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The Caribbean Actuarial Association's 15th Annual Conference

by Tesi Johnson

“Risks and Rewards—Challenges and Opportunities” was the theme for the Caribbean Actuarial Association's 15th annual conference, which was held at the Half Moon Hotel in Montego Bay, Jamaica, from Nov. 30 to Dec. 2, 2005. The location of the conference has rotated between Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad to give more actuaries and students in each country the chance to attend when they are hosting. Actuaries, actuarial students and other participants in related disciplines from the Caribbean and other parts of the world travelled to this world-renowned resort city for the three-day summit.

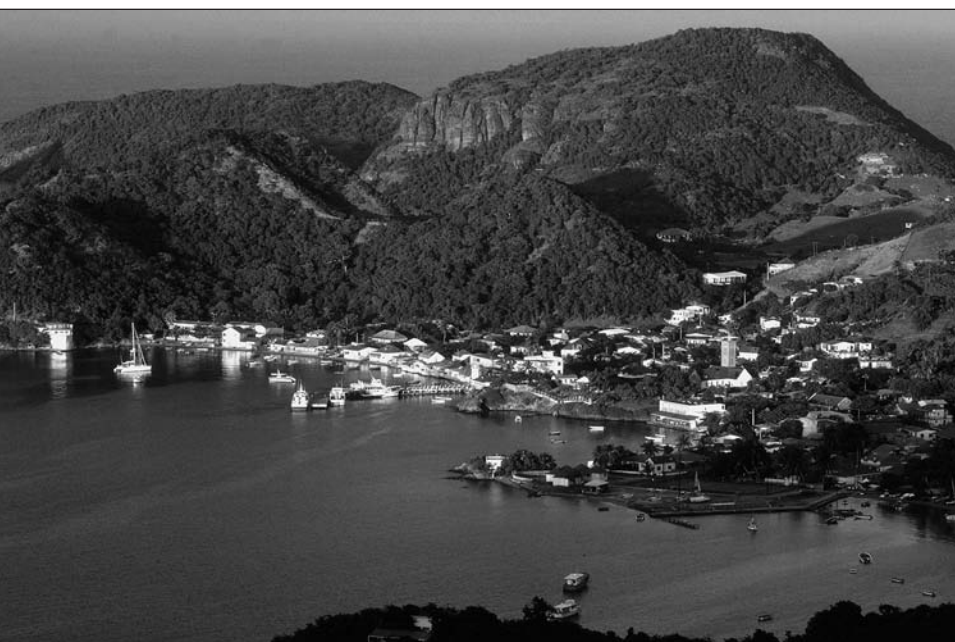
The sessions were held in the Conference Centre on the Half Moon's extensive grounds. A distinguished group of speakers from Canada, Jamaica, Japan, United States and the United Kingdom gave presentations covering a variety of topics ranging across the main practice areas of the actuarial profession and more. “We hope to attract as wide an audience as possible, not only actuaries, but also persons from other related fields, particularly from the whole financial industry” said Catherine Allen, the conference co-chairperson, and a practicing actuary with Guardian Life. The subjects dealt

with over the duration of the conference included banking, catastrophe, investment, health, pensions, life insurance, entrepreneurship and professional standards, as they relate to the actuarial profession.

The sessions on the first day were about professional matters, especially for members of the CAA. Shu-Yen Lui of MetLife International and W. St. Elmo Whyte, co-founder of FIRM Insurance Brokers Ltd. and senior lecturer at the University of the West Indies, conducted a question-and-answer session for the students. Afterwards Russell Greig spoke to the membership about enhancing the reputation of casualty actuaries.

On Thursday morning, Sir George Alleyne, the Chancellor of the University of the West Indies (UWI), special envoy of the secretary general for HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean, opened the conference officially as the keynote speaker. He addressed the state of the Caribbean with respect to the health issues of lifestyle diseases and HIV/AIDS. His speech was particularly well-timed since it fell on World AIDS Day. Sir George challenged the CAA, and other such professional bodies, to be champions for change in altering the landscape of these health issues in the Caribbean. After Sir George's presentation, Robyn Day, the president of the Caribbean Actuarial Association, presented a check of US\$5000 to Sir George, as a gift to the University of the West Indies, which will go towards purchasing books for the actuarial science program. This was the second presentation made to the university at the conference. At the cocktail party, the president of the International Association of Black Actuaries, Stafford L. Thompson Jr., presented an award to UWI, which recognized it as the University of the Year for the performance of their students in the professional actuarial exams. W. St. Elmo Whyte received the award on behalf of the University.

Following, Russell Greig addressed “Finite Reinsurance and Risk Transfer Issues” and delved into recent developments in this area. Next, Dr. Alan Punter, the CEO of Aon Capital



Service Limited in London and honorary visiting professor in insurance and risk finance at the Cass Business School in London, gave a thought-provoking presentation on the topic of catastrophes as they relate to the insurance industry and reinsurance in particular. He examined the global reinsurance industry prior to the 2005 hurricane season, and commented on the impact that hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma had on the industry. After lunch, Andrew Wise, former partner of Watson Wyatt in London, presented "Trend Towards Bonds and Alternative Investments in Private Equity and Hedge Funds." Oscar Zimmerman, the president, CEO and board member of Scotia Life/Scotia General Insurance Companies was next on the agenda with, "A Return to Retail Relationship Banking." He pointed out the Bancassurance opportunities such an approach would provide. To close the second day, ambassador Richard Bernal spoke on the trade negotiation process in the World Trade Organization and the variety of ways consensus was applied. This was a refreshing change from technical matters.

The third day of the conference opened with a panel made up of Michael Pomery, the president of the Institute of Actuaries in the United Kingdom, Paul Timmins, a lawyer with the consulting firm Watson Wyatt in Canada, and Leslie Lohmann, the proprietor of Lohmann International Associates in Japan. They spoke on new developments in pensions practice. Mr. Lohmann's presentation was particularly controversial, as he questioned the role of the Trust in protecting employees from shortfalls in funding a retirement plan and challenged the traditional funding methods used to finance a pension scheme.

Also on the third day, Shu-Yen Liu spoke on "life insurance in emerging markets." After a lunch break, main speaker Aaron Hou, risk manager at Jamaica Money Market Brokers and supporting speaker Andrew Wise probed "derivatives in risk management." Following, José Nicolas, the regional director of Munich Re and June Chen of the Institute of Risk Management, together presented on "trends in living benefits." The final item on the agenda for the third day was the CAA's annual general meeting. Here the CAA formally adopted the life standard of practice (APS2) for actuaries practicing in the region as a mandatory stan-

standard following adoption last year of the pensions standard of practice (APS1).

There were two extra items offered on the fourth and final day of the conference for those interested. Michael Pomery updated the audience on the post-Morris events in the United Kingdom. Also, Les Lohmann facilitated a discussion on operating an actuarial business.

Naturally, the conference was serious business, but the attendees look forward to the entertainment. On Wednesday evening, everyone gathered for the welcome cocktail party. Dinner on Thursday night was an Indian buffet. On Friday night, we all went offsite to the Bellfield Great House for a tour, dinner in the garden under the tropical stars, and a limbo and fire eating show.

The conference was given extensive corporate support with sponsorship from Axis Actuarial Software, Eckler Partners Ltd., Guardian Holdings, Life of Jamaica Ltd., Munich Re, National Commercial Bank Jamaica Ltd, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Swiss Re and Valani Consulting. Their patronage supported this stimulating and fulfilling conference bringing current worldwide actuarial issues to Caribbean practitioners in their home territory.

The 2006 conference will be held Dec. 7-8 in Suriname and promises to be as first-rate as we, and our visitors, have come to expect in the Caribbean. For more information please visit our Web site at www.caa.com.bb. □



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