



From the bridge

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Canada's Navy faces several challenges as it endeavours to gain broad public and governmental support for significant capital investment to maintain balance, multipurpose maritime forces. The level of capital investment needed is unprecedented and occurring precisely when the government faces other pressing demands on our national treasury. This presents several important questions. Will our economy be strong enough to support such investment? Will Canadians see this investment as important and necessary? Will they be willing to support such investment to achieve the recapitalization of our RCN when facing other important national challenges? It is suggested that these questions can only be answered positively by ensuring Canadians at all levels understand why Canada needs a strong and capable Navy. This is our task.

We are undertaking a multi-level approach to educating Canadians on the need for a strong and capable Navy:

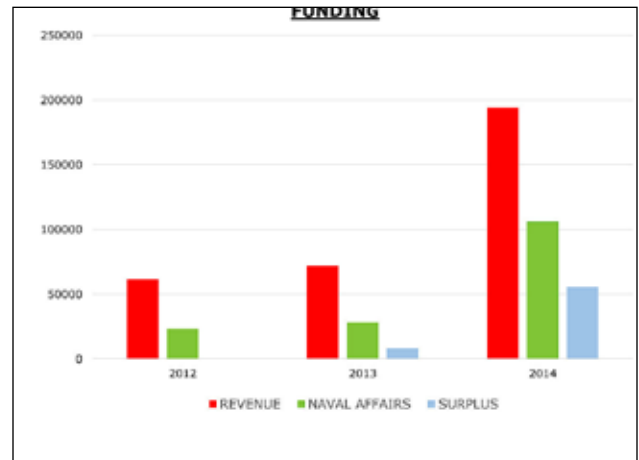
- At the grassroots level we are rolling out a package as part of OUTREACH that will enable selected Branch members to engage Canadians. Richard Archer has been active in pushing this forward. Branches will have received the presentation with back-up notes by the time you read this and be looking for members willing to speak to local organizations — those who have been part of the pilot project have found it interesting and rewarding — please volunteer.
- At the national level we have just completed a third very successful conference, have staged two Battle of the Atlantic GALAs, which showcased the RCN and provided a forum for government, industry and naval leadership to join in support of our veterans. Moving forward we are embarking on an aggressive Naval Affairs program which will see high quality articles advocating for a strong and capable Navy for Canada published across the country. Dan Sing is our new National Director of Naval Affairs and is leading this effort.
- Generally, we are working to expand communications both with you our members and the wider public. Bob Bush will launch a new updated National website — Branches are either joining in or providing a link. Our *LinkedIn* group is hosting informed discussion on a number of matters of current interest, and the NAC NEWS, in addition to keeping our members up to date on current developments, is funding wider distribution.

The extent to which we can educate Canadians depends on two major factors: the health of our Branches and the funds available.

■ BUDGET

We have a new National Board, the first one nominated and elected directly by the membership. You have selected those who you wish to have represent you as National Directors. The

Board members have a broader base with greater diversity in terms of age, experience, perspective and background. At the same time the National Board retains a number of NAC veterans — a great mix. At our recent AGM meetings, the Board approved a new budget focussed on ramping up Naval Affairs activities aimed at educating Canadians as to the need for a strong and capable Navy.



As shown in the FUNDING graph above, revenues have more than tripled since 2012; spending on Naval Affairs is proposed to quadruple and we will retain a healthy surplus which will smooth out any future surprises for both Branch and National initiatives and events. Previous articles have described Naval Affairs activities — the committee will be publishing a detailed plan in the coming weeks.

Whereas in the past we lived hand-to-mouth, moving forward we intend to expand our growing revenue base and make important investments to advance in educating Canadians. We are starting to assemble the talent and resources needed to drive towards this task — in this regard we are the *new* NAC.

We can consider making way in Naval Affairs due to the increase in revenue from our new Conferences and the very successful BOA GALA. Of the \$135K in new revenue, \$130K came from NAC-O and \$5K from NAC-VI. All made possible by the hard work of Branch members. It is hoped that Branches will continue to conduct these successful events that will help provide funds for the critical work of the Association.

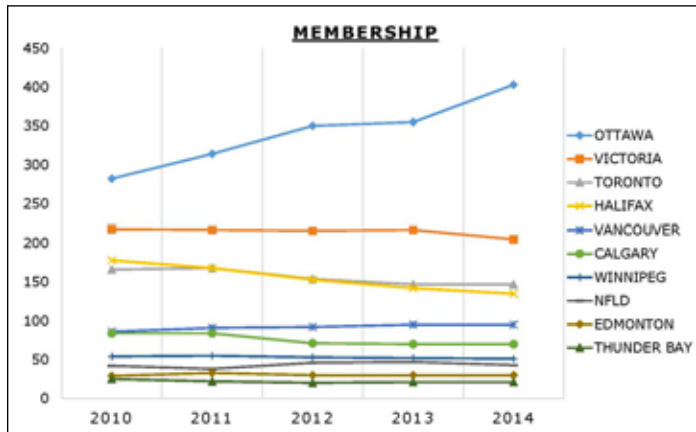
We should be asking ourselves whether we can keep up the recent fundraising success. We should also be thinking how we can pursue avenues to expand our fundraising as we develop the strong national level voice Canada needs. Your ideas are most welcome.

■ MEMBERSHIP

As you can see from the MEMBERSHIP graph, showing our ten largest branches, most Branch memberships continue to trend lower as our elderly membership continues to decline. We have

lost two Branches in the past few years and another Branch has signalled this year is likely their last.

All Branches face unique challenges with recruiting and retention. While strong growth will likely be limited to our major naval concentrations of Halifax, Victoria and Ottawa, our major city branches with strong Reserve Force presence should be able to grow at least modestly. To ensure the NAC remains vibrant and viable, all branches can hopefully stem the tide of falling membership.



I would offer that widened membership is not a threat but rather an opportunity. New, younger members with backgrounds different than ours add vitality to the Branch while keeping it relevant and more enjoyable for all. Think of new and younger members as a new audience.

In my Summer 2013 *Starshell* column, I suggested some approaches that might be useful in increasing membership. At our recent meeting we formed a Membership Committee to examine best practices and how they might be applied nationwide. The intent is to marshal our strengths and experiences across all Branches and assist all Branches

in membership recruitment where needed. This will require dedicated effort by Branches ... can we do it?

■ GUIDANCE MANUAL

A major goal for this year is to put in place the administrative instructions to reflect the recent changes and set us up for continuing success. We have already started calling on Board members and the general membership to help make this happen.

In all areas we are, to a certain extent, making it up as we go along. Having spent 25 years running a small high tech company, I am quite comfortable with this approach. But I realize that this may not be the case for many. Some have explained they are uncomfortable without a new 'Guidance Manual' in place. It is a 'chicken and egg' situation in that the manual must codify best practices but in these new areas of business, we don't know what works until we try it.

Given that our National Board, which is entrusted with guiding NAC in addressing issues of national interest, is now nominated and elected by the membership, it has been suggested we have a new group composed of Branch Presidents which can focus on and communicate issues important to Branches. This has been tentatively labelled the 'Advisory Committee.' With our strong National Board, proposed Advisory Committee and increased member communications, I believe we have the building blocks for success. As with everything we are trying to implement, if you have a better idea please speak up.

Canada needs a strong naval voice to help inform and educate Canadians if it is going to build the Navy it needs — **this is our mission.**

Yours aye

The above "From the Bridge" column was published in the Autumn 2014 edition of the Naval Association of Canada's magazine *Starshell*.