



## **Seafarers' International Union of Canada COVID-19 Taskforce Update October 14, 2020**

SIU Covid-19 Taskforce

Chair: Josh Sanders, Vice-President Great Lakes and West Coast  
Members: Charles Aubry, Vice-President St. Lawrence and East Coast  
Chris Given, Director of Government Relations  
Paul Macdonald, HQ Representative (Thorold)  
Philippe Marchand, HQ Representative (QC)

### I. Overview

Welcome to the first communications update from the SIU's COVID-19 taskforce. The SIU's taskforce has met regularly since the start of the Pandemic in March 2020 and with the onset of the "Second Wave" and some instances of misinformation being shared by the Companies, has now made the decision to share information on a weekly basis to keep SIU members up-to-date with current information as well as provide a straight line of communication so that the Union can provide you with our direct perspective and opinions on issues of concern such as shore leave, shipboard protocols, etc.

You will receive an update from the SIU COVID-19 Taskforce via e-mail approximately once per week.

Unfortunately, most of us are now experiencing the "Second Wave" of the Pandemic in our home Provinces and across the Country. As of October 14, 2020, across Canada there have been:

- 186,881 total cases
- 19,741 active cases
- 9,654 deaths

On October 9, 2020, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) released updated epidemiology modelling to demonstrate that the Epidemic growth is accelerating nationally but with uneven activity through different regions of the Country. The most rapid acceleration is occurring in Quebec, Ontario and Alberta.

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In the same report, the PHAC outlined that:

- incidences of COVID-19 among young adults (20-39 years old) has remained the highest group since late June/early July and;
- most outbreaks are occurring in School and Childcare centres and “other” settings including social gatherings; and
- Hospitalizations, particularly in Quebec have increased significantly.

The long-range forecast suggests a rapid and aggressive resurgence of the virus in cases where an increase to or a flat level of “rate of contacts” occurs. The only way to slow the spread is to decrease the current rate of contacts by 25%-35% which would bring the epidemic under control in most locations. At the moment, there is not much of a “curve” only a straight-line trending upwards.

Link: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/epidemiological-economic-research-data/mathematical-modelling.html>

## II. The SIU’s role in other COVID-19 related Groups

Your Union is involved in every high-level discussion taking place with regards to the marine sector and Transport Canada as well as communicating regularly with all of the Companies and union delegates to ensure best practices and information are shared as needed during these difficult times.

Brothers Josh Sanders & Chris Given are both members of the Transport Canada Covid-19 Tiger Team, which is a government-led group tasked with identifying and sharing best practices in relation to marine protocols dealing with Covid-19. As an example of its work, the group examines real-life and mock scenarios and assists policymakers in developing proactive and reactive government policy to deal with different COVID-19 scenarios in vessel and port operations.

Brother Vince Giannopoulos represents the SIU and the ITF on the National Seafarers’ Welfare Board that deals with all manner of issues relating to the safety and well-being of seafarers calling at Canadian Ports. While the group primarily deals with issues relating to foreign seafarers, the policies and work done in this group relating to Covid-19 has an important role to play in protecting the health of domestic seafarers as well.

Links for Updated Ship Safety Bulletins from Transport Canada related to COVID-19:

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<https://tc.canada.ca/en/marine-transportation/marine-safety/ship-safety-bulletins/revISED-temporary-measures-regarding-marine-personnel-certificates-discharge-books-marine-medical-certificates-marine-counter-services-oral-examinations-can-now-be-administered-virtually>

<https://tc.canada.ca/en/marine-transportation/marine-safety/ship-safety-bulletins/mobility-asymptomatic-workers-marine-sector-during-covid-19-ssb-no-18-2020>

### III. COVID-19 Cases on SIU Vessels

Unfortunately, while our membership was largely spared from the brunt of the virus at the beginning of the Pandemic, there have recently been positive cases on board a number of our vessels. When a case occurs, the SIU has worked to ensure that members are isolated, receiving medical care and provided with support to ensure the process is as stress-free as possible.

As of October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the situation on board is as follows:

- 3 Vessels with cases
- 9 Positive cases\* (\*one member is hospitalized)

**If you are feeling unwell – please immediately alert your direct supervisor and the Captain of the vessel** so that the proper precautions can be taken. It may not be a COVID-19 exposure, but all risks must be mitigated to ensure the health and safety of yourself and the rest of the crew.

If there is a situation occurring on board your vessel that you feel compromises your health or safety (breach of COVID-19 protocols, lack of PPE, unsafe visitors on board, etc.), please communicate these incidents to your ship's Union Delegate who can get in touch with a local SIU official. If the situation requires immediate attention, do not hesitate to contact the Union ASAP.

### IV. SIU's Position on Shore Leave

As the situation with COVID-19 evolves rapidly, there is significant consideration and evaluation of available information happening every day. Obviously, the safest place to be when you are working is on board the vessel. We strongly encourage members to restrict shore leave as much as possible and to take advantage of Company ordering systems where possible.



However, the SIU does recognize the importance of shore leave, especially for seafarers' health and mental well-being. In Ports where the risk of exposure remains relatively low, the SIU remains in support of permitting shore leave when it is requested by a member.

If you choose to disembark from the vessel to take shore leave, please ensure:

- You follow your Company's protocols for shore leave requests and for reducing the risk of exposure.
- Wear the proper PPE (mask, gloves, etc. as needed)
- Maintain good hand and respiratory hygiene (Wash hands frequently, use hand sanitizer, cough or sneeze into a tissue or the bend of your arm. Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth)
- Practice Social distancing (Remain at least 6m apart from any other person)
- Limit social Contact (avoid closed spaces, crowded spaces and close contact)
- Follow local and/or Provincial public health guidelines for the area you are visiting.

#### V. Restrictions on Shore Leave

Shore leave can be an important element for ensuring seafarers' health and well-being. The SIU does not support any full bans on shore leave. The SIU has agreed to support shore leave restrictions in the following ports only\* (as of October 6, 2020):

- All U.S. Ports
- Clarkson (Peel Region)
- Port of Toronto
- Port of Montreal
- Côte-Sainte-Catherine
- Bécancour
- Valleyfield
- Trois-Rivières
- Sorel
- Port of Hamilton

\*Please keep in mind that some Ports are unavailable for shore leave based on local or Provincial restrictions outside of anyone's immediate control (Atlantic Bubble, etc.)

This list is subject to change at any time to reflect updated information as determined by local public health agencies and at the discretion of the SIU.

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**If you request shore leave and are denied shore leave in any Port that is not listed above,** please immediately inform your ship's delegate and contact the Union so that a Grievance may be filed. Please make sure to document the instance (Location, time, reason for denial, etc.) as the Union will require information for the grievance process.

#### VI. Members Who are at Home or Returning to Work

Please ensure that you are following public health recommendations and doing your part to mitigate the possibility of exposing yourself or your families to COVID-19 when you are at home and not working. If you are planning for a return to work, or you are a sailing as a relief or any other position where returning home regularly, all measures must be taken to ensure COVID-19 is not brought back to your vessel and that you are in good health when joining.

The SIU **recommends** that all members returning to a vessel from STO, or joining a vessel as a relief, wear a non-medical mask for their first 14 days after returning to the vessel in order to better protect your fellow crew members from any potential exposure to COVID-19.

For information on non-medical face coverings and proper use, please visit the link:  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/covid-19-safely-use-non-medical-mask-face-covering.html>

**If you are feeling unwell at home, please immediately contact and follow the advice of your local public health authority.**

#### VII. International Shipping Issues

As most of you are aware, seafarers employed in international and deep-sea shipping have been suffering from a lack of shore leave and repatriation issues since the onset of the Pandemic in March. There are now upwards of one million seafarers globally being affected by the ongoing and unresolved crew change crisis that has gripped the worlds' seafarers. Hundreds of thousands of seafarers have been stuck at sea for upwards of 18 months, 7 months past the maximum time permitted under the Maritime Labour Convention. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of other seafarers have been stuck on the beach, unable to join vessels or secure employment and are suffering terrible economic situations in their respective countries as a result.

The SIU plays a very active role in the ITF and continues to call on nations and organizations to designate seafarers as key workers, facilitate crew changes and open borders for marine sector

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workers who continue to keep global supply chains working all while enduring tremendous personal suffering. Enough is Enough.

For updates on the Situation, Please Visit the ITF Website:

<https://itfseafarers.org/en>

<https://www.itfglobal.org/en>

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