

Tourist Insurance plan cancelled to pay for city garbage

Written by T. Rob Brown (aka Roberto Chocolate)

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The much touted health insurance plan for visitors to Panama has disappeared under a pile of garbage.

The \$3 million that the Tourism Authority had set aside to implement the plan has been transferred to the new national waste authority (ANA) as the government scrambles to find funds so that the clean up body can begin operations in December.

The tourism authority had planned to purchase insurance policies for visitors entering the country through Tocumen International Airport.

The project was to have been operated by Generali Insurance for three years and was intended to bring peace of mind to tourists knowing they would be covered in case of an accident.

For the first 30 days of a visit it would have covered health care, including the costs if a person needs to be transferred to a medical centre outside of Panama.

The policy also included \$20,000 in coverage in the case of a tourist dying while in Panama.

The government received five proposals from insurance companies, and Generali had the best bid at \$2 million. Three other bids were lower, but the coverage offered by Generali was the most comprehensive.

The awarding of the contract was delayed after American Life Insurance Company (Alico) filed an objection to being excluded from the bidding. because the company lacked certain

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qualifications. The company's appeal was rejected.

They can now rest happy that they didn't have to go to the expense of purchasing celebratory champagne.

For Generali the bubbles have burst and the project has been quietly slipped under the garbage carpet. Bad news for tourists and private health facilities looking to get their share of the insurance pay outs.

"We have not implemented the insurance because the contract has not been endorsed by the Comptroller," said Tourism Authority Director **Solomon Shamah**.

The waste agency will receive \$1 million from other sources. The money will be used to purchase equipment and uniforms for the employees.

ANA, was created to solve the trash mess goverened by city mayor **Bosco Vallarino** and has a budget of \$45 million for next year, which will come primarily from the Ministry of Health.

When, and if the problem is solved in the capital, ANA will expand its activities to Colón and San Miguelito.