

# SIU COVID-19 TASKFORCE UPDATE



## Seafarers' International Union of Canada COVID-19 Taskforce Update August 20, 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 August 18, 2021, the situation across Canada is as follows:**

- 1,460,175 total cases (+35,460 since last update)
- 20,778 active cases (+16,041 since last update)
- 26,761 deaths (+249 since last update)

In the most recent COVID-19 daily Epidemiology report issued by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), the report noted in the 7 days leading up to August 18, 2021, case numbers are once again on the rise across the country. British Columbia has seen a significant increase, reporting 3,718 cases over the past week, while Ontario and Quebec reported 3,471 and 2,717 cases. The increase in cases is being traced back to the Delta variant, which is easily transmissible. The good news is, those who are vaccinated are less likely to contract the virus, and if it is contracted, are far more likely to not suffer complications or need hospitalization.

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The report also outlined that:

- The majority of cases are being seen in the 20-29 and under 19 age group, accounting for 38.8% of all cases.
- Of those who are vaccinated;
  - 19.6 million achieved partial vaccination status, of which 30,197 (0.15%) were diagnosed with COVID-19 while partially vaccinated
  - 14.5 million achieved full vaccination status, of which 3,927 (0.03%) were diagnosed with COVID-19 while fully vaccinated
- Those in the above 80 age group are more likely to have more serious symptoms, with the highest hospitalization rate by age group at 26.4%.

The SIU of Canada is pleased to see the vaccine continue to be distributed to all crews on board SIU crewed vessels. Progress continues to be made and some crews are now receiving their second dose, which is excellent news which should bring us closer to some resemblance of normality. Thank you to all SIU Members who have continued to make countless sacrifices in order to continue working. Your hard work and dedication to the industry does not go unnoticed and without you, the country and the economy would grind to a halt.

Once again, the SIU of Canada urges all Members to get a vaccine as soon as possible. The Government of Canada recently announced that [vaccination would be mandatory for all federally regulated workforces](#), which would include Canadian seafarers. This would mean that in order to continue working, all SIU Members will need to be vaccinated by October 31, 2021. Your Union is still waiting for the full guidelines and details to be released by the federal government and Transport Canada. Once the full guidelines are released, we will share that information and what it entails with the SIU Membership.

To this end, we want to remind Members that 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 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.

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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>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/news/2021/08/government-of-canada-to-require-vaccination-of-federal-workforce-and-federally-regulated-transportation-sector.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 has continued to engage with government officials in public health at both the federal, provincial and regional levels to facilitate access to COVID-19 vaccinations in Canadian Ports. Discussions are underway to encourage governments to develop a roll-out plan that specifically addresses the need to recognize seafarers as a priority group for COVID-19 vaccine boosters, should health officials determine that booster shots become necessary annually. Through our efforts, the Government has recognized the critical role that Canada's seafarers play in supporting supply chains and we are hopeful that if future similar situations were to arise, the government would be in a better position to respond to the industry's needs to ensure our workforces remain healthy and able to carry on with their duties.

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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 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>

“Measures to Mitigate the Spread of COVID-19 on Passenger vessels and Ferries” SSB NO.:09/2021:

<https://tc.canada.ca/en/marine-transportation/marine-safety/ship-safety-bulletins/measures-mitigate-spread-covid-19-passenger-vessels-ferries-ssb-no-08-2021>

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

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**As of August 20, 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
  - 0 Active Cases
  - 24 Resolved Cases
  - 2 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.

#### 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.

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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

The SIU of Canada is happy to finally report that as of **July 9, 2021** there are no shore-leave restrictions in any port across the country. If you choose to go ashore, please continue to follow public health guidelines, practice social distancing and wear your PPE to help protect yourselves and your crewmates.

\*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 sailing as a relief or any

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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

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.

The ITF continues to stress 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 had lobbied for 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.

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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 vaccinate most seafarers in countries like the U.S. and Singapore, is made more widely accessible. After many discussions with PHAC and Health Canada, foreign seafarers calling at Canadian Ports have finally begun to have access to COVID-19 Vaccines, with many seafarers obtaining their 1<sup>st</sup> doses at walk-in clinics in the Ports of Montreal, Quebec and most recently in the Port of Halifax. The local Missions to Seafarers have played a critical role in facilitating this and ensuring foreign crew members have access to transportation to/from vaccination sites – We are grateful to the staff and volunteers in those centres for their hard work.

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*

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