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VOL. 31 - NO. 100

WEDNESDAY - JUNE 19TH, 2019

75 CENTS

Ministry of Works Budget Slashed

BY BERTHONY MCDERMOTT
 Journal Staff Writer

The Ministry of Public Works budget is being cut by \$26.9 million which the Minister Desmond Bannister acknowledged will pose severe challenges to capital works initiatives. This he said is as a result of the former administration's runaway spending.

Some \$53.5 million of the \$ 93.7 million for the Ministry this fiscal year is already committed to ongoing capital projects, one of them the Andre Rodgers Baseball Stadium.

"The Stadium was planned and construction was started by the former administration. The total cost was to be \$16,500,000 plus design fees of \$1,443,750 for a total cost of \$17,943,750.

"Under the former administration, the cost

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▶ Minister of Public Works, Desmond Bannister

MITCHELL WANTS DISMISSED WORKERS RE-HIRED

The Chairman of the Progressive Liberal Party, Senator Fred Mitchell has called on the government to rehire a number of people who he said, "were victimized." He says, "the statements about hiring in the Public Service by the Public Service Minister delivered in the House of Assembly on 17th June 2019 are not credible and



▶ Senator, Fred Mitchell

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New Gaming Bill Promised

BY BERTHONY MCDERMOTT
 Journal Staff Writer

New gaming legislation is to be tabled and debated by the end of the month, according to the

Minister responsible, Dionisio D'Aguilar.

This comes after weeks of talks between the government and gaming operators on the way forward.

The Minister said, "it will outline basically that the gaming tax will go from 11 per cent as it once was to 15 per cent for those companies under \$24 million.

"It will go up to 17 and a half per cent for those companies above \$24 million and then there will be a winnings tax on any single winnings greater than

\$1,000," Minister D'Aguilar said.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Peter Turnquest acknowl-

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US EMBASSY CHARGE D'AFFAIRES PAYS COURTESY CALL ON THE CHIEF JUSTICE



▶ US Embassy Charge d'Affaires Ms. Stephanie Bowers paid a courtesy call on the Hon. Mr. Justice Brian Moree, Chief Justice of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, at the Supreme Court on June 18, 2019. (BIS Photo/Derek Smith)

Min. Gives Warning For NIB Contributions

BY BERTHONY MCDERMOTT
 Journal Staff Writer

The deadline has passed for companies who have failed to pay up national insurance contributions and the government is now looking to take action.

As National Insurance Minister Brensil Rolle revealed during his contribution to the 2019/2020 budget debate in the House of Assembly on Wednesday, some \$17 million is owed in NIB contributions.

Elaborating on that

point outside Cabinet yesterday morning, Minister Rolle told reporters that while most companies have an agreement to pay what is owed; this is something they have simply ignored.

"The next step is to move forward and to prosecute these individuals who have not made their payments to NIB, lived up to their commitment or the agreement that they made with NIB," he said.

These outstanding

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ALL THE NEWS YOU NEED TO READ IN THE MORNING

SCHOOL REPAIRS POSE MAJOR CHALLENGE

BY LICEC BASTIAN
Journal Staff Writer

Reconstructing the block destroyed by fire at the North Andros High School and repairs to the Anatol Rodgers High School's Woodwork building that was set on fire on Sunday, will be a challenge in terms of getting it ready for the new academic year, as

Education Minister Jeffrey Lloyd admits that the setback has forced some readjustment to his ministry's budget

The Ministry of Education's 2019/2020 budget has allocated \$46 million to Education. Speaking with reporters just before the weekly Cabinet meeting yesterday, Mr. Lloyd said

adjustments now have to be made.

"When you're talking about fires, you're talking about a composite of concerns and that really is a challenge for us, but I have no difficulty in expecting that school will be ready for September.

"In terms of the school in North Andros, that particular building,

I believe that's going to take a little bit longer than the three months, Mr. Lloyd said

However, he also suggested that students will adjust accordingly once the school year begins in September.

"For instance the fire occurred and the school [North Andros High] was still having examinations. We made the

adjustments and put the students in a different part of the school, that's not a problem.

"Of course it's a difficulty when you have to make that adjustment, because it takes the students out of the normal course of their learning experience," he said

Officials reported a fire at the Huntley G. Christie school in North

Andros after 4:00pm on Wednesday, June 12th.

Four days later, fire services were called to Anatol Rodgers High.

The Ministry of Education is still awaiting the results of an investigation in the case of the North Andros campus. Arson is suspected in the case of the Anatol Rodgers School.

MARIJUANA COMMISSION ON FACT-FINDING MISSION

BY LICEC BASTIAN
Journal Staff Writer

The Bahamas National Commission on Marijuana's 23-member committee is heading overseas to Jamaica and Canada in an effort to

gather as much information to continue their study regarding all things related to Cannabis (marijuana).

Co-chair of the Commission, retired former Deputy Commissioner of Police,

Quinn McCartney said the purpose of the mission is to investigate the regulatory issues and realities as they relate to a sister CARICOM member state.

While in these countries that both have reg-

ularized the use of the Cannabis plant, Mr. McCartney said that the Commission will meet with government and the Cannabis Licensing Authority (CLA) officials.

"While in Jamaica, members of the Commission will meet with key officials from both the Jamaican government and officials from the Cannabis Licensing Authority to investigate the regulatory issues.

"In addition, members of the Commission will plan to travel to Canada to meet with government officials and also the CLA in an effort to obtain a broader perspective relative to concerns surrounding Cannabis reform around the world," Mr. McCartney said.

"Upon returning to The Bahamas, the Commission will compile a report that will be shared with the government," he added.

Initially the

Commission was to report its findings by the end of April, however it was given a three month extension to make this happen, much to the dismay of critics, who argue that the Commission is taking too long to reveal their findings.

The Rastafarian movement here in The Bahamas has indicated intentions to sue the government over the issue.

When questioned about these critics, Mr. McCartney said the Commission is aware that the public wants the issue addressed as quickly as possible.

"The Commission wants to make sure that we are very deliberative in our discussions and in our consultations, and we want to make sure that what we bring to the Bahamian public is something that would be of relevance to The Bahamas.

"We say yes it may be perceived to be taking a

bit too long, but certainly we want to give this issue sufficient time because it is a very important and critical issue

Mr. McCartney is encouraging the public to attend Town Hall meetings which are scheduled for June 27 here in the capital at the St. John's High School Auditorium at 6:30pm and in Grand Bahama at the Foster B. Pestaina Center Christ the King Anglican Church.

The Commission will also conduct walkabouts in several communities in New Providence and an anonymous survey to codify the views of the Bahamian public.

As a result, the Commission is seeking summer interns who would assist with research and logistical operations.

College students are encouraged to submit their resumes to info@bahamasncm.com by noon June 30th.

Ragged Island To Receive \$12 Mil In Repairs

BY LICEC BASTIAN
Journal Staff Writer

Minister of Public Works, Desmond Bannister revealed yesterday during his contribution to the 2019/2020 Budget Debate that hurricane ravaged Ragged Island is on tap to receive \$12 million in repairs to major infrastructures on the island.

However, Mr. Bannister acknowledged that reconstruction on Ragged Island, particular-

ly to government facilities will have to be done "in stages over a number of years, as logistically the engineering and architectural process together with the funding of the approximately \$12 million cannot be accomplished in a single budget year".

Hurricane Irma, in 2017, devastated the key infrastructure, including school Buildings, teachers residence, Police Station, Health Clinic, Airport

Shelter and Administration Building. Mr. Bannister said that these structures suffered severe damages as they were "extremely vulnerable".

"This infrastructure was extremely vulnerable because it was very old, and much of it did not meet current building standards with respect to the proper strengthening of foundations and the



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BAHAMAS DELEGATION ATTENDS CARIBBEAN TOURISM ORGANIZATION WEEK



► Pictured at the Caribbean Tourism Awards Dinner during the CTO Week in NYC 2019 is The Bahamas Tourist Office New York's Team with Director General Bahamas Ministry of Tourism and Aviation, Joy Jibrilu. From Left to right: Valery Brown-Alce, Sr. Director Marketing; Jeff Rodgers, Manager Sports Tourism Marketing; Mikala Moss, Area Manager, New York; DG; Ebianna Smith, Senior Executive; Chrystal Bethell, Marketing Co-ordinator; Vandia Sands, Marketing Representative.

FORT LAUDERDALE, FL –June 14, 2019 – Director General of the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism and Aviation, Joy Jibrilu, led the Bahamas contingent at the recent Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) Week 2019, in New York City.

The Bahamas team under the leadership of the Director General included the local staff

of the Bahamas Tourist Office, New York as well as a Bahamian culinary team that represented The Bahamas in CTO's Annual Rum and Rhythm Festival.

The annual week of activities in New York City is organized by the Caribbean Tourism Organization. CTO has long held that the event which draws tourism officials, industry execu-

tives, the media, the Caribbean Diaspora, travel agents, consumers and students is an opportunity to "showcase the best of Caribbean tourism."

In addition to taking part in many of the week-long activities and events, the Bahamas Tourism's top executive, DG Jibrilu also provided interviews with various local media houses and

Caribbean newspapers. The event also provided an opportunity for the Bahamas DG to be a part of a Caribbean Marketing Conference for Ministers, Commissioners, Directors of Tourism and other Industry Representatives.

According to CTO, The week in New York is organized annually to combine business ses-

sions and consumer-oriented events with food, fashion, entertainment, sales and networking opportunities and overall "create awareness of the Caribbean's diverse product offerings."

A popular event annually, The Rum and Rhythm (scholarship benefit) featured the traditional and national dishes and drinks from CTO member countries.

The Bahamian culinary team headed by Chef Kermit Mackey prepared Conch Empanadas, Coconut Flavored Shrimp and Grits, Pulled Pork on Plantain Chips, Mini Rum Cakes and Bread Pudding, all inspired by Bahamian flavors.

For information on The Bahamas, visit www.bahamas.com

Budget Slashed

Continued from / PAGE 1...

continued to mushroom completely out of control.

"To date the government has already spent \$25,910,347.20 on the stadium and we estimate that it will take close to \$11 million more to finish this stadium," Minister Bannister said.

Minister Bannister, who at the time was contributing to ongoing debate on the 2019/2020

budget debate, added that the total cost of the stadium will run the government into more than twice its original cost.

Then, there is Star Academy which he described as an even more sordid project the former administration never properly planned.

"They started out by allocating \$6,891,333.60. A few months later they increased this by \$20,098,452.33."

"Now the total cost will exceed \$30 million. The challenge is not only that government does not own the land; government does not even have a lease on the land," he said.

The delay to both projects he said, is the result of the former administration's dysfunction and poor planning.

That aside, the Minister's confident that 260 works projects will continue this year.

MITCHELL WANTS DISMISSED WORKERS RE-HIRED

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do not have the ring of truth."

He said, "various spokesmen for the Government continue to trot out the narrative that people dismissed by the FNM administration since coming to office for no good reason, have been re-hired and regularized. The anecdotal evidence does not support the government's assertions.

"The PLP is receiving disturbing reports from all across the country that the

people who were hired on the various apprenticeship programmes of the PLP administration were summarily dismissed and sent home. They have not been rehired.

"The public servants who are involved with the hiring process under the rebranded programmes of the FNM, have reported to us that they have been receiving lists from FNM generals about who to hire in these programmes. We believe these public servants.

"We do not believe one word that the Minister for the Public Service says on this subject," said Mr. Mitchell.

He called on the Government to rehire those people they have let go so that they can begin to feed their families once again as their lives take on some form of normalcy. Also, Senator Mitchell said, the government should stop this evil and wicked practice of victimizing workers they suspect to be supporters of the PLP.



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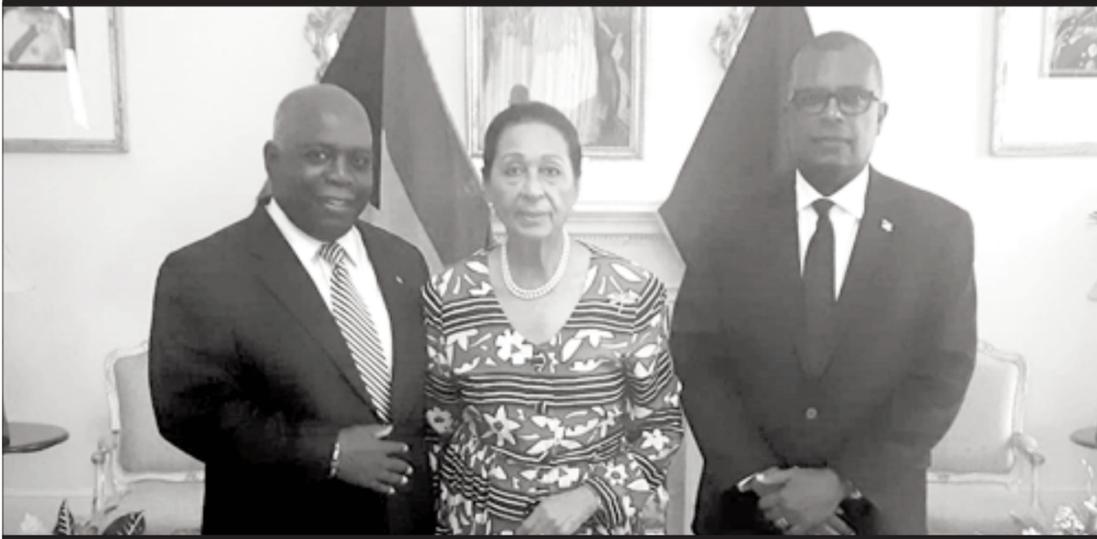
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PLP LEADERS VISIT WITH GG



▶ PLP Leader and Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition the Hon. Phillip "Brave" Davis along with PLP Chairman Sen. Fred Mitchell met with the Governor General Dame M. Pindling at Government House on Tuesday 18th June, 2019.

New Gaming Bill Promised

Continued from / PAGE 1...

edged in the House of Assembly during his budget communication last month that revenue was down for the 2018/2019 fiscal period in part due to the slump in gaming taxes.

A new tax regime took effect January 1st 2019 for all licensed gaming houses to pay 15 per cent on \$0 to \$24 million dol-

lars of revenue and operators earning anything greater than \$24 million will pay 17.5 per cent.

Based on the increased tax rate, the government had expected to collect approximately \$35 million in taxes.

That did not happen. If all goes as planned, the new gaming tax regime is to take effect July 1 – the start of the new fiscal year.

Min. Gives Warning For NIB Contributions

Continued from / PAGE 1...

payments stretch as far back as 10 years. Over that period, some businesses have even closed shop, but the Minister insists the board will work with them.

"Some of the negligence may have been on our behalf as well, because we signed an agreement with them and perhaps we didn't pursue them as vigorously as we should have.

"That's why I said yesterday that we are going

to vigorously pursue businesses, companies and individuals who are operating with a view to ensure that their commitments to NIB are collected in a timely fashion," Minister Rolle said.

To employers, Minister Rolle advises, "We've set up callers so that individuals can call NIB directly, so they could find out if the payments were made on their behalf; that is a critical point for staff members and others."

"We invite them to call

NIB so they can keep a trace or keep track of monies that have been paid on their behalf to the board and secondly the whole issue of the moral values of companies and individuals who take your money or deduct your money and not pay you," the National Insurance Minister said.

Meantime, the Minister's urging all employers to live up to their obligation and simply make their NIB payments.

Ragged Island Receives \$12 Mil In Repairs

Continued from / PAGE 2...

construction of roofing.

"There is a huge challenge to enforce building controls in the construction process in many family island communities, and it is very important for local government to be vigilant during the entire process so that we may protect residents of these communities from natural disasters," he said.

Mr. Bannister revealed that the construction of the school and teachers' duplex is pegged at \$4 million, while the construction of the clinic and Police Station and officers accommodations are pegged at \$3 million each.

"The school has been designed for 60 persons. It also will serve as a hurricane shelter. The Ministry of Education has only 6 students on record. The project design has been completed and currently the tender documents are being finalized. It is planned to tender the project by next month with an expected start date in October or November 2019.

"This is why it is so important and such a challenge, and I spoke about this challenge in the Family Islands, and so our architects have sought to design a hurricane shelter, a small school and teachers' residence," Mr. Bannister said.

"After the school, we are looking to construct the clinic. Designs are still being reviewed by the Ministry of Health, but the architectural design has been completed," he added.

As for the construction of the Administrators office, Post Office and Court room, it will cost the government \$2 million; for these Mr. Bannister said that architectural design is ongoing.

Mr. Bannister added that "preliminary cost estimates have taken into consideration the inflationary effect of construction from cost of transportation to the Family Islands".

MINISTER HENFIELD ADDRESSED THE 121ST PHILIPPINES INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS



▶ Minister of Foreign Affairs the Hon. Darren A. Henfield was guest speaker at the Filipino Association of The Bahamas 121st Philippines Independence Day Celebrations on Sunday, June 16, 2019 at Baha Mar. Minister Henfield pointed out that both The Bahamas and the Republic of the Philippines are archipelagic nations and both greatly appreciate their cultural history. Themed, 'Filipino Pride, My Roots, My Heritage,' the festivities and celebrations featured a 'Search for Miss Philippines Bahamas 2019.' Seated from left: the new President of Filipino Association of The Bahamas (FAB) Mrs. Florita M. Viterbo, Mrs. Henfield and Minister Darren Henfield. (BIS Photos/Derek Smith)

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