It is always fulfilling to report upon a successful year and I’m pleased to say that this year is no different! The Canada Branch plays an important role within our local maritime communities but with an industry still feeling the effects of difficult days, it is more important than ever for our branch to show the value of membership, when and where we can.

I am pleased to report that the Canada Branch is again in excellent financial standing. 2016/17 saw a profit of $16,000; with a balance of more than $44,000. An upcoming change with financial institutions will allow us to further clarify and enhance our internal banking processes. Thanks to Gabriela Klongova and Karl Wang for their continued financial leadership.

The Canada Branch offered November and May examinations in Vancouver and Montreal. This year was supported by an internationally coordinated Education Open night in September and February to inform and engage potential students. Although the outreach saw a small turn out in numbers, it proved to be the quality of students that mattered, with many registering for exams. Montreal continued to support local students with exam study sessions covering topics such as; Port Agency, Ship Sale and Purchase, Dry Cargo Chartering, Legal Principles of Shipping & Shipping Law and Ship Operations & Management. Appreciation to Julian Hung, Gemma Chinnery and Kay Afghahi for the excellent student support.

An outcome of these efforts saw a gentle increase of students taking exams: Vancouver (Nov) 9 students, wrote 13 exams; (May) 12 students, wrote 20 exams. Montreal (Nov) 12 students, write 17 exams; (May) 14 students, write 17 exams. Globally, student numbers were slightly down, so it is fantastic to see that the Canada Branch is bucking that trend.

ICS London tested a series of live tutorials during March and April. These tutorials were two hours long on various topics to cover multiple subjects. The test phase was well received, and the plan is to roll it out through the next academic year.

A revitalized initiative for the Canada Branch has been to support the students that successfully complete their exams. These are potential members and it is important to support their Membership application process. This seemingly obvious but not always properly handled task, has helped to boost our membership numbers which now stands at 96. With a clear target to reach 100 members by 2020, I believe we are on track to achieve this number well within that timeline. A special thank you to Eric Andersen and Daryl Raibl for managing the membership list to provide clarity on the true count.

The Canada Branch continues to offer opportunities for networking and education through pub nights and speaker events. In coordination with the COSBC, the popular Business of Shipping course will run again this June. The east coast held two seminars; General Average, Salvage, Collisions & Towage – An Introductory Case Study & Off-Hire: A Study while the west coast hosted The Marine Industry & Canada’s Coastal Strategy. Most recently a joint effort coordinated ICS-VMAA speakers to create a three-part series of seminars being held May 10th, June 8th and a final date in August. Another VMAA partnership presented an opportunity for members to attend the biennial Standard Club’s Canada Forum event. Through these types of partnerships, the Canada Branch continues to look for opportunities to partner with other organizations to strengthen the breadth of offerings to members.

Which can only be described as a highlight for the Canada Branch, the 3rd annual Dry Bulk & Commodities Conference was set to another sold out crowd. Speakers featured top industry representatives from the grain, coal and log trades. And this year featured headline speaker John Kearsey, from SSY Canada –covering the Shipping Market update. Attendees are coming from as far away as the Port of Nanaimo, Port of Longview, Port of Olympia and the Port of San Diego. Thanks to Stephen Brown for his expert facilitation skills and Daryl Raibl for guiding the Conference through the day. And a massive thanks to Peter Amat who is year-after-year instrumental in mobilizing the speakers, sponsors and attendees!

Pub nights prove to be popular and well attended. The west coast annually hosts a Spring Pub night in addition to the Christmas Pub Night. This year we were pleased to have raised $1,000 to support the Mission to Seafarers. Montreal partnered with the Youth of Shipping to host a pub quiz night which saw more than 50 participants show off their maritime knowledge.

Controlling Council 2016 was held in London and was rather different than other Controlling Council organized in the past. This year the Institute combined the AGM and annual prize giving with hosting the FONASBA annual meeting which resulted in a busy week full of workshops, meetings and events. The Controlling Council meetings are proving to be the arena where ideas are turned into actions and it has been acknowledged that more decisions were ratified at the 2016 meetings than at any previous Controlling Council in the recent history of the Institute. Thank you to the ICS Canada Branch for supporting me to attend on your behalf.

The objectives set at Controlling Council turn into projects which are carried forward by the Executive Council. Short term projects will focus on education and examination to deliver the Understanding Shipping course and Port Specific diplomas and further maturing of a Corporate Supporter Scheme. Medium term projects are still some way from delivery but Executive Council members have been working hard to develop and progress the delivery and development of Online Courses, a Continuing Professional Development Program and the Governance Project, which will lay the foundations for the Institute’s future.

The Canada Branch too has conducted a comprehensive review of the Canada Branch bye-laws. Last updated in 2009, a refresh and clarification of several sections will enhance this guiding document. The Canada Branch is lucky to have the skill and expertise of Stephen Brown and Gemma Chinnery to assist in this effort. Next steps will be to further develop the processes that sit behind several governance sections.

June 2016 also saw the Canada Branch’s first newsletter published. Content is drawn from the ongoing activities captured on the website, which is then pushed out to the membership on a bi-annual basis. This is a great way to demonstrate what the Canada Branch has been delivering and what value to membership can been realized. Thanks to Karl Wang for his skills as editor.

Unfortunately, the Canada Branch website suffered numerous cyber-attacks at various times this year. Acknowledgement to Andriy Tereshchenko for his continuous support to ensure that the platform is up-to-date and protected from future incidents.

Finally, I would like to welcome Alisha to our team. We are very fortunate to have a dedicated resource to ensure that all of these activities come together. Thank you to Andrew and Carol and the Chamber of Shipping for their ongoing support of ICS. And thank you to all of the Canada Branch board members that have agreed to return for another year. We are fortunate to see another year through with this dynamic team at the helm. I am looking forward to another positive year to come!