

2006 I.T. FOCUS:

# Reality Check

The CSIO Portal  
dream is over.

*What's Next?*



ICLR managing director  
**Glenn McGillivray**

**PROFILE**

**INSIGHT:**

**New Modeling:  
The Cat's Meow**

Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction (ICLR), a non-profit research institute based in Toronto and London, ON, is focusing on communications. Enter Glenn McGillivray, the new managing director of ICLR.

As of three months ago, McGillivray brought 15 years of insurance industry communications experience to ICLR. His background seems almost custom-designed for what ICLR, headed by executive director and founder Paul Kovacs, is proposing to do over the next five years.

*ICLR Strategic Plan 2006-11* outlines the development of a long-term communications plan to widely publicize the results of ICLR's research. The plan will promote the Canadian discussion of tips for community management of environmental hazards, safer design and construction of buildings, infrastructure protection and risk management.

As ICLR notes on its Web site, natural disasters have killed more than 650,000 people over the past 10 years and caused more than Cdn\$1 trillion in damage. Disaster damage has been doubling every five to seven years since the '60s. "The greatest tragedy is that many disaster losses are preventable," ICLR notes.

Since Canada's property and casualty insurers founded ICLR in 1998, the research institute has worked diligently to prevent disasters from occurring. It has secured Cdn\$3 million from the insurance industry, Cdn\$44 million from other sources, established three research chairs, more than 350 publications, 30 researchers and 100 students.

It's now time for McGillivray, a specialist in communications, to help publicize these achievements. McGillivray comes to ICLR from Swiss Reinsurance Company Canada, where he was the assistant vice president of corporate communications for 11 years. His resumé contains six, solid pages of more than 100 publications, journal and magazine articles he has written during that time, ranging from ice storms and hurricanes to earthquakes and global warming.

"From a communications perspective, which is my area of expertise, there's a host of projects I'm going to be working on," McGillivray says, when asked what he will be doing at ICLR. "I think essentially, you can boil down my responsibilities into two areas: The first is very simply to get the word out...."

# The Manager and the Message

*Glenn McGillivray brings his communications experience to ICLR*

By David Gambrill

"At the institute, we conduct research and we foster relationships with academics, academic communities, government and other groups. The ultimate goal is to prevent natural hazards from becoming catastrophes. We also support others in that goal as well. But if the research is going to sit on a shelf somewhere, gathering dust, it just doesn't help us fulfill those objectives."

"A large part of my job is to get the word out about the research, about the conclusions we've reached. It could even be tips on how to handle yourself in winter, prepare your home or prepare your business, your small business. When a catastrophe hits a small business, one-quarter of these businesses never re-open because they just weren't prepared to handle it."

The latter observation is typical of the kinds of interesting facts to which McGillivray refers in casual conversation. You could even describe his quiet demeanor as "matter-of-fact." McGillivray says over the course of his career, he has found that people in the insurance industry would prefer to listen to facts than public relations spin. Not surprisingly, he has a solid appreciation of the scientific aspect of disasters.

While many in the insurance industry have developed an expertise in the area of catastrophic loss, McGillivray says his interest in the pure science associated with the discipline has allowed him to take his interest in the area further.

"I've always been interested [in the cat loss area]," he says. "I think a lot of people are because of human nature: It's the power and majesty of Nature and its impact on people and that sort of thing. But being in property and casualty



insurance, you really can't get away from it. It's an important part of the industry, helping people recover from such losses. It's our *raison d'être*. I took a slightly heavier interest than most people in the scientific end of things. I guess I took it a couple of steps further than most..."

Quite a few steps further, considering his academic background is based in the arts rather than the sciences. He has an undergraduate political science degree from Wilfrid Laurier University. In 1991, he obtained a graduate diploma in corporate communications from Seneca College of Applied Arts and Technology in Toronto. From there, he accidentally entered the world of insurance.

"I started off at the Personal Insurance Company in 1991," McGillivray remembers.

"I started off as a co-op student in the marketing area, corporate communications area, and I was interviewed offsite by the company. I was interviewed on campus."

"My first day at work was also my first day at the building. I was driving down Evans Avenue in the bus and I was thinking to myself, 'An insurance company? What am I doing? This is going to be the worst two months of my life.' And actually it turned out to be one of the best two months of my life. I continued my relationship with them for a few years. I never looked back..."

Now when he looks back on his career, he sees 15 years of research and communications work dedicated to helping reduce, death, injury and property

damage caused by Canadian hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, winter and ice storms, etc.

ICLR has been working on mitigating the effects of these kinds of natural hazards over the span of McGillivray's career. ICLR has a membership of 34 insurer and reinsurers, five prominent associate members and nine community partners – including, for example, the Canadian Red Cross, Health Canada, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Meteorological Service of Canada and others.

McGillivray says his role, in addition to "getting the word out," is to continue providing quality research support to existing members and to sign on as many new ICLR members as possible.

"A lot of companies would like to do more in the area of NatCat research, climate change research, but a lot of companies in Canada just don't have the resources or the size to justify their own staff and to do their own thing," McGillivray says. "Their involvement through ICLR gives them an opportunity to contribute to the dialogue and to the education. We're here to provide resources to them, if they need research or direction on a particular issue."

ICLR has many projects on the go; a full accounting of the various research initiatives can be found at <http://www.iclr.org>. When asked to identify one that stands out, McGillivray points to the Cdn\$8-million 'Three Little Pigs' project conducted at the University of Western Ontario [an ICLR partner].

"This is a really, really interesting laboratory," McGillivray says. "This is the only place like it in the entire world. They are actually building a home inside a laboratory – a full home, fully outfitted with brick, furnace, electrical and the whole nine yards. This home is going to undergo some stresses later on in this laboratory that will replicate hurricane-force winds. With sensors, they are going to be able to tell what has failed, why it has failed, when it failed, and what we can do to prevent this from happening, how we can build more resilient homes, and that sort of thing... It's just an amazing, amazing project."

Although it does some work internationally, ICLR primarily focuses its work on the kinds of hazards you would most likely see in Canada – tornadoes, floods, and windstorms. It is currently working on producing more information about brushfires. It is also in regular contact with a professor who has had some success in predicting the timing and location of earthquakes.

McGillivray says his interests nicely meshed with the current work of ICLR. "I think when you're told that what you'll be doing here is working to reduce injuries, deaths and property damage, that's a very strong pull," he says. "It's very fulfilling to be able to work in that role and stay within the realm of the insurance industry. That's why the insurance industry is there: It's to help people recover from these losses, but also try to prevent their impact in the first place. I'm trying to prevent hazards from going that extra step, to becoming catastrophes." ■