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# The Bahama Journal

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# SHIFT IN GOV'T'S HOUSING POLICY

BY JAMEELHA MISSICK  
 Journal Staff Writer

Minister of Housing, Ramould Ferreira yesterday announced a shift in the government's housing policy. For the first time, homeowners will be able to construct a split level single family home in a government subdivision.

The affordable housing initiative also now calls for homeowners to be energy efficient.

"As a result, each homeowner is expected to install a solar water heater



▶ Minister of Housing, Ramould Ferreira (File photo)

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## CHIPMAN RESIGNS FROM PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

The Free National Movement Member of Parliament for Centreville, Reece Chipman yesterday served notice in the House of Assembly of his decision to resign as a member of the powerful Public Accounts Committee.

In a letter to the Speaker of the House of Assembly Mr. Chipman said, "In light of the



▶ Centreville MP, Reece Chipman (File photo)

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## PM AND MIN. OF NAT. SECURITY AT CONTRACT SIGNING WITH SHOTSPOTTER TECHNOLOGY



▶ Prime Minister, Dr. the Most Hon. Hubert Minnis at the contract signing ceremony between the Ministry of National Security and ShotSpotter Technology, a US -based company known for its technology in detecting gunshots being fired, almost immediately, in criminal activities. The ceremony was held Wednesday, January 23, 2019 at the SLS Baha Mar on Cable Beach. He is pictured with the Hon. Marvin Dames, Minister of National Security. (BIS Photo/Yontalay Bowe)

## GOV'T SIGNS CONTRACT WITH SHOTSPOTTER TECHNOLOGY

BY LEAH COOPER  
 Journal Staff Writer

Prime Minister Doctor Hubert Minnis yesterday along with National Security Minister Marvin Dames signed a contract

with Shotspotter Technology in an effort to enhance the country's crime fighting skills.

The Prime Minister expressed the view that

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## High Default Rate In Education Loans

BY JAMEELHA MISSICK  
 Journal Staff Writer

An audit into the Education Loan Authority, found that in June 2017, the authority's

loans receivable, net provision of \$16,336,710 amounted to \$60,507,578 of which \$51,384,289 was over 90 days in arrears.

The report revealed that the authority was

unable to obtain the necessary historical default rates in its loans receivable portfolio.

It also found that repayments of loans receivable by students in

the current and subsequent years have not been sufficient to meet the authority's obligations in relation to the loan com-

■ See page 7...

## DNA AGAINST ACCESSION TO WTO

BY LEAH COOPER  
 Journal Staff Writer

Democratic National Alliance (DNA) Deputy Leader Arinthia Komolafe yesterday said the Bahamas should not move forward with accession plans to the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Mrs. Komolafe says that her party "wholeheartedly supports the principles of a free market economy and initiatives that will provide a fair global trading sys-



▶ DNA Deputy Leader, Arinthia Komolafe (File photo)

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ALL THE NEWS YOU NEED TO READ IN THE MORNING



# No Evidence In Junkanoo Bribery Allegations

BY LICEC BASTIAN  
Journal Staff Writer

The Chairman of the Junkanoo Corporation New Providence Limited (JCNP), Silbert Ferguson says no evidence has come to the surface in the alleged bribe claim made in a voice note that circulated social media following the parades.

Mr. Ferguson made his comments during a press conference the JCNP held to release the official Junkanoo results.

"The investigation is still going on, the JCNP took another step this week. We have assembled a special committee

that will be working solely on this matter and then they will be working with the police; that's as much as I can tell you at this point.

"But as you can see there is no evidence that has basically come forward and so we are stepping up from the inside now to work with the exterior as we move on with this issue," Mr. Ferguson said.

When pressed on the issue, Mr. Ferguson said that when selecting judges, the committee relies on an individual's integrity to guide them as judges.

"We've realized we've been hit with this. When we invite people

to join us in our parades, we did not ask anybody to come and do unjust things to our Junkanoo groups.

"That is just something that's alleged because there is no evidence. We have a lot of voice notes, we've had nobody come forth, even the person with the voice notes. So, at this time we are still awaiting.

"But the integrity of our judges, we've always preached that. We've always preached fairness here at the JCNP, because we want to have a level playing field for all of our groups and that is all we can do. We have to leave

the integrity to that person who is coming to join us in partnership to judge our parades," Mr. Ferguson said.

"Integrity is something you cannot train," he said.

Mr. Ferguson, however, did say that if changes were to be made to the process of judging the Junkanoo parades, it will only be done based on the find-

ings of the committee currently investigating the claims of bribery.

"Once the committee returns with their findings, the committee will then present to the JCNP everything moving forward in terms of penalties and punishment for any person or groups that would be in this kind of activity moving forward," Mr. Ferguson said.

Mr. Ferguson added that the JCNP has had several special called meetings since the allegations to deal with the issue.

Approximately 60 persons judged the two parades, the majority of them being women.

According to the JCNP it is believed they have narrowed down the list to ten.

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## MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY

### UNITED STATES COAST GUARD (USCG) ACADEMY 4 YEAR MILITARY DEGREE PROGRAM

The Bahamian Government in collaboration with the United States Embassy (Nassau) invites all qualified persons who are interested in applying for a four-year degree scholarship at the United States Coast Guard Academy in Connecticut, United States, to submit their applications to the Royal Bahamas Defence Force Headquarters, Coral Harbour Base by 31st January, 2019.

#### To qualify, applicants must:

- Be a Bahamian citizen
- Be between the ages of 17-22 years old
- Be unmarried and with no dependents
- Be willing to serve in the Royal Bahamas Defence Force for a minimum of five years on completion.
- Must be physically fit
- Must be able to swim
- Have SAT scores of 600 in both Math and English (or ACT minimum of 26 in Mathematics and 27 in English).
- Have a high school diploma
- Possess excellent English skills

#### Bachelor's Degree Programs are offered in:

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- Cyber Systems
- Electrical Engineering
- Naval Architecture
- Operations Research
- Marine and Environmental Sciences
- Government
- Mechanical Engineering
- Management

#### Deadline for submission of application is 31st January, 2019.

Deadline for registration for SAT examination is 8th February, 2019 for the 9th March, 2019 test date (results from March test are only accepted if results from previous test are received by 1st March, 2019).

Students may register at:

<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register/international>

The USCGA code number for the SAT exam is 5807.

Deadline for ACT registration is 11th January, 2019 for 8th February, 2019 test date.

Students can register at <https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act-non-us.html>

The USCGA code number for the ACT exam is 0600.

Applicants can make application to sit the SAT/ACT at local SAT Centers in New Providence as follows: Aquinas College, St. Andrew's School, St. Anne's School, The University of The Bahamas, Government High School and Queen's College.

For further information, please contact the Royal Bahamas Defence Force Human Resource Officer, Lieutenant Commander Michael Hanna at telephone 362-3705 or 362-3711 or via email at [michaelhanna@rbdf.gov.bs](mailto:michaelhanna@rbdf.gov.bs) or visit the website [www.rbdf.gov.bs](http://www.rbdf.gov.bs)



# POLICE INVESTIGATES SHOOTING INCIDENT

Police in New Providence are seeking the public's assistance in identifying and locating the persons responsible for a shooting incident yesterday which left an adult female with injuries.

According to reports, shortly before 11:00am, a

woman was sitting in a vehicle on Gray's Terrace off Bernard Road, when the occupants of a silver Honda Accord license number AR6981 were allegedly seen firing shots at the occupants of another vehicle, resulting in the woman being shot. She was transported to hospital

and is listed in stable condition.

Police are appealing to members of the public who may have information concerning this incident, to contact the Central Detective Unit at 502-9991/2.

Investigations are ongoing.

# CHIPMAN RESIGNS FROM PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Continued from / PAGE 1...

absence of a House Approved Terms of Reference for the Public Accounts Committee, and the fact that the member for Killarney and the the Prime Minister of the Bahamas has publically called the Public Accounts Committee Functionless, I hereby submit my resignation effective immediately."

He added, "My resignation serves as a signal to the next generation, that the House of Assembly is the biggest issue in Bahamian Politics, and

unless we fix it, as soon as possible, we lose you to an unjust, unfair oligarchy, that will continue to reign over a Nation, a Bahamas of imbedded "have nots", and that, has very serious implications and "THAT" I cannot appreciate"

The Committee is appointed by the Speaker and chaired by a member of the Opposition.

Mr. Chipman, who is an accountant by profession, last year was relieved of his position as Chairman of the Bahamas Antiquities and Monument Commission

by Prime Minister Doctor Hubert Minnis after a disagreement over the management of the Commission. Since then, he has been at odds with the government on the increase of Value Added Tax and a decision to lease the Town Centre Mall for the relocation of the General Post Office.

The freshman MP has declared his intention to contest the 2022 general election, insisting that he "is going nowhere."

He narrowly defeated former Prime Minister Perry Christie in the May 2017 election.



## West Bay Street Road Rehabilitation Project

### Important Notice

### Traffic Diversion

West Bay Street between Blake Road and Tropical Gardens Road will be closed to traffic on Thursday, January 24th 2019 between the hours of 9:30am and 8:00pm. The motoring public is asked to adhere to all posted diversion routes. Provisions will be made to accommodate all necessary local traffic during the duration of the work.

We apologize for any inconvenience caused to the public during this period. For further information or assistance please contact any of the following:

Bill Simmons Construction & Heavy Equipment Co. Ltd -  
Tel. 323-7920

Ministry of Public Works - Tel. 322-4830/1 or  
Email - publicworks@bahamas.gov.bs

Water & Sewerage Corporation -  
Tel. 302-5599 or Visit our Website - www.wsc.com.bs



### MINISTRY OF FINANCE DEPARTMENT OF INLAND REVENUE REAL PROPERTY TAX NOTICE for 2019

In accordance with the Real Property Tax Act, Chapter 375 as amended, the Chief Valuation Officer hereby gives notice:-

- that copies of the assessment lists are available as required by Section 7 subsection 7 of the Act, and may be inspected at the Office of the Chief Valuation Officer;
- that a notice of assessment addressed to each owner of property liable to tax under the Real Property Tax Act is available at the Valuation Office, located at rear of the shops at Carmichael Plaza, Carmichael Road and may be collected therefrom by or on behalf of the owner of such property during normal working hours;
- that pursuant to subsection (3) of Section 7 of the Act, upon the expiration of five days after the publication of this notice, a notice of assessment shall be deemed to have been served on every owner of property liable to tax under the Act;
- that without prejudice to the provision of subsection (3) of Section 7 of the Act, the Chief Valuation Officer may at any time after the publication in the Gazette of this notice send by post, a notice of assessment addressed to any owner of property liable to tax under the Act;
- that pursuant to Section 11(1) of the Act, any person aggrieved by a notice of assessment deemed to have been served under this Act may object thereto by serving on the Chief Valuation Officer within thirty days after the date on which the notice of assessment is deemed to have been served, a notice in writing of such objection stating the grounds upon which he relies;
- that pursuant to Section 18 of the Act, the tax is due and payable by the owners of property not later than sixty days after the date on which notice of assessment is deemed to have been served. Accordingly, it is the duty of each taxpayer to ensure that he receives a Notice of Assessment;
- that the exemption has been allowed for 2019 on those which have been declared as owner-occupied residences, and have satisfied the conditions. However, under Section 43 of the Act, the owners are required to disclose to the Chief Valuation Officer any change in the circumstances which does not entitle the property for the exemption allowed;
- that pursuant to Section 10 of the Act, every owner of property shall not later than the thirty-first day of December in each year, make to the Chief Valuation Officer in the prescribed form a return of such particulars of that property as may be prescribed, for the purpose of enabling that Officer to compile and maintain accurate assessment lists, and such owner shall declare to the correctness of such return before an authorized person.

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# SHIFT IN GOV'T'S HOUSING POLICY

Continued from / PAGE 1...

or a minimum of a 2kw photovoltaic solar system that is required to be registered with renewable energy generation programme at Bahamas Power and Light," he said.

Minister Ferreira took the lead in the House of Assembly on a debate on a land resolution that seeks the House approval for the conveyance of 1.267 acres in the Fox Hill Community for a nominal sum of \$10.

The property is to be developed for the sale of service lots to first time homeowners.

The 10-lot subdivision, which lies on the southern side of Romer Street and the western side of Armbrister Street will bear the name of former Fox Hill Member of Parliament and a founding member of the modern day Fox Hill Festival, Lionel Davis. It will comprise 10 service lots, which, according to the minister, are ready for sale.

"After purchasing one of these lots, the Access to Affordable Homes Act 2018, gives the Bahamian land owner the right to apply to the Ministry of Finance for exemptions

from customs duties and excise tax on all materials necessary to construct a single-family dwelling home," he said.

"Mr. Speaker, I wish to put the general public on notice that we expect these lots to move quickly.

"As a matter of fact we have a list of persons already waiting to purchase them," he added.

Service lot owners can either use their own contractor and architect or use pre-existing housing plans the government offers.

Service lots have been sold in Sunset Close for under \$20,000 to police, defence and customs offi-

cers, nurses and teachers.

Minister Ferreira noted in a press release that the lots in the Lionel Davis Subdivision will be sold for a similar price.

Following the Carmichael Village Subdivision, the government intends to provide service lots in the family islands.

"In Abaco, surveying works are being carried out for the extension of The Central Pines Subdivision, where an additional 60 residential service lots are being prepared for sale later this year," he said.

"An occupational survey is being carried out in

Crossing Rocks which is expected to be completed at the end of this month," said the Minister.

The Opposition's position is that for the most part – the service lots will not help the country's larger housing crisis, whereby Bahamians are unable to finance the construction of homes.

"That is why the government was in the housing and construction business for the most part under the PLP, because it knows that it is more cheaper, more efficient and therefore the prices that would allow this structure for single mothers in particular to be able to

afford a home," Mangrove Cay, South and Central Andros MP, Picewell Forbes said.

Forbes further noted the high density of Fox Hill's population coupled with its narrow roads.

"The question is to whether or not the traffic problems and additional population density in the area will be conducive to peace and good order in that community, which already has challenges in keeping the peace in everyday life," Forbes said.

The PLP MP further expressed hope that Fox Hillians be given first preference to the land.

# GOV'T SIGNS CONTRACT WITH SHOTSPOTTER TECHNOLOGY

fighting crime is about "making people feel safer in their homes, on the streets, in their cars, in their businesses and in public spaces".

He added that the contract signing may

help to significantly reduce crime and make the country's homes and streets safer.

He said, "this advanced technology is expected to aid in further decreasing gun vio-

lence and homicides."

He added, "Shotspotter Technology has the capacity to increase gun-fire awareness by 500 percent. It will utilize acoustic technology to identify

when and where a gunshot is fired. This will lead to the more precise detection and location of incidents."

The prime minister indicated that Shotspotter Technology is expected to come on stream before the end of

this first quarter.


After completing the necessary research, Minister Marvin Dames said that he is pleased to be partnering with Shotspotter Technology.

He added that evidence shows in the United States this technology aided in

the reduction of gunshot violence in crime-ridden cities like Chicago, where police are reporting double digit decreases in murders and shootings.

The project is expected to cost the country \$1.9 million over a three-year period.


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## "BTC wraps up an exciting Christmas Sweepstakes Promotion"

Six weeks, one hundred thousand dollars in cash and prizes and tons of memorable moments for customers, is how BTC is describing its recent Christmas Sweepstakes promotion.

CEO, Garry Sinclair said, "I think we succeeded with creating happy moments for our customers during the holidays. Every single day during the month of December there was something exciting for our customers. Every week, there was a special device offer, and we did something totally unexpected just for civil ser-


vants. On government pay day last month, all civil servants were eligible to win \$1,000 per hour for 10 hours."

All Christmas long, customers that paid their bill in full, purchased a phone, signed up for new services and tried the new 3x data enriched "Always On" plan were eligible to win prizes. Prizes included junkanoo tickets, an entertainment center, grocery vouchers, exquisite jewelry, mobile devices and cash.

"We did not forget to lend a helping hand to those in need, and the BTC team of iVolunteers

served hot meals and distributed grocery parcels at Great Commission Ministries. We also treated the Ranfurly Home for Children to a special showing of Ralph Breaks the Internet," Sinclair continued.

For the first time in history, BTC took its promotion throughout the streets with its Christmas Carol Caravan. Brand ambassadors held a live open-air concert while cruising through the Carmichael Road, Blue Hill Road, Mall and Marathon, Shirley Street and East Bay corridors.



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Also Congratulations to The Minister of Tourism & Aviation Dionisio D'Aguiar for Winning Caribbean Tourism Minister of the Year!

**2018**



# WARNING SHOT



By Jerry Hutchinson

## Auditor General Reports: Time to End the Charade

The mandate of the Auditor General as stated in The Constitution of The Bahamas Article 136 is as follows:

- The Auditor-General shall submit his reports made under paragraph (3) of this Article without undue delay to the Speaker (or, if the office of Speaker is vacant or the Speaker is for any reason unable to perform the functions of his office, to the Deputy Speaker) who shall cause them to be laid before the House of Assembly without undue delay.
- In the exercise of his functions under the provisions of paragraphs (3) and (4) of this Article, the Auditor-General shall not be subject to the direction or control of any other person or authority.
- The accounts of the department of the Auditor General shall be audited and reported on by the Minister of Finance.

Another year and another auditor general report years after the event. One may be forgiven if they view this as a pointless exercise, especially as very few persons appear to have ever been held accountable for their wrongdoings. It is inconceivable that the frequency and extent of alleged thievery can go on and on and only small level thieves face the courts.

So, whilst these reports some years after the fact make good political theatre, the underlying problems remain unaddressed. How can it be that the Auditor General's Office can state unequivocally that millions of our funds are misappropriated yet no one is brought to account? This may be because the wrongdoers are civil servants and not politicians and, that remediation is not a priority. According to the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

"Naturally, the vulnerabilities in the company's system revealed after the theft should be addressed first, and any holes in the system should be closed. Job duties should be analysed, and some tasks may need to be re-assigned to prevent any single employee from having too much control over a function. Segregating duties is one of the most basic fraud prevention controls that all companies should implement, and, this is a very cheap method of fraud prevention if it is done correctly."

In the Tribune reporting of January 15, 2018 entitled "Auditors uncover \$450k bonus fraud" we see once more laid out in detail the nature of the fraud. If you read the article through you will see that it was affected by the very same systems failures the remediations recommended by the IFRS was intended to prevent. I believe that if the frauds detected by the Auditor General (AG) over the years, involving virtually all the government's revenue centres were totalled, it would probably be in the millions of dollars.

The question must be asked why? Why, after all the thefts and misappropriations documented is there not a professionally staffed accounting department in every ministry, whose properly prepared accounts can be audited by the AG's staff on a timelier basis? These accountants will also detect in good time, efforts by dishonest staff to commit fraud. This is a problem which has existed across administrations but, has been left to fester and proliferate. It is unconscionable to expect the AG with his minimally staffed and underfunded department to unravel these matters long after the fact. It is also criminally negligent to allow the flagrant theft of our funds to continue year on year without legal consequences. The Bahamas can use the stolen funds to grow the economy and ease the taxpayer's burdens but, I guess I am being altruistic. Okay, we know incontrovertibly that government revenue has been stolen over significant periods of time so, let's explore why nothing is being done to bring the culprits to justice.

### Not believing anyone was a big victim.

There are some misguided persons who believe that government funds are endless. So, what if they thief a bit, no one will miss it. That's a spirit of criminality, avarice and covetousness. But they are right about the not missing it part. The lack of consistent oversight and protection of our funds is a disgrace. The idea that no one is a big victim is also selfish and short-sighted. Stolen funds represent a drain on the governments consolidated fund. It funds unfunded pension liabilities estimated to be around \$26 million. Civil servants expect their salaries, gratuities and pensions to come from the fund. With all the fraud being perpetrated on public funds, theft puts the safety of these benefits at

risk. At risk because of rampant dishonesty and theft literally, of your pension funds!

### Attorneys advise against legal action.

One of the most effective shields against civil servants being prosecuted in our courts is General Orders (GO). The passage of time before the fraud is discovered and, the intentional absence of a paper trail makes a prosecution problematic.

The wrongdoers know this, and unions use it as a defence. So, employees are either transferred or interdicted in accordance with GO. In some instances, criminal staff are given the option of having the pilfered funds deducted from their salaries; this solution challenges logic. It is doomed to fail as, now the employee must double down on their thievery to replace the funds deducted! If, the fraudster is a kleptomaniac or a degenerate gambler then, heaven help us.

In each of these instances the public loses; the transferred employee is given another venue to continue their fraud; and, the interdicted employee is put on half pay. Eventually interest [or files] is lost forestalling the prosecution of the alleged fraudster. There is more than anecdotal evidence to conclude that neither of these options is in our interest. Indeed, some interdicted employees are being paid long after they have found employment outside the service and in several cases have died.

### Emotional ties with the employee.

The Bahamas is a small society and, we all develop close workplace relationships. In some cases, friendships cover the course of many years. It is not unusual to find family members working together in some government departments. So, department heads will find it difficult to deal effectively with fraud in their departments especially as friends will not "rat" on each other. This is where you must rely on effective accounting and management systems which alerts department heads to fraud and other staff wrongdoing. Another serious issue is that deferential department heads will usually pass critical staff dishonesty issues to their Ministers. This creates a whole raft of human resource problems; undermines staff morale and creates "untouchables" within a department. Since Ministers hardly ever make other than politically expedient decisions, especially if it involves a constituent, the culprits remain in place, unpunished and emboldened. Indeed, Bahamian funds and operations are placed at risk when political appointees are sent to head highly technical departments with no training or experience in how they operate. They usually seek to cover their deficiencies with bullying tactics, bluster and arrogance; a deadly combination in any environment.

### Not trusting the judicial system.

There is growing public perception that the legal system is not fit for purpose. There are too many instances when clear cases of fraud are brought to the courts and never prosecuted because of the non-appearance of witnesses, police and otherwise. Public servants, especially heads of departments are busy people.

It is unfair to repeatedly ask them to appear to court for a case that is not called. The glacial pace of our legal system, therefore, militates against civil servants being brought to justice for financial wrongdoings in the rare instances that they are charged. So, what do we do? Clearly, the accounting systems and methods must be overhauled and improved. The Bahamas cannot afford the continued "leakages" of public revenue because proper focus and resources are not being provided. What I find incredible is the lack of urgency being given to the prevalence of systemic fraud across multiple government ministries; rampant fraud which endangers the financial health of the country.

Imagine the national development projects we can undertake without seeking expensive bank loans if this criminal activity is remediated. I know that once the most recent auditor general's report is widely disseminated our politicians will propose all manner of fixes for the problem. They might even begin another police investigation with probably no results, just like in the past. For sure, eventually some small fry will be hammered in the courts, but the underlying problem will remain unaddressed; this is unhelpful. The necessary financial means and political will must be exerted if these scandalous episodes in our public life are to be ended. Our elected officials and law enforcement need to step up and solve this vexing problem.

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**Journal**  
Quo Vadis, Bahamas?

Wendall K. Jones  
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Kimaley P. Jones  
Vice President/Operations

## E D I T O R I A L

# The Global Economy In Perspective

It is extremely important that Bahamians have a full appreciation of what is happening in the Global economy in order to make projections for the local economy. In recent days, there have been debates on what to make of the Labour report released by the Department of Statistics. There are some commentators who simply do not believe the numbers released and question whether the rate of unemployment in New Providence and Grand Bahama are in decline.

However, since we are a residual economy in the Bahamas, the perspectives of leaders of international organizations are especially important to policy makers and businessmen in the country.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Christine Lagarde said the IMF modestly cut its global growth forecast for 2019 to 3.5 percent from 3.7 percent. Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, on Tuesday, she said the move was due to the high level of economic risks that are accelerating around the globe. These include the U.S.-China trade war, Brexit and China's slowing economy.

"Six months ago these were threats, but they were not at the level of magnitude we have now," Lagarde said. Now we are seeing the ripple effects these issues are having on the global economy, she said. Among them: tariff increases that are shaking up markets and boosting volatility particularly in advanced economies. "There is a compounding effect to all this. Market values have changed dramatically over the last few months," she points out.

Right now, there is uncertainty over when these risks will be resolved, Lagarde said. Take Brexit, for example. No one knows if the U.K.'s withdrawal from the European Union will be resolved by the March 11 deadline

or if it will be a no-deal exit.

Last week Parliament overwhelmingly rejected British Prime Minister Theresa May's proposal for a deal. "This is a big uncertainty for Europe, and the role played by London as a key financial center," she said.

On the trade front, the IMF chief noted there has been progress. The new U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement has been resolved, and the TPP 11 (Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement) has been ratified by seven members and is now in place. "These are all positives, but you still have the big elephant in the room: the U.S. and China that have to resolve trade disputes over issues of intellectual property, state-owned entities, subsidies and the balance of trade."

We don't know how long it will take to resolve the issues in a satisfactory way between both countries.

Trade negotiations between the United States and China have been ongoing for months, ever since both countries have started slapping billions of dollars of tariffs on a variety of goods. They have set a March 2 deadline in their cease-fire for imposition of a new round of tariffs.

The trade war has an impact on how these large economies are growing. China on Monday announced that its official economic growth came in at 6.6 percent in 2018 — the slowest pace since 1990. Fourth-quarter GDP growth was 6.4 percent, a sign the economy is decelerating.

So what is her advice for policymakers? "Focus on the issues and how to resolve them. Address remaining vulnerabilities, and be ready if a serious slowdown were to materialize."

"At this point, country policymakers need to harness the existing growth momentum in order to create more policy room to act."

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 - Brush Fire Scorches Acres of Land  
 - Delays Hinder Business For Ferry Operators  
 - GO TANKLESS  
 - Deaths Hinder Business For Ferry Operators



# DNA AGAINST ACCESSION TO WTO

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tem”.

She also noted that “E-commerce, technology and the phenomenon of globalization have removed national barriers to cross-border trade regardless of membership of trading blocs”.

However she said successive administrations have advanced the policy of full accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), despite the serious concerns raised by the public and private sector investors.

In a press release she accused the government of failing to present a strong case to justify WTO accession and clearly articulate the expected benefits.

She said, “in the aftermath of implementing massive tax increases and policies that have exacer-

bated the hardship on the Bahamian people, the government continues to have misplaced priorities.”

She added, “their disconnection from the plight of the masses has prevented them from seeing that WTO accession is not a priority for struggling Bahamians. The enormous resources expended on this initiative further raises questions, seeing that the Free National Movement (FNM) did not campaign on joining the WTO on the 2017 campaign trail.”

Mrs. Komolafe stated that the country’s economy urgently needs structural reforms to improve productivity, efficiency, competitiveness and the overall ease of doing business.

She added, “further the cost of entering and remaining in business remains high within our

nation. Accession to the WTO is not required to implement these long overdue reforms and should not be an impetus for same.”

On the other hand, she said that concurrently, the WTO is also in need of sweeping reforms to ensure fairness in international trade for developing nations, the use of state-owned enterprises and an effective policing and dispute resolution regime.

She said, “this issue is further complicated by the threat of the United States – our number one trading partner – to leave the WTO. The recent release of The Bahamas’ offer to the WTO is welcomed insofar as it is an indication of the beginning of transparency in the government’s dealings.”

Mrs. Komolafe encouraged the govern-

ment to apply this practice to all aspects of governance rather than select initiatives.

She noted that the government has indicated in its most recent release that lost revenue following accession will only amount to \$40 million.

Her response to this was that a proper analysis and realistic projection on revenue loss is meaningless, until a final WTO offer has been agreed upon.

She added, “any projection of revenue loss by the government is premature and cannot be relied upon at this time. It also remains unknown how the government will replace lost revenue within a regressive tax system.”

The party is now calling on the government to release data supporting its conclusion.

Mrs. Komolafe said,

“additionally, the government should also reveal the vulnerability study completed by the government so that the same can add to a productive discourse on the effects of WTO accession for The Bahamas.”

She added, “successive administrations have squandered opportunities over the years to empower Bahamian entities in preparation for the competitive pressures that accession to the WTO will present. On the contrary, the tax burden on Bahamian residents and businesses have been increased by governments subscribing to a “tax, spend and borrow” philosophy. We submit that accession to the WTO is not a panacea to the myriad challenges confronting us as a nation and should not be touted as such.”

The DNA Deputy Leader suggested that the

government reprioritize and focus its attention on addressing the systemic restrictions and structural deficiencies within our economy.

“We are concerned that vulnerable sectors in The Bahamas will be further challenged and unable to compete with nations equipped for mass production/exportation with accession to the WTO. This is consistent with the widely held view that the structure of the WTO provides a greater advantage to developed countries and the obvious detriment of small developing nations.”, she said.

The DNA proposed that as an alternative, The Bahamas explore “bilateral, plurilateral and sector-specific trade agreements with its main trade partners with the sole criterion being the best interest of the Bahamian people”.

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