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ACTUARY TAKES ON ALL CHALLENGERS TO WIN IQ SHOWDOWN

by Tom F. O'Sullivan

Tom O'Sullivan, vice president and actuary, Canada Life, Reinsurance Division and vice president and chief actuary of the London Reinsurance Group took on all challengers to win the Test the Nation IQ Showdown on the Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC) on March 18, 2007. The format was unique as it pitted six diverse teams of 36 against each other together with a smaller team of eight celebrities. The CBC did an excellent job of creating the groups with Radio DJs, Tattoo Artists, Surgeons, Millionaires, Fitness Instructors and Mayors who all came dressed for their parts.

Tom was tested even before the IQ Showdown as he had to find a team he could join that met his characteristics. Mayors were out as he didn't look good with a "chain of office." Fitness Instructors were a possibility until he was told he needed to wear tight clothing. Surgeons were a no-go as he didn't want to ruin his hair with the scrubs. Radio DJs either got up too early or worked all night. He is afraid of needles so he couldn't be on the tattoo artists' team. His only choice was the millionaires. However, if he liquidated all his possessions obtained during the 27 years of his actuarial career he could scrape up about \$100,000. In the end, the millionaires were it as he told the contest's producer that he could "dress like a million bucks" and they were desperate as someone just dropped out.

The IQ test of 60 questions was created by a university professor and allowed for 10 to 20 seconds to answer each question on math, memory, language, logic and perception. The Surgeons started strong with a 6 percent lead on the Millionaires, but at the halfway point their lead was shaved to 2 percent. On the individual side, O'Sullivan was in a neck and neck battle with Toronto's Mayor David Miller who is a Harvard graduate and a Rhodes Scholar. Even though O'Sullivan was secretly hoping the next set of questions would be on "Fair Value Accounting," he got his second choice as the math questions followed and he ended up the overall winner with an IQ of 137 (56 out of 60). Tom was



happy to have finally proved without a doubt the answer to the age old question: FSA > (Harvard + Rhodes)!

In the team competition, the surgeons edged out the millionaires 119 to 118 and everyone seemed to be happy that those who perform surgeries are the smartest on average! The fitness instructors finished third followed by the mayors, radio DJs, tattoo artists and celebrities.

Tom was a bit of a celebrity himself back at the office, but was quickly humbled as one of his bosses let everyone know that, "we had to be careful that we didn't rub it in the competition's face so we chose someone who would win ... but just barely!" In addition, Tom has been told that he will now lose a point from his IQ for every mistake he makes over the next three months. I am happy to report that Tom is now giving 25 percent discounts to actuaries at his new tattoo parlor!

If you missed the show and think you can beat Tom's IQ you can try the test at <http://www.cbc.ca/testthenation/episodes/iq/take-the-test/ttn-iq.html> *



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