

ALBERTA INSURANCE COUNCIL
(the "AIC")

In the Matter of the *Insurance Act*, R.S.A. 2000 Chapter I-3
(the "Act")

And

In the Matter of Matthew Akins
(the "Agent")

DECISION
OF
The Life Insurance Council
(the "Council")

This case involved an allegation pursuant to s. 481(2) of the Act. Specifically, it is alleged that the Agent failed or refused to provide information and documentation requested by the AIC through a Demand for Information (the "Demand"). In so doing, it is alleged that the Agent contravened a provision of the Act as contemplated in s. 480(1)(b).

Facts and Evidence

This matter proceeded by way of a written Report to Council dated June 29, 2018 (the "Report"). The Report was forwarded to the Agent for review and to allow the Agent to provide the Council with any further evidence or submissions by way of Addendum. The Agent did not respond.

The Agent was the former holder of life and accident & sickness ("A&S") certificates of authority and was licensed from February 8, 2016 to October 19, 2017, when the Agent's licenses were suspended. This matter arose out of correspondence received from the Agent's sponsor, dated October 19, 2017, which stated that the Agent was terminated from his employment due to violation of internal policies. The AIC investigation began in an effort to determine whether the Agent's actions had subsequently breached any part of the Act or its Regulations.

The AIC contacted the Agent on May 9, 2018 via email and requested an explanation surrounding his dismissal. Having not received a response to the communication, the AIC sent the Agent a formal Demand for information on May 31, 2018 via registered mail. The Agent did not respond.

Discussion

The AIC operates under a delegation from the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance (the “Minister”). Through this delegation, the AIC has authority over matters relating to current and former holders of insurance agent certificates of authority. Section 481 states that “[t]he Minister may direct the holder or former holder of a certificate of authority to provide to the Minister within a reasonable period of time specified by the Minister relating to the matters in section 480(1).” Subsection 2 states that the “... person served with a direction under subsection (1) who has the information must provide the information in accordance with the direction.”

Regulatory offences such as these are strict liability offences. As such, the AIC has the onus to prove that the Demand was properly made upon the Agent (proper in the sense that they meet all of the requirements under the Act) and that the Agent did not comply. Once this occurs, the onus shifts to the Agent to establish that he exercised due diligence in meeting his statutory requirement to respond. To substantiate this due diligence defence, the Agent must demonstrate that he took all reasonable means to avoid making the offence. Given the facts in their entirety, it is clear that the Agent did not act with due diligence and we find him guilty.

In terms of the applicable sanction, the public relies on the AIC to investigate complaints and the Act requires that holders, and even former holders, such as this Agent, provide information when called upon to do so. Therefore, the public is not well-served when agents fail to comply with demands like those made in this case. Pursuant to s. 13(1)(b) of the *Certificate Expiry, Penalties and Fees Regulation*, A.R. 125/2001, the Council has the discretion to assess a civil penalty in an amount up to \$1,000.00. Therefore, we order that a civil penalty of \$750.00 be levied against the Agent. The civil penalty must be paid within thirty (30) days of the mailing of this Decision. In the event that the civil penalty is not paid within thirty (30) days, interest will begin to accrue at the applicable prescribed rate. The Agent has thirty (30) days in which to appeal this decision by filing a notice of appeal with the Office of the Superintendent of Insurance, pursuant to s. 482 of the Act (excerpt enclosed).

This Decision was made by way of a motion made and carried at a properly conducted meeting of the Life Insurance Council. The motion was duly recorded in the minutes of that meeting.

Dated: September 18, 2018

[Original signed by]
Kenneth Doll, Chair
Life Insurance Council

Extract from the *Insurance Act, Chapter I-3***Appeal**

482 A decision of the Minister under this Part to refuse to issue, renew or reinstate a certificate of authority, to impose terms and conditions on a certificate of authority, to revoke or suspend a certificate of authority or to impose a penalty on the holder or former holder of a certificate of authority may be appealed in accordance with the regulations.

Extract from the *Insurance Councils Regulation, Alberta Regulation 126/2001***Notice of appeal**

16(1) A person who is adversely affected by a decision of a council may appeal the decision by submitting a notice of appeal to the Superintendent within 30 days after the council has mailed the written notice of the decision to the person.

(2) The notice of appeal must contain the following:

- a) a copy of the written notice of the decision being appealed;
- b) a description of the relief requested by the appellant;
- c) the signature of the appellant or the appellant's lawyer;
- d) an address for service in Alberta for the appellant;
- e) an appeal fee of \$200 payable to the Provincial Treasurer.

(3) The Superintendent must notify the Minister and provide a copy of the notice of appeal to the council whose decision is being appealed when a notice of appeal has been submitted.

(4) If the appeal involves a suspension or revocation of a certificate of authority or a levy of a penalty, the council's decision is suspended until after the disposition of the appeal by a panel of the Appeal Board.

Address for Superintendent of Insurance:

Superintendent of Insurance
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402 Terrace Building
9515-107 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2C3
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