It is my pleasure to draw closed my first year as Chair of the Canada Branch. I can confidently report that the 2014/15 year has continued to raise the profile of ICS both in Vancouver and on the East Coast, through the many opportunities and activities to engage students, membership and non-members alike. As follows, I will summarize the year.

London reports that it is on a firm and even keel, forecasting a year-end profit estimated at £70,000.

To this point, a Head Office internal audit was conducted in October 2014. The audit was directed at the administrative, risk and governance aspects and overall, Head Office is functioning very well. The findings note that the operations have improved considerably in recent years. To echo this sentiment, a recent article in Tradewinds highlights the efforts of Julie Lithgow and her team to get the ICS to a “passing grade”. To note, the Institute’s office consists of one Member, two Fellows, five Foundation Diplomas graduates and two active Advanced Diploma students, further demonstrating their commitment to ICS.

Locally, we have had a very strong year, seeing a profit of almost $7,000 which reverses the deficit trend seen over the last few years. We have a current account balance of more than $20,000. I want to thank all the Board Members for their hard work in making this year a remarkable financial success!

For the first time, two exams sessions were held in one academic year. In addition to the April exams, November exams were conducted as a trial. Initial feedback seems to indicate that they were a great success with three times the expected number of students participating, though it may take several sets of examinations to make a full analysis. Exams for November 2015 will be announced within the next few months.

With this change, clarity of the registration process is required. The academic year runs from August to August, with registration fees payable by each student annually – in August. The registration fee includes exams in November (where offered), and April; which is therefore treated as one academic period. Should a student register later in the academic year (i.e. after November), then the fee covers the April exams only.

Internationally, November 2014, recorded 884 students write 1,500 papers in 33 centres; and April 2015, saw 2,200 students take almost 6,000 examination papers in 104 centres. The student numbers for April 2015 were slightly lower than seen in past years, but were expected, due to the addition of a November exam date. The pass rate stood at around 40%, a reflection of the rigour of the exams, which "are considered by certain practitioners to be of degree level.”

Locally, the Canada Branch student numbers saw a moderate increase. Vancouver was selected for the inaugural November exams, registering 5 students to write 7 exams. In April 2015, the Canada Branch increased its capacity by hosting 4 exam centres: Vancouver, Montreal, Toronto and new this year, Halifax, for a total of 23 students writing 48 exams. A special thank’s to Director, Julian Hung, for helping to bring the East Coast examination process in-house, which enables the Canada Branch to keep 100% of the student registration fee. To celebrate the students’ perseverance and success, both branches are to host a Student Pub night in their honour.

The annual Controlling Council meetings were held in November 2014 in Dubai. The two-day pre-Controlling Council workshop focused on engaging all branches to encourage cooperation and participation with the understanding to work through key issues that are affecting the Institute as a whole, and the branches in their local regions. The event highlighted many of the challenges that branches experience. By bringing every branch together, there is a valuable learning opportunity to share common ideas. Thanks to Dena Rantz for attending these meetings on behalf of the Canada Branch.

The Membership Committee held its annual face-to-face meeting in Hong Kong in March 2015, marking the first time the Membership Committee had met away from London. The Membership Committee and ICS welcomes’ Robert Hill as the Institute’s Head of Membership. Robert, a New Zealand national, has re-located to London to take this previously vacant role. The Membership Committee also welcomed Austin Dooley from Rotterdam as a new committee member; he will represent those members of the Institute who are not directly associated with a branch.

The Membership Committee elected 73 new members which is considered to be a very high number at this time of year and is most likely due to the trial examination session held last November. I am happy to report that our membership numbers remain strong: at the end of the 2014/15 fiscal year we had 26 Fellows, 35 Members, 14 Retired and 6 Life members for a total of 81 members. The Canada Branch welcomed two new members, Karl Wang and Hannah Carter at the close of 2014. To date, we are working to connect with 7 lapsed members.

All told, the Canada Branch was very active, both on the west coast and east coast.

Speaker Events are a continuing priority for the Board. The West Coast held two Speaker Events in 2015: Sept 2014, Methanex presented methanol as an emerging marine fuel and March 2015, Teekay spoke about $50 bbl of Oil and its influence on the shipping industry. Our East Coast Branch Director, Julian Hung, arranged several Speaker Events throughout the year: Nov 2014, Geography of Transport; April 2015, Maritime Litigation, Arbitration & Mediation; May 2015, Ship Arrest and also Contracts, Subjects and Good Faith. Additionally, two study sessions to support our students challenging the “Shipping Business” exam were offered in Montreal. And the ICS continues to co-sponsor the Business of Shipping course organized by the Chamber of Shipping with recent courses held in Oct 2014 in Calgary and April 2015 in Prince Rupert.

But undoubtedly, the highlight of the year was the first inaugural Dry Bulk & Commodities conference held in November 2014 in Vancouver. The day-long seminar hosted eight speakers representing the complexity of the Dry Bulk industry. Special thanks to the generous sponsors that helped support our vision. The success of this sold-out event set the stage for this conference to be held annually, with planning well underway for November 2015.

Socially, Vancouver hosted a spring pub night that followed our AGM in June and the Christmas Pub night in November that followed the Dry-Bulk & Commodities conference at which record attendance was set, in addition to a record breaking $2,700 raised for the Mission to Seafarers. Similarly, Montreal hosted Christmas Pub night in Dec 2014 to close out the year.

Field trips were also initiated as another way to engage and add value to our ICS members. In May, the West Coast membership visited Seaspan’s Shipyard and East Coast members had the opportunity to visit the Port of Montreal. These outings were well attended and all participants felt they were worthwhile events.

Looking at the year ahead, the website will become a focus for our Board as we migrate from its current architecture to a mobile-device friendly platform.

Last but not least, I would like to thank outgoing Board Member Eric Andersen for his 12 years of hard work and dedication to the running of the Canada Branch.

Finally, I would like to extend sincere thanks to all my fellow Board members, I think this team is well balanced and our open and fair working environment has made this past year an easy one for me. And a big thank you to the Chamber of Shipping staff, specifically Mariam Riad, Andrew Knapman and Carol Jenson for their continued support and assistance of all things ICS.

Best Regards,

Dena Rantz

Chair, ICS Canada Branch