

# ITAC unveils awards, talks business innovation

By Selena Mann

**■ OTTAWA-BASED INFORMATION** Technology Association of Canada (ITAC) will be hosting an awards program June 14 to seek out enterprises with productivity improvement, revenue growth, efficiency gains and business transformation because businesses in Canada are lagging behind ones in the United States in productivity, according to Bernard Courtois, the CEO and president of ITAC.

The Ingenious Awards will feature five categories for excellence in large public organizations, large private organizations, small-to-medium private businesses, small-to-medium public businesses and non-for-profit organizations.

ITAC is comprised of multiple technology companies such as Bell Canada, Dell Inc. and Intel Corp. It held a roundtable at the Toronto Board of Trade in Toronto in February to discuss Canada's lack of business innovation and to announce the award ceremony.

"We know that while there are many, many examples of excellence using technology

to innovate or to completely transform organizations, overall in Canada we are not using technology at the same rate as other competitor nations," Courtois said. "We also know that the most persuasive way to encourage organizations to use technology is through peer-to-peer exchange of best practices among companies and other organizations. The Ingenious Awards Program provides a mechanism for facilitating that peer-to-peer exchange in a sustained fashion."

If an enterprise does not invest in current technology and their employees do not know how to use it, the company would lose money as many small businesses and medium businesses are, according to Doug Cooper, the country manager of Intel of Canada Ltd. Small-to-medium businesses do not train their employees to be well versed in using the Internet causing them to be less productive and less efficient, he said.

"The biggest impact for an

enterprise of underinvesting (in IT) is the ability to acquire sales," Cooper said. "You can't be competitive and run your business."

Enterprises only account for 10 per cent of companies in Canada, while 90 per cent of businesses are small. That percentage of companies has less than 100 people employed, according to Courtois. "(Small-to-medium businesses) do not have people to do that. They have no money for consulting," Courtois said.



Bernard Courtois,  
CEO of ITAC

The lack of investment in IT is fundamentally because these smaller companies simply do not have the money to spend on acquiring good technology. Small-to-medium businesses also do not have the money to spend on learning how to better use the existing technology to increase their productivity and overall increase Canada's profits, according to Courtois.

The awards are on June 14 in Toronto. Applications are being accepted until Mar. 30. **CT**

## EQUITABLE LIFE REVAMPS ECM BEFORE QUEBEC MOVE

By Rafael Ruffolo

**■ WATERLOO, ONT.-BASED** Equitable Life of Canada changed its enterprise document management system to better handle multilingual documents in its Quebec operations.

The insurance firm said its previous document management system, which has been in operation for the last seven years, was "very cumbersome" in handling French processing documents.

The company expanded into Quebec for the first time ever last year and decided to make the switch to Hewlett-Packard Co.'s Exstream product line to help facilitate the move.

Cam Crosbie, vice-president and chief information officer of Equitable Life of Canada, said processing time for documents in both English and French was the biggest factor in

choosing HP. To make matters easier, he said the vendor of its previous system — which the company would not disclose — announced it was entering end-of-life support just prior to the decision to enter the province.

"On the previous system, 25,000 documents would take us up to 24 hours to process," said Crosbie.

After narrowing down its vendor selection process to three companies, Crosbie said it held a "bake-off" over a three-week period. Every week, a new vendor would come into the Equitable Life offices to test the processing time on 25,000 insurance statements.

HP's Exstream system generated the statements, which included policy holder contracts, statements and letters, in approximately 10 minutes, the company said. The average decrease in document processing time across the board, Equitable Life said, was about 500 per cent.

Mike Kaminski, an account manager with HP Exstream who worked closely on the Equitable Life project, said the fact that the system was able to generate fast processing times regardless of the document

language, helped his company win the contract.

For organizations heading into their own enterprise document management upgrades, Crosbie advised IT shops to follow its "bake-off" approach and actually get vendors on-site to test your requirements.

"It adds a little bit more time to your selection process, but at the end of the day, you know exactly what you're getting," he said, adding that it is important to use identical machines in any comparison tests.

According to a recent Forrester research report on enterprise content management suites, EMC Corp., IBM Corp., Oracle Corp. and Open Text Corp. are currently identified as the leading players in the market. Conducted about a year ago, it lists HP and Hyland Software as "strong performers" and "competitive alternatives" to EMC and IBM in document management.

However, the report is critical of both companies for a lack of "strong support" for content in areas such as Web content management, document output management, and digital asset management. **CT**



## Vancouver budget becomes open data

By Selena Mann

**■ VANCOUVER IS ADVOCATING** open data and sharing government documents with the public by releasing its city budget to the public, according to David Eaves, a public policy entrepreneur.

"I don't know of a single city anywhere that is sharing its budget," Eaves said.

The City of Vancouver shares more data than other cities, according to Eaves.

Eaves is an advocate for the concept of open data that entails governments should make their information public and open for citizens to look over, such as information discussed during city council meetings and political budgets. The city council has confirmed the actual capital budget will be released later this year in April.

The city of Vancouver released documents on the city's Web site, Vancouver.ca, such as a PowerPoint and a video of the break down of the 2011 capital budget. In the PowerPoint it shows the break down of the sectors and departments where the money will be spent. The total budget is \$337 million split across different sectors. The actual budget with the detailed information is not yet on the site; however, it is expected to be shared with the public, according to Eaves.

"I did see that the open data portal has had 45,000 downloads," Eaves said.

Anyone can gain access to government information from Vancouver's open data Web site, data.vancouver.ca, where there is a large quantity of

documents for viewing. There is everything from documents such as survey results to business data. One of the latest posts is about business license data containing information on businesses such as names, type, status, locations and details. The last post was on Nov. 29, 2010, with a parks-related datasets survey results.

**“ I don't know of a single city anywhere that is sharing its budget**

**— DAVID EAVES**

Edmonton, Toronto and Ottawa have adopted an open data framework as well. Last year in August, Steven Green, director of marketing and communications at the Government of Ontario Cabinet Office, spoke at a GovCamp event in Toronto, an open discussion of political agendas. Green posed the question of whether open data was more useful than social media. Both consultants and government spokespeople chose to advocate open data over social media. David Tallan, senior manager of enterprise web development at the Government of Ontario, said he would choose open data because it eliminates the need to create apps.

"Once data is out there, it doesn't require ongoing development," Tallan said. **CT**

— With files from "Open data or social networking?" by Jennifer Kavur, ComputerWorld Canada.