

# SIU COVID-19 TASKFORCE UPDATE



## Seafarers' International Union of Canada COVID-19 Taskforce Update June 3, 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 June 1, 2021, the situation across Canada is as follows:**

- 1,383,214 total cases (+15,108 since last update)
- 31,164 active cases (-13,621 since last update)
- 25,566 deaths (+205 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 and deaths have been reported by Ontario and Quebec. In the 7 days leading up to June 1, 2021, Ontario reported over 7,000 cases, still accounting for most of the cases in the country, but trending downward in recent weeks, thanks in part to lockdown restrictions across the province and an improved vaccine rollout. Quebec continues to see improved conditions and decreased case numbers, reporting 2,372 cases over the last 7 days. British Columbia reported 1,837 cases over the last week, also

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down since our previous update. Alberta reported 2,684 cases this past week. On the East Coast, the provinces have reported a combined 306 cases in the past week. Nova Scotia accounts for 192 of the 306 cases.

The report also outlined that:

- Of all tests administered (34,862,859) 3.8% have been found to be positive for COVID-19.
- The majority of cases are still being seen in the 20-29 age group at 19.1% of cases, followed closely by the under 19 age group at 18.9%. As vaccines rollout for the older age groups, these percentages will continue to increase for the non-eligible age groups.
- Those in the above 80 age group are more likely to have more serious symptoms, with a 27.2% hospitalization rate.

The SIU has been working with the Companies and the Chamber of Marine Commerce to establish vaccination hubs along key marine corridors such as the Welland Canal. Over the course of the the last few weeks there have been concrete plans put in place with a contracted health company to administer vaccine doses on board vessels as well as a plan with the Seaway to facilitate access. While all the pieces are in place to see this plan move to the operational phase, at the last minute, the local public health authority made a decision not to release vaccine doses for this purpose. As an alternative, companies are arranging for some members to be able to go ashore to receive their COVID-19 vaccination at Niagara region vaccination centres. We will be continuing discussions with the Province as well as pushing for establishment of these hubs in other Areas outside the Canal in order to ensure all of our members have access to COVID-19 vaccinations for those who want them and we are now looking at how to facilitate 2<sup>nd</sup> doses for those who will be needing them in the near future.

The SIU of Canada would like to provide Members with all of the information available regarding the safety and effectiveness of the varying COVID-19 vaccines available. While SIU Members will not be forced to receive a vaccine, your Union is encouraging all Members to get the first vaccine they are eligible for to help keep yourself, your fellow brothers and sisters, and your fellow crew mates safe. All vaccines have been shown to be effective in preventing COVID-19, and give your bodies the ability to fight off severe symptoms if you were to contract the virus. Some Members have expressed concern over the safety of the vaccines being administered, and while we are not doctors, all of the reputable resources and scientific data available show all vaccines to be extremely effective and safe. Yes, it is true that the vaccines were developed in record time, and this seems to be a concern to some, however, no other

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time in history has the whole scientific community been focused on solving one problem at the same time. It is no surprise that these vaccines were developed quickly.

For information regarding the varying vaccines, how they work, and their safety, we've compiled the below links to help;

- Video: [Why You Can't Compare Vaccines](#)
- Video: [mRNA Vaccines Explained](#)
- Fact Sheet: [Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine](#)
- Fact Sheet: [Moderna Vaccine](#)
- Fact Sheet: [AstraZeneca Vaccine](#)
- Fact Sheet: [Janssen \(J&J\) Vaccine](#)

Links:

<https://health-infobase.canada.ca/covid-19/epidemiological-summary-covid-19-cases.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. Your union is currently in discussions with all of our companies to strengthen protocols in order to combat the more contagious variants of concern.

The SIU recently participated in a Transport Canada hosted call in late April with industry stakeholders regarding recently announced travel restrictions on flights from Pakistan and India. These announcements will have an impact on foreign seafarers who will be further restricted from crew changes and repatriations. During the call, a verbal update was provided on the vaccination efforts underway to secure priority vaccination for seafarers. The joint efforts of the SIU and CMC were praised by Transport Canada who are also advocating on behalf of workers in the industry on this matter.

Any Certificate of Competency, that otherwise would have expired between October 1, 2019 and March 15, 2020 (but which was extended by previous Ship Safety Bulletins) is now further

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automatically extended until June 30, 2021. Any Certificate of Competency, that otherwise would have expired between March 16, 2020 and June 30, 2021 (but which was extended by previous Ship Safety Bulletins) will now remain valid until the earlier of; 15 months from the date of expiry on the face of the certificate, or December 31, 2021.

Although certificates are being extended until June 30, 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 04/2021:

<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-ssb-no-04-2021>

“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 June 3, 2021, the situation on board is as follows:**

- 0 Vessels Currently Dealing with Active Cases
- 8 Vessels with Cases Previously on Board - Resolved and Returned to Operation
- 26 Confirmed Cases since Pandemic Started
  - 2 Active Cases
  - 22 Resolved Cases
  - 2 Deceased

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**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 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)

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- 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, with the conditions in each region being monitored closely.\* (as of June 3, 2021):

- All U.S. Ports
- 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.)

Note: This 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.

## 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.

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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

Globally, the COVID-19 Pandemic continues to afflict hundreds of thousands of seafarers working in international trade who remains subject to restrictions on repatriations, shore leave and access to medical care.

In late May, the ITF hosted a week of maritime section meetings where there was a large amount of work and discussion pertaining to the ongoing COVID-19 situation as well as the need to develop a global seafarers' vaccination program. In summary, it was stressed that seafarers need to be prioritized for vaccinations within their own countries and that all countries should be prioritizing any seafarers visiting their ports as marine transportation plays such a vital role in ensuring critical goods are being delivered throughout the globe. In addition, the ITF stressed the need for governments to drop patent rights on vaccine development to ensure there is a more equitable vaccine roll-out globally as; "This won't be over until it is over for everybody". While most G20 countries have successfully begun and are advancing well into vaccinating their populations, the majority of countries around the world still lack access and ability to facilitate vaccination of their citizens and this is causing a huge discrepancy in fighting the vaccine on a global scale. The longer the vaccine continues to circulate in populations, the greater the risk becomes that the virus will mutate and even vaccinated populations may face dangerous outbreaks from COVID-19 variants that vaccines risk being ineffective against.

The goal is ultimately to see all seafarers being vaccinated in whatever Port they can get access to a WHO-EUL approved vaccine which is universally available to ensure a first and second dose is available when needed, or the single-shot J&J vaccine, which is what is being used to

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vaccinate most seafarers in countries like the U.S. and Singapore, is made more widely accessible.

The SIU continues to play an active role in the ITF and through our work in the ILO and IMO and other international forums, and we continue to call on all nations and organizations to designate seafarers as key workers, facilitate crew changes, prioritize seafarers for vaccination 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>

<https://www.itfglobal.org/en/news/shipping-industry-launches-vaccine-guide-seafarers>

*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*