

March 16, 2020

Western Marine Operations Contingency Call

Record of Discussion

Opening Remarks

Robert Lewis-Manning provided the context for the call, noting that it was originally started to review impacts from the rail blockades which took place earlier in the year. As a result of potential impacts of COVID-19 the group attending the call decided that it would be beneficial to continue the calls, however this would now be done under the Western Marine Community Coalition, as it includes a wider stakeholder base of the marine community.

Prime Minister's Announcement

Bonnie Gee noted that the Prime Minister held a new conference in the morning to introduce further measures to contain COVID-19.

- The border is closed to all non-residents of Canada, with some designated exceptions including US Citizens and air crew. Clarification as to whether the exemption includes ships crew is being sought.
- All travellers with COVID-19 symptoms will be prevented from taking flights to Canada and an assistance program is being established for those stranded abroad. Canada has advised that they will not repatriate these individuals.
- Only Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto (Pearson) and Montreal (Trudeau) Airports would be open to International Flights
- Trade and Commerce would continue to flow

Ports

All the Port Authorities (VFPA/PRPA/PAPA) on the call indicated that they were fully operational. Prince Rupert indicated they were in constant communication with the tenants. Vancouver Fraser Port Authority has established a taskforce internally and noted that it has temporarily waived the requirement for the bunker supplier crew to board a vessel to complete bunker checklists, and temporarily eliminated the need for drivers to touch keypads to gain access to VACS gates. Travel and quarantine restrictions are in place.

Pilotage

The Pacific Pilotage Authority noted that 3 of 9 Fraser River Pilots were currently in self-isolation and this would impact 14 pilot days. The PPA has supplied gloves, masks and cleaning supplies to all pilots, and noted a concern regarding the availability of personnel protection supplies. The PPA would shortly be issuing a Notice to Industry similar to the recent Puget Sound notice with respect to cleaning and best practices on the bridge. The BC Coast Pilots advised that six coastal pilots were currently in self-isolation pending test results. The BCCP also noted that there was a finite supply of protective wear available. The BCCP also highlighted that the pilots remain committed to keeping the supply chain moving.

Carriers/Agents

Carriers and Agents noted that there was concern on how crew-change would be impacted, along with personnel arriving under a working Visa, and we are seeking clarification. Vessels are following the guidance put out by the International Chamber of Shipping on COVID-19.

BCMEA

The BC Maritime Employers Association outlined the steps that were being undertaken to dispatch labour with a minimal amount of contact at the dispatch hall. It was noted that local 502 had developed a good process. The BCMEA would be issuing a notice to labour that upon returning from travel they would be required to self-isolate for 14 days. The BCMEA is having regular calls with both Ship Owners and Labour. The BCMEA noted that some vessels arriving were requesting declarations to be signed by all personnel attending the vessel.

Transport Canada

Transport Canada noted that they were currently establishing what is considered essential services for all modes under their jurisdiction. With respect to their employees, some personnel will be working from home, all vessels inspections will continue as per usual. Transport Canada is seeking clarification from headquarters on crew transfers, and will send out notification once this is confirmed. Transport Canada is also preparing information and guidelines for vessels arriving into Canada that will provide some assurance that Canadians are taking all precautions. It was also clarified that any issues with domestic vessels should be reported to the Provincial Health Authority. Transport Canada is currently planning to continue with their marine stakeholder conference call, of which notice will be sent out prior to the next call.

Canadian Food Inspection Agency

CFIA noted that inspectors are not required to sign any health declarations required by the vessel. Currently service is being provided as usual with no inspectors facing quarantine, however it was noted that their policy prohibits employees with any illness (including colds and flu) to avoid the workplace. If the number of available inspectors falls, then other measures will need to be considered.

General Comments

- Transport Canada advised that it would distribute the information documents they were working on.
- Transport Canada advised that Cruise Ships would not be allowed into a port in Canada during suspension of the season to the end of June.
- Transport Canada confirmed that the International Chamber of Shipping Guidelines have been taken into account.