

Niagara District



Niagara District AGM
April 17, 2010
District Commander's Report

Two years ago I stood before this group as your new District Commander.

At that time, I wasn't quite sure of what was ahead in terms of delivering on the responsibilities I had just been handed.

Of the 10 Squadrons that make up the Niagara District, the mix was varied in actual membership size, bridge size, financial stability, course offerings and also in the level of participation in District functions.

As with any leadership position, one must first gain a sense of what is going on, identify the challenges, and then set a plan in place to address specifically what you wish to accomplish.

The 4 key objectives I set for myself included:

- 1) Providing every Squadron, and Squadron Officer with a reason to attend the monthly District Meetings.
- 2) To be a conduit for information flow between the Squadrons and the National and Governing Board level of CPS.
- 3) To develop a sound understanding of the challenges facing each Squadron, and to provide a level of guidance in order to assist them in solving their issues.
- 4) And finally, increase the "Level of Participation" in both directions between District and the Squadrons.

The first objective was addressed by introducing regular monthly Workshops into our District Meetings to promote, Training, Membership, MAREP and WBAS.

These Workshops were conducted by the respective District Officers, and through their efforts, we immediately attracted a broader group of participants from each of the Squadrons.

Thanks to those District Officers who contributed to making these Workshops a success.

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We identified areas where the District could have a positive impact, and moved forward with conducting an Officer Training Seminar last March, followed by 2 Instructor Development Seminars, and finally, setting plans for a 3rd. to be held later this fall.

Thanks to Instructional Development Officer Ken Budd for championing these initiatives.

I was fortunate to be District Commander during Niagara's 50th. Anniversary last May, and I would once again like to express my appreciation to the Port Dover Squadron for their efforts in making that event a huge success.

We have lead the way in terms of reaching out to not only the 10 Squadrons in our District, but also, to the 9 neighboring Squadrons of the Western Ontario District with our combined 5-week advertising campaign in the SW Ontario Boat Trader Magazine.

Based on your positive feedback, we will look at sponsoring this initiative once again this Fall.

Over the past 2 years, the MAREP responsibilities in the District were taken to new heights as Diane Allan brought this, sometimes forgotten category in back into focus through tours of the CCIW and Weather Network facilities.

My thanks to Diane for her continued support.

During these past two years, I have witnessed the results of a Squadron challenged with maintaining their identity and enthusiasm throughout 4 years of no course offerings and how they rallied back in 2008-09 and again this season with a core group of students.

That is tenacity.

I have seen the rebuilding of a Squadron demoralized by the actions of one person and how they have now developed into a positive and cohesive group of dedicated Bridge Officers and Instructors.

That is a "Team Effort".

I have also seen the result of a Squadron struggling to attract enough new talent on their Bridge to fill the Officer vacancies as they arise.

This is reality, and something we all need to focus on.

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As a District, Niagara has managed to hold off imposing the annual District Levy on the Squadrons and has instead, chosen to re-invest our existing District funding in the direct support of our Squadrons.

This same approach is necessary at the Squadron level, as we do have Squadrons with significant financial resources lying dormant, while they struggle to maintain their position in the market place.

Collective advertising initiatives, training seminars and year end social events, all in an effort to show appreciation for the Squadron's support, have contributed to the overall team building efforts I felt were key to our District's current and future success.

I have gained a great deal of knowledge from attending the Governing Board Meetings, National Training Meetings, Annual Conferences and local Squadron functions over the past two years.

The information gathered at these events, and the relationships developed over the past 2 years have been the catalysts for me to strive towards leading this District into a new and different place.

My approach at times may have appeared to be somewhat direct, but in an organization where change has been extremely slow in coming, and tradition has tended to leave us behind the curve of progress, I felt that one needed to stir the pot in order to see what comes to the surface.

In addition, the involvement I've had on the Governing Board and 2 National Committees has given me a view into the problems facing other Squadrons across the country that have not sourced out and tried new and different ways of doing things.

With the issues facing CPS today, complacency will only have a negative impact on any future success.

My nature has always been to quickly analyze, identify the direction to take, involve those around me in building the plans, and then to move forward.

As I look at the Squadrons here today, and the successes they have achieved through their own Team Efforts, I tip my hat to those who accepted the challenge, and truly made a positive difference in their Squadron.

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Our next major challenge as an organization will be in the recruitment of new people to our Bridges.

This will take a more focused approach on everyone's part if indeed we are to be successful in attracting new people.

Commanders, "you can not do things the same way as you have for years, it's not attracting new people".

Simply accepting the Commander's Flag will not produce, or even maintain a successful Squadron "You" need to lead.

We need to think, and act different, and to make recruitment a priority, and a commitment before our current Bridge Officers burn out.

It really isn't all that tough, and we can do it together.

In closing, CPS has been a very enjoyable organization to be associated with, and for me, the past 19 years has offered an excellent opportunity to meet and develop friendships both here, and across the country.

I look forward to the coming year and working with our new D.C., Bill Allan, and extend my sincere personal "Thanks" to everyone for the support you have given me during my term as Niagara's District Commander.

Respectfully Submitted

Jim Brown
Niagara District Commander