

New hat is old hat for institute chair

J.R. (BOB) TISDALE is donning yet another hat in support of insurance industry education efforts in Canada.

The Insurance Institute of Canada has named the chief operating officer of Pembridge Insurance Co., Pafco Insurance Co. and Ivantage Insurance Brokers and vp of Allstate Canada as the new chair of its board of governors.

He has previously served as chair of the Chartered Insurance Professionals' Society, president of the Insurance Institute of Ontario and deputy chair and governor-at-large of the Insurance Institute of Canada.

"I've played a lot of roles which helps me have greater insight into the various operations and components," Mr. Tisdale said last week.

"You get exposed to the inner workings (which) has helped me a lot so the learning curve is less."

He said the institute is working on several new initiatives, including the introduction of computer-based exams next month.

"It shows that the institute is moving forward and modernizing. Any time new computer-based exams are introduced it is challenging because there is a transitioning period.

"We have to look at our demographics and understand that there is a waning part of students that won't be (interested in) computer-based exams. How to balance the old and the new is critical for the future."

He noted that the institute's educational offerings are readily available to anyone who is interested in building a successful career in insurance.

It has a dedicated career connection program that encourages students to look at the insurance industry.

"The possibilities in our business are immense," he said, noting that one of the things he is looking forward to is congratulating institute graduates.

"It's such a tremendous feeling of pride. Most of them are working full-time and trying to balance activities and finding time to study — and these are not easy courses."

■ Intact Insurance president Jean-François Blais has been elected deputy chair of the Insurance Institute of Canada. Along with the naming of Bob Tisdale as chairman for the 2015-2016 term, AIG Insurance Co. of Canada ceo Lynn Oldfield becomes vice-chair and governor-at-large. Neil Morrison, formerly with Hub International, is immediate past chair. Regional vice-chairs are Robert Katzell for Alberta; Tim Shauf of the Commonwell Mutual Group in Lindsay, Ont.; Chantal Gagnon of Intact Insurance in Quebec, and Kathy Stewart of Hyndman & Co. in Charlottetown. Divisional vice-chairs are Michael Wills of Eagle Underwriting Group and Northbridge commercial lines vp Julie Pingree.

Brokers urged to tackle data issues

THE PRESIDENT of Ontario's self-regulatory body for independent p&c brokers addressed data protection efforts during an annual meeting address earlier this month in Toronto.

"The impact of (the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, which was amended in June) and similar statutes heighten our obligations and encourage a more formal process for the collection, use, sharing and destruction of personal information," said the Registered Insurance Brokers of Ontario's Beth Pearson, of AP Insurance Brokers in Hamilton, Ont.

"We need to make sure they are up to date and ensure that the policies and procedures reflect what is happening in our shops — with a keen eye on protecting the personal information in our possession."

She told RIBO members that information technology tools such as data encryption can go a long way toward helping protect data.

"And it is also important that we raise awareness of data protection amongst our staff through, for example, training sessions on office policies and procedures."

Ms. Pearson said that it is particularly important to enhance security measures when data is at its most vulnerable — when it is accessed via mobile electronic devices.

She also addressed the issue of overland water coverage — which has become a major issue for the industry since the unprecedented 2013 flooding in Calgary and Toronto — noting it has placed a "significant burden" on brokers.

"We aim to stay abreast of new products and determine which clients might benefit from them," she said.

"It is the client who must decide what products they wish to purchase (but) a broker can and should recommend appropriate products."

Ms. Pearson cautioned that properly documented files must reflect brokers' recommendations and their clients' decisions.

"In any future dispute as to what was or was not recommended or accepted, your brokerage practices — including file documentation — will be of tremendous value."

Also at the annual general meeting, RIBO introduced John Goldsmith, its longtime external lawyer, as its new general counsel.

He will succeed Patrick Ballantyne, who is taking over the RIBO ceo post from the retiring Jeff Bear at the end of 2015.

Meanwhile, J. Daniel Desbiens of Advanced Insurance Brokers in Chatham, Ont. was honoured at the RIBO meeting with the Chris Ward Memorial Award. It is presented annually to the individual who receives the highest mark on the first attempt of the Level II examination.

There was a three-way tie for the Donald W. Lambie award, which is presented to the individual with the highest mark in the initial RIBO qualification examination.

Recipients are Marco De Bruyn of H.L. Staebler Co. in Kitchener, Ont., Stephen Green of Stewart Morrison Insurance Brokers in Lindsay Ont. and Paul Somers of Bickerton Brokers in Gananoque, Ont.

Echelon addresses challenges in Europe

ECHELON Insurance has attributed a third-quarter loss to challenges with its overseas operations.

"In Europe, results were impacted by a spike in claims frequency on young drivers and as a result we continue to build prudent reserves to support the business," said Steve Dobronyi, ceo of the Mississauga, Ont.-based specialty insurer.

"We have already taken immediate action on the affected areas and have de-risked the underwriting profile through program cancellations, underwriting restrictions and other management initiatives."

Volatility in capital markets and the disappointing performance in Europe offset strong underwriting results in Canada for Echelon, leading to a net loss of \$3.7m for the quarter compared to a \$5.5m gain for the same period last year.

It posted a \$678,000 underwriting loss for the period along with a \$2.8m loss on investments. Its combined ratio deteriorated slightly to 100.8% in Q3 2015 compared to 99.8% for the same period in 2014.

Echelon's direct written premiums for the quarter grew 25% to \$131m.

"Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes all made strong contributions to underwriting profits," Mr. Dobronyi said.

Founded in 1998, Echelon operates in Canada and Europe with a primary focus on non-standard auto insurance and other niche products.

It operates and distributes through Echelon Insurance, the Insurance Co. of Prince Edward Island and Qudos Insurance and trades on the Toronto Stock Exchange.

"We're proud of the business that we've built in Europe over the past several years," Mr. Dobronyi said. "We are well positioned to selectively underwrite only the risks with the highest profit margins and are excited by the opportunity to now realize the value that's been built."

"Coupled with the consistent profitability of our Canadian business and an increase in our shareholder dividend, Echelon continues to offer an attractive mix of value, growth and income to our shareholders."