

November 2, 2009

UMV: 60,242

## CARIBBEAN RHYTHM COMES TO CANADA

*Caribbean Week wraps up; events take place in Eastern Canada from Oct. 23 to Nov. 1*

*Charmaine Pang*



The Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) hosted the third annual Caribbean Week in Canada, bringing together tourism officials, the media, and the Caribbean community.

### **Press conference with Secretary-General Riley**

In Toronto, the CTO took time to highlight the media and the travel trade at the Caribbean Awards Luncheon this past Friday, hosted at the historic Distillery District. CTO Secretary-General, Hugh Riley, spoke at a press conference that morning.

He noted that total Canadian arrivals to the Caribbean were estimated at 2.4 million – a 15.3 per cent increase over 2007 figures. So far, total Canadian arrivals between January and July 2009 are estimated at 1.79 million – a 7.4 per cent increase over the same period in 2008.



*Hugh Riley, Secretary-General, CTO*

Riley said that "Canada is our 'rock'" and has contributed greatly to tourism numbers in the region, and identified six areas that his organization will focus on in 2010. Those are: training; sustainable tourism development; research; TSAs; energy efficiency and special events.

Looking at how the Caribbean has fared in the region, Riley said at the press conference that anecdotally, people have been spending less. As hotels have dropped their rates, occupancy rates have increased, but revenue has dropped. He added that despite the economic climate, the region has not lost focus on sustainable tourism and environmental responsibility.

Regarding Western Canada, Riley said the key issues "will always be distance and keeping demand strong enough to fill planes", avoiding double stops or overnight stays, which deter visitors to come. Markets in Western Canada and Atlantic Canada are the next regional 'pockets' which the CTO hopes to expand their presence into.

Important niche markets that continue to produce visitors for the region include the bridal/romance market (stable even in a recession, with great value now available); the Caribbean diaspora; and the dive market. Faith-based travel (religious groups, etc.) is also a growing market, said Riley.

The awards luncheon honoured the media and one member of the travel agency community. Silvija Smith, an agent with Beechwood Travel & Cruise, was honoured with the 2nd annual Andrew R. Parris award. The award was named in memory of Parris and his 40-year career promoting the Caribbean tourism industry in Canada.

The media winners were:

*Best Newspaper Feature:* Janie Robinson, Toronto Star (St. Vincent & the Grenadines)  
*Best Magazine Feature:* Mark Stevens, Dreamscapes (featuring various countries)  
*Best Feature – Trade:* Melanie Reffes, Canadian Traveller (St. Vincent & the Grenadines)  
*Best Photo:* Michael de Freitas, "Bonaire", Diver Magazine  
*Best Online Feature:* Ron & Barb Kroll, KrollTravel.com (Barbados)  
*Best Broadcast Feature:* Christien Perez, Producer, eTalk Daily (Bahamas)  
*Best Overall:* Mark Stevens, Dreamscapes

### **Caribbean week in Canada**

The series of Caribbean Week events promoted tourism opportunities to Canadians from Oct. 23 to Nov. 1.

Beginning in Montreal on Friday Oct. 23rd, the CTO participated for the first time at SITV, the largest consumer travel show in Canada. A Caribbean Pavilion at the show highlighted the region's offerings.

This past Friday, Oct. 30, the Caribbean Awards Luncheon recognized the consumer and trade media, as well as travel agents. The entertainment included Joy Lapps, a steel drum musician, as well as Rick McIntosh. A Caribbean lunch was served by Chef Pedro Quintanilla of Focaccia restaurant, featuring Cuban cuisine, as well as Chef Darryl Alexis from Encore Food with Elegance, representing Trinidad & Tobago.

On Friday evening, the Rum & Rhythm Festival took place at the Distillery District's Fermenting Cellar, featuring a variety of the Caribbean's award-winning rums, rum cocktails, Caribbean cuisine and music.

Over the weekend, the CTO brought a Caribbean Pavilion to the Zoomer show in Toronto, a consumer show dedicated to the 50-plus demographic.













