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Community



Insurance company supports research on climate change

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Insurance company Zurich Canada is preparing to work with SFU to examine ways to cope with the ongoing challenges of extreme weather events caused by climate change.

The insurance industry is feeling the impact of increasingly frequent climate-related events such as Hurricane Katrina and the recent flooding in the UK. And Zurich is responding by supporting ACT (the Adaptation to Climate Change Team), SFU's new adaptation policy-planning initiative.

"ACT will be a valuable resource for Canadian industry, governments and communities that has the potential to benefit the international community," says SFU president Michael Stevenson.

The program starts in May '08, bringing together Canadian and international experts to examine the science, publicize the issues and recommend policy options for sustainable adaptation to government, industry and community leaders.

"Climate change is of tremendous importance to Zurich Canada," said CEO Robert Landry. "Supporting ACT lets us actively assist in the development of policies that will benefit our customers and society as a whole."

Global losses due to natural disasters in 2005 were estimated at more than \$200 billion US, with insured losses topping \$70 billion US. In Canada, weather extremes are causing increasing damage to property, crops, communities and tourism.

Last winter, violent storms caused power outages and a boil-water advisory for a record two million British Columbians.

The extreme-weather trend is set to continue. Natural Resources Canada predicts an increase in severe droughts, storms, forest fires and floods with serious economic and social impacts. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's fourth report warns that temperature extremes and heavy precipitation will become frequent.

The ACT program grew out of concerns raised by Richard Lipsey, economist and SFU professor emeritus, about policy gaps in addressing adaptation. It's intended to complement the mitigation and carbon footprint-reduction planning now under way

nationwide.

ACT is led by SFU's public policy program, with the involvement of many SFU departments including urban studies and dialogue.

It will generate policy options and public education tools for adaptation to climate change-related issues—extreme weather events, community impacts, health risks, fresh water supply, crop and food adaptation, energy production and distribution, new technologies and displaced populations.

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