



## Pre-Season Winter Navigation Virtual Meeting November 22, 2021

Dear Participant,

The Federation held the annual Pre-Season Ice Meeting virtually on November 22, 2021. The event was attended by over 60 participants including Federation members, the Canadian Coast Guard, Transport Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Port Authorities, Pilotage Authorities, and other industry stakeholders. The meeting provided participants with an outlook for the upcoming winter regarding Coast Guard programs and icebreaking status, Transport Canada's winter requirements, pilotage winter rules, a seasonal forecast from ECCC and a Seaway closing outlook. The presentations can be found on the Federation's home page under [Documents – Pre-Season Ice Meetings](#).

The **Canadian Coast Guard** provided a Marine Programs update for the Central region with an emphasis on Marine Communications and Traffic Services (MCTS) and Aids to Navigation (ATON). From an MCTS perspective, reported incidents have increased since last year for both Quebec and Les Escoumins sectors. The Fall buoy decommissioning commenced on November 11<sup>th</sup> with the removal of the Quebec to Montreal lighted buoys. The Grondines to Montreal priority buoys are scheduled to start December 6<sup>th</sup>. The Great Lakes buoy decommissioning will begin in the Beauharnois Canal on December 23<sup>rd</sup> and work westwards and estimated to complete by December 28<sup>th</sup>. The Lake Saint-Louis and South Shore Canal have been converted to Four-Season buoys and the position validation of the buoys was completed in October.

In the St. Lawrence River, 148/183 buoys have been converted to Four-Season Buoys (4SB). The Coast Guard has contracted the purchase of another 55 buoys to complete the St. Lawrence sector (35 buoys) and add to the Great Lakes (2 buoys) and Atlantic regions (3 buoys). These buoys are to be delivered in early 2022 and installed during the Spring commissioning. At this time, a request has been submitted for funding to complete the Great Lakes region, however CCG is waiting response. The aids to navigation buoy tending schedule/progress is updated daily on the [MARINFO website](#).

The **Canadian Coast Guard** provided an update on the Icebreaking Program for the Central and Atlantic, a 2020/2021 seasonal review outlining various demands for CCG services across the regions and a 2021/2022 seasonal preview. Transport Canada authorized the Atlantic Ice Office to be more flexible in partially activating Ice Control Zones, specifically "U" and "V" zones. The Coast Guard will also engage with Transport Canada and stakeholders to discuss the area between 66 West and the start of

mandatory pilotage in which there is a gap in the Ice Control Zone Coverage. Last season saw one of the lightest ice years on record as there was no ice in the Gulf or in Lac St. Pierre. As a result, there were no recommended ice routes issued last season.

This season, Montreal Ice Operations will be staffed with ice officers working closely with the Regional Operation Officers and available 24/7. Ice Atlantic will be staffed from December 1, 2021 until July 1, 2022 at the Coast Guard Base in St. John's. Ice information and routing will be sent to shipping through Marine Radio stations, MCTS stations, e-mail or phone - whichever communication method is most suitable. Daily ice conference calls will be held with industry to present ice and weather conditions, forecasts and discuss Coast Guard asset operations. A 2021/2022 seasonal preview places icebreakers in different zones and transfers across regions as required. With today's technology, the old practice of providing pre-determined routes is being phased out for an on-demand system. Ice routes will be provided on demand as soon as possible.

The **Canadian Coast Guard** has acquired a shallow draft icebreaker for use on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River. It will transit to Canada later this year and the process of conversion should begin next year.

The **Canadian Coast Guard** provided an update on their Marine Programs Levels of Service (LoS) Review. A review of the CCGs LoS was launched this year with an online survey to obtain stakeholder views of the 2010 LoS edition. A total of 199 responses were received from a wide range of stakeholders with the largest percentage of respondents being commercial ship owners/operators. Results of the survey were shared with respect to all key programs including; Search & Rescue, Environmental Response, Aids to Navigation, Marine Communications & Traffic Services, Icebreaking Services and Waterways Management. From an icebreaking perspective, while a large percentage of respondents indicated "no change", some key trends were for faster and more reliable services, improved placement of icebreakers, better approach to ice jams and flood control. The Coast Guard will continue to engage with a view to submit proposed LoS changes for Commissioner approval by Winter 2022.

*Note – While the Fleet Renewal Plan was not presented during the meeting, a powerpoint presentation is available with the meeting documentation.*

The **Canadian Ice Service** provided a recap of the previous season as well as their 2021/2022 pre-seasonal outlook for the upcoming winter. Last year, ice conditions across the Gulf and Atlantic regions were significantly below normal with the second lowest ice year on record where the ice melt began 4-6 weeks ahead of normal. Since the summer, air and sea surface temperatures across the region have been above normal. The air temperature forecasts (December to February) indicate above normal temperatures while March is expected to be close to normal. As a result, the sea ice forecast for the Gulf is expected to be below normal, but higher than last year. For the Newfoundland and Labrador region, the sea ice forecast is for below normal ice conditions on Eastern NL and near to below normal for waters off the south coast of Labrador. The seasonal outlook will be issued on December 1<sup>st</sup> and the first 30-day forecast will be issued to the public on Wednesday December 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Transport Canada** reported on their ship safety winter navigation statistics from last season as well as their objectives for the upcoming winter season. Last winter was relatively quiet due to the mild conditions, however Transport Canada also applauded the efforts of industry as there is an overall downward trend of winter related incidents. The conformity of ships for last winter was 94%. Excluding wide-beam vessels, winter conditions were between December 21<sup>st</sup> to March 22<sup>nd</sup>. A total of 202 ships utilized the correct internal circulations while 12 ships required a temporary system or to delay navigation outside the restricted period. There were only 20 vessels with a combined 26 deficiencies recorded which was the lowest in 7 years. For the upcoming season, Transport Canada will continue to monitor vessels that have open/closed loop scrubbers as many operators are unaware of the potential risks regarding use of wet exhaust gas cleaning system in winter conditions. Transport Canada will be asking vessels to use a different fuel and not the scrubbers during the winter periods. Transport Canada also cautioned against the likelihood of increasing freezing spray conditions with the forecasted low ice conditions.

The **Laurentian Pilotage Authority** outlined their pre-winter, winter and post-winter periods and explained the criteria to transition between each. The pre-winter period is triggered by the lifting of the first priority buoy in each sector. The winter period is the trigger for double pilotage on all vessels and the Authority will determine the winter navigation period in each pilotage district based on the status of navigational aids, weather, ice formation and ice conditions and other pertinent factors. The LPA will communicate with industry prior to declaring the winter period.

Finally, the **St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation (SLSMC)** provided an overview of the Seaway closing preparations for the 2021/22 winter season. This year there are less vessel transits than last year, but ships carried more cargo. With 1,700 transits through the MLO sector and 2,048 transits through the Welland sector, service level objectives during pandemic operations have been maintained. The dredging of the South Shore Canal took place between October 6 to November 6<sup>th</sup> and resulted in 24 vessels being delayed a combined 51 hours. The official closing date for the 2021 navigation season is December 31<sup>st</sup> for the Montreal to Lake Ontario section and January 8 for the Welland Canal. At this time, all meteorological indicators point to a favourable closing. The Seaway will be holding regular calls with industry leading up to the closing during which the Seaway will provide status updates on conditions, infrastructure, icebreaking assets, buoy tending, pilotage, etc.

Please contact the undersigned if you have any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

Chad Allen

Director, Marine Operations