As I reflect, I would say that this year in particular, has been an extraordinary year of recognition, both locally and internationally. The Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers plays a unique role in the shipping industry, as the only body dedicated to professional education in the maritime industry and as such, is now being recognized for this. I will summarize the highlights of another great year.

I am pleased to report that the Canada Branch is in firm financial position, seeing a 2015/16 profit of $11,000; with a balance of more than $30,000. To ensure financial stability, it is recommended to maintain a base of $20,000; excess funds will be used to further grow membership benefits through education and networking opportunities. I wanted to give a special thank you to our ‘finance team’; Richard, Gabi, Andrew and Mariam for all their work to get our accounting records in to an income-based accounting format that will provide greater clarity and focus on quarterly budgeting efforts.

The financial report from London is less encouraging. However, there is no reason for panic. This year’s results are attributed, to a certain extent, to the current shipping recession and the global economic uncertainty at large. Given that costs cannot be reduced much further without affecting service levels, short terms plans are being enacted.

This past year has been about building strategic partnerships to foster and drive educational commitment as the Institute has continued to expand its international links to meet growing demand for its examination programme. Three announcements dominate: (1) ICS Educational Trust signed a service agreement with the Maritime London Officer Cadet Scheme under which the Institute will initiate opportunities for education and membership. (2) ICS signed an agreement to be recognized as strategic partner by China's Ministry of Transport and the Shanghai International Shipping Centre to create a Joint Training Program of Maritime Professionals. (3) ICS signed an MOU with Indian Maritime University, an agreement to promote mutual understanding for a bilateral commitment to academic and educational co-operation.

Locally, the hugely successful Business of Shipping one-day course, co-sponsored with the Chamber of Shipping of British Columbia (COSBC) delivered two sold-out events in Vancouver with more than 140 participants. A special thanks to Julian Hung, East Coast Director for his continued excellent work to provide study sessions to support students challenging their exams in Montreal.

A cornerstone for the Canada Branch is to offer interesting Speaker Event seminars throughout the year. In coordination with the COSBC, the west coast held one seminar focusing on the Challenges Facing Shipping. The east coast held three seminars; Strikes, Congestion & Bill of Lading Remedies, Quebec Maritime Industry and The Proposed Reform of the UK Marine Insurance Act. All saw excellent attendance which I think speaks to the need for this type of event in our local maritime community’s.

A highlight of the Canada Branch was the 2nd annual Dry Bulk and Commodities Conference, newly re-located to the Vancouver Convention Centre, it featured nine speakers, a healthy sponsorship roster and was again very well received by another sold-out crowd. The Canada Branch is committed to elevating the experience each successive year, as this event is now seen as a core deliverable.

As a sign that these coordinated efforts are truly raising our profile, ICS was announced as BIMCO Education and Training 2015 award-winner for its ongoing commitment to supporting maritime education, recognition of its investment in new learning and innovative teaching techniques, and the growth in student and graduate numbers around the world. “BIMCO felt this award was deserved by the Institute because of its unique role; providing global, professional shipping qualifications, holding all students to an equally high standard, but ensuring no one is left behind.”

And finally, as one last example of acknowledgement, ICS London Director, Julie Lithgow was named Woman of the Year by the Executive Committee of WISTA-UK for her work in education, training and her tireless promotion of the Institutes’ mission and its relevance to the maritime industry.

Membership numbers are holding strong both internationally and locally; with just under 4,000 members internationally and 85 members at the Canada Branch, I would say that the ICS continues to be a constant within the maritime industry.

Internationally, student numbers were lower than expected; 2015/16 academic year saw just under 3,000 students sit less than 6,000 papers in 100 exam centres. Interestingly, the absenteeism rate spiked this past April at 24% across all subjects. When speaking to students, many who were absent stated that they felt unprepared for the exams and would prefer to miss the exam than sit and fail. It has also been noted but not yet announced, that fees and dates will change slightly for the coming academic year, which will open on 1st of August 2016.

The Canada Branch is delighted to offer examination centres for students in Vancouver, Montreal, Toronto and Halifax. This year, student enrollment saw a slight increase: Vancouver hosted (Nov) 10 students, writing 15 exams; (Apr) 14 students, writing 20 exams. Montreal hosted (Nov) 12 students, writing 19 exams; (Apr) 12 students, writing 15 exams. Toronto hosted (Apr) 1 student, writing 2 exams. And I am proud to report that the November results saw two awards of Distinction given to top exam students: Gemma Chinnery for Legal Principals and Hugo Brent for Introduction to Shipping. April results will be published on August 4th and we wish all of our students the best of luck!

Pub Nights remain popular for networking and recognition of our students, members and friends-of-ICS. In Vancouver, the annual Spring Pub Night followed last year’s AGM and the Christmas Pub Night followed the Dry Bulk & Commodities Conference; while Montreal saw a record turnout to the Christmas Pub night. This May, the 2nd annual Young Professionals night was held in Vancouver in support of those new to the industry. The Canada Branch continues to believe that these events are important opportunities to network and socialize within our local maritime community.

Field trips were again offered as another way to engage and add value to our members. The Port of Vancouver showcased the operations centre and provided a tour to the newly opened Discovery Centre as it describes the various port activities.

Controlling Council 2015 was held in Ireland in early November. Thank you to the ICS Canada Branch for supporting me to attend on your behalf. The focus was to discuss and plan a forward-thinking strategy for the Institute over the next five years. As we identified, the ICS is ‘punching below its weight’ and from our Council at the top, through our committees, to our tutors and examiners and our head office, we are aware at how much untapped potential remains. At the Canada Branch level, we also concluded at brief strategy survey to garner the Directors support as we plan for 2016/17. In summary, the majority of Directors felt we are progressing in the right way with the right initiatives.

As a newly elected Executive Council member, I also had the privilege to participate in the annual face-to-face Executive Council meeting, held in Durban, South Africa in February. The strategic plan formed at Controlling Council now transitions into projects, with several top projects progressing: Education Committee will formalize the accreditation of Tutors; Membership Committee will clarify the pathway to membership; development of Branch model; development of a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) structure for ICS members to consider; and revitalizing the code of ethics.

It is great to confirm that our initiative to migrate the website to a mobile-friendly platform is complete and successfully up and running. A big thank you to Andriy Tereshchenko for his dedicated work to ensure a complete transition.

Finally, I would like to thank outgoing Board Member Richard Helm for his 15 + years of hard work and dedication to the running of the Canada Branch. Richard has been a valuable member of this Board and we are sad to see him depart.

In closing, I would like to extend a 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, Andrew and Carol for their continued support and assistance of all things ICS.

Sincerely,

Dena Rantz

Canada Branch Chair

16 June 2016