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SkyBahamas Locked Out

BY LICEC BASTIAN
 Journal Staff Writer

Bahamian-owned airline SkyBahamas has been booted out of the Lynden Pindling International Airport (LPIA). Bahamas Civil Aviation Authority (BCAA) Director General Captain Charles Beneby revealed as much during a press conference yesterday.

According to Captain Beneby, there has been a lot of talk, publicly, regarding SkyBahamas, "particularly a court order

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► SkyBahamas CEO Capt. Randy Butler

BCAA Clears Air on SkyBahamas

BY LICEC BASTIAN
 Journal Staff Writer

Bahamas Civil Aviation Authority (BCAA) Director General Charles Beneby said the authority will not be "coerced, bullied or strong-armed" into granting an Air Operators Certificate (AOC) to SkyBahamas.

Captain Beneby's statement yesterday was a direct response to the ongoing controversy with

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► BCAA Director General Charles Beneby

Former MP Wants 'Heads to Roll' at BPL

BY EARYEL BOWLEG
 Journal Staff Writer

Former Free National Movement Member of Parliament Lester Turnquest called for "heads to roll" while expressing his frustration over Bahamas Power and Light's (BPL) miserable load shedding crisis.

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► Former MP Lester Turnquest

Maynard - 'Wartsila Won't Stop Load Shedding'

BY LEAH COOPER
 Journal Staff Writer

Bahamas Electrical Workers Union President Paul Maynard yesterday contended that Bahamas Power and Light's new 132 megawatt Wartsila plant may not be the answer to load shedding. His comments fol-

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► Paul Maynard

'Too Early for Low Unemployment Rate Celebration'

BY EARYEL BOWLEG
 Journal Staff Writer

Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) Chairman Fred Mitchell said the government should not be "popping the champagne corks just yet" after revealing that unemployment is down.

Mitchell told The Bahama Journal on Monday that statistics

showing youth unemployment is still far too high and women continue to suffer in employment.

"There's a huge problem across the Caribbean with youth unemployment and with youth unemployment. It looks to me about 20 percent here still, but that is significant number," Mitchell said.

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► PLP Chairman Fred Mitchell

STUDENTS ATTENDING CANADIAN SCHOOLS PAID COURTESY CALL ON GG



► Students attending various high schools and colleges in Canada paid a courtesy call on Governor General Cornelius A. Smith at Government House, August 8, 2019. The students were accompanied by Dr. Marie McDonald (seated third left). (BIS Photo/Letisha Henderson)



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ALL THE NEWS YOU NEED TO READ IN THE MORNING

Cooper Welcomes Proposed Solar Facility

BY DEANDRE WILLIAMSON
Journal Staff Writer

Exuma and Ragged Island Member of Parliament Chester Cooper welcomed Bahamas Power and Light's (BPL) selection of a firm to construct a solar generation facility in Ragged Island.

"I am pleased that after watching the people of Ragged Island suffer for the past two years, this government has decided to move on addressing some of the needs of the people," Cooper said yesterday.

"I fully support renewable energy and any effort at improving the lives of

Ragged Islanders.

In the face of the mayhem taking place on New Providence, this is a bright spot for a beleaguered BPL."

Last week, BPL announced that work on implementing its first solar and battery storage solution is set to begin within days on Ragged Island.

Burlington Strachan, BPL director of grid stability and support services, said, "This project, when completed, will produce in excess of 90 percent of the energy requirements for Ragged Island, thereby reducing the carbon footprint of the island



and diversifying the energy mix for BPL on the island."

While the company chosen to construct the solar and battery storage facility is unknown, Cooper said he will wait to see what results from this undertaking.

"We also question why this project will only cover 90 percent of the needs of Ragged Islanders. There are not so many people that the other 10 percent should prove difficult to cover," he said. "We would also be very interested to know the specific cost of this project."

According to BPL, the

project also supports the power plant's diversification of energy sources within its generation fleet and is paving the way for the company in the renewables arena.

"While we exercise continued patience with this administration, we shall be closely watching the construction of this facility and eagerly anticipating the December 31, 2019 deadline for completion," Cooper said.

The member of parliament also noted that in addition to the solar facility, Ragged Island also needs a teacher, a nurse, a policeman and a public administration building.

Disney Not Labeled as 'Bully'

BY LEAH COOPER
Journal Staff Writer

Bahamian environmentalist Sam Duncombe defended Compass Point Owner Leigh Rodney this past Sunday in an op-ed charging that the government did not label Disney Cruise Lines as a "bully".

She said 30 years of advocating for this country's long-term welfare has taught her "one abiding, unalterable truth" and that is "Bahamian satire writes itself".

She was referring to comments made by Minister of Tourism Dionisio D'Aguilar warning the American co-owner of the Compass Point Resort not to "bully" the Bahamian government.

The businessman reached a tipping point last week, after having enough of the archaic way of doing business in the country.

Ms. Duncombe said Compass Point employs 60 Bahamians and serves quite a number of long-stay visitors here in the capital.

This is the same visitors the minister said spend 20-25 times more than cruise ship tourists.

She added that the government's attitude towards Compass Point compared to the government's attitude towards the proposed Disney Cruise port at Lighthouse Point is completely different.

She said the government did not accuse Disney of bullying, even when Disney, on the eve

of government's yes or no decision about Lighthouse Point, threatened to pack up and go away if the project was not approved.

Further, she said no one accused Disney of bullying when it insisted on "no taxes of any kind on any form of revenue generated from the project for at least 20 years, no import duties or levies on any materials related to the project, no real property taxes for at least 20 years, no obligation to improve local infrastructure."

"The company was given the right to build its own private power, water and sewerage plants," Ms. Duncombe added.

She also said there is no obligation to ever participate in any revenue-sharing formula, discre-

tionary authority to determine the number of Bahamians hired and a soft target of only 120-150 jobs, despite the fact that the company forecasts up to one million annual visitors.

The company, she said, also has discretionary authority to determine the number of vendors allowed on premises and

the type of goods they can sell, monopoly on food service and various other activities, no prohibition against penny-pinching commissions on tour operators, no meaningful contribution to workforce training - which is \$20,000 over five years, and lastly, no commitment to a cash-friendly environment.

She said, "So Disney will be free to use its onboard credit systems to control financial interface between its passengers and local vendors."

Ms. Duncombe said if Minister D'Aguilar is serious about pushing back against bullies, "maybe he should take another look at the Lighthouse Point deal."

SkyBahamas Locked Out

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- an injunction that was granted - and that injunction caused SkyBahamas to have to cease its operation and vacate premises attached to a lease that they had with the Nassau Airport Development Company (NAD)".

The BCAA is an independent regulatory agency separate and apart from NAD and the two have no connection whatsoever, according to Captain Beneby.

"SkyBahamas is not operating currently. They have been ordered out of the Lynden Pindling International Airport. The BCAA had nothing to do with that. That is a separate matter all together," Captain Beneby reiterated.

SkyBahamas occupied Terminal A at LPIA, when it relocated its operations from the Blake Road

Plaza in 2013, citing tough economic times.

At the time SkyBahamas' CEO Captain Randy Butler told The Bahama Journal that the company decided to relocate as a cost-saving measure.

He added that the company had experienced a steady loss in business during 2013 and as a result, had begun restructuring, including slashing its workforce.

At the time, the airline was also in the middle of a dispute with Bahamas Pilots Alliance (BPA) after terminating 10 of its pilots.

As for present day, Captain Beneby gave little information on SkyBahamas being put out of LPIA, adding that it is a matter being dealt with by the court system, while insisting that he would not speak to SkyBahamas' financial position.

"The claim that the authority somehow shut SkyBahamas down and prevented SkyBahamas from continuing its operation is unfounded," Captain Beneby said.

The Bahama Journal reached out to NAD, which stated that "NAD is not in a position to comment in this regard".

As for why SkyBahamas is currently grounded, Captain Beneby said among other things, the airline did not resubmitted its application for its Air Operators Certificate in time.

"The regulations require an applicant to submit a request for renewal at least 30 days prior to the expiration of that certificate. That application was received in the office of the Safety Oversight Department on the 21 of June, just nine days prior to the expiration of that certificate," Captain Beneby said.

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Veteran Tourism Executive Receives Coveted Industry Award

Linville Johnson, a Sr. Executive of The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism and Aviation (BMOTA) has joined a privileged list. The group includes Tourism Ministers, Governors, CEO's and Presidents of major national organizations and associations who are all among past recipients of the coveted Apex Award, presented annually by Black Meetings and Tourism Magazine.

Johnson, currently responsible for BMOTA's Multi-Cultural Market development, was one of the recipients of the Award at the recent Annual gala culminating the National Association of Black Hotel Owners, Operators and Developers (NAB-HOOD) and the International Multicultural and Heritage Summit and Trade Show at the Marriott's Biscayne Bay Hotel, Miami, Florida.

The Florida International University alumni was awarded for his "Distinguished Service" in the Hospitality and Tourism industry. His career to date has spanned more than three decades and includes the beginning of

his career at the former Britannia Beach Hotel, Paradise Island, Nassau. In his years with Bahamas Tourism He has successfully managed the organization's Tourist Offices in major U.S. cities including Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, New York and Miami.

Some of the highlights of Johnson's lengthy career with BMOTA includes his creation and development of the organization's Religious Market with the help of deceased Bahamian televangelist, Myles Munroe and well-known Bahamian evangelist, Neil Ellis.

Johnson also was one of the pioneer's with BMOTA's Latin American Market and assisted in the development and growth of the market within the organization. He was also responsible for the formation of BMOTA's Vertical Markets strategy that started with some 12 markets and was later narrowed down to six areas which now include, Fishing, Boating, Diving, Private Flying, Religious Markets and Weddings and Honeymoon.

The Sr. Tourism execu-

to The Islands Of The Bahamas, have worked with large groups and organizations across the U.S. Black Enterprise, The National Urban League, The National Coalition of Black Meeting Planners and the National Black Caucus are a few of the major organizations that Johnson has worked closely with.

During Johnson's leadership stint with the Religious Market, The Islands Of The Bahamas played host to some of the most influential spiritual leaders in the Christian faith such as T.D. Jakes, Rod Parsley, Benny Hinn, Tony Evans, Paula White and Promise Keepers International.

Recognizing Johnson's expansive contribution to BMOTA the Deputy Director General of Tourism, Ellison 'Tommy' Thompson said, "Linville has indeed provided outstanding service to the development and growth of tourism to The Bahamas from across the USA. He has served in numerous capacities with The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism and Aviation in Nassau and in cities across the U.S. over the past few decades and this award is a great way to



► Linville Johnson, responsible for the Multicultural Department of The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism and Aviation is pictured with his Apex Award, received from Black Meetings and Tourism's Magazine for his outstanding contributions to the Hospitality and Tourism Industry. Photo by ExclusiveAccess.Net

recognize his continuous long and dedicated service in our field."

Johnson's hard work was also recognized early in his career when he received a Ministry of Tourism Sales Person of The Year Award, that

was given to the Sales Representative whose territory showed the greatest increase in sales for a designated period.

A resident of Coral Springs, Florida, Johnson holds a Bachelor's Degree in

tourism marketing and hospitality management from Florida International University. He is currently pursuing graduate studies at the University of Miami and the University of Pittsburgh.



► Janet Johnson, CEO and Executive Director of The Bahamas Tourism Development Corp (TDC), represented The Islands Of The Bahamas on a panel at the recent International Multicultural and Heritage Tourism Network Conference in Miami, Florida. The topic of discussion was 'How to Develop An Effective Multicultural and Tourism Program that Helps to Grow the Minority Business.' Johnson is pictured seated second from right. Photo by ExclusiveAccess.net



► The Bahamas was one of the sponsors at the recent National Association of Black Hotel Owners, Operators and Developers Annual Trade Show and Summit, held in Miami, Florida. Pictured in The Bahamas suite at the Annual event, from left to right are Linville Johnson, Multicultural Market, Bahamas Tourist Office (BTO), FL; Janet Johnson, Bahamas Tourism Development Corp; Anita Johnson-Patty, General Manager, Communication's Department, BTO, Florida and Clay Saunders, Bahamas Ministry of Tourism and Aviation. Photo by ExclusiveAccess.net



► Pictured are Bahamian students who were in attendance at the recent Annual Summit and Trade Show of the National Association of Black Hotel Owners, Operators and Developers and the International Multicultural and Heritage Tourism Network in Miami, Florida. Photo by ExclusiveAccess.net

BCAA Clears Air on SkyBahamas

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SkyBahamas and the BCAA's decision to ground the airline, citing that it does not hold a current AOC, which is the approval granted by the BCAA to an aircraft operator to allow for the use of an aircraft for commercial purposes.

He added that an AOC cannot be granted until the BCAA is satisfied that the applicant possesses the necessary capabilities - operational, technical and financial, to perform the functions granted by the certificate in a safe manner, which protects the well being of the flying public.

Seeking to clear the air on the debacle, SkyBahamas Limited has been facing in recent weeks, Captain Beneby said he wanted to relay the complete message to the public as opposed to the one-sided information as related through the media by SkyBahamas CEO Captain Randy Butler.

Captain Beneby, during yesterday's press conference, said despite this, the BCAA sought to work with the airline's management team.

Captain Beneby added that one of the main reasons for the airline's grounding is the fact that it failed to reapply for its AOC.

According to Captain Beneby, SkyBahamas' AOC expired on June 29, and although procedure requires resubmitting of applications 30 days prior to expiration, SkyBahamas resubmitted on June only nine days before its AOC would expire.

"Notwithstanding the lateness of that application, and being desirous of facilitating activities associated with air commerce, we commenced work on the renewal for Sky Bahamas," Captain Beneby said.

"Amongst other things, there were a number of issues that were discovered. We worked with

Sky's management team with a view towards resolving those issues.

"We have made some progress, however, our activities were stymied by Sky's refusal to allow inspectors access to the premises as is required under the regulations."

However, he added that despite this, inspectors still carried out their duties once they were granted access by SkyBahamas.

"After finally being granted permission to access and of the six findings that were still outstanding we were able to resolve about half of them," Captain Beneby said.

"The authority is still mindful and still willing to work with SkyBahamas, notwithstanding all of the things that has gone on we're still willing to work with SkyBahamas."

Too, Captain Beneby held firm that SkyBahamas is not being singled out and it's by no means an act of sabotage, no political con-

sideration on the part of the authority, as expressed by the airlines CEO.

He did say however, that the issuance and renewal of the AOC is a process, adding that the authority must satisfy itself that the airlines possess the capabilities to exercise the privileges of that certificate.

According to BCAA's Director General, SkyBahamas was denied the AOC, as there were some nine findings that were relayed to the airline to correct anomalies in a reasonable amount of time.

"Originally, there were nine findings that were communicated to SkyBahamas officials and they were given an opportunity to work along with regulators. If the issues are not a serious safety concern," Captain Beneby said.

"We would be inclined to give the operator an opportunity to present an action plan that would correct the anomalies in a rea-

sonable amount of time. We attempted to do that in this case and I think we had some success.

"This is a regulatory issue. We are continuing to work with the operator in this case. What I can tell you, there is a requirement for an applicant for an AOC to demonstrate that they have the operational, organizational, technical and financial capabilities to do what it is they're seeking approval to do.

"There was a matter involving requirement management personnel that has to be addressed. There is a matter involving the currency of a pilot and a system that was intended to track the continued currency of that pilot that did not function the way that should have functioned and as a result, in our minds, it suggested that this applicant did not possess the necessary systems, safety systems to satisfy the requirement of the regulations."

It is not our intention to create an environment in

which an air operator cannot perform their functions.

Captain Beneby acknowledged that SkyBahamas was able to address some of the issues, but there are still some remaining issues that need to be addressed if the airline is to get its certificate.

"We have some issues right now that involve some of their documentation that we are willing to work with them to fix.

"There is one particular requirement and that is as it relates to the Organization Required Management personnel that needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency if SkyBahamas is going to get an AOC", he said.

Captain Beneby added that the BCAA has nearly 45 AOCs that is managed actively and they all have found it within themselves to be in and remain in compliance.

He also added that the issue with SkyBahamas is "an unusual set of events".

'Too Early for Low Unemployment Celebration'

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"The question is how do get the people under 25 who aren't involved in the economy and looking for work because it appears it is still difficulty. I guess much of it has to do with training, but also has to do with opportunities in the economy.

"It still seems that women still have disadvantage in the economy, even when they are exceeding men in their levels of education.

"All of this should be

warning signs to the government where they need to put the attention to trying to get additional equal opportunities for the country."

Mitchell also addressed the hidden problem of underemployment which occurs when a person is working in a lower capacity than they are qualified for.

This typically happens to recent college graduates in the Bahamas. The Department of Statistic currently has no data on underemployment in their

questionnaire.

"To some extent this is a structural problem which has to do with small countries, limited opportunities," he explained.

"Even in the resort sector, Bahamians hit a glass ceiling. There are jobs that they can do, but are not being offered.

"And the other thing is there is consistent complaint in that sector you get fired in the drop of a hat. These are two issues I think a more aggressive Department of Labour

should be looking at."

He pointed out the puzzling high unemployment rate in Abaco despite its booming economy in the Bahamas.

"The place seems to be quite busy, but this statis-

tics are showing unemployment has risen by percentage point in Abaco since the last survey. So we're talking to our people over there to figure out why that happened," Mr. Mitchell revealed.

Mitchell said the jump in employment was because of the Baha Mar project and Minister of Tourism Dionisio D'Aguiar is riding on the wave of someone else who started that project.

Former MP Wants 'Heads to Roll'

Continued from / PAGE 1...

Turnquest was one of many callers yesterday on Love 97's Issues of the Day radio talk show, who expressed disappointment in BPL following its press conference on Sunday where CEO Whitney Heastie was unable to guarantee an end to load shedding.

"The reality is that it doesn't appear to have been the will to grab this problem and make it a national priority to solve this one. This is intolerable," Mr. Turnquest said.

"This kind of foolishness only happens in the case of failed states, the inability to provide and ensure essential service.

"This standard, this performance is not acceptable. The explanation, the increase in bills when we know by their own hand that the consummation went down requires more

in-depth explanation. I want some heads to roll."

Another caller said BPL's load shedding is an "insult to the Bahamian people".

"Why can't y'all tell? Y'all are working for the Bahamian public. Why can't the public hear about this secret deal that y'all have? That's only one of the things, but I'm saying too is that they are not being straight with us. They have to be straight with us," the caller added.

Another caller pointed out that "the press conference was very empty".

"If nothing could come out of that conference that one could really bite into, this same generator that these guys brought in was operated by some very component persons they outsource," the caller said.

Some of the callers voiced their concerns over the prime minister's

silence on the issue.

"This is a crisis at the highest level you can think. This is almost a national security issue," a caller said.

"The prime minister has yet to come to the nation and speak to the nation on this crisis and I know one might say, 'that's not a part of his portfolio,' but the empathy and the sympathy of the people was the heart of what the government was suppose to be.

"It's sad to see the prime minister to be on Arawak Cay shaking cow bells."

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.

However, that plant is expected to be completed in December.