



## **Seafarers' International Union of Canada COVID-19 Taskforce Update October 23, 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 this week's 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 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. The update will also be available on the SIU website.

As we have officially moved into the Second Wave of the Pandemic across the Country, Canada has reached an unfortunate milestone of surpassing 200 000 cases. As of October 20, 2020, across Canada there have been:

- 203,688 total cases
- 22,151 active cases
- 9,794 deaths

In the most recent COVID-19 weekly Epidemiology report issued by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), the Agency noted that positive cases and hospitalizations across Canada have steadily increased since Mid-September. New cases have been reported in all Provinces with notable increases in Alberta, Manitoba and New Brunswick compared to the previous week.

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The report outlined that:

- since mid-July, incidence rates in those 20 to 39 years of age have remained consistently higher than all other age groups;
- schools, daycare centres, and long-term care and retirement residences accounted for the highest number of outbreaks in September and so far in October;
- According to forecasting, between 209 900 and 219 600 cases and 9 822 to 9 933 death are expected by October 25, 2020.

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.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 and Chris Given are scheduled to participate in a Transport Canada “Tiger Team” meeting on COVID-19 on October 22, 2020. The Tiger team is a tripartite group made up of seafarers’ representatives, shipowners’ representatives and government officials from various department tasked with developing and reviewing COVID-19 protocols related to foreign and domestic shipping in Canada.

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

“Revised Temporary Measures Regarding Marine Personnel Certificates, Discharge Books, Marine Medical Certificates & Marine Counter Services” – SSB NO.:21/2020:  
<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>

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“Mobility of Asymptomatic Workers in the Marine Sector During COVID-19” SSB NO.:18/2020:  
<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

As of October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020, the situation on board is as follows:

- 1 Vessel Currently Dealing with Active Cases
- 3 Vessels with Cases on Board Resolved and Returned to Operation
- 10 Confirmed Cases since Pandemic Started
  - 2 Active Cases\*
    - 1 Member Currently in Hospital
  - 8 Resolved Cases
  - 4 Potential Cases Pending Results

**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. 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.

If there is a situation occurring on board your vessel that you feel compromises your health or safety (breach of COVID-19 Company 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.

As the SIU has now had the unfortunate experience of dealing with COVID-19 on board a few vessels, we are compiling data and protocols from various responses to positive incidences in order to share best practices amongst the Companies and ensure protocols for dealing with COVID-19 on board the vessels are up-to-date and adequate to ensure our members health and safety remains the top priority.

### 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

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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 21, 2020):

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

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

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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.

**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 going ashore, reason given for denial, etc.) as the Union will require this 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>

Most companies will require you to complete a COVID-19 Questionnaire about your current health, contact and travel history prior to boarding when joining a vessel. **Please complete these questionnaires truthfully as otherwise you are putting the health of your crewmates in jeopardy. If your health changes after boarding the vessel, please alert a supervisor immediately so that proper precautions can be taken to ensure your health and protect your brothers and sisters on board.**

#### VII. International Shipping Issues

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

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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.

An example of these horrific working conditions is outlined in this shocking article from ABC Australia where the ITF Australia Coordinator, Brother Dean Summers of the MUA, is interviewed, accurately comparing the situation to slavery:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-10-20/seafarers-spend-18-months-without-leaving-cargo-ships/12780960?fbclid=IwAR1F-tlKsxxv9c0lbshEOwwll9K9OTsNByGmB9CnjSnAH5h55X0sGOnL92HU>

ITF Maritime Coordinator, Sister Jacqueline Smith, also penned an important op-ed on the important relationship between seafarers' health and wellbeing and maritime safety:

<https://safetyatsea.net/news/2020/seafarer-health-and-wellbeing-is-paramount-to-maritime-safety/?fbclid=IwAR3OH6D4rOzl9gvJhCFxbvydVhITebUDpMhfD--Bc5ZizrWXq7YXi0gu-dU>

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 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>

*The SIU reminds all members that they must follow Company policy regarding covid19. The above recommendations/opinions from the SIU Covid19 Task Force may differ from Company policy*