noise reduction at the Port of Trois-Rivières and encourage best practices to mitigate disturbances.

To better support payroll operations in Trois-Rivières and Bécancour, a new position was created near the end of the year and a special employee is now exclusively responsible for all payroll-related issues for the region.

Lastly, the nine-year collective agreement ended in December, representing the start of the collective bargaining process. Informal discussions were held throughout 2024 with the union and official talks will begin in 2025.





## HAMILTON

The MEA introduced a new working group on productivity and OHS in early 2024. This group is made up of the MEA industrial relations management team and two representatives per member company. The working group set the goal of increasing productivity and security on the terminals. The MEA team and terminal representatives worked together to identify the priority areas to correct, manage and monitor, such as qualified workforce, the responsibility of stakeholders in authority positions, the dress code, impairment and electronic devices.

The work attendance of our qualified workforce and growing our team remained priorities throughout the year. To respond to this concern, the MEA enhanced the available training offered. The MEA also hired 27 new employees and called on more than 30 qualified temporary workers from other ports during peak periods. A new attendance tracking system for unionized workers was developed. With these new attendance data, the MEA was able to identify some groups of employees and take more targeted action.

We conducted a training needs assessment on the operations of Hamilton clients. In response to this assessment, the Hamilton team, in collaboration with the Montréal team, started integrating fall prevention training.

**All grievances, with one sole exception, were settled internally by the grievance committee in the allotted time.**

Bargaining talks with the Hamilton longshore workers' union, ILA local 1654, began in 2024. We will meet with the union executive again in 2025, with the shared goal of renewing the collective agreement.

The peak period of the 2024 season was significant and unexpected in the last weeks of December. This made December 2024 one of the most intense months for maritime traffic in Hamilton. Our team spirit and our collective engagement were instrumental in overcoming these staffing challenges successfully.





## TORONTO

In 2024, the MEA continued its efforts to facilitate the required training as well as offer additional internal training in Toronto (signalmen, health and safety, lift trucks, cranes and simulator use).

We worked with the client to create and roll out a new training program that fully complies with the requirements of the Ministry of Labour and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

As the previous collective agreement with the Toronto longshore workers' union, ILA local 1842, expired, the MEA worked to quickly renew the collective agreement in fall 2024. We were pleased to obtain a unanimous vote in favour of this new agreement, which is set to expire in March 2028. We value our strong relationship with ILA 1842 as we work to reach shared security and productivity objectives for the port client.



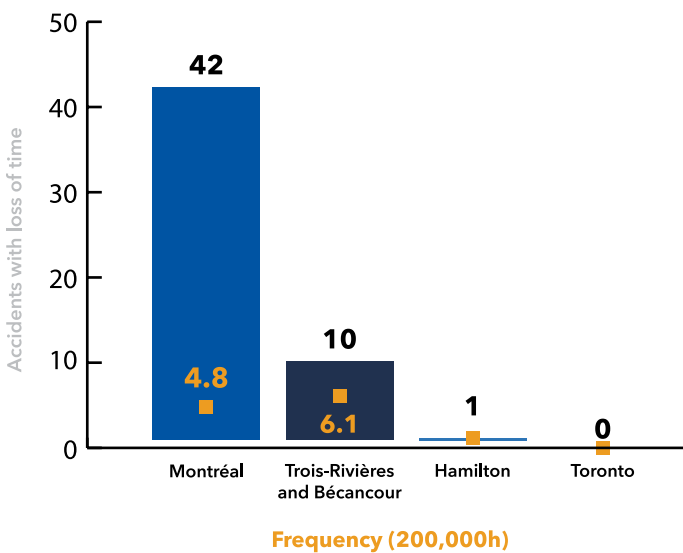
## Occupational Health and Safety

This year was marked by the two fatal accidents at the Port of Montréal. Following these tragic events, the occupational health and safety team worked in concert with the various partners to improve the safety of city truckers by harmonizing trucking-related activities.

Stricter enforcement of PPE use on port terminals continued and expanded. Due to the efforts of the OHS working group, we have noted improved PPE compliance at the ports of Hamilton, Trois-Rivières, Bécancour and Montréal.

Work on OHS training continued this year in collaboration with the training team. **Nearly 6,000 hours of training were offered in 2024, including 11 different health and safety courses.** Furthermore, we established an occupational health and safety training program for maintenance staff at the various port companies.

Workplace Accidents 2024





## Training

In 2024, the Harbour Training Centre undertook a major transformation to improve employees' learning experience and enhance operational efficiency. The training team structure has been revamped to separate technical and educational specializations with the goal of enhancing productivity and responsiveness to meet the needs of member companies. Training is more effective due to the introduction of automation and updated learning content accompanied by virtual clips and skills assessments.

Improved teaching methods, including the integration of virtual reality, offer a more engaging experience. Specialized training, such as on the new port cranes, was developed in response to operational needs. The continuous improvement effort, the standardization of training for maintenance staff and the specialized training of port employees is intended to standardize performance and guarantee a high level of skill.

In the last quarter, our partnership for implementing the learning management system was established, ensuring a customized solution adapted to our needs to optimize our training programs. In parallel, the review of our leadership development program demonstrates our commitment to the professional development of our managers in the field, the promotion of a culture of excellence and efficient team management.

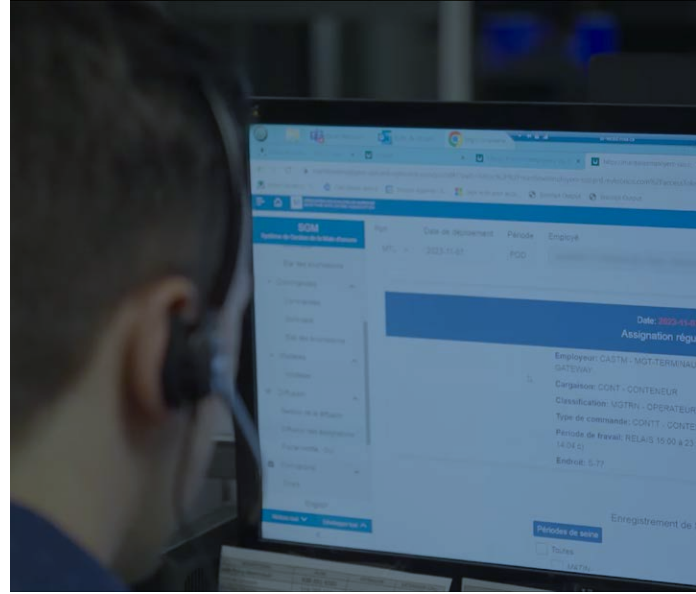
### Training Hours

	Montréal	Trois-Rivières and Bécancour	Hamilton and Toronto
2024	15,190	8,310	2,879



## Shared Services Centre

In 2024, the Shared Services Centre (SSC) and information technologies teams worked more closely with one another, including in the launch of the new integrated dispatch and payroll system for Trois-Rivières and Bécancour on UKG. The teams' combined efforts ensured that all workforce dispatches took place following the launch. Payroll for all employees was processed and arrears were corrected. Time sheet processing was more complex than anticipated, but we were able to adapt to the issues encountered.



The evolution of our internal communication practices, particularly the introduction of key messages and a more systematic distribution of information to SSC clerks and dispatchers, ensured that our activities are more consistent and smoother. This contributed to even more effective service to our various clients.

The MEA focused on data optimization to develop dashboards that present impactful and relevant information for member companies as well as the board of directors. In particular, we have regularly monitored longshore workers' use of paid days off for medical reasons and the resulting operational challenges.

## Information Technologies

Over the past year, the information technologies team has pursued major strategic initiatives intended to modernize our infrastructure, optimize data management and enhance regulatory compliance.

We continued the migration of our BI workload to Microsoft Fabric, with the next steps being integrating reports to this new platform.

The integration of the ports of Trois-Rivières and Bécancour to the workforce management system continues. This transition required adjustments as well as in-depth support and training for our teams and operators in Trois-Rivières and Bécancour.

With regard to technology, we deployed our Sage environment in Azure, which is now fully operational. Cost optimization in Azure remains a priority, while maintaining an optimal user experience. The consolidation of Microsoft licences began and serves to optimize supplier management, strengthen compliance and achieve efficiency gains.

Lastly, we made considerable progress in our efforts to achieve compliance with the *Act to modernize legislative provisions as regards the protection of personal information* or Law 25. A sensitive data management policy was written and will be implemented in 2025.



## Communications and Government Relations

In 2024, the communications and public relations teams focused its efforts on strengthening links with employees and partners, which fosters increased collaboration and mutual commitment.

### TRANSPARENCY AND CONTINUOUS UPDATING

As part of ongoing negotiations, the Negotiation updates section of the MEA website was updated, which gave our members and partners access to the latest information. An FAQ was also developed.

In addition to ensuring active media monitoring for our members, we continued our meetings with a number of economic groups and other stakeholders to keep them informed.

We have enhanced our visibility with our stakeholders by developing content and interacting with the communities on our social media.

### OUTREACH

The MEA was very active in promoting the longshore worker profession and educating the public on its port operations. Members of all teams were solicited to represent the organization, particularly at conferences related to IT, the maritime sector, development of the east of Montréal, the port industry, etc.

For the 55th anniversary of the MEA, we created and distributed a series of historical clips showcasing key moments for our organization and the maritime sector. And our booth at the Musée Pointe-à-Callière event was one of the most popular of the week.



We added more initiatives to bring together employees and their families through various activities including the first Forge FC soccer game organized for our families in Hamilton and the very first longshore worker family day in Bécancour.

We supported a number of organizations and events throughout the year through our sponsorship policy.

### NATIONAL MARITIME GROUP STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT



Our involvement with the National Maritime Group is an opportunity to highlight the critical issues related to the supply chain, port infrastructure and sector competitiveness by raising awareness among a larger audience.

All year long, the Group monitored and was an active participant in discussions concerning several draft bills and files with an impact on the Canadian maritime industry.

## Finance and Accounting

Over the past year, the finance and accounting team completed a significant transformation in managing accounts payable, suppliers, internal expenses and archiving, which are now entirely digitized and automated. This transition to paperless processes improves not only our efficiency, but also our environmental footprint.

Rigorous tracking of the invoicing and client accounts process was implemented, with full sales reconciliation for fiscal years 2023 and 2024. Moreover, we began automating several financial processes and initiated changes in the production of financial reports, particularly financial statements.

A sustained effort was also made to ensure the reconciliation of sub-ledgers with the general ledger, which enhances the accuracy and reliability of our financial data. Lastly, our budget process was reviewed to better adapt to organizational needs and ensure more strategic financial planning.

## Human Resources

In 2024, we made advances in human resources management, reflecting our commitment to improve the employee experience and optimize our internal processes.

We established the Allowance Program, an initiative intended to offer financial support better adapted to our employees' needs. Moreover, strategic changes were made to some of our services, particularly with the transition of the employee assistance program and the defined contribution component of our pension plan, which guarantees optimized service aligned with market best practices. The UKG Compensation module was optimized to facilitate compensation management and tracking. In parallel, the new committee on salary equity was established to ensure the MEA complies with industry regulations.

Our new French-language committee is part of our efforts to obtain certification from the Office québécois de la langue française, a key recognition of our efforts to promote French within our organization.

Initiatives to deepen the feeling of belonging were also implemented, including the distribution of coats identifying our values to office employees, updating the Employee Manual, developing graphic tools promoting the work conditions and benefits offered.

**What are the benefits of working at the MEA?**

- CAREER AND CULTURE**
  - A changing environment that encourages innovation
  - Inclusive environment that is representative of the community
  - Policy on life events
  - Recognition program
  - Employee events (Christmas party, BBQ, golf tournament, and more)
- WORK ENVIRONMENT**
  - Occasional remote work policy
  - Flexible schedule according to the teams
  - Hybrid schedule from May to September
  - 12 statutory holidays + 2 additional holidays + 35h of floating leave
  - 3 weeks' vacation as of May 1
  - Earn an additional week of vacation program
  - Free parking
- COMPENSATION**
  - Potential annual salary increase
  - Professional development program and performance management with a HRMIS
  - Competitive salary
  - Retirement plan (possible employer and employee combined contribution of up to 18% of the salary)
- BENEFITS**
  - \$1,500 referral bonus 24/7
  - EFAP and telemedicine program
  - Reduced-cost access to justice program
  - Employer covers 75% of insurance (no annual deductible)
  - Quarterly allowance program (starting at \$75)

The MEA is working to become a people-focused, agile, and resilient maritime employer that promotes high-quality standards.

**COURAGE** **RESPECT** **EXCELLENCE** **BENEVOLENCE**

OUR EMPLOYEES KEEP THE PORTS MOVING