LOOKING AHEAD

JULY 15 — **Ins. Brokers Assn. of Manitoba**, *Slo-Pitch Tourn.*, Winnipeg, Little Mountain.

JULY 21 — **Ins. Institute Ottawa Chapter**, *Golf Clinic*, Kanata, Loch March G.C.

JULY 25 — **Ins. Institute Hamilton/Niagara**, *Baseball social*, Welland, Welland Stadium.

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READERS NOTE:

This is the last weekly edition of *Thompson's* until we return following our annual summer break Sept. 14. Our daily email upgrade service will resume Sept. 8.

We wish all of our readers a safe and happy summer season.

Portage adopts Akur8 AI platform for pricing

PORTAGE Mutual Insurance is using a new AI-powered platform to support pricing model development for its personal lines business. The technology developed by Montreal-based Akur8 will initially be used for the insurer's home and auto insurance portfolios and may be expanded to other lines. Portage, which is based in Portage la Prairie, Man., said the new tool will help its actuarial teams build pricing models more quickly and produce more transparent, explainable pricing insights. Ryan Cheung, the insurer's director of actuarial pricing, said the platform showed benefits during the pilot phase. "Sophisticated models that previously took days to build can now be completed in hours," he said.

Smith elected president of Ont. institute chapter

CRAWFORD & Company Canada's Greg Smith has been elected president of the Insurance Institute of Ontario. He has 30 years of leadership experience with Crawford and is currently the company's president. Mr. Smith holds the Fellow Chartered Insurance Professional designation from the Insurance Institute of Canada, an ICD.D designation from the Institute of Corporate Directors and a Canadian Risk Management designation from the Global Risk Management Institute. He succeeds Melanie Muise, general manager, Canada at Neilson Financial Services, as president of the Ontario chapter. The Insurance Institute's executive committee is elected for a one-year mandate and is renewable for two years.

Wawanesa announces executive appointments

WAWANESA Insurance has promoted Maja Dos Santos to the role of senior VP and chief risk officer. She joined the company in 2003 and has held increasingly senior roles in actuarial functions and enterprise risk management. The Winnipeg-based mutual insurer has also appointed Julia Vul as VP, corporate actuarial and appointed actuary. Ms. Vul has more than 20 years of actuarial and insurance experience. Founded in 1896, Wawanesa is one of Canada's largest mutual insurers. The company said it serves over two million members through more than 1,900 broker partners.

Wawanesa tests tool for assessing wildfire risk

WAWANESA Insurance said it is piloting an AI tool that helps homeowners assess and reduce wildfire risk. The Winnipeg-based insurer has partnered with Climative, a climate intelligence company, on a free digital platform that uses property-specific data and user input to generate wildfire risk scores and recommended risk-reduction steps. "Homeowners want to know exactly what measures will make a meaningful difference when it comes to reducing their wildfire risk," said Winston Morton, CEO of Climative. "We're removing the guesswork by providing easy-to-implement actions they can take with confidence." The tool is being introduced to homeowners through Wawanesa broker partners including Western Financial Group and Westland Insurance.

Marsh names Palandra next CEO for Canada

BROKER Marsh has announced that Teresa Palandra will become CEO of its Canadian operations on August 1. Based in Toronto, she will also continue in her current role as president of Mercer Canada, a sister company of the brokerage that specializes in professional services. Ms. Palandra joined Mercer Canada in 2006 and has led the firm since 2023. She succeeds Sarah Robson, who will retire July 31 after more than 33 years with Marsh in senior leadership roles in Canada and the U.S. Ms. Robson has served as CEO of Marsh Canada since 2023 and was president of Marsh Risk Canada from 2018 until earlier this year.

Green-Bolton joins Westland as CFO

WESTLAND Insurance Group has appointed Nancy Green-Bolton as chief financial officer. She has joined the Surrey, B.C.-based broker from Western Financial Group, where she spent more than 18 years in several senior roles, including VP of finance, chief financial and risk officer and most recently chief operating officer. Westland said Ms. Green-Bolton has a strong track record of building and scaling finance functions, supporting growth in acquisition-driven environments and helping organizations operate with discipline. Westland operates through more than 250 locations across the country.

McLarens welcomes new senior GTA adjuster

MCLARENS Canada has welcomed Golan Joseph to its Greater Toronto Area team as a senior general adjuster. The company said that while he handles both liability and property claims, his focus has been on casualty lines including construction liability, host liability, professional liability and municipal liability. Mr. Joseph began his insurance career in 2010 as a claims adjuster for Wawanesa Insurance and he later held similar roles at Crawford and Company and QBE Insurance. McLarens provides loss adjusting, claims, risk management and auditing services, forensic technical consulting and pre-risk surveying through 230 offices in more than 45 countries around the world.

AM Best affirms rating for Sandbox Mutual

AM BEST has removed the placement of Sandbox Mutual Insurance's financial strength rating from under review with developing implications and affirmed an A- (excellent) evaluation for the company. The credit rating agency said the Saskatoon-based insurer's rating has been affirmed due to its execution of a quota share reinsurance agreement, which improved the company's risk-adjusted capitalization and stabilized its balance sheet strength following a decline in capital levels at year-end 2025. AM Best noted that the decline was driven by Sandbox's strong growth trends in recent years and a modest decrease in equity (*Thompson's*, June 8).

Insurer grants $150,000 for playground projects

SANDBOX Mutual Insurance has named five grant recipients for its 2026 Communities At Play program. École Jasper Elementary School in Jasper, Alta., Maude Burke Elementary School in Melfort, Sask., the town of Whitewood, Sask., École St. Adolphe in St. Adolphe, Man., and Oak Bluff Community School in Oak Bluff, Man., will each receive $25,000 for a playground project. Saskatoon-based Sandbox introduced the grant program in 2023 to support communities in the Prairie provinces. The application period for the grants typically opens early in the spring and winners are selected through employee and public voting.