

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR EVALUATING
PILOT PROFICIENCY**

Remarks by

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**Panel Discussion on the Future of Pilot Training
APA/CMPA West Coast Pilots Meeting
Vancouver, British Columbia
April, 2009**

INTRODUCTION

I am very happy to be participating in this panel discussion on the future of pilot training. Nothing could be more basic to the provision of the best pilotage service possible than excellent training, not only to qualify for a pilot license, but on an ongoing basis so as to ensure that pilots' skills are always at the leading edge of their profession.

RELATIONSHIP OF PROFICIENCY TO QUALITY SERVICE

I think it is important at the outset to distinguish between pilot proficiency – which speaks to the technical capabilities and professional judgement of pilots – and the broader concept of quality service.

Of course, pilots cannot provide a quality service without being proficient, but the provision of a quality service requires more than just proficiency. It implies a sensitivity and responsiveness to the operating requirements of maritime shipping, and a disposition to accommodate those needs whenever possible, so long as safety is never compromised.

While I have on other occasions spoken at length about the importance of pilots providing the best service possible, my remarks today are more narrowly focused on the need to demonstrate that pilots are proficient – that is to say, that they are at the top of their game and are able to discharge their duties and responsibilities with all the skill and good judgment that might be required.

THE NEED TO DEMONSTRATE PILOT PROFICIENCY

I expect that every pilot in this room believes that he is proficient in terms of his ability to do his job well. We all have extensive experience navigating ships, we have all received rigorous training for piloting in our respective districts, and our skills are kept current through constant application and, from time to time, through supplementary training.

For all kinds of reasons, this is no longer good enough – if it ever was – for our clients, our employers, the government, or the general public to be assured of our pilotage proficiency. Even a 99.98% accident-free performance isn't enough! We must be able to **demonstrate** our proficiency through **systematic practices and procedures** designed to evaluate, on an ongoing basis, our skill set.

In Canada, the Canadian Transportation Agency's review of pilotage issues led to a recommendation in 1999 that Pilotage Authorities develop a formal process for regularly assessing pilot competence. The Government of Canada endorsed this recommendation.

Special management audits of the country's four Pilotage Authorities, undertaken by the Auditor General of Canada between 2003 and 2008, all concurred with the need for a process to assess pilot competence, and criticized the fact that the Agency's recommendation had not yet been implemented.

It is important to note that neither the Canadian Transportation Agency nor the Auditor General suggested that pilots were **not** proficient; what was criticized was the absence of a systematic process that validated this proficiency on an ongoing basis.

The fact that the *Canada Shipping Act* requires shipmasters and officers, every five years, to undergo a mariner competency certification process in order to assess competency, makes the argument for a similar requirement in respect of pilots even more compelling.

OBSTACLES TO INTRODUCTION OF PILOT PROFICIENCY VALIDATION PROCESS

Despite the many calls over the years by credible voices to implement a formal process that confirms pilot proficiency in Canada, it is only now being introduced. Why has it taken so long?

There are two main reasons. The first one relates to the fact that there have been different views as to what actually constitutes an effective process for determining pilot proficiency.

This point is illustrated by some of the responses of the Pilotage Authorities to the Auditor General's finding that such processes were not in place. Authorities pointed to a variety of initiatives that they had undertaken and which they felt responded, at least to some extent, to the need for a more systemic approach to validating pilot proficiency.

Some of the measures cited were a structured process for pilot recruitment, the existence of a Pilot Training and Examination Committee, audits to evaluate pilot currency, the establishment of a Pilot Continued Proficiency Report, assessments of pilot performance related to marine occurrences and complaints.

While I think we are now very close to a consensus as to what elements should be included in a proper evaluation of proficiency, the second reason that has probably contributed to the delay in implementing a formal process was only addressed this past year.

I am referring to the long-standing and, I think, justified unease that pilots had about how such a system would work, how fair and objective it would be, and the possibility of mistakes that could directly affect not only their professional reputation but their livelihood.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ASSESSING PILOT PROFICIENCY

The pressing need to develop a process to evaluate proficiency and the feeling among pilots that such a system could have unintended negative consequences, needed to be reconciled. The CMPA and the four Canadian Pilotage Authorities therefore established a joint working group to formulate Guiding Principles that all Authorities would subscribe to when developing their proficiency evaluation process.

I had the pleasure of working on that committee with the Chief Executive Officer of the Pacific Pilotage Authority, Capt. Kevin Obermeyer. As it turned out, it was not difficult for us to develop principles that we could agree on. These were approved by the Authority and the CMPA in January of this year.

I think the guidelines go a great way to reassuring pilots that pilot proficiency assessments need not be seen as a threat but rather as one more tool designed to promote the best pilotage service.

Nine principles were adopted.

The first is that the development of proficiency evaluations will be **collaborative**. While responsibility for the program must rest with the Pilotage Authority, it will be developed and implemented in partnership with pilots.

The second is the intention to **focus on quality**. The purpose of the evaluations is to foster quality performance rather to be used as a punitive tool.

The next principle speaks to the need to introduce pilot assessments gradually. While, within a reasonable timeframe, the **applicability** of the assessments will extend to all pilots, in some cases implementation will be phased-in.

The fourth principle is that the **frequency** will be regular and not less than once every three years.

Fifth, in the interests of **transparency**, results of assessments will be communicated to pilots in a timely manner, and pilots will have an opportunity to comment before the results are considered final.

All assessment results will be maintained with the same **confidentiality** as pilots' confidential personnel records.

The seventh principle is that the **modality** for assessing pilot proficiency will be various with no single means being the sole basis upon which an assessment is made.

In those cases where it is determined that pilots need to make improvements, specific and practical **remedies** must be identified to ensure the situation is quickly corrected.

Finally, the ninth principle ensures the **precedence of the Pilotage Act** over any measures designed to assess proficiency. This last principle ensures that the legislation and regulations governing the issuance and suspension of pilot licenses is respected.

CONCLUSION

I believe assessing pilot proficiency in an objective manner, using a transparent process is necessary if pilots are to be accountable and are to maintain public confidence. We have to be able to demonstrate, in a way that is meaningful to the average citizen, that we have what it takes to do the job.

I think the CMPA, by collaborating with the Pilotage Authorities on what has not always been an easy question, has contributed to its resolution and have again demonstrated their willingness to work constructively with other stakeholders to ensure we have the best pilotage service possible.