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# The Bahama Journal

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# BPL Disaster Company Offers No Guarantees

BY LEAH COOPER  
 Journal Staff Writer

As load shedding continues to intensify and Bahamians are finding it unbearable, Bahamas Power and Light CEO Whitney Heastie said the power plant cannot guarantee that load shedding will stop, as there are generators that are failing.

"The challenge we have is with an ageing fleet. Last night, we had four additional units that



► Bahamas Power and Light officials held a press conference on Sunday at BPL's Clifton Pier power plant to discuss the causes of load shedding throughout New Providence. Seated left to right: Wartsila representative Edmund Phillips, BPL Chairman Donovan Moxey, BPL CEO Whitney Heastie and Acting COO Ian Pratt. (Journal Photo)

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## Davis – 'BPL A Failed Company' Calls for Compensation

BY DEANDRE WILLIAMSON  
 Journal Staff Writer

Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) Leader Philip Davis wasted no time responding to Bahamas Power and Light's (BPL) press conference as he believes the corporation failed Bahamians and they should be compensated for enduring the miserable load shedding crisis.

"I think at the moment, we are facing a catastrophe where BPL is a failed



► PLP Leader, Philip Davis

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## 'High Load Shedding Levels Unexpected'

BY LEAH COOPER  
 Journal Staff Writer

Bahamas Power and Light (BPL) CEO Whitney Heastie admitted yesterday that while

the company can improve its communication regarding load shedding, there are far more issues at hand as the company didn't expect such high levels of load

shedding this summer. "It must be noted that the board appointed in 2017 and this current board have had a collec-

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## Fire at BPL

BY DEANDRE WILLIAMSON  
 Journal Staff Writer

In addition to Bahamas Power and Light's (BPL) increased load shedding, there was a fire at the corporation's Clifton Pier power plant on Friday.

BPL Public Relations Director Quincy Parker told The Bahama Journal yesterday that the fire was extinguished and affected one of the generator units. However, Parker said

the generator was returned to service.

During a press conference on Sunday, Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) Leader Philip Davis blamed previous fires at the power plant on BPL's management.

"A new handpicked executive management team whose decisions led to multiple fires at the Clifton Pier, Blue Hills

■ See page 3...

## Unemployment Rate Drops

BY LEAH COOPER  
 Journal Staff Writer

The unemployment rate took a dive as more people are counted among the workforce, according to the Department of Statistics this past Friday.

Preliminary figures indicated that 4,330 persons were working at the time the most recent labour force survey was conducted in May 2018.

Senior Statistician

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► Prime Minister Dr. Hubert Minnis rushes with the Saxons Superstars at the 2019 Junkanoo Summer Festival at Arawak Cay, Saturday, August 10, 2019. (BIS Photo/Patrick Hanna)



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ALL THE NEWS YOU NEED TO READ IN THE MORNING

# Stalled Negotiations Worry BPSU President

BY BERTHONY MCDERMOTT  
Journal Staff Writer

It's been nearly two months since the Bahamas Public Services Union (BPSU) and the government came to the table to negotiate a new industrial agreement and according to Union President Kimsley Ferguson, the union hasn't heard anything from

the government on the financial aspects of that deal.

Take for instance, workers at the Princess Margaret Hospital, according to Mr. Ferguson, a meeting was scheduled for today, but postponed.

"I am very concerned, and I am hearing little innuendos about the place that persons are

trying to stall the negotiations," he said.

"I heard it. I didn't pay any attention to it. There are some indications of some things that are causing me to lean towards the fact that that may be what is happening."

The union president said he also had a meeting scheduled for today with the Prime Minister

and that was postponed. He appealed to those in authority to sit and meet with the union.

"There are Bahamians out there who have the challenge of preparing their kids for back to school and they need relief. They need assistance and so we are going to agitate," Mr. Ferguson said.

"We don't want to

have to take any extreme measures that's going to affect the operations of the Public Hospitals Authority or the public service."

"So, we are appealing to those persons in authority, our motto says, 'reasoning together accomplishes,' and so we want to be able to reason and arrive at a reasonable resolve so that these per-

sons who are turning the wheels in the public service and the various organizations where members of the public are going to be impacted, can receive some sort of relief and assistance in getting their children prepared for school."

Union members are seeking wage increases, a lump sum payment and a salary review.

# BPL Disaster Company Offers No Guarantees

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would have gone down. There's no guarantee that when those units come back another two won't go down," Heastie said yesterday during a press conference at BPL's Clifton power station.

However, BPL officials

noted that construction of a brand new 132 megawatt power station, powered by Finland-based manufacturing company Wartsila will fix the decades-long annoyance.

That plant is expected to be completed in December.

During Sunday's press

conference, Heastie also indicated that while the power company understands its consumers' frustrations, it simply cannot afford to compensate consumers at this time.

"Our monthly expenditures exceed \$40 million each month. Forty million

dollars on average is fuel. That goes to Shell North America. That's based on the price of fuel. That's nobody in The Bahamas gaining that money," Mr. Heastie said.

"Over \$8 million is spent on paying and running the business every

day. Inclusive of that would be the vendors that we are contracted to provide service with. Another \$3 million is provided for interest on loans."

Mr. Heastie added that with all of these expenses, there is no room for the power company to not

insist their customers pay their bills.

He also said the company's lack of funds is exactly how it's in the predicament it is in today.

BPL CEO added that the corporation cannot maintain its resources without proper funding.



▶ Reporters attended a press conference at Bahamas Power and Light's Clifton Pier power plant on Sunday. (Photo/BPL/Journal)



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# UNION FIGHTS FOR INCREASED MORTON SALARIES

BY EARYEL BOWLEG  
Journal Staff Writer

Minister of Labour Dion Foulkes, Allied Workers Union negotiator Obie Ferguson and Morton Salt Company executives met last Thursday to discuss the company's industrial agreement, but concerns over salary increase made it difficult to consent on terms of the agreement.

Ferguson, who spoke to Bahama Journal about the outcome of the meeting, said the parties made progress, but employees'

salaries and insurance are preventing them from signing.

"We maintain that the salary of 1.5 percent increase in pay is not sufficient. In the increases in insurance is excess of 5 percent. That doesn't make any sense," Ferguson said.

"We understand that concern that they're raising is inflection, that being what it is. We're averaging about 3 percent and we we're thinking in terms of an increase in VAT and some of the other

cost incurred on the worker. We figure that 1.5 percent isn't going to cut it."

Union President Jennifer Brown said they wanted to meet on Friday to finish talks on the agreement, but was unable, due to schedule conflicts.

Ferguson revealed they will meet again on September 30 to continue negotiations and finding a solution that appeases both the minister and Morton.

Back in June, Morton threatened to lock

employees out of the Inagua Salt plant if a "happy medium" of negotiations was not achieved within 15 days.

It escalated that month, after a letter accused the line staff union's inability to negotiate "in good faith" and preventing Morton's Bahamian operation's "economic viability".

Brown condemned the move as she felt it would do neither party any good. They eventually decide not to go through with their plans.



► Minister of Labour Dion Foulkes

## Emergency Landing at LPIA

On Saturday, a private aircraft en route from Pompano Beach, Florida to Nassau, Bahamas made an emergency landing at the Lynden Pindling International Airport (LPIA).

According to LPIA officials, the incident happened around 4:32 p.m. Two persons were onboard the Challenger

60 aircraft, one American and one Bahamian. There were no injuries reported.

Immediately upon receiving the call, NAD activated its Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Airport Rescue & Fire Fighting also responded to the incident.

Due to the runway excursion, aircraft operations were interrupted for

approximately one hour and 30 minutes at LPIA with services resuming at 6 p.m.

LPIA officials said, throughout the duration of the incident, the airport facilities remained opened.

Flights are currently arriving and departing and there were no flight cancellations.

## Unemployment

■ Continued from / PAGE 1...

Cynpreanna Winters said, "Two of the three most populated islands that were surveyed experienced decreases in their unemployment rates, and one experienced an increase."

"At the time of the survey, the rate in New Providence was 9.4 percent and in Grand Bahama 10.9 percent. On the other hand, Abaco's unemployment rate increased from 7.7 percent in November to 9.3 percent in May," Winters added.

The hotel and restaurant sector reportedly experienced the greatest increase while the community, social and personal service industry which accounts for 35 percent of

the workforce.

This includes the civil service, police service and domestic service, which continued to be the country's largest employer.

Statisticians also revealed that the number of discouraged workers also declined overall by two percent, one percent in New Providence and 5.4 percent in Grand Bahama.

Mrs. Winters added that vulnerable employment remained unchanged in May 2018 with no difference in its rate of 6.9 percent.

Males, she said, dominated this category.

Vulnerable employment, as defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) are workers less likely to have

formal work arrangements and more likely to lack decent working conditions and are often characterized by inadequate earnings and benefits.

Women were also reportedly more likely to be unemployed than men.

Mrs. Winters said, "Overall, the unemployment rate for women dropped to 9.9 percent in May, compared to 9.2 percent for men. Young women, those aged 15-24 and core-aged women, those aged 25-54, were more likely to be unemployed than their male counterparts."

In contrast, she said, men, 55, and over were slightly more likely to be unemployed in comparison to women in their same age cohort.

## Fire at BPL

■ Continued from / PAGE 1...

and Bimini power stations that severely compromised the power generation capacity and reliability of BPL, pushing this beleaguered public corporation to the brink of collapse with daily load shedding that proved disruptive and debilitating to the personal lives of Bahamians and harmful and threatening to the country's national economy," Davis said.

"There was reportedly another fire at the Clifton Pier power plant on Friday, 9 August 2019, so the fires continue unabated.

"The criticism, condemning and repudiation of BPL continue to

intensify as the government remains tone deaf to this public outcry."

The PLP leader also claimed that the promised investigations into the multiple fires that led to the unplanned \$95 million Wartsila deal have not been made public.

He said it is much "like the promised investigation into the circumstances that led to the collapse and eventual dissolution of the initial BPL board."

"The \$95 million Wartsila deal remains mired in controversy, covered in a dark cloud of secrecy and bears the stench of scandal and corruption. Why wasn't Shell North America allowed to provide

immediate bridge financing as part of the \$200 million energy supply deal. I note that the government said the Shell NA was necessary because BPL and the government did not have the money to finance the much needed new power generation plants," Davis said.

"What and who was the source of this \$95 million loan and why did its formal request not come to Parliament by way of resolution, resulting in a public and transparent Parliamentary debate? The government's apparent secret smoked-filled room and backdoor deal making is not being transparent, accountable or fiscally responsible."



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# 'High Load Shedding Levels Unexpected'

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tive stint of just over 24 months. Those two boards met the following set of circumstances in place, a decaying generation fleet, with equipment up to 60 years old," Heastie said during a press conference at BPL's Clifton power plant.

"So, here is where we are generation fleet where

parts could no longer be procured or could only be procured exclusively from manufacturers that have not been very responsive to our requests for help, a generation fleet where preventative maintenance was not the order of the day, a generation fleet that relied on costly fuel, and a generation fleet that, if action were not taken quickly, could

in fact lead us to where we are today or worse."

The CEO added that neither the time frame between those two boards, nor the circumstances that may have led to the change in boards, had an impact on that history.

He said it was the power company's hope that with the help of the additional rental units

from Aggreko, it would be in a position to prevent load shedding this summer.

He added that while BPL was cognizant of the tightrope it was walking, due to the pressure placed on the remaining plant, it did not anticipate this level of system failure.

"Our peak demand is 250 megawatts. We have a total of 210 megawatts

available today, which includes the following: 105 megawatts in Aggreko rental capacity, 35 megawatts at Clifton Pier, and 70 megawatts from Blue Hills," he said. "This equates to 210 megawatts or 40 megawatts short of what is required, hence the load shedding."

He said the company is working feverishly on

returning two generators at the Blue Hills power station that will make up for this shortfall.

However, the company cannot guarantee that other units will not fail as it has no excess capacity.

Mr. Heastie assured that once the country gets deeper into the fall season, the demand will drop thus relieving the load shedding.

# Davis - 'BPL A Failed Company'

Continued from / PAGE 1...

corporation. We know the inconvenience being suffered and inflicted on our people and yes there should be some form of compensation for all of this inconvenience," Davis said yesterday.

"In particular, I'm aware of persons whose appliances have been impacted and affected by the fluctuations of electricity, cutting on and cutting off, and those people ought to be compensated for their loss of their appliances."

He explained that the PLP government would have been empathetic to the concerns of Bahamians if this massive

load shedding issue occurred under his administration.

Davis added that the PLP would have addressed the issue to ensure that Bahamians are placed in a position as close as possible where the power would not be so disruptive in their lives.

On Sunday, BPL held a press conference at its Clifton Pier power plant where CEO Whitney Heastie said the corporation could offer no guarantee that load shedding would stop and he gave no assurance of compensation and explained that consumers are only charged for the electricity used.

However, Davis

believes load shedding is harmful to the Bahamian economy and claims the government doesn't care about Bahamians.

"Further, there is darkness at night, heat during the day and night, the misery index has risen exponentially and in the face of all this, all the minister can do is blame the PLP, while the prime minister is busy shaking cowbells," Davis said.

"The broader issues of political cronyism, ineptitude, mismanagement, corruption and the lack of transparency and accountability in the general stewardship of public assets in the public's interest strike at the core, the root and source of this current

national energy crisis.

"Further, the prime minister and his minister for BPL must not and will not be allowed to conveniently sweep all of these breaches of public trust under the proverbial carpet.

"Make no mistake about it, this current BPL crisis is unwittingly a Hubert Minnis construct and orchestrated crisis simply because he failed to place the interests of the Bahamian people above his narrow, hidden, personal and political interests and agendas."

The PLP leader also pointed out that former BPL manager, PowerSecure, possessed investment grade securi-

ties necessary to facilitate BPL's capital development.

"The Minnis government unceremoniously canceled their management agreement and ran them out of the country while approving and adopting their business plan, complete with the rates reduction program and enabling legislation," Davis said.

"The prime minister's mishandling of BPL is breathtaking. His stone silence and deflections in the face of the public fallout are resulting in a precipitous deterioration in public confidence in his administration.

"There is indeed a trust deficit.

"The prime minister has proven to be complicated and duplicitous on any number of governance issues ranging from the post office crisis, on the fraudulent Oban deal, contract administration and conflicts of interest involving a cabinet minister, and the public behavior of public officers Bennet Minnis and Omar Archer.

"In each case the prime minister either deflected, blamed the PLP, or avoided addressing these issues.

"So far reaching and harmful are the levels and depths of mismanagement at BPL that Prime Minister Minnis must act because after all it is the people's time."

# BCF Partners with MOE and Ministry of Youth, Sports & Culture Hosts FIDE Trainer's Seminar



Left to right: - FIDE Trainer Darcy Lima; Olga Roussos, Seminar Participant and Evon Wisdom, Senior Education Officer Interscholastic Sport, Ministry of Education.)



Left to right: - FIDE Trainer Darcy Lima; Lincoln Knowles, Seminar Participant and Evon Wisdom, Senior Education Officer Interscholastic Sport, Ministry of Education.

Another milestone has been achieved by the Bahamas Chess Federation (BCF). The BCF, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Youth, Sports & Culture and FIDE, recently hosted a free World Chess Federation (FIDE) Trainers Seminar. The intense three day seminar took place at Centreville Medical Centre from 27 July to 29 July, culminating with a final exam.

Successful candidates will be awarded one of four titles: - FIDE Trainer, FIDE Instructor, National Instructor or Developmental Instructor.

The international certification will be recognized by Federations around the world. These titles will also enable recipients to travel to international chess competitions as a Head Coach, to be certified to offer private lessons, run chess clubs and most importantly, to be able to give back to the community by sharing the gift of chess.

The instructor for the seminar was FIDE Trainer Darcy Lima. Mr. Lima is a Chess Grandmaster, Deputy President International Chess Federation for Americas (CCA), President of Brazilian Mind Sports

Association (ABRESPI) and President of the Brazilian Chess Federation. The three day seminar attracted twenty-three (23) participants. Participants included teachers, community center workers, coaches and future constituency club leaders from the islands of Grand Bahama, Andros and New Providence.

Mr. Evon Wisdom, Senior Education Officer Interscholastic Sport, Ministry of Education, encouraged seminar participants to use the knowledge they gained to assist young persons in their communities: "Impart the skills you have attained

during this seminar to some child; you will appreciate giving back and helping someone else more than anything else you do. That is what this certification is for." He concluded: - "If you get this certification and all you want it for is to travel, that is not a ministry that is something that benefits you. There are many children throughout our community who are challenged but have an innate talent. You have something, you have a skill. Spread the love!"

The free FIDE Trainer's Seminar is a part of what BCF is describing as the organization's 'Summer of Chess'. The 'Summer of

Chess' kicked off with the free BCF month long chess summer camp, followed by the FIDE Trainer's Seminar. The 'Summer of Chess' will culminate with the free 'Chess in Education School Instructor Online Seminar'. The goal of the seminar is to train teachers how to use chess as a pedagogical aid.

"I am happy with the seminar turnout. BCF has taken another great step forward, it was a very informative and educational seminar", exclaimed Elton Joseph, President, Bahamas Chess Federation. Mr. Joseph added: - "The BCF

Executive Committee would like to thank the Ministries and The MedNet Group of Companies, a sponsor of the seminar, for working with us on this very important project. The BCF will support our great participants who have taken up the mantle to equip themselves to assist in the development of our Nation. We also look forward to the final event of our BCF 'Summer of the Chess' initiative, our free 'Chess in Education School Instructor Online Seminar'. Our goal is to attract participants from more than three islands for this Seminar."