

SIU COVID-19 TASKFORCE UPDATE



Seafarers' International Union of Canada COVID-19 Taskforce Update March 12, 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
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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 March 9, 2021, the situation across Canada is as follows:

- 893,518 total cases (+40,649 since last update)
- 30,179 active cases (-498 since last update)
- 22,304 deaths (+542 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 March 9, 2021, Ontario reported 8,307 cases while Quebec reported 4,919 cases. While the Quebec numbers are continuing to decline since our last update, the decline is certainly slowing. In Ontario, case numbers over the last week have increased in comparison to the metric shown on our last update. Lockdown measures were lifted in both provinces a few weeks ago, so it is expected that cases will begin to rise yet again

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with fewer restrictions. British Columbia has seen 3,752 cases over the last 7 days, while the East Coast as a whole has seen 69 cases this past week.

The report also outlined that:

- Of all tests administered (25,352,166) 3.7% 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 32.8% hospitalization rate.
- Importantly, it must be noted that infections, hospitalizations and deaths have been reported in every single age group, including in children.

The Ontario government recently released its list of individuals that plans to prioritize as part of the second phase of its vaccine rollout beginning in April. As our Membership knows, the SIU of Canada has been pushing all levels of government across the country to ensure seafarers are included in priority vaccinations for essential workers. On the list of groups eligible for the second phase of the Ontario government's vaccine rollout, "Transportation, warehousing and distribution" is listed as a group that would presumably result in seafarers being eligible for the vaccine. The Union is still pressing the government for conformation on this front, but the response has been slow. We will continue to keep Members up to date on any further developments regarding the vaccine, and hope to have positive news to report in the coming weeks.

The Government of Quebec has yet to reveal their specific plans for the vaccination of essential workers, but a rough framework has been released by the government, and the vaccination rollout within the province is underway. The Government of Quebec recently suggested that further restrictions would be lifted when all individuals in the province 65 years and older will be vaccinated. This decision will be monitored closely, as the specifics of this statement made by Premier Legault are yet to be released. Those with the vaccine may still be able to be carriers of the COVID-19 virus, so lifting restrictions outright once vaccination is underway is a questionable decision.

In British Columbia, the government's vaccine rollout is also underway, and a recent COVID-19 outbreak at a long term care facility in Surrey is exemplifying the power of the vaccine, and showing its limitations. At one long term care home, where 88% of residents have been

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vaccinated, one resident and one staff Member tested positive for COVID. This prompted the provincial health officer to state that transmission of the virus is possible even when people are fully vaccinated, but the illness seems to be milder and less contagious, and the vaccine helped to ensure there wasn't "rapid, explosive outbreaks".

On the East Coast, the provinces have been able to get back on track after a significant outbreak in Newfoundland and Labrador a few weeks ago. The province is still not back to the low numbers they were seeing throughout the pandemic until recently, but the number of active cases in Newfoundland and Labrador is down to 80. Other provinces on the East Coast have continued to do well in the fight against the spread of the virus.

With some parts of the country beginning to reopen, we want to remind Members of the SIU of Canada to remain vigilant, stay safe, wear a mask and take care of your families. While we are thankful that the restrictions that were in place helped bring the number of cases back down across the country, there is no doubt that once these measures are lifted, the number of cases will again begin to rise, so to this end, please stay safe and stay healthy.

Links:

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

<https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/this-is-the-full-list-of-people-eligible-for-covid-19-vaccines-in-phase-2-1.5335728>

<https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/progress-of-the-covid-19-vaccination/#c78786>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/covid-19-update-march-9-1.5943167>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/nl-covid-march-9-1.5942393>

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

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union delegates to ensure best practices and information are shared as needed during these difficult times. Your Union is currently in discussions with all of our companies regarding protocols for fit-outs this spring.

SIU officials participated in a “Focused Engagement Session” with industry stakeholders hosted by Transport Canada regarding interim orders in place concerning COVID-19 in the marine sector.

The restrictions that were in place to restrict pleasure craft and cruise vessels carrying over 100 passengers was extended to February 28, 2022. The restrictions, which were set to expire on February 28, prohibit pleasure craft in Canadian Arctic waters and cruise vessels carrying more than 100 passengers in all Canadian waters.

The SIU of Canada has requested information from Transport Canada on the issue of validity periods for seafarers’ certificates. Seafarers’ Certificates with an expiration date between October 2019 and March 2021 were extended to March 31, 2021, however no additional extension has so far been granted. We continue to work with and press Transport Canada to ensure these deadlines continue to get extended as needed and the SIU continues to seek more information regarding the availability of courses, particularly for those employed on vessels requiring an MED refresher in order to remain compliant with the STCW 2010 Manila Amendments.

Although certificates are being extended until March 31, 2021, we encourage any seafarer seeking to renew their certificate of competency to do so.

You simply need to follow these 2 easy steps:

- Scan the relevant pages of your discharge book and signed testimonials, if applicable; and
- Send the scanned information by email to your local Transport Canada Marine Examination Centre.

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->

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[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 March 11, 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.

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.

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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 March 11, 2021):

- All U.S. Ports
- All Ontario Ports
- Port of Montreal
- Port of Quebec

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*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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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.

On January 26, 2021 the ITF alongside over 300 industry and human rights leaders in the marine transportation sector signed the *Neptune Declaration*. This is a new global pledge with a focus on resetting expectations and putting accountability on the industry to use their leverage to end the deepening crew change crisis. Signatories include major multinationals like BP, Cargill, Rio Tinto and Shell. Signatories are expected to deliver on a shared responsibility to resolve the crisis, an initiative led by the Global Maritime Forum.

In February 2020, Nautilus Federation, which represents 22 trade unions affiliated to the ITF, issued a statement calling on governments and global organisations to coordinate a worldwide vaccination programme for seafarers and inland waterways transport crew. The Federation believes that a mass vaccination program for maritime and shipping professionals would help address the crew change crisis while ensuring seafarers do not miss out on vaccinations while travelling for work. Their statement notes that vaccination policies and authorizations by Governments differ globally, and it calls for seafarers to have access to vaccines in other countries and to ensure that the vaccine given is also one that is authorized by their country of domicile.

The statement also asks that:

- Any vaccinations authorised by the WHO be recognised as valid for seafarer travel and transit through any national jurisdiction
- Seafarers who have not yet been able to receive a vaccination to be permitted to travel to and from their country of domicile and their place of work without restriction for the duration of the global seafarer vaccination programme

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- An education programme targeted towards seafarers to counter the effects of anti-vaccination propaganda

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