

Working in Québec's marine industry

Canada is composed of ten provinces and three territories. Québec, a majority French-speaking province, is located between Ontario and the Atlantic provinces. It is transected by the St. Lawrence, one of the world's largest rivers, which links the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean. Because the St. Lawrence is one of the world's most important inland waterways, the marine industry constitutes a veritable driving force for the Québec economy.

Québec's shipping industry

Québec's shipping industry comprises hundreds of companies, which represent approximately 18 000 direct and indirect jobs in a wide range of activity sectors: general freight transportation, ferryboats, transport service, cruise ships and tour boats, port services, docking, towing, pilotage, marine safety, vessel repairs, etc.

Shipping in Québec is:

- Annual economic spinoffs of about \$1.8 billion;
- Fifteen or so trading ports located along the St. Lawrence and Saguenay rivers;
- About 300 companies active in transportation, port services and marine services;
- More than 100 million tonnes of cargo passing through Québec ports every year;
- Over 6 million passengers carried yearly on ferryboats and domestic cruise ships.



Growing human resources requirements

Québec's marine industry is currently facing major human resources issues. The aging work force, massive departures for retirement in the medium term and the lack of a young generation are the direct consequence of a shortage of qualified, experienced candidates.

In the next 10 years, the industry expects to hire about 7000 persons.

The occupations most in demand among navigating personnel are:

- Captains and deck officers with superior skills certification
- Marine engineering officers

Good wages

Wages are generally very lucrative—well above the Québec average for skilled occupations.

In general, navigating personnel work between six and nine months a year.

Procedure for working in Québec's marine industry

Jobs for navigating personnel are regulated occupations requiring a Canadian certificate of competency issued by Transport Canada. Canada does not automatically recognize other countries' marine certification. If you hold a certificate of competency qualifying you to work in a marine industry occupation that is in demand and you wish to work in Québec or any other Canadian province, you must apply to Transport Canada have the equivalency of your certificate and sea time recognized. The procedure is as follows:

- 1 Have a valid certificate issued under STCW 95, without tonnage restrictions or voyage limitations. Sea time is checked. Near coastal time is not recognized.
- 2 Have your official documents translated into French or English, with an official seal.
- 3 Get Canadian citizenship or landed immigrant status with a permanent resident card.
- 4 Have Transport Canada analyze your file. Originals are required for file analysis (seaman's book, valid certificate, training certificates and transcripts).
- 5 Transport Canada will verify the authenticity of your certificate through your country of origin. This process can take up to one year.

After your file has been studied, you usually need to pass various exams and compulsory training sessions to obtain your Canadian certificate. These requirements are designed to ensure knowledge of the Canadian maritime system and features of navigation regulations specific to Canada. Usually, for a higher officer, the process takes about 8 to 12 months. A Ministère des Transports du Québec financial assistance program can provide financial support of 50% of the tuition fees for a courses leading to officer certification.

Note that, when first employed in Canada, newcomers often begin one level lower than the certificate recognized by Transport Canada. During this time, candidates must prove their technical skills and, especially, their ability to adapt to the company's management style.

Educational institutions

In Québec, the only institution offering training leading to captain/navigation officer and marine engineering officer certification is the Institut maritime du Québec in Rimouski.

In the other Canadian provinces, four other marine institutes offer training leading to captain/navigation officer and marine engineering officer certification. They are located in Ontario, British Columbia, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.

Although English is the working language in some shipping companies, speaking French is a major asset for finding a job in Québec's marine industry.

Additional information

Human Resources Sectorial Committee of the Maritime Industry (CSMOIM) : www.csmoim.qc.ca

Transport Canada : www.tc.gc.ca

Institut maritime du Québec : www.imq.qc.ca

Immigration-Québec : www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca

Citizenship and Immigration Canada : www.cic.gc.ca

Emploi-Québec : www.imt.emploiuebec.net