



**Pre-Season Ice Meeting
Virtual Conference
November 26, 2020**

Dear Member,

This year, the Federation held their annual Pre-Season Ice Meeting remotely on November 26, 2020 due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. The event was attended by over 80 participants including SFC members, the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG), Transport Canada (TC), Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), Port Authorities, Pilotage Authorities, and other interested stakeholders. The meeting provided members with an outlook for the upcoming winter regarding Coast Guard programs and icebreaking status, Transport Canada's winter requirements, LPA winter rules, a seasonal forecast from ECCC and a Seaway closing outlook. The presentations can be found on the Federation's home page under ["Winter Navigation"](#).

The **Canadian Coast Guard** provided a National Programs [Update](#) on Central and Arctic Region activities concerning aids to navigation. The aids to navigation buoy tending schedule is posted on the [MARINFO](#) website and updated daily. The Fall 2020 buoy tending program is currently underway with the St. Lawrence sector 56.1% complete and the Great Lakes sector 55.8% complete; priority buoys are expected to be complete by December 31.

The Government's four-season buoy (4SB) program in which new 4SBs will be deployed throughout the St. Lawrence River is estimated for completion by 2021. Currently, 148 of 185 4SBs have been deployed with the objective to reduce seasonal maintenance of buoys and increase the level of service:

Sector	Number of 4SB Deployed
Les Escoumins to Quebec	12 of 15
Quebec to Trois-Rivieres	46 of 57
Trois-Rivieres to Montreal	59 of 82
Lake St. Louis	31 of 31
Total	148 of 185

A new 1.0m prototype is currently under development and on trial for potential deployment to some of the 37 remaining positions. The state of advancement of year-round lighted ice spar can be monitored on the [MARINFO](#) website.

The **CCG** provided an update on the Icebreaking Program ([Part 1](#) / [Part 2](#)) for the Central & Arctic and Atlantic, a 2019/2020 seasonal review outlining various demands for CCG services across the regions and a 2020/2021 seasonal preview. Transport Canada authorized the Atlantic Ice Office to be more flexible in partially activating Ice Control Zones, specifically "U" and "V" zones.

Last season experienced below average ice conditions across the region and despite an early ice break up in Lake St. Pierre during February, a high number of escorts were still recorded in the Gulf. Several variables affect levels of service and response times for icebreaker assistance. In 2019, levels of service were met 100% in the Great Lakes, St. Lawrence and Arctic sectors, while the Atlantic region reached 99.3%.

This season, Montreal Ice Operations will be staffed with six ice officers working closely with the ROC available 24/7. Ice Atlantic will be staffed from December 1, 2020 until July 1, 2021 at the CCG Base in St. John's. Ice information and routing will be sent to shipping through marine radio stations. Daily ice conference calls will be held with industry to present ice and weather conditions, forecasts and discuss CCG assets operations with stakeholders.

A 2020/2021 seasonal preview places icebreakers in different zones and transfers across regions as needed – regional boundaries are not limitations except for locks which prevent the sharing of assets during winter navigation. Icebreaking assets are assigned to certain areas according to several factors.

In 2019, the Federal Government announced that 24 new large ships would be built to renew the [Coast Guard fleet](#). These vessels are critical to year-round safe and efficient movement of ships and goods in Canadian waters that will deliver icebreaking, environmental response, offshore patrol and search and rescue missions. The new fleet will consist of:

- Up to 16 Multi-Purpose Vessels (MPV) to be built by Seaspan's Vancouver Shipyards. The first MPV will be delivered following the delivery of the Royal Canadian Navy's 2nd Joint Ship Supply.
- Up to 6 Program Icebreakers to be built at a third Canadian shipyard. The concept development is underway, and a delivery schedule will be available following negotiations with the third NSS shipyard. Expecting a ten-year time frame.
- 2 Arctic Offshore Patrol Ships (AOPS) adapted for the Coast Guard to be built by Irving Shipbuilding Inc. in Halifax. Delivery will take place following the delivery of the Royal Canadian Navy's 6th AOPS. Expecting to see models in mid-2020s.

The Coast Guard is committed to maintaining its service levels while new ships are being built. As such, the CCG is investing in the existing fleet to ensure the delivery of critical services until the new vessels are phased into service. Interim and support measures will include:

- Vessel Life Extension (VLE) program for existing ships
- 3 commercial icebreakers to backfill existing ships during refit and VLE
 - Captain Molly Kool: West Coast Newfoundland, Gulf of St. Lawrence, Corridor, Straits. Operating from December 18 until end of season.
 - Jean Goodwill: West Coast Newfoundland, Gulf of St. Lawrence, Corridor, Straits. Operating from January 15 until end of season.
 - Vincent Massey: to be delivered in 2021 based out of Quebec City.
- Procurement process to acquire a light icebreaker is underway. Acquisition request for proposal was re-tendered to industry in September 2020.

The renewal of the Coast Guard fleet is underway and the Coast Guard will continue to have the fleet capabilities required to perform.

Environment and Climate Change Canada provided a recap of the previous season as well as their 2020/2021 [pre-seasonal outlook](#) for the upcoming winter.

The **Canadian Ice Services (CIS)** forecasts a strong La Nina year which will have more of an impact on the Western and Central regions than in the Eastern/Atlantic region. Forecasts show a below normal ice year in the Gulf, but a higher total accumulated ice coverage (TAC) than last year's TAC. Sea surface temperature anomalies are below normal in the northern Gulf and above normal in the southern Gulf. The temperature forecast predicts near to above normal temperatures which may impact conditions in the southern and eastern Gulf and the Cabot Strait.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, CIS is forecasting near normal ice conditions in waters off eastern Newfoundland, but more than last year. Near normal temperatures paired with off-shore winds will spread ice cover over a larger area compared to previous seasons. In waters off the south coast of Labrador, CIS forecasts near normal ice conditions, but more expected than the previous three seasons. Persistent offshore winds will spread sea ice cover over a larger area compared to last year.

Mid-December is expecting full ice formation along the Labrador coast and in the St. Lawrence River estuary. Mid-January models predict temperatures entering the Gulf could be below normal, but closer to normal once in the Gulf estuary. Mid-February is forecasted to see near normal conditions in the Gulf with full ice cover expected along Labrador and into northeast Newfoundland. The forecast for mid-March anticipates less ice cover than normal. A seasonal outlook will be issued to the public on December 1 and the first 30-day forecast will be issued on December 15.

Transport Canada reported on their ship safety [winter navigation statistics](#) from last season as well as their objectives for the upcoming winter season. The conformity of ships for winter 2019-20 was 93%. Last winter experienced milder conditions and resulted in a shorter season. No ship was declined and TC worked with arriving vessels to install a temporary system. Alerting cases related to winter navigation included recirculation installation (20%), operational problems (21%) and other winter navigational problems (69%); there were 34 cases involving 33 ships. For the upcoming winter navigation season, a new revamped [winter navigation email](#) with an IMO number of compliant ships will be included in an annex.

The **Laurentian Pilotage Authority (LPA)** [outlined](#) their pre-winter, winter and post-winter periods and explained the criteria to transition between each. 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.

NOTE: The beginning of departure restrictions for long and wide-beam vessels were announced to begin on December 4, 2020. As well, the beginning of pre-winter navigation between Quebec and Becancour was announced to begin on December 4, 2020 following the lifting of light priority buoys. The 2020-2021 pre-winter dispatching schedule clarifies restrictions concerning [ice cover less than 3/10](#) throughout a given sector, as well as for [ice cover equal to or greater than 3/10](#).

Finally, the **St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation (SLSMC)** provided an [overview](#) of the Seaway closing preparations for the 2020/2021 winter season and pilot capacity will be put under stress towards the end of the season. Milder temperatures are forecast for the seaway for December and the seaway freeze-up is 7-10 days late compared to the average. With 1,858 transits through the MLO sector and 2,307 transits through the Welland sector, service level objectives during pandemic operations have maintained reliability, availability and efficiency. Special Agreements are in place this season taking into account terms for MLO users and terms for the extended Welland

Canal Pilot Project users. The SLSDC's new tug, Seaway Guardian, was delivered on July 19, 2020 and training has begun with the Marine Services Division on the operational handling of the vessel.

The [official closing date](#) for the 2020 navigation season is **December 31st** for the Montreal to Lake Ontario section and **January 8** for the Welland Canal. The Seaway will be holding regular calls with industry leading up to the closing during which the Seaway will provide status updates on closing conditions, infrastructure, icebreaking assets, buoy tending, pilotage, etc.

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

Sincerely,

Meghan Clark
Operations Coordinator