

The Canada Lands Surveyor Commission – A Recommended Role in the Certification of Hydrographic/Offshore Surveyors

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SUMMARY

The scope of hydrography is international and it is practiced according to international standards. While Canada has one of the most extensive inland, coastal and offshore areas in the world, significant portions of these areas are yet to be surveyed to modern standards. Surveys are required for purposes ranging from modern nautical charting to acquiring data in support of Canada's Article 76 claims to the Continental Shelf; from Coast Zone Management and the development of a Marine Cadastre to the exploration and subsequent exploitation of offshore resources. Over the last two decades there has become an apparent lack of IHO/FIG/ICA- accredited training programs for hydrographic surveyors in Canada. If left unchecked this will compromise the profession's capacity to respond to domestic and international hydrographic survey projects.

Recognizing this opportunity as a potential need for a certification program to protect the public from unqualified service providers, the Association of Canada Lands Surveyors (ACLS) Offshore Issues Committee in cooperation with the Canadian Hydrographic Association (CHA) have prepared joint recommendations to implement a national certification program with policy regarding the ACLS Affidavit of Experience & Practical Training specifically for hydrographers. The recommendations suggest that the existing process for obtaining a Canada Lands Surveyor Commission could serve both the Canadian private and public sector as the basis for a national certification program for hydrographers. As with any certification program, it could serve as a recognized part of career development; as a standard to which individuals from varied academic backgrounds could be brought on par and furthermore as a standard to which domestic, in-house training courses could be measured.

Although this paper focuses on the certification and education of Canadian hydrographic surveyors, similar debates are occurring in other maritime nations. The author would like to take this opportunity to encourage further discussion and feedback from the international community.