

Search:

About Us

[Board of Directors](#)
[Chamber Background](#)
[Committees](#)
[Constitution & Bylaws](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Membership](#)
[Home](#) [About Us](#) [Chamber Background](#)

History and Background of the Chamber of Shipping

The rise of the Chamber of Shipping of British Columbia (CSBC) came in two evolutions of the Vancouver Merchants' Exchange (VME) ... some seven years apart.

The first came in the early days of the development of the Port of Vancouver in 1914. A small group of men in the shipping industry set up the VME as a central meeting place for the exchange of information on the marine trade. Other exchanges had flourished in Europe, so why not on Canada's West Coast ?

However, the VME was hardly set up and running before the First World War put an end to most commercial shipping and activity and the exchange came to a close.

After the war, as Canada worked on recovery, the shipping business opened up as never before, thanks largely to the successful launch of the Panama Canal in 1914. The shipment of grain via the Port of Vancouver became viable via the canal to Europe and the same group behind the first VME pushed for its re-establishment.

So, on April 15th, 1921 the Vancouver Merchants' Exchange was born again and an office established on the ground floor of the Metropolitan Building. By the end of its first year, the exchange had attracted 85 corporate and private members.

Within a year of the second launch of the VME, the Port of Vancouver had risen rapidly from 10th to third place among grain ports in North America. As it grew, the merchants' exchange absorbed the almost idle Grain Exchange in 1922 and later created a Grain Exchange Division.

Shipping Chamber Born

The idea of separate divisions for specific interest groups with the merchant exchange quickly won favour and in September, 1923 a Shipping Division was created with three sections - deep sea, coastwise, and towboat. The Chamber of Shipping of B.C. traces its roots to the deep-sea section.

Meanwhile, the other main division, the Grain Exchange, handled the business of exporters, merchants, brokers, millers and other related groups, while lumber exporters, insurers, and canned salmon exporters also had representation.

Quick Links

[Port Security Badges](#)
[Marine Air Quality](#)
[2006 Annual Report](#)
[Latest News](#)
[Upcoming Events](#)
[Issues:](#)
[Customs](#)
[Environment](#)
[Labour](#)
[Security](#)
[Transport](#)
[Career Opportunities:](#)
[Job Postings](#)
[Resume Listing](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Plimsoll Club](#)

For its first decade the merchant exchange acted as the voice and focal point of this diverse marine industry, but eventually, as each division grew, it sought to stand on its own feet with its own voice and greater autonomy.

In 1926, the VME's Shipping Division was reconstituted as an autonomous association -- the Vancouver Chamber of Shipping (VCS) -- and soon after gained membership in the International Shipping Conference, made up of similar shipping groups from 19 countries.

Canada's only representative until then had been the Shipping Federation of Canada. Soon, responsibilities were divided by coast, and the federation spoke for the east and the Chamber for the west.

Split of Interest Groups

With shipping gone from the VME, other interest groups started forming their own separate associations. Among the first to follow were the Vancouver Grain Export Clearing Association (1928), the British Columbia Towboat Owners' Association (1930), the Vancouver Grain Exporters' Association (1932), and the Coastwise Operators' Association (1939). By the 1950's and 60's, each distinct interest group on the grain side also had its own association such as the British Columbia Wharf Operators' Association (1952), the British Columbia Terminal Elevator Operators' (1957), and the British Columbia Grain Shippers' Clearance Association (1962).

The stand alone Vancouver Chamber of Shipping had developed three committees to help it do its work - the Documentary and Reference Committee, the Aids to Navigation Committee, and the Legal and Legislative Committee - while also maintaining three representatives on the VME Board of Trustees.

During the Second World War, the Chamber oversaw the protection of shipping in the Pacific under the Defence of Canada Regulations.

Postwar years saw another boom in the development of the Port of Vancouver and the various affiliated marine associations grew in strength and purpose, casting doubts about the value of the umbrella VME which was being seen as increasingly irrelevant to their needs.

Chamber Goes BC Wide

In 1966, the Vancouver Chamber of Shipping voted overwhelmingly to disassociate itself from the merchants' exchange because of poor quality facilities and services. And as the influence of the VCS spread well beyond Vancouver, that year the chamber was incorporated as the Chamber of Shipping of British Columbia.

By 1975, the Vancouver Grain Exchange was the only constituent member of the merchants' exchange still on board the old VME. In October that year, the Vancouver Merchants' Exchange took the only course it could and wound up its operations.

Meanwhile, the Chamber of Shipping of British Columbia was buoyant and strong. In its 75 year history it has proven itself valuable as a forum for gathering, developing, and disseminating

information to its membership, which is today around 110, and to communities around the world.

The CSBC speaks out for its members with all levels of government and the wider marine community on such topics as ship and port operations, navigation and pilotage, cruise ships, legislation, and even as a registration point for vessels under the Canadian oilspill regulations.

The Chamber has also spearheaded the formation of an informal coalition, the Western Marine Community, to ensure equitable regional apportionment of the Canadian Coast Guard's cost recovery program.

And in another evolution of the growing role in marine matters on the west coast, the Chamber recently took over control from the Federal Government of the Vancouver International Maritime Centre which uses tax and other regulatory advantages to attract shipping companies to base their operations in Vancouver.

© Copyright the Chamber of Shipping of British Columbia, All Rights Reserved.