

Pacific Coastal

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To : The Honourable Mr. John Baird,
Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

Dear Sir,

Please accept this letter as a formal complaint against the destaffing of the BC Coastal Lightstations.

We are an airline operating float planes on the south and central coast of BC and we have a very strong opinion as to the necessity of maintaining the current level of service that exists in the remaining Lightstations. We have been through this several times in the past. Each time the issue has been thoroughly examined the result has been the same, the Lightstations need to be there. They serve an indispensable asset to aviation and marine traffic on our coast.

The alternative option of automatic stations still do not replace the flexibility and reliability of having a live person on location providing invaluable reports and observations. Everyday our pilots are making decisions that are based on the weather. The reports from the Lightstations provide both regular sequenced reports, and when necessary, direct reports on the weather. These decisions when made with inaccurate or non existent reports can mean the difference between life and death. There have been too many tragic events in the past that may have been prevented if there had been better reporting. We feel that reducing the reliability and accuracy of the reports is both dangerous and irresponsible.

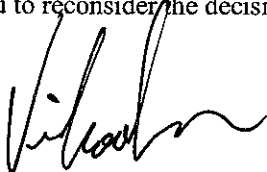
Technology has provided us with a new set of tools in the form of automatic weather stations and weather cameras. The unfortunate fact is that too many times the cameras alone do not provide enough information. They are also subject to down time, and ironically it is usually when they are needed most because the weather often has a factor in the malfunction.

Aviation has been moving towards a higher level of safety thanks in part to the efforts of Transport Canada, the Transportation Safety Board, and the industry itself. There is now a new era in safety that is being woven throughout aviation. It is called Safety Management Systems (SMS). One of the pillars of SMS is risk management. This is done through a process of risk assessment and mitigation. There can be no significant changes to any operation without an evaluation of the risk level.

A decision of this magnitude would need to be assessed in our operation. I would only hope that it has been done in this case, and if so, the results need to be shared with the public. We need those men and women, they are a safety net strung out along a wild and desolate coast. There may come a time when technology eventually replaces the steadfast lightkeeper. We do not believe that time is now, and we hope that it is still a long way off.

On behalf of Pacific Coastal Airlines, Our Pilots, Our Customers, and anyone traveling the West Coast of BC, we implore you to reconsider the decision to destaff our Lightstations.

Sincerely,



Vince Crooks
Director of Flight Operations

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