More international business companies registered in 2008

By Stacia Browne

ONCE again Barbados witnessed an increase in the number of new licences for international business companies during 2008, and this is expected to push earnings by the sector beyond that level reported for 2008.

The increased numbers were highlighted by the Governor of the Central Bank of Barbados, Dr. Marion Williams, in her review of the economy for 2008, which was given at the end of last month.

She said, "In the international business and financial services sector, preliminary data as at the end of September 2008 indicated that 371 new licences were issued for international business companies, approximately 37 more than in the same period of 2007. Seventy-five new societies with restricted liability were licensed, compared to 126 a year earlier."

She also stated that one new offshore banking license was granted during the period compared to five new licensees in the similar period of 2007.

Though licences for international business firms has increased, that may not be indicative of more foreign investment coming to these shores. It does show however that foreign firms are still looking to Barbados as domicile for their operations.

According to the Central Bank of Barbados balance of payments publication for last year, the revised data for earnings by the sector were $154.8 million from the financial services. This figure represents a major increase from the revised for 2006 that stands at $76.2 million.

The current period is critical for the sector at a time where uncertainty is looming internationally.

Barbados has long boasted of the infrastructure available to lure international business firms. In fact, some international business companies already here have been expanding their operations by increasing the number of employees on staff.

This is also evidenced by comments made by the President of Barbados International Business Association (BIBA), Lisel Lewis, in her welcome address posted on that agency's website, where she states, "Barbados today is robust with international banks, insurance and reinsurance companies, investment management houses, call centres, manufacturers and international traders. The 'natural resources' international business seeks in selecting a jurisdiction like Barbados are in ample supply here – a world class educational system, including the University of West Indies, an experienced international workforce, a stable economy, modern and efficient air and sea ports, dynamic telecommunications systems, a stable political environment, a low crime rate, a comprehensive series of dual tax treaties and, of course, a climate that is renowned for it warmth and stability. Whether it is because of the dynamic and high quality business environment one finds here, or the casual and healthy lifestyle, Barbados is rapidly becoming the hub for international business in the CARICOM region."