

# THE VANCOUVER SUN

## Container traffic up at Port of Vancouver: A port official says improvements are needed on roads and railways to handle increases

The Vancouver Sun  
Thu 29 Jul 2004  
Page: D1 / Front  
Section: BusinessBC  
Byline: Brian Morton  
Source: Vancouver Sun

The Port of Vancouver says it's experiencing a dramatic increase in container traffic this year, with overall volume during the first six months up 16 per cent to 36.5 million tonnes.

However, Jim Cox, the port's vice-president of infrastructure and development, says new investment is needed in roads and railways to handle the increased traffic.

"We're beginning to feel some issues on road and rail," said Cox. "We need highway improvements in the Lower Mainland and improvements to expand the capacity to move goods in and out of the Port of Vancouver. We're not handling it as quickly as we'd like [and] we expect significant growth in containers in the future."

According to a news release issued Wednesday, the port has reached a new mid-year record in the shipment of containers, following 15 consecutive years of growth in the sector.

The release states that total container shipments increased seven per cent from 756,879 TEUs (20-foot equivalent unit, the standard measurement for a container) to a new record of 809,456 TEUs.

Grain shipments jumped 81 per cent to 4.1 million tonnes, with wheat rising 133 per cent to 2.5 million tonnes.

Other increases included potash (up 23 per cent to 3.1 million tonnes), sulphur (up 14 per cent to 3.2 million tonnes), and petroleum products (up 13.3 per cent to 1.6 million tonnes).

Captain Gordon Houston, the port's president and chief executive officer, was not available for an interview, but said in a prepared statement that the growth underscores the need to work together and plan for critical investments. "It's our job to make sure that the goods shipped in and out of the Port of Vancouver move to market quickly, efficiently and reliably," said Houston. "Without investments in transportation infrastructure, our collective competitiveness as a gateway is compromised."

Cox said growth in commodities such as grain is fuelling the increased port traffic. "Grain's up 81 per cent and that's an important part of it.

"And Asian demand for raw materials and Asian supply of manufactured goods is fuelling it."

Meanwhile, Werner Knittle, vice-president of the B.C. division for Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, said Wednesday that congestion at the port is costing the industry millions of dollars.

"We'd like greater investment in capacity, especially rail capacity," he said. "[The increased port activity] is great, but it creates congestion. The railways can't handle the traffic."

Knittle said shippers are now experiencing delays of 10 days or longer to get their containers through the port, which translates into lengthy waits for their products. "We'd like it to be a couple of days."

He said the railways have added more rail cars and increased service frequency to help alleviate a shortage of rail cars and locomotives that move containers around, but it's still not enough. "There's no simple solution."

According to the port's news release, the Port of Vancouver is Canada's largest and most diversified port, trading \$29 billion in goods each year.

As well, the release says, port activities generate 62,000 jobs, with \$3.5 billion in economic output.

Last year, 66.7 million tonnes were shipped through the Port of Vancouver, the release says.