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INSIGHT: LESSONS TO LEARN FROM HURRICANE IRMA

16 HOUSE & HOME PAGES

The secret elite who owe BPL thousands

Minnis orders end to special treatment

By TANEKA THOMPSON
Tribune News Editor
tthompson@tribunemedia.net

BAHAMAS Power and Light has given politicians and government officials who were on a special "do not disconnect" list seven days to pay their "outrageous" bills or be disconnected.

BPL is owed "hundreds of thousands of dollars" by persons on this list, several of whom are said to be "active politicians", *The Tribune* was told. Government House also owes BPL a hefty sum.

The headline directive came from Prime Minister Dr Hubert Minnis, who was consulted by Minister of Works Desmond Bannister about the practice the latter found in place by the Christie administration, which allowed elite members of society to rack up electricity bills as high as \$50,000 and not be disconnected.

This while the average consumer can have his or her electricity shut off for an outstanding sum of as little as \$200.

The Tribune understands the list includes several Progressive Liberal Party officials, government officials and at least one Free National Movement member. BPL issued the letters to the delinquent customers on Thursday.

SEE PAGE FIVE

COURTYARD HOTEL FACES 'COLLAPSE'

By NEIL HARTNELL
Tribune Business Editor
nhartnel@tribunemedia.net

A DOWNTOWN Nassau resort "risks total failure and collapse", its owner fears, after a dispute with its management company saw it "frozen out" of the hotel's accounting and reservation systems.

Sunset Equities, owner of the 201-room Courtyard by Marriott on West Bay Street, is alleging that Donald J Urgo & Associates is "threatening to wreak havoc" on its plans to bring in a new management company, Trust Hospitality.

The owner and its principal, New York-based developer Ron Hershco, last week took the case to his home state by seeking an injunction and temporary restraining order to prevent Urgo from blocking access to the property's accounting and reservation systems.

FULL STORY - SEE BUSINESS



Arthur is five and lives at PMH. He's not sick, just alone, his only family the hospital staff around him. Shamefully, his story's not unique. In this Christian nation, how can this be allowed?

Shock report by Ava Turnquest. See pages 6 & 7.

DRIVER MOWS DOWN WOMAN AFTER ROW

By NICO SCAVELLA
Tribune Staff Reporter
nscavella@tribunemedia.net

POLICE are searching for a female suspect who intentionally struck a woman with a vehicle following an argument in the Blue Hill Road south area early Sunday morning.

According to police, shortly after 2.30am, two women were involved in an argument in the parking lot of a bank located on Blue Hill Road south that led to one of the women intentionally being struck by a vehicle. The victim was rushed to hospital where she is detained in serious condition. The suspect fled the scene. At last check, police were said to be following significant leads into the matter.

Meanwhile, police are searching for several male suspects responsible for

SEE PAGE EIGHT

FOX HILL TEENAGER SHOT DEAD

By NICO SCAVELLA
Tribune Staff Reporter
nscavella@tribunemedia.net

POLICE are investigating the circumstances surrounding the shooting death of a 17-year-old boy in the Fox Hill area on Saturday evening.

The shooting came less than a week after an 11th grade Government High School student was shot multiple times and killed while hanging out with persons in the back of his Fox Hill home.

SEE PAGE EIGHT

WE MAY HAVE A PROBLEM WITH MARIA

By NICO SCAVELLA
Tribune Staff Reporter
nscavella@tribunemedia.net

WEATHER forecasters yesterday warned of the potential dangers of Tropical Storm Maria, advising that in the "worst case scenario," the system could turn out to be a "major hurricane" expected to hit the southern Bahama islands by the weekend.

Dave Samuhel, senior meteorologist for Accuweather.com, said while Tropical Storm Maria isn't expected to hit the southern islands until Friday or so, its impact on islands in that region "could be severe".

SEE PAGE THREE

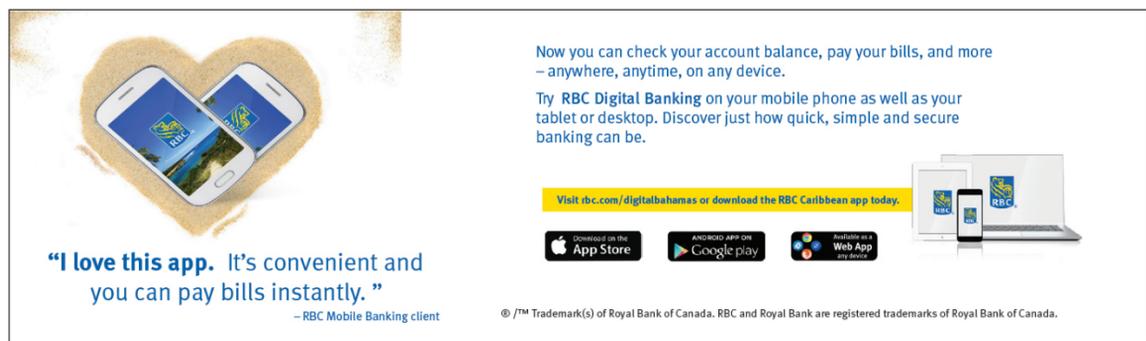


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We may have a problem with Maria

from page one

He said Accuweather currently forecasts Maria will strengthen into a category two or three storm, however, he said that prediction may very well change.

Nonetheless, Mr Samuhel said The Bahamas should not receive any impact from Tropical Storm Maria immediately, although noting that waves from Hurricane Jose - passing near the US East Coast - will continue to affect both the northern and southern Bahamas, with the north facing shores also to experience "some large surf" as a result.

He said the other system forecasters are tracking, Tropical Storm Lee, is "weakening" and will be a "non-factor".

According to an Accuweather.com report, Tropical Storm Maria continues to strengthen as it makes its way west-northwestward.

Conditions are conducive for the storm to strengthen

into a category two hurricane prior to reaching the Lesser Antilles on Monday night and Tuesday, the report said.

By midweek, the storm is expected to reach category three intensity, when it is expected that the storm would affect much of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands with severe rain and wind.

Based on the storm's projected path, Mr Samuhel said he expects that by Friday, Tropical Storm Maria will hit Inagua and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

"We're looking at Maria to cross the northern Caribbean Tuesday and Wednesday, and the impacts will really be determined by how much of those islands it goes over," Mr Samuhel told *The Tribune* on Sunday. "Say does it go right over Puerto Rico and Hispaniola, and if so it will be a much weaker hurricane as it passes by those islands, so that would be I guess good news for you.

"If it stays just north of those islands it will retain more intensity, but regardless of what happens there your impacts are probably not until Friday or next weekend when you'll start to see some tropical storm or hurricane conditions in the southern Bahamas.

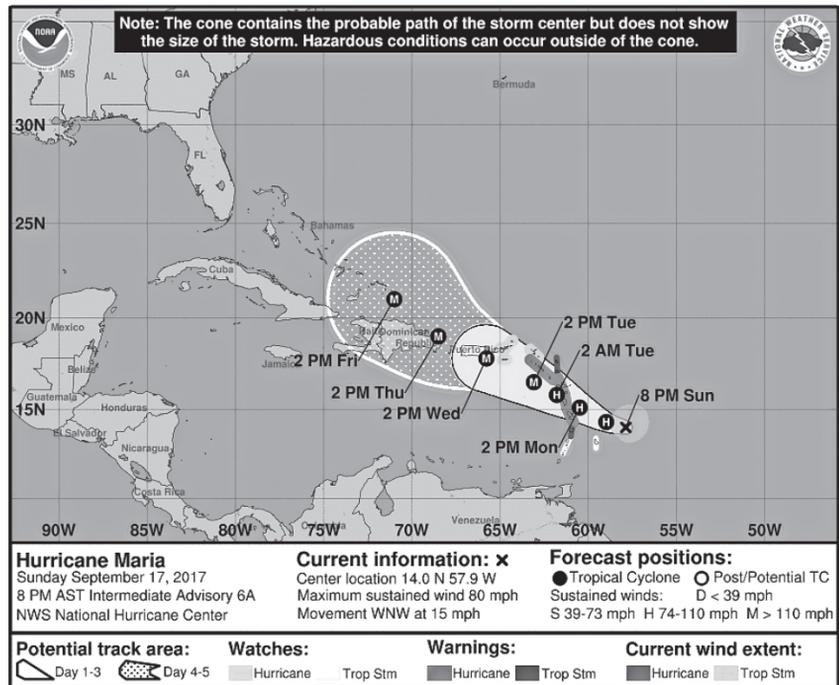
"It would first approach Great Inagua being the southernmost island there and then the Turks and Caicos," he added.

"That's where we could start to see impacts by Friday or so."

When asked by *The Tribune* about forecasted severity of the storm by the time it hits, he said: "It could be severe. The worst-case scenario is it's a major hurricane coming into the southern Bahamas Friday or next weekend."

"Our forecast right now is for a category two, but it's likely going to change as to what happens," he added.

Tropical Storm Maria is the third system to affect the region in recent



weeks, following the passages of Hurricanes Irma and Jose earlier this month.

Maria has prompted a hurricane warning for Guadeloupe and Dominica

and a hurricane watch for Antigua, Barbuda, St Kitts, Nevis, Montserrat, Saba, St Eustatius, St Maarten, St Martin, St Barthelemy and Anguilla

- many of which were devastated when Irma struck and killed 44 people in the Caribbean, according to CNN.

HURRICANES A SYMPTOM OF CLIMATE CHANGE

By RASHAD ROLLE
Tribune Staff Reporter
rolle@tribunemedia.net

EVENTS such as Hurricane Irma, which devastated Ragged Island as it moved throughout the region this month, have left no doubt humans are living through a period of climate change, CARICOM Secretary General Irwin LaRocque said Friday after landing here.

CARICOM officials visited Ragged Island on Saturday to observe the damage there from Hurricane Irma. They also held discussions with Prime Minister Dr Hubert Minnis about how CARICOM could be helpful to this country in the wake of the storm.

"One of the things that the heads of government have mandated us to do is organise for all of the affected states, a donors' conference that would help bring resources for the long haul to rebuild," Mr LaRocque told *The Tribune* on Friday.

"It's not going to be a short-term thing, but

long-haul rebuilding, building smarter and more resilient. Already we've begun discussing with at least one international partner that would help us to get this thing going. We have to plan for it so it's one of the discussions we'll have here with the prime minister.

"Climate change is here," he said. "These are traumatic events that leave no doubt in our minds that we are living through climate change."

Keith Mitchell, the prime minister of Grenada and current chairman of CARICOM, said the organisation's heads came here to show solidarity with this country, having visited other hard-hit island nations like Antigua and Barbuda; Turks and Caicos, Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands.

"In your hour of need we feel compelled and very happy to respond to what is taking place here and to offer all the support CARICOM could give in this difficult time," he said.

He reiterated a long-standing CARICOM



MINISTER of Foreign Affairs Darren Henfield (third right) hosted a small luncheon for CARICOM Chairman and Grenada Prime Minister Dr Keith Mitchell (third left) on Saturday, September 16 following the delegation's return from Ragged Island where they toured the devastation caused there by Hurricane Irma. Dr Mitchell was accompanied by a number of senior Caribbean Community officials, among them, CARICOM Secretary-General Ambassador Irwin LaRocque (far right). Bahamian Prime Minister Dr Hubert Minnis also attended the luncheon. Pictured from left: Minister of Labour Dion Foulkes; Foreign Affairs Acting Permanent Secretary Donna Lowe; Dr Mitchell; Mr Henfield; Director-General in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sharon Haylock and Ambassador LaRocque.

Photo: BIS

concern, that multilateral financial institutions and other development partners which use per capita income to determine a country's level of development and consequent need for grants and concessional financing are using a flawed formula, one that fails to provide a true picture of a country's economy.

"...What we have to do in every forum," he said, "is to

restate the position we have been taking: to assess countries because on so-called per capita, that formula is a farce because in one stroke of the pen, you can have so many disasters that can take years to recover from.

Especially in The Bahamas, even if you have one island spared, so much destruction can take place with the many islands you have."

TWO HELD OVER GUN FIND

TWO men, including a man on bail for murder and a nightclub owner, were taken into police custody following the seizure of two illegal handguns in two separate incidents over the weekend.

According to police, shortly after 1am on Sunday, officers assigned to the Selective Enforcement Team were conducting an operation at Apache Alley off Kemp Road, when a man was seen behaving suspiciously.

The man was approached and searched by police.

A firearm - a .40 Glock pistol - along with seven

rounds of ammunition were found in his possession.

The man, who police confirmed was being electronically monitored and on bail for murder, was taken into custody.

In the second incident, shortly after 2am on Sunday, a special police operation team, acting on information conducted a search of a local nightclub located on East Street South and Gibbs Corner, where they allegedly uncovered a Smith and Wesson pistol containing a magazine with 14 rounds of ammunition hidden in a toilet bowl. The owner of the club was taken into custody in relation to the discovery.

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IT	C	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	8:50	N/A
HOME AGAIN	T	1:10	3:35	N/A	6:15	8:40	10:45
THE HITMAN'S BODYGUARD	C	1:00	3:20	N/A	6:00	8:20	10:40
ANNABELLE CREATION	T	1:05	3:35	N/A	6:05	8:25	10:45
EMOJI MOVIE	A	1:15	3:35	N/A	6:15	N/A	N/A
THE DARK TOWER	T	1:15	3:45	N/A	6:15	N/A	N/A
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Baha Mar attempts to break bread again

AS IF to make amends for an embarrassing blunder, the much troubled Baha Mar resort prepared dinner Thursday evening for Family Islanders who had been flown to Nassau and housed at the New Providence Community Centre to escape the wrath of Hurricane Irma.

Baha Mar, facing its first hurricane, was criticised for closing its doors to the approaching hurricane and informing its guests that if they could not leave The Bahamas, they should seek alternative "local shelter".

Atlantis' president and managing director was the first to express alarm. Howard Karawan found it not only "unacceptable", but "alarming" that Baha Mar would close its doors to its "customers and the community" as a category 4 hurricane approached.

Sir Sol Kerzner — and especially his late son, "Butch" who had been accepted by Bahamians as one of their own — set the tone for Atlantis while under their ownership. Not only did they make their guests as comfortable as possible during a storm, but they opened the doors to welcome Bahamians who also needed shelter.

Mr Karawan, who is continuing in the Kerzner tradition, said that a major hotel on an island has a "moral obligation", not only to provide shelter for its guests, but to support the community. The only reason, said Mr Karawan, that a hotel should close in the face of a hurricane would be if the hotel were not "built up to standard." This comment harks back to the original problem that destroyed the Baha Mar dream.

We have heard many allegations about construction standards at the Baha Mar resort. We don't know what is true or false, and none of us will ever know the full story until the court-sealed documents — sealed at the request of the China Export-Import Bank— are opened.

Baha Mar, which was six months behind its December 2014 opening — a date on which the contractor, China Construction America (CCA), had given the all clear for opening — then went on to miss two more set dates in March and May 2015. Finally, having been publicly embarrassed by the much publicised three missed opening dates, developer Sarkis Izmirlian drew the line in the sand — Chapter 11 Bankruptcy — Delaware was the destination. In an earlier statement it was claimed that the work on the property by China Construction America (CCA) had not met expected "standards of excellence" and was therefore, not acceptable.

On June 29, 2015, Mr Izmirlian announced that the Cable Beach resort had voluntarily filed for Chapter 11 in the United States so that Baha Mar's construction could be completed and the property opened as soon as possible.

"I am committed to doing all I realistically can to move Baha Mar forward to be completed and opened successfully," Mr Izmirlian had said at the time. "I am confident that, once opened, Baha Mar will be a world-class destination resort that will attract guests from around the world and serve as a key economic sparkplug for the Bahamas."

This was a dispute between a developer and his contractor. Already the Izmirlian family had spent \$850m of their own money on the \$3 billion development.

If the Christie government had remained out of the argument, and let Chapter 11 go full term, Baha Mar would probably have been the shining star among resorts as was intended. And

The Bahamas' credit rating would not have been reduced to "junk" by Standard and Poor's just before Christmas. Nor would Moody's have had to give the new government a second chance by retaining the country's Baa3 rating, but downgrading it from a positive to a negative outlook for the future. Everyone had pinned their future on Baha Mar's success.

But, once government got into the fray, agreeing with EXIM bank and CCA that as most of the assets were in The Bahamas, whatever disputes there were should be decided in The Bahamas, failure loomed. And so in came the Christie government flying the affront to "sovereignty" flag, failing to understand — or not wanting to acknowledge — that The Bahamas courts had recognised international insolvencies, and if it were not for government's interference, Chapter 11 would have been the most efficient route for Baha Mar to take. Former prime minister Hubert Ingraham warned then prime minister Christie that to put Baha Mar into bankruptcy in The Bahamas was "fundamentally a bad decision". So strongly did Mr Ingraham feel on this matter that he wrote two letters trying to dissuade Mr Christie from making such a fatal mistake. "The government," said Mr Ingraham at the time, "should not have tilted in favour of the construction company (CCA). It made a mistake and now it is stuck with a very bad decision because it is the government that put Baha Mar in liquidation."

But the PLP government, almost taking the lead away from the courts, went full steam ahead at the side of EXIM bank.

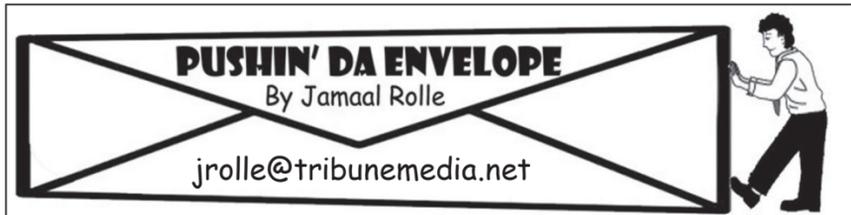
Beijing's plan seemed clear when it came time for the bank's receivers to sell off the resort. Sir Sol Kerzner, who was one of those interested in bidding on the property complained — as did others — that the China EXIM bank would not give him the information needed to make a proper bid. It was obvious that the EXIM bank with its contractor CCA had plotted its own course from that day in 2015 when CCA failed to deliver a completed Baha Mar for the opening date that it had itself set.

They refused to let Mr Izmirlian bid on his own development. In a letter to the bank, Mr Izmirlian pointed out that his company had been advised that all offers to purchase the resort had to go through the receivers and that was why the Izmirlian offer would not be considered, yet the Baha Mar purchaser — selected and approved by EXIM — had been "found outside the receivers' process".

It is now the door to this company that the Beijing group has approved that the Minnis government has to open gingerly and have all its investigative wits about them.

The selected group is a large and very successful Hong Kong company. It is like an octopus with arms that reach into many ventures. But the one that we suggest our government has to pay special attention to is the long arm that stretches into the entertainment and casino world and has rubbed shoulders with the Triad. National Security Minister Marvin Dames has enough problems with his own home grown gangs without adding to his burdens.

The Bahamas has now been given a second chance to secure its own interests. There will be no more "tilting" in favour of EXIM and CCA, but rather in favour of these islands called The Bahamas.



STORM EVACUEES UNWILLING TO RETURN



Clarifying capital markets

EDITOR, The Tribune.

LETTERS

letters@tribunemedia.net

THE article in the Tribune Business Section of last Friday, September 15, about BISX may have given the impression that I was critical of its management for not making BISX more successful by persuading more companies to list.

That is a distortion of what I said. My principal point was the small number of listed companies, and the meager volume of trading of their shares, was due to many factors far beyond the control of CEO Keith Davies and the rest of his executive team. They have worked hard to bring BISX as far as it has come, and have been notably successful in listing many mutual funds and other collective investment schemes for foreign securities.

But the fact remains that with a total of only

20 ordinary shares listed, many of which rarely trade, BISX is a negligible factor in our economy and is shunned by many investors as well as by companies that might consider "going public".

The principal reason for this is our overly restrictive exchange control rules on capital markets transactions, which cannot be changed by BISX but only by our Central Bank and Ministry of Finance. These rules inhibit the inward flow of off-shore capital held by both Bahamians and foreigners, and make it difficult or expensive for Bahamians to move any local capital to reputable foreign stock exchanges.

As I said, our citizens can freely sink their savings into

web-shop numbers games, but cannot invest in IBM, Walmart, or Apple.

The Central Bank appears obsessed with the fear that relaxing capital controls will immediately bring devaluation of the Bahamian dollar.

This fear has often been debunked in Tribune columns by hard-headed Jamaican businessman John Issa, who has a major stake in The Bahamas through ownership of Superclubs Breezes and points out the energy of securities trading on the Jamaica Stock Exchange, free of exchange control.

I do hope my friends at BISX will continue their persuasive efforts with the Central Bank, which is where any decision to relax the rules will lie.

RICHARD COULSON
 Nassau,
 September 17, 2017.

Foolish ban on older vehicles

EDITOR, The Tribune.

GOOD morning Bahamas. I am a fellow Bahamian and small time contractor sitting right now in my truck on the dump site beginning to write this letter. I came out about an hour earlier and just completed clearing trash off my trailer by hand.

While clearing the trailer, I have watched as others came with their small dump truck and just dumped off their trash and left while

I am still pulling with my hands.

My problem is that I need to buy a small dump truck to make my life and work a little more easier. But this foolish policy of banning all vehicles over ten years old, implemented by the last PM, that we helped kick to the ground in the May election, is hurting me and many others that want to purchase a truck that we can afford.

I am still to this day wondering what is the rhyme or reason for such a decision.

Did he take on, all by himself, the problem of solving "global warming" by banning said vehicles?

To my new and improved PM, sir, we beg you to look at this asinine policy implemented by that dinosaur of a former PM and repeal this law. I need to purchase a dump truck that I can afford without becoming a slave to some foreign bank elitist.

FRANCEO SMITH
 Nassau,
 September 15, 2017

The IMF and taxation

EDITOR, The Tribune.

THE IMF is bemoaning the fact that commercial banks in The Bahamas are reluctant to lend, they no doubt are concerned about increasing their significant number of nonperforming loans, the Bank of Bahamas recently requiring additional recapitalisation at the expense of the tax payers for that very reason being a typical case in point.

Also, while acknowledging that the Bahamian economy has been stagnant since 2012 the IMF, rather than suggesting that the government improve our economic outlook by putting their own house in order by enacting Fiscal Reform Legislation and a cap on government spending, is encouraging them to further fiscal folly by recommending they

implement an income tax on Bahamians already burdened by a regressive tax regime. Death by a thousand cuts!

To paraphrase Dr. Laurence J Peter, "The Bahamas is a land of taxation that was founded to avoid taxation."

IAN MABON
 Nassau,
 September 15, 2017.

The secret elite who owe BPL thousands

from page one

They will have the option to arrange a payment plan if they cannot pay in full.

While the government is adamant about collecting the unpaid utility bills from politically connected individuals, *The Tribune* understands Dr Minnis is also focused on going after companies with delinquent National Insurance Board (NIB) contributions and those who owe money to the Public Treasury.

The Tribune understands the prime minister, who previously told Parliament his own electricity was once cut off for non-payment, does not want to know who is on the "do not

disconnect" list, but is resolute no one is above the law and those who cannot pay their bills should have their electricity shut off.

When contacted for comment, Mr Bannister told *The Tribune*: "BPL used to have a list and they used to put all the politicians and some other (well connected) people on it. The prime minister has said from the outset that we are not going to operate like that.

"As soon as I was able to learn of the existence of this list, I contacted him and he agreed there was to be no list and everyone was to pay their way."

Mr Bannister said he has not seen the names on this special list, but told *The Tribune* he knows

some of the sums owed are "outrageous".

I don't know how someone could accumulate \$30,000, \$50,000 and not be concerned about paying BPL," he added.

"They (officials at BPL) were instructed to send those letters out and we fully expect there will be nobody who will be exempt. (. . . Except) the GG, that's the only person who should not be cut off, at Government House.

"I know Government House will pay; the message has to be that all of us are subject to the law and all of us must pay."

When asked again who was on this list, Mr Bannister said: "I haven't looked at the bills; I have not looked at the names. I don't want

to know the names. It's not a political witch hunt and I'm not interested in who it is, just interested that BPL is going to be able to operate appropriately.

"When I was a minister (from 2007-2012) they cut me off twice - once I was in France on government business and they cut me off. Former Prime Minister (Hubert) Ingraham didn't tolerate that nonsense. We have to let everyone know this is a country of law and order and we don't operate that way."

He added: "Since the election, I've had my headquarters turned off, my community centre in Carmichael has been turned off. It's rented and I didn't get the bill in time from my landlord and I went and paid it."

When contacted by *The Tribune*, BPL Chairwoman Darnell Osborne could not say how many delinquent people are on this list or how much is exactly owed by those in this category.

"As a board, in terms of policy, and in terms of trying to improve the cash flow of the corporation, we would like to have all customers treated the same," she said.

"Whatever the policy has been in the corporation in terms of management and what they do for regular customers in terms of receivables, in terms of if you fall on hard times, you come in and pay a percentage, whatever policy they have for regular customers, they have been instructed

to deal with everyone in that manner.

"It's just that there is no special treatment for anyone going forward," Ms Osborne added.

In December 2016, Department of Statistics officials revealed that as many as 12,000 people had their power disconnected due to nonpayment.

Cyrianna Winters, a statistician, said at the time: "Approximately 10 per cent of households where the main source of lighting was electricity had their power disconnected due to non-payment of their bills."

Ms Winters said that "10 per cent" translates to about 12,000 people.

The survey was conducted between October 24 and 30 of last year.

FORMER ENVIRONMENT MINISTER DENIES SOLICITING \$120,000 IN BRIBES



FORMER Environment Minister Kenred Dorsett is pictured leaving the Supreme Court last Friday.

Photo: Shawn Hanna/Tribune Staff

FORMER Environment Minister Kenred Dorsett was formally arraigned before a Supreme Court judge on Friday charged with using his former ministerial position to extort and solicit \$120,000 in bribes from Jonathan Ash.

Dorsett stood before Justice Bernard Turner faced with the nine criminal charges he was initially arraigned for in July: a single count of misconduct in public office and four counts each of extortion and bribery. The allegations concern the purported exchange of funds in connection with work done by a heavy equipment operator to move debris from the New Providence Landfill following a massive fire at the site in March.

It is alleged Dorsett, while a public official between March 1 and May 9 of this year, demanded and obtained two payments of \$10,000 and two payments of \$50,000 from Mr Ash knowing he was not lawfully authorised to make the demand. It is also alleged he, in his previous capacity between the same period at the landfill, "without lawful authority or reasonable excuse," solicited the amounts from Mr Ash "on your account of abstaining from performance or exercise of your asserted power as a minister of environment 'to stop' Jonathan Ash from working at the said sanitary landfill."

It was finally alleged Dorsett willfully misconducted

himself as a public officer without lawful authority.

He pleaded not guilty to all of the charges read to him on Friday.

Before the adjournment, Damian Gomez, QC, Dorsett's attorney, submitted that the defence is unable to produce an effective notice of alibi because there is no date between March 1 and May 9 when the acts were alleged to have occurred. That issue had previously been raised by Wayne Munroe, QC, on

September 1, when Dorsett had appeared in the Magistrate's Court before Magistrate Samuel McKinney for a status hearing.

At the time, Mr Munroe argued the alleged acts occurred between March 1 and May 9, or a total of 70 days, but said the details provided were not specific to a day, time, or location. He further pointed out at the time that the charges only indicate that the alleged acts occurred on the island of New Providence.

Following that argument, Magistrate McKinney explained that Dorsett had 21 days in which to present an alibi or a witness. After hearing similar submissions from Mr Gomez during Friday's proceedings, Justice Turner transferred the matter to Justice Carlita Bethel's court and adjourned the matter to October 13 for trial. Justice Bethel, as trial judge, will thus consider the accused's submissions concerning the notice of alibi.

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Patients stuck in hospital

By AVA TURNQUEST
Tribune Chief Reporter
aturnquest@tribunemedia.net

THOUSANDS of dollars spent daily at Princess Margaret Hospital to lodge homeless patients exposes an historic gap in the country's ability to adequately care for its citizens in the face of rising demands for public health care, *The Tribune* has learned.

With 28 boarders presently costing the public hospital more than \$15,000 a day, officials are calling for a national discussion and asking the public to take a long hard look at the current roles of the institution and the community.

Several current boarders have been at the hospital for as long as five years; however nursing staff provided several accounts of persons that were interned as infants and left as teenagers.

It is a phenomenon that also calls into question the efficacy of state-run social services, which work closely with the hospital to manage cases but are largely unsuccessful.

"This topic is a controversial topic," Principal Nursing Officer Valerie Miller told *The Tribune* last week.

"It's not one that the public is keen on hearing because it casts some aspersions on them to some extent, but PMH is really plagued by what we deem boarders. Boarders in our setting are those persons who would have come in to seek medical attention, and at the completion of their treatment the physician deemed it was fit for them to return home.

"These persons would not have been collected and discharged and hence they remain with us and we refer to them as boarders. Many of them are not on treatment and some of them are like many persons who take tablets at home every day so just taking medication is no indication to be in hospital. We have borders ranging from one-month-old to 84 years."

She added: "This would be something that's in the society and the society has changed and some persons truly have nowhere to go. We always do our assessment, a complete physical assessment and history taken on the patient, and sometimes you have your antennas going up at

the very beginning that this is a potential problem.

"In a case like that we involve the social workers right away who can do their assessment, do a home assessment, and sometimes they realise that this is someone who we have to find an arrangement for. There are only so many places out there so they don't have a high percentage of success rate for getting our patients out."

Nurse Miller spoke to *The Tribune* during its investigation into reports that there were several young children who were living at the hospital indefinitely. Presently there are four children: two infants, a five-year-old, and an 11-year-old.

Some 15 years ago, the hospital utilised a school bus to take school-aged boarders to and from school; nowadays, Nurse Miller said there is a trained teacher onsite to ensure that children are able to keep up with curriculum while receiving long-term treatment.

However, she told *The Tribune* that there has been no change in how boarders are managed by the state since then.

"It's the same challenges (for kids)," she said. "It's harder. It took us years to get them (teenagers) out and they were here with us since they were babies. There are several things that contribute to that, while we have our challenges, I'm sure our sister institution has their challenges as well. And there are only so many persons they can accommodate in the ward (at Sandilands Rehabilitation Centre) designated for those type patients. But I can't say it's easier getting them out."

While cases vary, a considerable number of boarder children have mental disabilities or require specialised medical care. Special needs children are admitted to SRC's Robert Smith Ward.

Cost factor

A cost analysis undertaken by the hospital estimated that having two boarders in the Paediatric Ward cost the institution \$1,108 per day; while a sample of 23 adult boarders cost the hospital \$15,000 per day, Nurse Miller said.

The remaining boarders consist of 18 men, and six women, three of whom are non-nationals.



WITH 28 boarders presently costing the public hospital more than \$15,000 a day, officials are calling for a national discussion and asking the public to take a long hard look at the current roles of the institution and the community. A Tribune investigation into reports that there were several young children who were living at the hospital indefinitely uncovered the incidence of four child boarders: two infants, a five-year-old, and an 11-year-old.

Photos: Shawn Hanna/Tribune Staff

"Accommodating that number of persons who really don't need to be in an acute setting," Nurse Miller said, "not only is it dangerous, it compromises what you can do for someone who really needs acute care."

"It's very costly to have persons using an acute care bed in hospital. What it does, it leads to overcrowding, it's very expensive because you now aren't just having them in a bed but you have trained staff manage them whose

services and skill set could be used on more acute patients. And there is, of course, lodging and utilities and feeding and clothing, everything."

In June, Health Minister Dr Duane Sands told parliamentarians that the country had the highest incidence of diabetes in the world. With statistics depicting 79.2 per cent of the population diagnosed as obese or overweight, the steady rise in noncommunicable diseases has been an impossible phenomenon

to ignore for public health care providers.

Notwithstanding sickness, Dr Sands further reported that the Accident and Emergency (A & E) Department at PMH managed 1,272 assaults, 246 stabbings and 216 gunshot wounds last year.

On Thursday, Nurse Miller surmised that the rising demand for state health services was bolstered by socioeconomic challenges.

"I think as a country, as a nation," she said, "there is

an increase in noncommunicable diseases, diabetes, hypertension, things like that are prevalent in our society and we see the effects of that.

"I also think there is an increase because as you speak to individuals they share that they would have lost insurances, lost jobs, so they would have normally tapped into the private sector but now they're utilising hospital services as a public patient. It's a combination of factors why the

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Funeral Service

Louise Claudia McSweeney, 88



of Coral Harbour, who died at the Princess Margaret Hospital, Shirley Street, Nassau, on Thursday, 7th September 2017, will be held at Christ Church Cathedral, George Street, Nassau, on Friday, 22nd September 2017 at 3:00 p.m.

The Very Reverend Patrick L. Adderley, Dean of Nassau and Father Colin Humes, Priest Vicar, will officiate and interment will follow in St. Anne's Cemetery, Fox Hill, Nassau.

Predeceased by her brothers, Bobby, John Jerome and Frederick McSweeney and sister-in-law, Rosemary McSweeney.

Her memories will forever live in the hearts of her brother, Reverend Irwin McSweeney; sisters-in-law, Marleen and Linda McSweeney; nephews, Marcel, Shawn and John McSweeney; nieces, Marcia, Maryann and Jennifer McSweeney; niece-in-law, Martina McSweeney; nephew-in-law, Greg Yancey; many grand nephews, grand nieces, cousins, other relatives and friends, caregivers, Nurse Marsha McQueen and the family at Coastline Community Care Nursing Home.

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ONE of the youngsters in hospital.

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ARTHUR, THE BOY LIVING ON THE PAEDIATRIC WARD

By **NA TURQUEST**
Feature Chief Reporter
 aturnquest@tribunemedia.net

FOR five-year-old Arthur, a perfect day consists of touring the hospital with his favourite nurse, eating lots of pizza and watching Barney shows.

Although his circumstances are far from typical, the precocious charmer is full of energy on Thursday afternoon, and eager to show *The Tribune* the tiny corner of the Paediatric Ward at Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH) he calls home.

“Arthur is just infectious, he really is,” said a ward nurse, “he is a sweetheart.”

“Once he gets started, he steals the show. There is never a dull moment with him,” she continued.

“He has so much energy, he’s always breaking toys or getting into mischief but he’s so lovable. When we do rounds sometimes he’ll come, or he’ll go by the gift shop. We went to the park yesterday.”

The Tribune has changed Arthur’s name to protect his identity.

“Are you my daddy?” he coyly asks *Tribune* photographer Shawn Hanna during this newspaper’s visit to the hospital. His tone and cheeky grin elicited nervous chuckles from all within earshot; however, his eyes betrayed a glimmer of wisdom and gave an inkling of perspective into how the rambunctious little boy braved his circumstances.

His question was a sorely needed icebreaker to a considerably bleak narrative.

Arthur is one of four child boarders currently being housed at PMH, a phenomenon that highlights shortfalls in the country’s ability to meet social demands. Two of them, infant girls, are in the Neonatal Ward.

Although he is not sick, he has lived on the ward for two years watching sick kids and their visiting families come and go. His case is one of dozens of children that have called the institution home due to their



A NUMBER of young children are living at the hospital indefinitely, with nowhere to go if the hospital were to release them.

Photos: **Shawn Hanna/Tribune Staff**

complex medical histories, some unable to leave until they are teenagers and others as adults.

He spends the majority of his time inside the hospital, and in the ward; however, sometimes he is treated to an outing, like a visit to the park last week after he got a vaccination.

Arthur’s “room” consists of a standard hospital crib; however his space is at the rear of the ward with a few more feet of perimeter space than the other seven cribs.

He has two small mobile dressers for his toys, books and clothes.

Last month for his birthday, he had a clown and Big Bird entertainer, with his favourite pepperoni pizza and cupcakes.

A cost analysis undertaken by the hospital estimated that having two boarders in the Paediatric

Ward cost the institution \$1,108 per day.

However, nursing staff at the Princess Margaret Hospital told *The Tribune* the emotional toll of caring for child boarders far exceeds the soaring costs shouldered by the facility.

Eleven-year-old Jacob’s condition, another child boarder whose name has been changed, offers a stark contrast to Arthur’s effervescent personality.

Jacob came to the hospital in 2014 as a victim of abuse, and is a candidate for the Robert Smith Ward at Sandilands Rehabilitation Centre (SRC). He is nonverbal with severe developmental delays, suffers from seizures, and his current medication makes him shake constantly.

“Some nurses, they just get attached,” said Nursing Officer Eulogia Brown, as she spoke to caring for Jacob.

“He has (become more sociable), but before he was very withdrawn. When he came, he said nothing and he’s just started verbalising a bit trying to say ‘mama,’ and when he gets excited he’ll go ‘wooo, wooo.’ It’s a real improvement because when he first came he was just there, he didn’t try to move or say anything.”

But not all boarders arrive as sick three-year-olds, like Arthur, or abused eight-year-olds like Jacob; for some, the hospital is their first home.

“It really is heart wrenching,” said senior nurse Judy Johnson, “because we really get attached to them. Some of them come to us as newborns with their naval cord just cut, so we name them, we see that they’re christened, we buy clothes for them, even though the hospital does it, we also do our personal spending.”

Nurse Johnson continued: “So when they have to go, especially to a (children’s) home and not to a family, it really breaks our hearts. I just get tired of doing this, one baby just went to a home and we can’t even visit them to continue with that bonding even though they don’t know anyone else but us.”

Nurse Johnson has worked at the hospital, particularly its Neonatal Ward, for 15 years. Wiping tears from her face as she tended to a three-month-old boarder, she told *The Tribune* it never gets easier with some goodbyes harder than others.

“Angel, we named her,” Nurse Johnson said, remembering a child who has since left the hospital.

“I’ll never forget the day she came, that was the coldest February in 2014 or 2015. It was so cold, a Tuesday, and the policemen

brought her in. The mom delivered her on the step and she came in with her naval cord and the elastic band on it.”

She continued: “When they leave you don’t even know what home they gone to, how they’re doing, nothing. They say we have to get permission to visit, but so far, we haven’t been successful. Sometimes I wonder if they remember us.”

Nurse Johnson told *The Tribune* that there were twin boarders at one point, who were admitted into a home but separated by adoption.

“One of them is a manager at Atlantis now, he remembers us because they were big when they left but he said he doesn’t know where his brother is, they got separated in the home.

“It hurts,” she said, “it just hurts.”

numbers are rising,” she said.

“When they come, one of the things we can do is do the full assessment and make the necessary referrals. You try to be proactive and don’t wait until the persons is discharged and

then you find out there is nowhere to go.”

In July, a series of weekend challenges forced some A&E patients at the Princess Margaret Hospital to wait for more than 24 hours to receive treatment or be relocated to outpatient

clinics due to malfunctioning equipment and severe overcrowding.

Dr Sands told *The Tribune* at that time, “There was just no room.”

“Just imagine 28 beds are taken that could be used,” Nurse Miller continued.

“Sometimes we have as many as 30 patients in the A&E awaiting admission but there are no beds. What it forces us to do is use trolleys which is not conducive for acutely ill patients and in extreme cases we also have to

open additional wards which we refer to as virtual wards, areas that were decanted as part of our redevelopment.”

One such area was the space formerly used for the hospital’s General Practice Clinic, which is now located

offsite. Virtual wards are usually staffed on an overtime basis, she said, as nurses currently on shift are attached to the established wards.

“When we open these various wards, they are acute care type patients with no acute care beds available so we still need to put that particular skill set in that environment on an overtime basis, and overtime adds up.

“It’s also difficult because overtime is optional so not every time you say you need a nurse that nurses are available so it can become challenging sometimes and it’s a significant cost.”

In August, Dr Sands put the cost of boarders - which he estimated to be around 30 persons - at more than \$7m a year. He suggested that there should be a long-term or chronic care facility to accommodate these persons, telling *The Tribune* that the government was looking into partnering with a long-term facility to provide care for patients who cannot go to a regular nursing home due to physical and mental challenges.

“It’s a sensitive thing,” Nurse Miller said.

“I’m not in the position to say who can take and who can’t take, but suffice to say we do have borders who have visitors. So clearly they are not alone, but they’re here so that suggests something. I’m not here to judge why because persons have their own stories and we’re not here to say why or who should or who can, that’s not for us to do.

“Personally, I do feel that as a country perhaps there needs to be some alternative plan. Some of these persons have old age pension, every little bit counts and helps,” she added.



NURSE Judy Johnson caring for one of the infants in the paediatric unit.

Warrant issued for arrest of Chrissy Love

A BENCH warrant was issued for the arrest of media personality Christina "Chrissy Love" Thompson when she failed to appear before a Supreme Court judge on Friday, accused of making contemptuous remarks about the legal proceedings against former Cabinet minister Shane Gibson, who had been charged with impropriety.

However, Justice Cheryl Grant-Thompson ordered that the bench warrant be suspended until 9.30am on Wednesday, September 20. Should Ms Thompson not appear in court at that time, the warrant will be executed.

However, court documents seen by The Tribune show how Thompson has, last Wednesday, filed a constitutional motion against the originating summons and consequent proceedings.

In that motion, dated September 13, Thompson declares that the constitutional rights given to her under Articles 17, 19, 20, 23 and/or 28 of the Bahamas Constitution have been infringed upon.

She is also requesting an order that the proceedings originating from "verbal summons" returnable on August 31, as well as the summons bearing the date of August 31 be deemed a nullity, and that the proceedings commenced by the summons be stayed pending the determination of the constitutional motion.

Thompson is also seeking vindictory damages, damages, costs, and such further



CHRISSEY LOVE

and/or any other damages the court deems as just.

According to the court documents, the grounds of the constitutional motion – nine in total – include, but are not limited to, that the purported proceedings are an abuse of the court process; the summons failed to comply with the stipulations of Section 59 of the Criminal Procedure Code; the summons presumes guilt on the part of the applicant; and that the summons failed to give the applicant a reasonable period of notice in which to defend herself.

Meanwhile, Justice Grant-Thompson said her ruling on outspoken political activist Omar Archer Sr's matter will also take place on Wednesday to allow her to re-read the transcript of the matter as well as Archer's formal apology to the court.

Both Thompson and Archer were summoned to appear before Justice Grant-Thompson on Friday

primarily in connection with statements the two would have allegedly made on their respective social media platforms primarily surrounding, but not limited to, Gibson's legal proceedings which are currently before the Supreme Court.

At the start of Friday's proceedings, Murrio Ducille, Thompson's attorney, said his client had pre-arranged plans to take her son to school, and was thus out of the jurisdiction. Mr Ducille said as he understood it, Thompson's summons came after she had left the country.

However, Police Assistant Superintendent Michael Johnson, attached to the Central Detective Unit (CDU), subsequently took the witness stand and said shortly after 1pm on September 11, he and two other officers went to Dunkin Donuts on East Street South where they encountered Thompson.

ASP Johnson said he ultimately presented her with the summons by pushing it near to her hand, but Thompson told him that she didn't want it and for him to contact her attorney.

The officer said he subsequently left the area, but noticed a video Ms Thompson that was posted online sometime after he would have delivered the summons.

In view of ASP Johnson's testimony, the judge said she was satisfied that Thompson was in fact informed to appear before the Supreme Court, but didn't. She said while she has some sympathy for Thompson's absence based on the reasons Mr Ducille gave, those reasons ought not fly in the face of the court issuing a summons to appear.

This led to the issuance of the arrest warrant, which will be executed only if Thompson fails to appear before court on Wednesday.

Apology

Subsequent to that decision by Justice Grant-Thompson, Archer's lead attorney, Fred Smith, QC asked the judge, who had turned her attention to his client, not to read aloud the specifics concerning what Archer allegedly said that led to him being faced with contempt of court.

Mr Smith submitted that as there were members of the press present at Friday's proceedings, reading the facts aloud would only revisit the matter publicly, and would not serve to benefit the hearing in any way.

Thus, instead of reading them all aloud, the judge asked Archer if he had seen and consequently agreed with what was contained in the 10 particulars of contempt with which he was faced, which he accepted as read.

Archer then offered an apology to Justice Grant-Thompson for his remarks, stating that while persons have a constitutional right to freedom of speech and freedom of expression, such freedoms should be exercised in a respectful manner.

Mr Smith, in offering a subsequent plea of mitigation for Archer, stated that when Archer first approached him for legal advice on the matter, one of the first things Archer stated was his intention to apologise.

Mr Smith further stated that after a conversation between the two, Archer came to realise just how important and significant the judiciary is to a small country such as The Bahamas.

Mr Smith also drew the court's attention to a voice clip of Archer, obtained by *The Tribune*, in which he publicly apologised for the contentious remarks he made against the judiciary.

According to Mr Smith, Archer made the apology prior to appearing in court on Friday.

"As Bahamian citizens, our right to freedom of speech, expression, choice, freedom of gathering and freedom of movement is protected under the constitution of The Bahamas,"

Archer said in the voice clip. "However, that gives us no right as citizens to be disrespectful in regards to our judiciary.

"And the more responsible thing to do when you're in a situation and you have been very disrespectful to the judiciary is to apologise, because you do not want to put the judiciary in disrepute.

"By that I mean you don't want other persons to come behind you and be disrespectful also," he continued. "My right is protected by the supreme law of the land, and that being the Constitution. However, I must be responsible in exercising my right."

He added: "Freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of choice and movement and that of gathering, yes it is protected under the Constitution of The Bahamas, but one must be responsible. Responsible in carrying out his or her actions, and I intend to do the responsible thing today, and to publicly apologise and move on."

After hearing Archer's apology and Mr Smith's submissions, Justice Grant-Thompson said she is now faced with deciding whether to move to convict Archer for his actions and sentence him accordingly.

However, she said she wished to re-read the transcript of the matter as well as Archer's submissions to the court before she makes her ruling.

She adjourned the matter to Wednesday, at which time Archer will learn his fate.

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Key Accountabilities for this role:

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Please note: Only candidates short-listed will be contacted.



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FOX HILL TEENAGER SHOT DEAD

from page one

Saturday's murder takes the country's murder count to 102 for the year.

According to reports, shortly after 6pm on the day in question, the teen was walking on Johnson Road, Fox Hill, with another male, when two males in a grey coloured vehicle approached and shot at them before speeding off.

The victim was rushed to hospital in critical condition where he later died. The other male was unharmed, however.

Former Fox Hill MP Fred Mitchell, in a video following both Saturday's and last Tuesday's murders, urged the Minnis administration, particularly National Security Minister Marvin Dames to "step up to the plate" and "put the resources in Fox Hill to get this problem resolved".

Mr Mitchell, speaking live from the Fox Hill Park in a video circulated on social media, further lamented how his letters to both Mr Dames and commissioner of police to have additional resources placed in Fox Hill to fight "this crime epidemic and the gunshots that are being fired every night and people having to crouch in their homes" have not been answered to date.

"No response from the commissioner of police, no response more importantly from the minister of national security who campaigned, beating up his gums saying that oh yeah, they had the solution to all of this, and the situation has gotten worse," Mr Mitchell said.

"...But back to the fact that you have now a 17-year-old got killed, that's

three people in three weeks in Fox Hill, plus two shot, plus gunshots every night," Mr Mitchell said. "That's what's going on here, and the minister of national security is silent, has nothing to say.

"He needs to step up to the plate, and the government needs to put the resources in Fox Hill to get this problem resolved. Enough is enough."

On Tuesday last week, police said they received reports gunshots were heard in the Brice Street area off Fox Hill Road around 11.30pm. When officers arrived on the scene, they found the lifeless body of a boy lying on the ground with multiple gunshot wounds.

Police have not official identified the victim but *The Tribune* understands he is 16-year-old Jeffery Wright of Brice Street.

Mr Mitchell said: "You know, a kid goes to Doris Johnson, he goes to the Church of God, Bernard Road, all of those communities, including the grandmother Renae Neely in this community and Ms Braynen who is the grandmother of the other boy, the 16-year-old who was killed. All of these people are suffering because of this stuff happening, and we must do something about it.

"And don't tell me that I was the MP and 'blah, blah, blah.' That's got nothing to do with what is happening now. We need to put resources to do something now. When I was MP, I did what was necessary to tap these issues down. I'm saying bring the resources FNM government. Do something about it."

The Fox Hill community has long been plagued with violence.

In 2013, when Mr Mitchell was the area MP,

Claudzino Davis, Shaquille Demeritte, Eric Morrison and Shanique Sands were shot and killed as they assembled on the basketball court in Fox Hill, awaiting the results of the 2013 Boxing Day Junkanoo parade. Several others were injured at the time.

Meantime last month, after weeks of reported violence in the area, officers conducted a walk-about in the community, gathering information and giving residents safety tips.

At the time, Senior Assistant Commissioner of Police Stephen Dean said the walk-about was "the first of many" officers plan to conduct in the area, known to police as a crime hotspot.

Additionally, Chief Superintendent of Police Maxine Rolle, officer-in-charge of the Eastern Division, said at the time she plans to canvass the area "at least twice a month."

That same month, Fox Hill MP Shonel Ferguson expressed concern about the recent wave of gun-related violence in her constituency, pledging to "eradicate" the "stigma" of Fox Hill being labelled a crime hotbed by Bahamian society.

At the time, Ms Ferguson said her constituents are "enraged" over the stigma of violence attached to the area, saying much of what has happened in Fox Hill has also occurred in other areas in New Providence. She thus pledged to eliminate the negative connotations associated with the community by "pushing the positive things" about the area.

Anyone with information on these incidents is asked to call police at 919, 502-9991 or the Crime Stoppers hotline at 328-TIPS.

DRIVER MOWS DOWN WOMAN AFTER ROW

from page one

two armed robberies that occurred over the weekend.

In the first incident, shortly after 10pm on Saturday, a man was in his Honda Civic car on Dawson Street,

when three men in a grey Ford Explorer approached and robbed him of his cell phone, cash, and vehicle before speeding off.

Then shortly after 2am on Sunday, a woman had just pulled up to her home in Kennedy Subdivision

in her silver coloured Nissan Fuga, licence plate AF3436, when three men in a red Honda Fit armed with a handgun robbed her of her vehicle before speeding off.

Investigations continue into all three incidents.

A chance to change

YOUR SAY
By FRED SMITH QC

THE 2017 general election has gifted us with a tremendous opportunity to strengthen and entrench crucial democratic principles in the political, social and economic life of The Bahamas.

Principles such as transparency, accountability, individual rights and respect for the rule of law are cornerstones of good governance and key to improving the quality of life for everyone who calls this country home.

Our democracy took a battering under the last Progressive Liberal Party (PLP), which quickly degenerated into little more than a petty kleptocracy tainted by corruption, crony capitalism, gross human rights violations and increasingly anti-democratic tendencies.

All the blame for this disaster should be laid at the feet of Perry Christie and his comrades, however.

The truth is the failure of successive governments, both PLP and FNM, to implement legislative safeguards ensuring good governance and protecting against corruption and political manipulation paved the way for the collective nightmare that was the Christie Administration.

Going forward, if we want to prevent a return to the dark days of 2012–2017, The Bahamas must make concrete legislative changes to entrench democratic principles and remove, to the greatest extent possible, all opportunities for elected officials to engage in corruption, malfeasance and oppression of the populace.

If this FNM government is to remain true to its mantra, 'It's The People's Time,' a number of steps must be taken to improve

the state of democracy in The Bahamas.

Freedom of Information

The government should overhaul the existing Act to:

- Ensure the Information Commissioner is chosen by a truly independent selection committee.
- Expand the definition of "Public Authorities" subject to the Act to include ALL bodies owned, controlled or substantially financed by the government.

Minimise time limits for the release of documents. Currently it takes 30 years for information to be declassified.

Remove the provision giving veto rights to a Cabinet Minister. All decisions should be made by the Information Commissioner alone.

Strengthen the judiciary

The FNM has already taken an important step in this regard, announcing the creation of an Independent Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP).

The government should also:

- Create a mechanism for prosecuting officials who fail to comply with court rulings.
- Create a mechanism to prosecute anyone who may seek to intimidate, coerce, hinder or unduly influence a judge.

End executive control over the tenure of judges.

Grant non-citizen judges and their families permanent immigration status.

Allow the judiciary to manage its own affairs and budget.

Whistleblower Act

The existing FOIA makes only cursory mention of protection for civil servants



THE CABINET of The Bahamas.

Photo: Yontalay Bowe

who uncover and expose cases of official neglect or malfeasance.

The government should go further with a Whistleblower Act that is both modern and comprehensive. It should encourage and even incentivize those with knowledge of wrongdoing to come forward.

New role for the Attorney General

With the creation of an independent DPP, there is no longer a need for the Office of the Attorney General to manage thousands of prosecutions each year. The resultant free time could be used to a number of positive ends.

For example, the AG could concentrate on ensuring our laws are in line with the various international treaties which The Bahamas has signed – particularly those designed to enhance human rights protections, strengthen democracy and promote the rule of law.

The AG could also focus on developing and expanding legal provisions against top-level corruption, especially regarding sitting Cabinet Ministers.

Hate speech

During the last Christie Administration, hate speech became the chief mode of political attack on minority groups such as undocumented migrants, the LBGTQ community and activist that fought human rights abuses, fiscal mismanagement and environmental pollution.

Legislation criminalising and outlining penalties for all forms of hate speech and harassment in urgently needed. Careful consideration must of course be given to balancing this with the right to freedom of expression enshrined in the Bahamas Constitution.

A new definition of 'policy'

Longstanding confusion regarding the role of 'government policy,' has meant successive administrations have been able to substitute policy for law – the result being government officials regularly, though sometimes unknowingly, operate illegally.

The government should create legislation that clearly outlines the role and limits of policy and reinforces in explicit terms, the priority of statute and constitutional law.

Ombudsman

The FNM has foreshadowed the creation of an independent Office of Ombudsman, although details have yet to emerge.

Independent units should be established in all key departments and report regularly to the Ombudsman on matters such as: fiscal management; complaints and claims of negligence or malfeasance; operational efficiency; and systematic issues leading to poor service or breaches of basic rights.

Local government

Despite the existence of a Local Government Act, decision-making power on each island remains vested in central government, which also retains control of local budgets and collects all tax revenues for payment into the public treasury.

The Act should be amended to create a system in which each island is able to envision and create its own future, with district councils empowered to collect taxes, pass by-laws and enforce them, and control issues such as town planning and Crown Land use.

Exchange control reform

Severe exchange control regulations are a major barrier to meaningful citizen participation in this economy.

Virtually all the key players in the tourism industry are internationally traded companies, yet citizens are prevented from investing in any of these enterprises. Bahamians can aspire to no more than employment in what is essentially, a foreign-owned industry in their own country.

A review should be conducted with a view to systematically liberalizing and eventually abolishing exchange control, thereby empowering Bahamians to both have a stake in their own economy and conduct business overseas.

Campaign finance transparency

The FNM has pledged to introduce some level of campaign finance reform through the expansion of the Public Disclosure Act to cover political donations.

Secret campaign donations are the driving force behind the networks of corruption and nepotism that plague the political life of The Bahamas. Shedding light upon and regulating political financing must be a priority in any effort to further entrench democratic principles.

Gender equality

The overwhelmingly public rejection of proposed constitutional amendments aimed at bringing about gender equality was due, to a large extent, to the politicization of the referendum process and misinformation campaigns by special interests.

Luckily, neither a national referendum, nor changes to the constitution are actually needed to bring about gender equality, at least in the short term.

A few simple changes to existing statute law could effectively plug the gaps in gender equality, thereby allowing the public to adjust to the new reality and see that most if not all of their fears are unfounded.

Land use

The creation of a Land Use Plan (LUP) for New Providence was mandated in the 2011 Planning and Subdivision Act. The Christie Administration simply ignored this, however.

LUPs aim to make development more rational, efficient and ethical. They aim to bring an end to the unhealthy development model currently employed, which leads to environmental destruction, disregard for traditional customs and culture, social upheaval and economic uncertainty.

LUPs should be made mandatory for all islands in The Bahamas.

Crown Land

Over the years, secret 'Heads of Agreement' deals with developers have resulted in the giveaway of hundreds of millions of dollars worth of land which is supposed to be the property of the Bahamian people.

A Crown Land Act must be passed which clearly outlines the circumstances under which leases and grants can be issued. Dialogue with the local population should be a key and binding cornerstone of this law.

Applications by Bahamians should be prioritised over proposals from foreign developers. There must also be provisions for clearing the backlog of 30,000 applications by Bahamians and providing for transparency in all matters relating to the granting and lease of Crown Land.

Public awareness

There is a worrying lack of awareness among some sectors of society regarding the nature of constitutional rights, the role of government and the function of the law.

A comprehensive awareness campaign is therefore a crucial component of any successful effort to enhance our democracy.

This must begin at the grade school level across the public education system and extend to courses in Civics, Good Governance and Constitutional Theory at the University of The Bahamas.

Other key target groups include: law enforcement, immigration and correctional services; civil society, in particular groups that deal with minority, migrant and gender rights; staff at the Office of the Attorney General, the Ministry of Legal Affairs and the Judicial and Legal Services Commission; social services providers.

Environmental legislation

The FNM administration has already taken an important step in this regard with the announcement of an impending Environmental Protection Act.

This Act must be the all-encompassing final authority on environmental matters in The Bahamas and must deal decisively with urgent issues such as unregulated development, abuse of Crown Land, and the wanton destruction of natural resources.

It must also provide for the training of Environmental Officers on each island, answerable to the Local Government authorities and empowered to investigate any and all alleged environmental infractions. It must establish an Independent Environmental Czar, who is mandated to work closely with the Office of Ombudsman to investigate matters of concern fairly and without prejudice.

The way forward

For those Bahamians who value democracy, fairness and justice, the way forward is clear: we must erect firm legal barriers to prevent recent history from ever repeating itself.

Never again can we allow our progress towards a more democratic and prosperous future to be hijacked by underhanded officials and their associates whose only interest is lining their own pockets.

Never again can we submit to shamefully regressive laws or condone the violation of people's fundamental human rights, all in the name of scoring cheap political points.

The FNM have been given an unprecedented mandate. The Minnis Administration has an incredible opportunity to go down in history as the government that ushered in true democratic change in The Bahamas and pointed the way to a brighter future for us all.

Let us pray they have the political courage to live up to their potential.

Career Opportunity

Scotiabank (Bahamas) Limited

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Position Summary:

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Key Accountabilities for this role:

- At least 5 years of real estate experience.
- Strong construction management knowledge and experience.
- Demonstrated expertise in project management for real estate projects.
- Strong facilities management knowledge.
- Engineering or architectural background would be considered an asset.
- A Bachelor's degree in a related field.

Functional Competencies:

- In-depth knowledge of construction and design, facilities management, leasing/purchasing procedures.
- Working knowledge of software relating to spreadsheets, project management, cost/budget reporting, construction scheduling and building design.
- Ability to write reports and/or correspondence.
- Forward thinking and innovative skills.
- Strong communication and writing skills.
- Strong negotiating and networking skills.
- Strong human relations/ people management skills are essential.
- Strong organizational ability.
- Availability to travel.

Qualified candidates should submit C.V. via email to:

hrbahamas@scotiabank.com on or before September 22, 2017.

Please note: Only candidates short-listed will be contacted.



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Climate change is here to stay



DAMAGE left after Hurricane Irma hit Barbuda.

Photo: Anika E. Kentish/AP

SINCE September 6 when Hurricane Irma, the most monstrous storm that the Atlantic has endured in history, thundered up to the tiny island of Barbuda and devastated it, I have been telling audiences in Washington, DC, and, through the media, to the wider world that Climate Change and global warming are a reality and here to stay.

The 1,700 persons who inhabited Barbuda until September 9, including 500 children of school-age, would need no convincing that the weather is far from normal, and that, increasingly over the last 25 years, hurricanes have become larger, stronger and more brutal in the damage that they inflict. The Barbudans have been among Hurricane Irma's most affected victims.

On September 12, in a formal statement to representatives of the member-nations of the Organisation of American States (OAS), I said on behalf of Antigua and Barbuda: "These storms know no borders. They cross them at will and with no fear of being turned away by any immigration officer. They know no ideology or embargoes. So, Irma stalked through parts of Cuba before it went on to parts of the United States. They make no discrimination between small or large, or poor or rich. They see no white people, or black people or any shade of colour in between. Their destruction is ruthless, heartless and pitiless."

"That is why," I said, "no nation can stand apart from the reality of climate change or the effects of global warming." I repeated that statement to Emergency Aid Agencies, representatives of developed countries, a Public forum organised by the Center for Strategic and International Studies and in many media interviews.

With regard to Barbuda, its land mass is 62 square miles. Hurricane Irma was 364 miles wide when it spread itself across the Island, overwhelming it in size, strength and ferocity. Irma's force was Category 5 plus, with winds gusting up to 220 miles per hour; much stronger than the force with which it tossed property aside when it stormed into Florida as Category 4, waning to Category 2. Neither Barbuda nor its inhabitants stood a ghost of a chance against so formidable and all-encompassing a monstrous power.

When Hurricane Irma departed, Barbuda was reduced to what Prime Minister Gaston Browne called "a mangled wreck". It was uninhabitable, having

World View

By SIR RONALD SANDERS



no electricity, no potable water and buildings that were structurally weakened and dangerous to enter. In those circumstances, it would have been irresponsible for any government to leave anyone on Barbuda. Thus, the government took the decision to evacuate everyone to Antigua. The decision was made more urgent because on the very day of the exodus, Hurricane Jose was forecast to set upon Antigua, following in Irma's destructive path.

On Monday, September 11, even as Hurricane Irma was performing its "dance macabre" over the other countries in the Caribbean, having delivered cruel blows to the US and British Virgin Islands and all of the French/Dutch Island St Martin/St Maarten, Pope Francis restated his conviction that Climate Change is real and perilous. He rightfully expressed the view that the impact of climate change will be hardest on the world's poorest, and he was openly critical of those who do not play their part in reducing its effects. "If we don't go back we will go down," he warned.

Three things contributed to the fact that Antigua was scarcely damaged while Barbuda was decimated. First, Antigua and Barbuda are separated by 30 miles. Thus, only Irma's outer bands hit Antigua. Second, Antigua is a hilly island; Barbuda is flat. Antigua has some natural resilience; Barbuda has none. Third, Antigua has experienced many hurricanes since the early 1990s, the consequence of which has been higher codes for buildings and more awareness among the population of the need to take precautions. The Antigua and Barbuda government and, particularly the Prime Minister, gave strong leadership in gearing-up both islands for Irma.

There are lessons for the entire Caribbean to learn from the Antigua and Barbuda experience. The first is the importance of preparation and readiness such as I just described. The second is the incalculable benefit of strong and visionary leadership.

The people of Antigua and Barbuda have been high in their praise of Gaston Browne who took command of preparation for the impending

storm and for managing the situation of Barbuda and its inhabitants. His leadership, they say, was "inspirational". One of the things he did in preparation for the storm was to stock a warehouse in Miami with material that was flown in immediately for emergency relief in the wake of the storm. Hence, unlike the British, US and French Islands, Antigua was prepared to deal with the evacuees from Barbuda who increased Antigua's population by three per cent overnight with all the demand for government services that such an increase entails. Beyond that, despite the treacherous conditions which lingered over Barbuda on the afternoon of the Hurricane's passage, Browne was the first person to arrive on the island via a dangerous helicopter ride. His presence on Barbuda and the fact that he could personally give comfort and hope to the traumatised, bewildered and desperate people was decisive and invaluable.

The third is readiness for dealing with a post-hurricane humanitarian crisis. While Antigua could not have expected an overnight influx of the entire Barbuda population, in less than two days the government mobilised every resource to accommodate and care for them. Shelters were organised, Antiguan were asked to volunteer accepting children and elderly people into their homes, and essential material – food, water and basics for living were provided by the government. The Antiguan were remarkably open-hearted and welcoming. Of course, others helped – initially the Red Cross and then the emergency services of a few countries and hemispheric agencies. But, the initial costs were borne by the government. So, while the people of other islands, mostly colonies and outposts of powerful nations, were left in dire conditions for days – some are still waiting for help, this did not occur in Antigua and Barbuda.

In future, all Caribbean countries have to cater for a humanitarian crisis. Not many can decant from one part of their state to the other. Therefore, preparations will have to include stockpiling food, water,

medicines and other essentials long before storms arrive on their shores.

The fourth lesson is that building codes and standards have to be dramatically improved. Storms in the future will be Category 5s and more. Buildings have to be constructed to stand-up to them, or year after year the countries of the Caribbean and the United States will face huge costs to rebuild after disasters and

to cope with humanitarian crises.

As it is, the government of Antigua and Barbuda is facing a bill upwards of US\$250 million to rebuild Barbuda, but it is a US\$1 billion economy. The government cannot do it alone. Barbuda is both a natural disaster and a humanitarian crisis that cries out for a global humanitarian response.

• Responses and previous commentaries: www.sirronaldsanders.com

The writer is Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to the United States and the OAS and High Commissioner to Canada. He is also a Senior Fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London and Massey College in the University of Toronto. The views expressed are his own.

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We thank all applicants, however only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

GAIN AN EDGE
A NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Shawn strives to make a difference

SADLY, it was just too late. Or was it? Shawn Minnis left C.V. Bethel Senior High School before he had an opportunity to graduate and receive his diploma. Shawn was a go-getter with good grades and big dreams. . . but he was also a realist. With the death of his father leaving Shawn's mother as a single parent, Shawn had to make a tough decision.

He put his dreams aside, left school and went to work to assist his family.

But leaving school didn't kill Shawn's dreams. The desire to have a meaningful career kept calling him. He wondered if it was just too late to answer the call.

"Each year that I got older, I thought it was too late to go back to school," said Shawn. "I had to realise that learning is a never-ending process."

Shawn eventually came to understand that education was the key to unlocking all of the goals he had for himself and his family. After four years in the work force, Shawn mustered the strength to return to school, achieve his high school diploma and then go on to complete numerous certifications and licences in maritime studies.

This past May, Shawn graduated from Holland College with a certificate in Power Engineering. He was able to achieve this goal with the support of a scholarship from Lyford Cay Foundations.

Now Shawn's future is bright and he is set to embark on a field with endless possibilities. With his education, he is able to operate and maintain boilers, turbines and refrigeration and air conditioning in commercial and industrial buildings. It is an untapped field here in The Bahamas, which further positions Shawn for success.

So why did Shawn work so hard and sacrifice so much? Why did he bother to fight to achieve his goal?



Because Shawn knew a secret. He knew that college makes the difference.

It is not just true for those who pursue traditional careers that everyone associates with college. It's also true for technical and vocational careers. And it is becoming increasingly true for careers where a college education was not needed just a decade ago.

We now live in a world where everyone needs some form of education after high school. At least that's true for everyone who dreams of more for their lives and for everyone who wants a razor-sharp edge in an increasingly competitive world.

According to a recent Inter-American Development Bank report, half of our students attending public schools don't graduate from high school. A 2012 survey conducted by the Department of Statistics noted that two thirds of our population do not have any form of post-secondary education.

What if every Bahamian acted like Shawn? What if everyone fought for their opportunity to get an education even if they were faced with challenging circumstance or even if it just seemed like it was too late?

Well, it could revolutionise The Bahamas in ways that the country has never seen before.

According to international studies, educated populations experience better health and family life, higher salaries and more opportunities for growth.

An educated population experiences less poverty, less crime, more economic prosperity and better governance.

That is a Bahamas that we all want.

When asked what advice he had for others who dreamed of making college a reality, Shawn said: "This means more to me than anything at this point in my life. My advice is to seize the opportunity and do not let it go to waste."

If you want tips on how to use education as a step toward a better future for you personally and for the country, you will want to continue following this column every week.

The Lyford Cay Foundations, Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute and University of The Bahamas invite you to keep reading so that you can "Gain An Edge."

"Gain An Edge" is a biweekly collaboration of the Lyford Cay Foundations, the Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute and The University of The Bahamas aimed at promoting a national dialogue on higher education.



SHAWN MINNIS, determined Lyford Cay Scholar and 2017 graduate of Holland College

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Rolle tours hurricane aftermath

SOCIAL Services and Urban Renewal Minister Lanisha Rolle visited the tornado-damaged areas in Grand Bahama and urged people to be very "sensitive" and understanding to the victims who suffered significant damage and what they are going through at this time.

She wanted persons affected to know that the department cares and is there support for them during this difficult time.

Ms Rolle and Ms Lillian Quant-Forbes, deputy director of Social Services, were among the delegation that travelled with Prime Minister Dr Hubert Minnis on Thursday to Bimini and Grand Bahama.

About 28 families have been affected on Grand Bahama as a result of a tornado as Hurricane Irma passed west of the northern Bahamas unleashing ferocious winds and some rain.

Five homes in the Imperial Park Subdivision were destroyed. Several units at the Imperial Gardens Apartment Building and about ten businesses in Freeport were also damaged.

Some of the victims were concerned and upset about passersby coming into the area just to take photos of the damage and post them on social media.

Ms Rolle said: "There are some that were affected and others that were not, and I think it is very important at

this time for us to be sensitive, to realise it was not me today, but it could be tomorrow. Therefore, we must be there for each other."

She said the Ministry of Social Services is concerned and is there to assist Bahamians who were affected.

"We want persons to know that we care and that we are here for them, and that is why we are here and a part of the assessment team to make sure that individuals know that Social Services is onboard."

"We empathise and see the need, and are assessing the needs and assisting as much as we can, where we can."

Ms Rolle also said: "The important thing that we must remember is that

this is all of our problems and all our challenges, and all of our success. And so together as a people we will rise again out of these various situations."

Paula Marshall, assistant director of Social Services in Freeport, had reported that officers met with the victims and had compiled a list.

She stated that many of the victims have indicated that they do not want to leave their homes.

However, she noted that arrangements would have to be made to relocate at least one family whose house was totally destroyed.

"They are going to need to have accommodations until arrangements can be made for that particular

facility to be rebuilt. Whether that is going to be done by the government, we don't know at this time, but in the meantime, they need to be able to function," said Mrs Marshall.

She noted that social services cannot force people to leave their homes and so some have decided to stay, and others have made arrangements to stay with family and friends.

She noted that Social Services would definitely help those affected regarding assistance with food, clothing, toiletries, and blankets.

Ernestine McPhee, a resident of Imperial Park whose home was damaged, had expressed her frustration with the process when she went to seek assistance

at the Department of Social Services.

Ms McPhee, whose adult son is disabled and diabetic, told Prime Minister Dr Hubert Minnis that the process was very stressful. "I was there from 9am until after 1pm; I missed a whole day at school at the Social Services just to give them (some) information that's what you have to go through."

She told Dr Minnis that she was in need of a generator and wanted to know if she could be provided one from NEMA to keep her son's insulin cool.

McPhee said their home is insured and was worried about her elderly neighbour whose home was not insured, but was destroyed.

HUNDREDS VOLUNTEER FOR GRAND BAHAMA CLEAN-UP

By DENISE MAYCOCK
Tribune Freeport Reporter
dmaycock@tribunemedia.net

BEACHES are one of the country's most valuable assets, and in observance of the 32nd International Coastal Cleanup on Saturday some 600 volunteers will comb the beaches on Grand Bahama removing trash and marine debris.

The major global effort is being held under the theme, 'Harnessing the Power of People to Fight Ocean Trash.'

The event is being coordinated by the Ministry of Tourism, the Keep Grand Bahama Clean Committee, and the Bahamas National Trust.

Jeffrey Pinder, a senior executive of Sustainable

Tourism at the Ministry of Tourism, said beach clean-up would take place between 8am and 10am, and persons are invited to join in and help tackle this vexing problem.

He stressed that the ministry is pleased to be a part of the International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) for the last 30 plus years, coordinating clean-up efforts between Grand Bahama and New Providence, collecting data from various beach locations on the two islands.

"We want to find out how is it that garbage, whether it is marine debris, plastic, cups, are ending up on our beaches," he said on Friday during a press conference held at Xanadu Beach.

According to Mr Pinder, the effort in Grand Bahama

is well supported with some 600-student volunteers from the various public and private schools on Grand Bahama.

Each group will consist of 20 volunteers and two coordinators who will canvas the shoreline and beaches on the island from east to west.

Mr Pinder thanked all the local sponsors for assisting in providing gloves and water for the hundreds of volunteers who will be participating.

"We want to thank Solomons, FOCOL, Dolly Madison, Sawyers Fresh Mart, and others that have assisted us with this ICC event which is in its 32nd year, and we are happy to be able to do this especially

since the passing of the last storm.

"We want to show GB is resilient and that we are ready for customers. This is especially important for the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) because our beaches are on one of the biggest attractions for cruise ship passengers to the island."

Mr Pinder noted that 60 to 80 per cent of the cruise passengers who come off the ship would end up on one of our beaches.

"It is important to make sure that not only are they clean, but that we have an idea where this garbage is coming from," he said.

Oletha Gardiner, co-chairperson of the Keep Grand Bahama Clean Committee, said they always

partner with the MOT in the ICC efforts.

"We are pleased to be a part of this effort this year, just after the recent passing of the storm. The KGBC mandate is that everybody is responsible for keeping our island clean and wants to continue to spread that message."

Ms Gardiner said the committee has partnered with schools as well as civic organizations to keep the island clean.

"Our beaches are one of our prize possessions in the country; we want to make sure we do our part to keep our environment clean," she said.

The International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) is the largest single-day volunteer cleanup effort in the

world tackling the growing threat of trash in the world's oceans. Trash is one of the most visible and most prolific threats facing our ocean today; it's also one of the most preventable, according to a statement issued by the Ministry of Tourism.

It indicated that worldwide, more than 500,000 people participated in last year's International Coastal Cleanup (ICC), removing nearly 18.4 million pounds (more than 8.3 million kg) of trash from oceans and waterways.

According to the statement, since the first ICC 32 years ago, more than 12 million volunteers have removed over 228 million pounds (more than 103 million kilograms) of trash.

READY FOR SCHOOL THANKS TO BANK

FOR the eighth consecutive year, Cabinet ministers and educators along with hundreds of parents and students packed the Kendal G L Isaacs Gymnasium for the Ministry of Education and Commonwealth Bank's Parenting Forum and walked away not only inspired to tackle the new school year but equipped with the necessary tools.

The theme of this year's forum, hosted by the New Providence Association of Principals of Public Secondary Schools (NAPSS), was "Parents, Schools, The Community: Shaping the Finished Product" which showcased the comprehensive approach necessary to ensure the overall success in educating the nation's children. These sentiments were echoed in the remarks of guest speakers, including Minister of Education Jeffrey Lloyd.

"Less than 50 per cent of our students are graduating from high school," said Mr Lloyd. "I don't think we can be proud of that. We are seeing a downward trend in the positive results of our exams. We are failing. Countries around us are going up, we are going down. So all of us must get



FROM left: T Nicola McKay, principal of C R Walker Senior High School; Jeffrey Lloyd, minister of education; Denise Turnquest, Sr VP credit risk of Commonwealth Bank and Lionel Sands, director of Education in the Ministry of Education.

on board and we have to turn this around because we must turn this around."

"Commonwealth Bank understands that education is indeed a partnership," said T Nicola McKay, principal of C R Walker Senior High School. "The Ministry of Education alone cannot foot the bill for the cost of educating our children. There would be no forum without the donation of the bags, books, pens, pencils and the lunch that is also provided by Commonwealth Bank."

Bringing remarks on behalf of Ian Jennings, Commonwealth Bank's

president, Sr VP Credit Risk Denise Turnquest said: "Children whose parents are involved in their education earn higher grades, have a much better chance of graduating, are less likely to drop out of school, are more likely to go onto higher education, have better social skills so they get along better with people, and they are more likely to like school."

Mr Lloyd told the crowd that "education is your responsibility."

"At the end of the day, we are going to help you but it's what you do with the opportunity you have

to make it happen for you. The opportunity you have now, you may not have again," he told students.

To parents, he had a different message.

"God gave these children to you. You have a fundamental responsibility for these children. It is your responsibility to see that these children be what they come to earth to be."

Between spirited charges, attendees were entertained by the sounds of the Royal Bahamas Police Pop Band.

This was the 11th year Commonwealth Bank partnered with the Ministry of Education for back

to school supplies and the eighth time it sponsored the Parenting Forum, providing well-stocked book bags, pencils, composition books and lunch for all. Over the last decade Commonwealth Bank has invested over \$2m in education including over 110,000 backpacks.

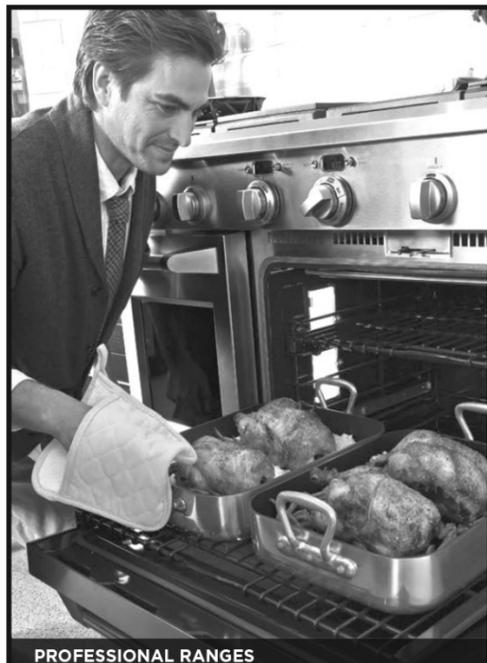
The forum also provided the opportunity to highlight the accomplishments of students who gave stellar performances during the standardised examinations of the Bahamas Junior Certificate (BJC) and Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education exams.

BAHAMIAN BOATERS SAVED BY JOINT RESCUE

SEVERAL Bahamian boaters were rescued by a joint effort by members of the Royal Bahamas Defence Force, Royal Bahamas Police Force and Operations Bahamas and Turks and Caicos (OPBAT) and Bahamas Air Sea Rescue (BASES - Freeport) in two separate incidents on Saturday.

In the first incident at 6pm, OPBAT reported that a 25-ft white Ranger vessel named "Whiplash" experienced mechanical problems two miles south of Bimini. A vessel from the Police Marine Division in Bimini was dispatched with a police officer along with two RBDF marines on board. The disabled vessel along with a male occupant were safely brought into North Bimini.

In a second incident at 8.25pm, a 19-ft skiff was being towed by a 17-ft skiff in the area of Brown's Boat Basin near the Poop Deck, East Bay Street. A 26-ft vessel named "Raptor" collided into the tow rope, resulting in minor damage one of the vessels. RBDF Patrol craft P-115 went and assisted the vessels, which were all escorted to the RBDF's Harbour Patrol Unit. None of the occupants on the vessels were injured.



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Tribute paid after death of trade unionist

MINISTER of Labour Dion Foulkes has expressed condolences on the passing of former trade unionist Idena Burrows who died in hospital last week.

"It is with profound sadness that I learned of the passing of Mrs Idena Burrows, past president of the

Bahamas Communications and Public Officers Union (BCPOU)," Mr Foulkes noted in a press release.

"Mrs Burrows served as both president and vice-president of the BCPOU. She played a critical role in the fight for women's rights in the trade union

movement in The Bahamas and in the wider Caribbean.

"She was a champion for the trade union movement for which the National Congress of Trade Unions (NCTU) honoured her during the 2015 Labour Day celebrations. Mrs

Burrows made a significant contribution to the BCPOU and to the trade union movement in the Bahamas. She served in many capacities in the movement. Her death is a loss to the trade union movement and to the NCTU."

Mr Foulkes said Mrs Burrows served as a consultant for the government and on a number of national boards.

"She was instrumental in developing young trade union leaders, investing heavily in education and training. She was an avid

church-goer, a member of Evangelistic Temple and a family woman. Her role in developing young people in the church and trade union community was exemplary," he added.

She leaves behind a husband, Stanley, children and grandchildren.

Soup made with love



A SOUP Kitchen hosted by the Masonic Lodge and the Order of the Eastern Stars on Saturday at Meadow Street on Mother Butler's Park across from the Salvation Army. Photos: Terrel W. Carey/Tribune Staff

AS they celebrate Prince Hall Week, the sisters of Rebecca Chapter No 4, Order of the Eastern Star, held the seventh installment of Rebecca's Mystery Soup Kitchen on Saturday.

The chapter is affiliated with the Prince Hall Lodge.

The soup kitchen, this time held at Mother Butler's Park on Meadows Street, has a concept of "showing up" unannounced at various spots in the Bain's and Grants' Town community.

"God bless the sisters of Rebecca," said Simeon Darlicie. "This is the second time that I caught the kitchen when it came around. The first time it was at the Urban Renewal. My sister ran into the house and

told me to hurry up cause the ladies from Rebecca was out there.

"The lady in charge said the soup was made with love and I believed her. We had nothing to eat at all that day and they came right on time with love and that soup that taste so good. All of us got some. We didn't know how we were going to get food until they came along that day. God bless them."

The chapter's "worthy matron" said it was the group's goal to spread love and joy to those in need of a good meal.

In addition to a hot meal, the women also provided clothes to those who needed them.



AWARENESS MONTH SEEKS TO ENCOURAGE RESPONSIBLE GAMING

A PLANNED Responsible Gaming Month was created to increase education and awareness around gaming and promote responsible gambling practices.

According to a press release from Island Luck, as with other possibly addictive activities, the gaming

house believes that gambling "may present an issue to a small portion of the population therefore we strongly believe that there is a need for this month of education and awareness".

It is expected the month will be observed every year, focusing on responsible gaming education

for gambling patrons and employees.

"At Island Luck, we understand that responsible gaming begins before the patron walks through the doors," said Neil Major, risk and compliance manager of Island Luck. "Island Luck takes our role in educating our patrons,

employees and the general public on problem gaming seriously. Responsible gaming is an ongoing priority of Island Luck, from our board of directors and top management to front-line team members and we are committed to continuously raising awareness about this subject matter."

To illustrate this year's responsible gaming theme, Island Luck will be airing targeted video blogs, television, radio and print material on the various programmes currently offered to patrons to assist with any gaming issues they may have. This event will coincide with the material

relating to the phenomenon of problem gaming already prominently displayed in all Island Luck locations and on Island Luck's website.

"Island Luck is proud of our continuous efforts to promote our responsible gaming programme," said Mr Major.



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