

## Canadian Underwriter, 9/11/2007

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Zurich, SFU working together on climate change adaptation

Zurich Canada has announced it will be working with Vancouver's Simon Fraser University (SFU) to examine options for adaptation to extreme weather events caused by climate change.

The ACT/Zurich Canada Extreme Weather Events program kicks off in May 2008, and will bring together Canadian and international experts to examine the challenges, publicize the issues and recommend policy options to government, industry, and community leaders."

"The insurance industry continues to feel the impact of increasing frequency of climate-related events such as Hurricane Katrina and the recent UK flooding," the company announced in press release. "In responding to this changing environment, Zurich is taking a proactive role in supporting this research to examine adaptation policy options working with SFU's new ACT (Adaptation to Climate change Team) series."

Zurich is providing financial sponsorship as well as support and guidance in furthering ACT's research.

"Climate change is obviously of tremendous importance to Zurich Canada," Zurich Canada's CEO Robert Landry says in the release. "Supporting ACT gives us an opportunity to 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 US\$200 billion, with insured losses topping US\$70 billion.

According to Zurich, ACT grew out of concerns raised by renowned economist and SFU professor Dr. Richard Lipsey about policy gaps in addressing climate change adaptation. ACT is intended to complement mitigation and carbon footprint-reduction planning now underway nation-wide.

Led by SFU's noted Public Policy Program, with support from the schools of Urban Studies and Dialogue, ACT will generate policy options and public education tools for adaptation to climate change-related issues including extreme weather events, community impacts, health risks, fresh water supply, crop and food adaptation, energy production and distribution, new technologies and displaced populations.

"At SFU, our focus is 'Thinking of the World,'" says SFU president Michael Stevenson. "ACT will be a valuable resource for Canadian industry, governments and communities that also has the potential to benefit the international community."

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