

# SIU COVID-19 TASKFORCE UPDATE

COVID-19

JAN. 15 2021

## Seafarers' International Union of Canada COVID-19 Taskforce Update January 15, 2021

### 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)

Welcome to the most recent 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 whenever necessary 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.

#### I. Overview

**As of January 13, 2021, the situation across Canada is as follows:**

- 681,328 total cases (+**54,529** since last update)
- 79,293 active cases (+**90** since last update)
- 17,383 deaths (+**1,014** since last update)

In the most recent COVID-19 daily Epidemiology report issued by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), the Agency noted the majority of cases have been reported by Ontario and Quebec. In the 7 days up to January 13, 2021, Ontario reported 23,908 cases while Quebec reported 16,696 in the same period.

The report also outlined that:

# SIU COVID-19 TASKFORCE UPDATE



COVID-19

JAN. 15 2021

- The report states that of all people tested (14,714,036) 4.3% have been found to be positive for COVID-19.
- The majority of cases are still being seen in the 20-29 age group at 18.7% of cases, while those in the above 80 age group are more likely to have more serious symptoms, with a 33.5% hospitalization rate.
- Importantly, it must be noted that infections, hospitalizations and deaths have been reported in every single age group, including in children.

In recent weeks, we have seen the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec continue to struggle with a surge in COVID-19 cases, with both provincial governments implemented strict lockdown measures to attempt to bring the number of cases down. The current lockdown measures for each province can be found below;

In Quebec:

- A provincewide curfew from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m. There are exceptions for essential workers and dog walkers near their home. The fine for breaking curfew will be \$1,000 to \$6,000.
- All non-essential workplaces and businesses, including gyms and restaurants, will be closed. Curbside pickup at stores and delivery for restaurants will be allowed.
- Places of worship must close.
- Daycares will stay open. Elementary schools will open as planned on Jan. 11, but children in Grades 5 and 6 will be required to wear a mask.
- High schools will remain closed, opening Jan. 18. High school students and staff will be supplied with two government-issued three-layer disposal paper medical masks per day.
- Grocery stores and corner stores must close at 7:30 p.m.
- Indoor and outdoor gatherings with people outside the household are prohibited.
- The measures don't apply to the autonomous northern territory of Nunavik, as well as the James Bay region.

In Ontario:

- Ontario has issued a 'stay at home order' to all residents beginning January 14, 2021, which will require everyone to remain at home with exceptions for permitted purposes or activities, such as going to the grocery store or pharmacy, accessing health care services, for exercise or for work where the work cannot be done remotely
- Outdoor organized public gatherings and social gatherings are further restricted to a limit of five people with limited exceptions.

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# SIU COVID-19 TASKFORCE UPDATE



COVID-19

JAN. 15 2021

- Individuals are required to wear a mask or face covering in the indoor areas of businesses or organizations that are open. Wearing a mask or face covering is now recommended outdoors when you can't physically distance more than two metres.
- All non-essential retail stores, including hardware stores, alcohol retailers, and those offering curbside pickup or delivery, must open no earlier than 7 a.m. and close no later than 8 p.m. The restricted hours of operation do not apply to stores that primarily sell food, pharmacies, gas stations, convenience stores, and restaurants for takeout or delivery.
- Non-essential construction is further restricted, including below-grade construction, exempting survey.

Links:

<https://health-infobase.canada.ca/covid-19/epidemiological-summary-covid-19-cases.html>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-lockdown-legault-1.5863426>

<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59922/ontario-declares-second-provincial-emergency-to-address-covid-19-crisis-and-save-lives>

## 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.

The SIU Continues to participate in all high-level meetings taking place with the Federal government related to COVID-19 and the marine industry. On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, the SIU participated in an update call with Transport Canada and marine sector stakeholders to discuss updates to information in ship safety bulletins, the outcome of the COVID-19 Tiger team, ongoing work to enhance COVID-19 protocols as well as issues concerning shore leave regulations for foreign seafarers.

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

# SIU COVID-19 TASKFORCE UPDATE



COVID-19

JAN. 15 2021

"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>

"Mobility of Asymptomatic Workers in the Marine Sector During COVID-19" SSB NO.:28/2020:

<https://tc.canada.ca/en/marine-transportation/marine-safety/ship-safety-bulletins/mobility-asymptomatic-presumed-non-covid-19-carrying-seafarers-marine-sector-during-covid-19-pandemic-ssb-no-28-2020>

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

As of January 14, 2021, the situation on board is as follows:

- 0 Vessels Currently Dealing with Active Cases
- 4 Vessels with Cases Previously on Board - Resolved and Returned to Operation
- 11 Confirmed Cases since Pandemic Started
  - 0 Active Cases
  - 10 Resolved Cases
  - 1 Deceased

**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.

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COVID-19

JAN. 15 2021

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 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 a Health Canada approved 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 2 metres 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 has agreed to support shore leave restrictions in the following ports only, as a result of recent lockdown conditions across the country\* (as of January 15, 2021):

- All U.S. Ports
- All Quebec Ports

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JAN. 15 2021

- All Ontario Ports

\*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, Restricted Zones for inter-regional travel, 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. Please be advised that the situation in certain areas are being closely monitored as COVID-19 cases are trending upwards and changes may need to be made quite rapidly.

**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**

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# SIU COVID-19 TASKFORCE UPDATE

COVID-19

JAN. 15 2021

immediately so that proper precautions can be taken to ensure your health and protect your brothers and sisters on board.

## VII. International Shipping Issues

Globally, there are upwards of one million seafarers being affected by the ongoing and unresolved crew change crisis that has gripped the worlds' seafarers. Hundreds of thousands of seafarers have been stuck on board well past the maximum time permitted under the Maritime Labour Convention of 11 months at sea. 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.

In late November, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) announced that it will be ending the temporary exemptions for vessels to have seafarers on board for longer than 11 months. As of February 28, 2021, AMSA, through Port State Control, will enforce the limit of 11 months regardless of the Pandemic. The Canadian maritime sector unions issued a joint letter this week, advocating for Transport Canada to also set a firm deadline for enforcement of the 11-month length of service under the MLC, in parallel to that established by AMSA.

On December 17, 2020, the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Committee of Experts sent a strong message to governments that they have failed in their duty of care towards seafarers under international law during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the first ruling of its kind, the committee of 20 eminent jurists has found that governments have failed abjectly to protect the minimum standards for the protection of seafarers' rights, as set out in international law under the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) 2006. This includes basic rights such as access to healthcare, repatriation, annual leave and shore leave. The finding follows submissions made by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and of the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS).

As a result of new strains of COVID-19 being gound in several countries including the UK and South Africa that scientists are saying may be more contagious than the original virus, immigration authorities in certain countries like the Philippines are now getting spooked regarding crew change policies. The Philippines, the world's leading crewing provider and a top destination for crew changes during the pandemic, has decided to halt crew changes for seafarers who have been in 21 different countries around the world two weeks prior to visiting the Southeast Asian republic.

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JAN. 15 2021

The SIU continues to play an active role in the ITF and through our work in the ILO and IMO and we continue 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 COVID-19. The above recommendations/opinions from the SIU COVID-19 Task Force may differ from Company policy*