



PILOTAGE AROUND THE WORLD

Remarks by

**CAPT. MICHEL POULIOT, C.M., F.N.I.
PRESIDENT
CANADIAN MARINE PILOTS' ASSOCIATION**

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INTRODUCTION

In a few moments, I will have the pleasure of calling on three of my colleagues from around the globe to talk about developments elsewhere in the world and what it means for pilotage everywhere.

Our panelists are Captain Mike Watson, Captain Dieter Bloechl and Captain Gwee Bok-Lee.

BIOGRAPHIES OF PANELISTS

Capt. Mike Watson

Captain Michael Watson attended the United States' Merchant Marine Academy, graduating with a degree in marine transportation, commissioned as Ensign in the U.S. Naval Reserve, and licensed as Third Mate of steam and motor vessels by the United States' Coast Guard.

His professional license is now master of Steam and Motor Vessels and is a First Class Pilot for the waters of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries by the U.S. Coast Guard and the State of Maryland.

Having worked for the Military Sealift Command, supplying troops in South Vietnam, he joined Farrell Lines Inc., of New York, transporting commercial cargoes to Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Mexico. He rose to the position of Chief Officer at Farrell Lines and then joined the Association of American Pilots.

Captain Watson pursued a parallel career as a leader of pilots, first with the Association of Maryland pilots, of which he ultimately became the President. In 2000, Capt. Watson was elected President of the American Pilots' Association, a position he continues to hold.

In 2002, he joined me on the executive of the International Maritime Pilots' Association as Vice-president, and, in 2006, he was elected President of the International Maritime Pilots' Association for a four-year term.

Capt. Dieter Blochl

Capt Blochl hails from Bavaria in Germany and has been at sea for 40 years. He attended the German Merchant Marine Academy, acquiring an Officer License, subsequently receiving a diploma in engineering and an unlimited Master License.

Before joining the Kiel Canal Pilots, he served as a captain on container ships for Norasia/Maersk.

After leading the Kiel Canal pilots and becoming Vice-president of the Bundeslotsenkammer – the German Federal Chamber of Maritime Pilots, he went on to serve as President of the Bundeslotsenkammer, a position he still holds, and Vice-president of the European Maritime Pilots' Association.

Last year he was elected President of the European Pilots' Association.

Capt. Gwee Bok-Lee

Capt. Bok-Lee graduated from the Korea Merchant Marine University and served on merchant vessels, first as an officer and then captain, for 23 years.

He began his career as a pilot in the Port of Incheon in 1995 and later became President of the Incheon Pilots' Association. In 2006, Capt. Bok-Lee became president of the Korea Maritime Pilots' Association and Vice-president of the International Maritime Pilots' Association.

WEST COAST PILOTS' ASSOCIATION

As I mentioned, these three very distinguished pilots will shortly give us their views on what they consider to be the important issues facing pilotage.

I recently found myself in a position similar to the one they are in here in Vancouver this morning.

I was invited to Seattle to speak to the West Coast Pilots' Association and to give them a perspective on pilotage from a Canadian point of view.

I thought my fellow Canadian pilots and other members of the marine community might find it interesting to hear what I had to say to the Americans about the situation here in Canada.

STATUS OF PILOTS

I have, of course, been speaking for years to pilots in every part of the world about the important connection between the level and quality of service they provide, and the nature of the pilotage regime itself.

My message has always been a simple one, and so it was in Seattle. I told the members of the West Coast Pilots' Association that if we are to maintain our status as independent professionals, discharging our duties without fear of interference or undue pressure, we must make sure that we provide the very best service possible, at reasonable cost and with due regard for the shipping industry's needs.

I then reported to them – not without some irony – about the assault against the independence and integrity of pilots that had occurred in my own country and that is, at least partly, the result of a lack of responsiveness by pilots themselves.

Between 2003 and 2005, pilotage charges in the Mid-St. Lawrence River district were not only rising, but were doing so in an unpredictable manner and at too fast a rate.

The seriousness of the situation was compounded by a perception by industry, regulators and government policy-makers that pilotage service levels were, at the same time, falling.

And so, what I had told pilots in Argentina, the United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, Brazil, and in Seattle earlier this year, would happen if they were not vigilant, actually did happen. And it happened in my own country!

Of course, I was referring to the legislation introduced in the House of Commons on 19 June, 2007, which, if passed, would, among other things, pave the way for a competitive pilotage regime.

I told them that while pilots in Canada have had to play a furious game of defense since that date, I was also able to report that we now have reason to hope that the legislation will not be passed.

But it is a close call and if we avoid the terrible consequences that could result from the legislation, it will not only be because of vigorous representation in Ottawa, but also because of the significant changes made in respect of compensation and by dramatically improving performance on the St. Lawrence River.

So, my very important message today, as it was in Seattle a few months ago, is: don't think it can't happen here.

As I have said so often before, if we want to maintain the current pilotage regime, we must be sure not to acquire any bad habits that might tempt people to conclude the system needs to be changed.

CONCLUSION

The introduction of the legislation we now call Bill C-4 has reinforced one important lesson we are still learning: we can never do enough.

We must always contribute to marine safety, we must provide the best service possible, we have to be politically active to protect our interests, and we have to remain open to new ideas and to partnerships with other industry stakeholders.

It is a tall order, but the rewards are great. We are members of one of the most respected professions in the world, we enjoy our work, and we serve the public interest and Canada.

Now, I would like to invite my friend and colleague, Capt. Watson.