

Environmental

Business Review

CANADA

PUBLIC HEALTH
WITHOUT COMPROMISE

**A.L. SKINNER
CONSULTING**



A.L. Skinner Consulting



This award is in recognition of **A.L. Skinner Consulting's** stellar reputation and trust among customers and industry peers, evident in the numerous nominations we received from our subscribers. **A.L. Skinner Consulting** emerged as the **Top Environmental Public Health Consulting Firm in Canada 2025** after an exhaustive evaluation by an expert panel of C-level executives, industry thought leaders, and our editorial board.



Angus (Gus) Skinner,
Founder

A.L. SKINNER CONSULTING

PUBLIC HEALTH WITHOUT COMPROMISE

They say the measure of a voyage isn't just where it takes you, but how safely you arrive. At sea, safety reaches beyond navigation accuracy or lifeboats, encompassing the well-being of people at every level. Cruise ships and ferries are floating cities where food, water, and sanitation systems must work flawlessly. In such tight quarters, even small lapses and seemingly minor errors can spiral into a public health nightmare.

For the past decade or more, cruise operators have faced rising crew turnover, tougher standards, and emerging public health threats in addition to norovirus and legionella. For some, the pressure



has already hit home. Last winter, a cruise ship pulled into port with a failing public health – sanitation score, putting both its reputation and revenue at risk.

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Yet just weeks later, the same vessel achieved a dramatic turnaround in compliance. Inspectors returned to find compliance restored, what one industry leader called a “rabbit out of the hat” recovery. The difference came from rolling up sleeves, with boots-on-deck training, clear-eyed audits, and a deep cultural reset among the crew.



Orchestrating the dramatic turnaround was A.L. Skinner Consulting, an environmental public health consulting firm founded by former Health Canada / Public Health Agency of Canada Environmental Health Officer - Angus (Gus) Skinner. Skinner had a very clear yet daunting objective to keep passengers and crew safe, help operators stay compliant, and support a positive guest experience.

With over two decades of frontline regulatory experience and a career spent training the very inspectors who enforce these standards, Skinner brings cruise and ferry industry insider expertise on what regulators look for. He embeds compliance in a way that works across diverse, multinational crews, backed by practical, field-tested strategies that actually stick.

Skinner’s approach is “people-first”: giving crews the skills and confidence to protect every guest on board. It’s this mix of rigor and real-world insight that makes A.L. Skinner Consulting a trusted partner in tailored audits, practical guidance, and public health services across the maritime industry, safeguarding compliance and reputation. Today, the firm provides a full range of public health services to the maritime industry, helping operators identify and mitigate risks to protect passengers and crew alike from foodborne illness, waterborne illness, and many other chemical, biological and physical health hazards.



“I don’t believe in death by PowerPoint,” says Skinner. “Slides don’t change behavior. Real progress happens in the galley or on deck, working with the crew, asking questions, listening, and breaking down barriers. When teams understand not just what to do but why it matters, compliance stops being a box-ticking exercise and becomes part of daily public health culture.”

Raising the Bar for Shipboard Safety

Manuals like the U.S. Public Health – Vessel Sanitation Operations Manual and Canada’s Cruise Ship Inspection Program outline the operating guidelines, but the real struggle for operators is understanding the why behind the requirements and applying them daily. Many are reluctant to approach regulators directly for clarity, knowing that doing so may raise red flags for future inspections.

A.L. Skinner Consulting translates complex compliance requirements into practical, shipboard routines and offers a safe space for operators to ask questions, test ideas, and resolve challenges without fear of regulatory repercussions.

That role has only grown more critical as public health regulations evolve. On August 1, 2025, the U.S. Public Health – Vessel Sanitation Program released its latest regulatory requirements, and the Public Health Agency of Canada has harmonized its cruise ship inspections, accordingly, creating a North American standard. While Canada traditionally focused on food and water safety, A.L. Skinner Consulting embraces the full manual, covering every aspect of shipboard health and sanitation.

That kind of guidance has become even more critical since COVID-19. Pre-pandemic, managing norovirus outbreaks in the uniquely contained cruise ship environment was the industry’s biggest challenge. Crews were stable and loyal, helping preserve institutional knowledge. But since the pandemic, high turnover, with sometimes more than half their trained crew each season, has left operators stuck in a cycle of constantly rebuilding skills, creating inconsistency, loss of experience, and added strain on training investments.

Alongside stronger training and audits, technology is reshaping how operators manage compliance. Digital log platforms such as ZennPH reduce paperwork, standardize routines across diverse crews, and provide managers with real-time oversight. Pairing practical expertise with these tools ensures that daily compliance becomes simpler, faster, and more sustainable.

In addition to embracing the digital world, cruise lines can improve the crew’s knowledge of food safety by using TrainCan’s cruise ship food safety training platform, for example.

“We work to change from a culture of only preparing for upcoming public health inspections to one that is practiced daily, a 365-day culture of public health. Not inspection-week compliance, but daily behaviors that hold everywhere ships sail, while shifting food safety and health practices from tick-box exercises to daily behaviors and habits,” says Skinner.

With his regulatory perspective and decades of field experience, Skinner helps operators build durable systems that are inspection-ready year-round, ensuring both compliance and a safer guest experience.

Real Insights in Every Corner of the Ship

Skinner doesn’t subscribe to the “cookie-cutter” training methodology because every cruise line is different. Some want on-site training, real engagement that pulls the crew together and builds practical skills. Others can’t spare 30 or 40 crew members for an hour or more without affecting operations, so they prioritize audits and inspections instead.

Some clients want the full package, including training, inspections & audits—the whole deal. Others just want ad hoc inspections, a reality check from an outside perspective. Internal teams don’t always share everything, and as an external auditor, Skinner emphasizes that he’s not tied to anyone, as his role is to call it as he sees it.

In a few instances, cruise lines even request ‘secret shopper’ public health audits. Skinner or a colleague will board a vessel completely unannounced, sometimes staying for a full week. They travel like any other passenger, and after a brief meeting with ship’s management onboard to advise them of the visit, the consultant observes daily operations, crew interactions, and adherence to safety protocols without prior preparation by the crew or Officers.

Scheduled inspections often show a polished performance, Skinner notes, while unannounced visits reveal the truth.

A.L. Skinner Consulting’s intent is not to catch anyone off guard, but to review systems in action, identify gaps, and embed long-term improvements. At the end of the day, it is about what the client wants to achieve—stronger compliance, better daily practices, or both. The firm tailors its training in such a way that it resonates with the crew, allowing the material to be retained long-term and seamlessly embedded into ship-wide, crew-wide practices.

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This approach consistently delivers results for A.L. Skinner Consulting’s clients, thanks to its elite, handpicked team of environmental public health officers from Canada, Europe, and beyond. Each consultant brings frontline inspection experience, regulatory insight, and specialized knowledge of the cruise and ferry industries. In a field with barely a dozen true experts worldwide, the firm works with roughly a third of them, creating a depth of expertise that few can match.

Long-Term Support and Follow-Up

“Given the challenges of high crew turnover, I provide refresher training and follow-up inspections / audits to maintain long-term public health compliance, helping clients maintain measurable improvements long after the initial audit,” says Skinner.

Most audits and recommendations are contractual in nature, which typically conclude once the visit is completed, but the relationship doesn’t end because Skinner remains accessible for ongoing guidance and support. He revisits fleets when needed; for example, one client has been supported 17 times, resulting in the hiring of two internal public health officers. He also provides continuous guidance through email consultations, photo reviews, and, where feasible, in-person vessel visits, anywhere the cruise ships are sailing.



Expertise That Scales with Client Needs

Demand for Skinner’s specialized expertise continues to rise as cruise operators worldwide seek guidance to navigate increasingly complex public health requirements. With only a handful of firms worldwide operating at this depth, A.L. Skinner Consulting anticipates a busier schedule ahead. Its strategic partnerships will ensure every operator gets Skinner’s expert guidance, without compromise.

At the same time, countries beyond North America, including the EU, Australia, Brazil and China, are expanding cruise sanitation programs. Skinner monitors these changes closely, helping clients implement adjustments proactively.

In the year ahead, Skinner’s focus will be on providing expert guidance, scaling strategically and remaining agile as the global landscape continues to evolve. By taking this approach, A.L. Skinner Consulting ensures operators maintain continuous, proactive, and future-ready compliance, safeguarding both crew and guest safety while delivering an exceptional experience.

Guided by this focus, the firm draws on decades of frontline regulatory expertise and strategic innovation, helping operators through the evolving public health landscape. With an emphasis on proactive risk management and crew-centered training, the firm assures that every ship remains inspection-ready while consistently delivering a safe and exceptional experience for passengers worldwide. **EB**

Special note: A.L. Skinner Consulting will be rebranding to Seven Seas Public Health Services

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