



From the bridge

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It has been slightly over a year since our Victoria meetings where I became President and this is my fifth *From the Bridge* column. In these columns I have attempted to communicate:

- The state of our Association and our vision for the future.
- The way ahead—what could be done at the Branch level to widen and grow our membership thereby growing NAC.

While wholesale changes to our governance were mandated by the new government legislation regarding not-for-profit rules and regulations, I submit we benefitted greatly as we took the time in the year leading up to the last AGM to reconsider how we were doing things. At the Victoria meetings we adopted a new governance approach based on individual membership [many Canadian not-for-profits are still struggling with the changes or have failed to qualify because they have not moved away from “the way we always have done our business” which is no longer acceptable under the new legislation]. As a result, at this fall’s upcoming meetings we will for the first time be electing a National Board where you as an individual have a direct vote. The Board will be different, and National direction will be designed to sustain the collegial work of the branches and enhance our national role by focusing on fundamental support to Canada’s Navy.

As we have discussed, every country with a strong Navy has a strong association/institute which helps to educate its government leaders and citizens as to the need for a navy. Canada however, does not. Canada needs such a group and many believe our NAC is the group to do this job.

Most if not all other countries also provide funding for such an institute. Since we do not have access to Public Funds we must supplement the important work of supporting our Navy by also spending considerable time and effort in generating the necessary funds.

So, ‘our mission should we be willing to accept it,’ is to:

- Develop a strong, dynamic nationwide organization.
- Explain to government leaders and Canadian citizens why Canada needs a strong Navy.
- Do this while maintaining and strengthening what we have now.

We have made significant progress over the past year due to the hard work of our members. Congratulations, and our thanks are due:

- Branches, who have opened up their membership and changed their names to NAC as a signal of this openness. This was not an easy task, particularly in the case of our older members. However, as a direct result of their foresight we have, for the first time, the Commander of the RCN and formation commanders on both coasts as members of their respective Branches. This would not have happened if we had remained as NOAC.
- The Ottawa Branch, which has increased membership to almost 400 with members ranging from naval cadets to CRCN including the RCN CPO.
- Ottawa and Vancouver Island Branches, which have staged ‘best of class’ National Conferences and in Ottawa’s case, two outstanding BOA Galas with attendance by the nation’s leadership. These functions have generated approximately \$140K—these are the funds needed to generate new National naval affairs initiatives [see my FTB in the Spring 2014 edition of *Starshell* for further details]. The organizing teams have dedicated countless hours to these tasks providing the seed money that our National efforts need to grow and support our Navy.
- Nominees for the National Board of Directors, whose names you will see elsewhere in this issue. These individuals have stepped up to the plate offering to give of both their time and money as necessary to help guide our Association on its new path.

- Our outgoing Board who have worked to make the changes and put in place the necessary governance.

For the past nine years, Derek Greer has served as our financial rock. The financial administration of the Association was revamped by Derek and put on the solid footing we now have. His work is perhaps invisible to most members, however, it is well known to Branch Treasurers who have at hand Derek's guidance helping them navigate the sometimes confused waters of a Canadian not-for-profit. Derek is now looking to pass the torch and King Wan has agreed to carry it on. BZ Derek!

I am sure you will agree that our website has seen tremendous improvement over the past year as Bob Bush has put in countless hours. Branch Presidents were consulted as to where we go from here with the result that a major revamp of the website is underway so that we will have a NAC presence which will work across all modern media including mobile devices. We will move from an internally focused website to provide a face to the outside world and help explain why Canada needs a strong Navy. This has been made possible through the funding from Branch activities. I hope we can look to Bob to remain as Webmaster.

In our effort to reach Canadians, Richard Archer is leading development of an 'outreach program' including a presentation and the 'how to'. Richard has trialed it on a number of service clubs and is developing a plan for how to select important community leaders so as to ensure the story gets in front of those local leaders we need to educate as the need for a strong RCN. We will appoint a Chair of Outreach and I hope Richard will accept. Again, financial support flows from the funds raised by NAC-O and NAC-VI.

With the changes implemented through our new By-laws and Articles of Continuance, some concern has been expressed that the input from Branches may be lacking. Several ideas have been discussed over the past months with the result that I will be proposing we establish an Advisory Committee composed of all Branch Presidents so they have direct input to the Board on any issues they deem important. We will appoint a Chair of the Advisory Committee at the first meeting of the 'new' Board.

Branch membership is the backbone of NAC. A priority in the coming year must be how we expand to bring in more Canadians who believe in the need for a strong Navy. The two coastal cities offer a large base of both serving and recently retired folks we have to date failed to attract. A Membership Committee will focus on membership growth nationwide.

Naval Affairs will be the primary focus of National. The funds generated by NAC-O and NAC-VI are intended to support a much expanded effort in this area. Should he be elected to the Board I hope Dan Sing will take up the position of Vice-President of NAC and Chair of the Naval Affairs Committee.

A common thread in all of this is the need for strong Branches. Membership growth can only happen through local effort and as I hope this short note illustrates, the funding necessary to support all National efforts originates with the hard work at the Branch level.

The way our new governance works, as is the case for most corporations, is that the new Board at its first meeting will select the officers of the corporation. I will propose the Board consider Ken Lait as Secretary, King Wan as Treasurer and myself as President.

Yours aye,

Jim