

Fair Sailing is an initiative by the James Bay Neighbourhood Association (JBNA) to advocate for responsible cruise tourism practices that prioritize the interests of residents, local businesses and the environment of Victoria, Canada's highest volume port-of-call.

James Bay residents want quality of life, clean air, no foreign garbage and a healthy safe community. The impacts of the cruise industry in our neighbourhood include overtourism, air pollution, the import of foreign garbage and threats to public health.

This section of **Fair Sailing** outlines the impacts of the cruise industry during the Covid-19 pandemic with proposed actions to safeguard the health of our community from ship-borne outbreaks, epidemics and pandemics.

www.fair-sailing.com

Actions Needed

- Following the directives of the Office of the Provincial Health Officer:
 - Restart cruising only with complete cruise ship passengers and crew vaccinations
 - Require each cruise ship operator to post a surety bond or other financial instrument to cover all local accommodation, quarantine, and treatment costs for passengers and crew who must be evacuated due to infection and/or exposure. This includes those who test negative but must quarantine in order to protect local communities

Protect Public Health During Pandemics

As part of its **Fair Sailing** initiative, JBNA is advocating for more responsible cruise ship practices to reduce the negative social, public health and environmental impacts of cruising on our port community.

There are a number of other health issues related to cruise tourism, including noise, traffic and air pollution. These are addressed in other sections of **Fair Sailing**.

Victoria as a Port-of-Call

Most cruise ships on the Seattle/Alaska route are registered outside of the United States (US). The *US Passenger Vessels Service Act* requires foreign registered ships to make at least one stop at an international port.

Past surveys indicate that about 70% of cruise ship visits to Victoria were to satisfy the requirements of the US Act. This has made Victoria an essential port-of-call for the cruise lines on their Alaska itineraries.

Covid-19 – 2020 Public Health Directive

In March 2020, the **Minister of Transport Canada** issued Interim Order #5, *Respecting Passenger Vessel Restrictions Due to the Coronavirus Disease 2019* which banned cruise ships from Canadian waters. The order was later extended to February 28, 2022, and more recently brought forward to November 1, 2021.

Covid-19 - The Cruise Industry's Approach

In March 2020, the United States (US) Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) alerted Americans to avoid cruising, citing increased risk of Covid-19. Despite the advisory, some cruise ships continued to sail.

The world watched as Covid-19 cases on the Diamond Princess rose to over 700 and 13 people died while the ship was quarantined for six weeks in Japan. Within weeks, over 50 cruise ships carried the virus. 3,689 confirmed cases were associated with 102 outbreaks on 124 ships by the end of September.

In September 2020, the cruise lines convened a **Healthy Sail Panel** to recommend Covid-19 mitigation strategies and protocols. The panel recognized the need for “*aligning [staggering] terminal hours of operation with ship arrival and debarkation times to reduce unnecessary traffic in the terminal*”. Scheduling changes could alleviate the congregating of large numbers of people at terminals and minimise opportunities for passengers from two ships to interact. This is also a mitigation measure for the impact of overtourism land transportation ‘surging’.

Several port communities have limited cruise ship activity to reduce impacts on their communities. Examples are Bergen, Norway, permitting 3 ships or 8,000 passengers per day; Dubrovnik permitting 2 ships or 5,000 passengers per day; and residents of Key West Florida voting to limit ship sizes and the people disembarking to 1,500/per day. *(Note: Limits are undergoing challenges and/or changes)*

The cruise industry seems to agree that staggering ship arrival and departure times will assist with the prevention of pandemic outbreaks. Unnecessary traffic can be further reduced by limiting the number of ships in port. In addition to lessening the spread of diseases on shore, these measures improve community health by reducing noise and air pollution.

James Bay residents know of the role cruise ships play in the transmission of diseases, including Covid-19, norovirus, measles and/or E-Coli. During the swine flu pandemic of 2009, cruise-ships were re-routed to Victoria to avoid exposing passengers and crew to the H1N1 virus. This is an example of how quickly the cruise-industry can adapt, if required.

2021 Cruise Industry Update

The US government has approved a temporary amendment to its Passenger Vessels Service Act allowing cruise ships to sail past BC in 2021.

Royal Caribbean’s *Serenade of the Seas* sailed from Seattle to Alaska on July 19, 2021.

Seattle-Alaska itineraries that include Victoria as a port-of-call for 2022 are being promoted.

Looking Ahead

There is no such thing as “safe cruising” during any pandemic. Covid-19 has highlighted the role the cruise industry plays in transmission of diseases and the need for clear rules and regulations to protect public health.

The relationship with, and reporting to, the Office of the Provincial Health Officer when an outbreak occurs needs to be transparent and needs to be enhanced with public real-time reporting of infectious diseases.

Most port-of-call visits to Victoria occur on Day 6 of itineraries for the Alaska run. With the 2-week incubation period, cruise lines’ Covid-19 testing prior to boarding may not be sufficient to prevent spread of the virus into Canada when passengers disembark on Day 6 of most visits.

Rules for on-shore operations and activities, including self-guided tours in James Bay and downtown Victoria are needed.

The US CDC has proposed that cruise lines enter into agreements with local US health authorities to accept evacuation to on-shore hospitals for passengers and crew if needed, and to provide access to shoreside housing if needed. ***On-shore accommodations and treatment costs would require significant financial surety guarantees by the cruise lines.*** (Note: CDC identifies agreements with each cruise-line, not with the Cruise Line International Association)

We look to our health authorities and levels of governments to continue monitoring and restricting cruise travel during the Covid-19 pandemic and to develop effective safeguards to minimise the transmission of diseases from those disembarking from cruise ships.

What Residents say

“I don’t want the money so much as I want Victoria to remain a healthy haven for its citizens, but we need to be firm against the pressure placed everywhere by the cruise ship lines.”