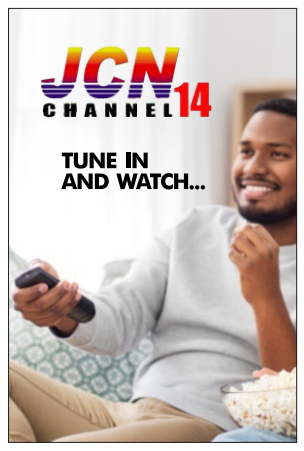




The Bahama Journal

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TEACHER SHORTAGE

TYNIA BROWN
Journal Staff Writer

Senators passed the 2026/2027 budget bills on Wednesday paving the way for them to receive the Governor General's assent and become law in time for the new fiscal year which begins on July first.

The ongoing shortage of teachers in the public education system emerged as a key issue during budget debate in the Senate, with both government and opposition senators agreeing that urgent action is needed to address the problem.

Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Education Senator Keenan Johnson acknowledged the challenges facing schools and said the government is actively working to find solutions before the start of the new academic year.

We know that there's a teacher shortage, and we know the pressure that this places on schools, Johnson told the Senate, noting that he has been tasked with exploring every possible avenue to address the issue and remove barriers that may be preventing recruitment."

Johnson said the Ministry of Education is approaching the problem from both a short-term and long-term perspective, with immediate efforts focused on ensuring schools are ready to welcome students in September.

Parents expect schools to be ready in September. They expect schools to be open, classrooms to be ready, children to be safe, and learning to begin on time, he said.

Beyond addressing immediate staffing needs, Johnson said the government is also seeking to strengthen educational opportunities through lifelong learning initiatives such as Upskill Bahamas and by encouraging greater partnerships with the private sector and community organizations.

However, Opposition Senator Dr. Trevor Johnson warned that the teacher shortage could worsen if more people are not encouraged to enter the profession.

Johnson quoted Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Chester Cooper who revealed that, the country is currently facing a shortage of approximately 300 teachers while enrollment in teacher education programmes continues to decline.

See Story Cont. Pg. 3

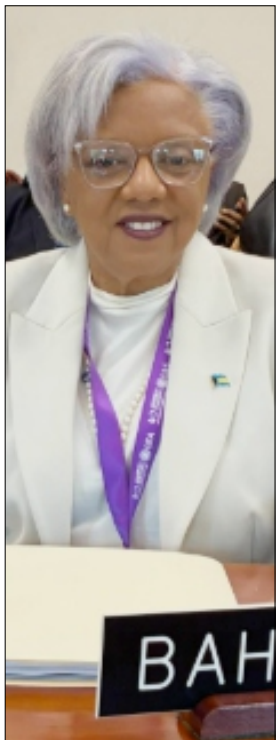
CARTWRIGHT: POVERTY REDUCTION MAIN FOCUS OF DAVIS ADMINISTRATION

BY GERRINO J. SAUNDERS
Bahama Journal News Editor

The Bahamas has been known both regionally and globally for its relatively high standard of living, with even the average family able to afford a home, pay their bills and have enough left to travel, pay school fees and even splurge a little; but those days have seemingly passed and there are signs that the poverty level in the country is on the rise and the Bahamian middle class is shrinking.

In its second consecutive term the new Davis administration is looking to make serious inroads into reversing this trend and reducing the level of poverty in the country in way that can be felt and measured. Exactly how will they do this?

See Story Cont. Pg. 3



The Minister of Social Services
Barbara Cartwright



Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Education Senator Keenan Johnson

DARVILLE PROMISES IMPROVEMENTS IN NHI



Health and Wellness Minister Hon. Dr. Michael Darville

TYNIA BROWN
Journal Staff Writer

Despite the government's efforts to increase funding for National Health Insurance (NHI), Opposition Senator Dr. Trevor Johnson remained critical of the programme, raising concerns about payment delays, service

disruptions and ongoing challenges within the public healthcare system.

During his contribution to the 2026/2027 Budget Debate in the Senate on Monday, Johnson questioned whether increased spending was translating into improved healthcare services for Bahamians.

Every Bahamian, regardless of political affiliation or island of residence, deserves access to quality healthcare, Johnson said.

While acknowledging that investments have been made in the healthcare sector, Johnson argued that significant challenges remain. He pointed to continued complaints regarding medication shortages and a lack of basic resources at Princess Margaret Hospital, Rand Memorial Hospital and public clinics throughout the country.

Johnson said healthcare professionals cannot provide world-class care if they do not have the necessary tools and equipment to perform their duties effectively.

Johnson also expressed concern over the lack of a morgue at the Rand Memorial Hospital in Grand Bahama, questioning why the nation's second city continues to face such challenges. He added that similar concerns have been raised in other parts of the country, including Deadman's Cay, Long Island.

The opposition senator further highlighted issues surrounding the National Drug Prescription Plan and NHI services.

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MITCHELL REMINDS OAS MEMBERS TO USE POWER JUDICIOUSLY

BY GERRINO J. SAUNDERS
Bahama Journal News Editor

While speaking at the Organization of American States General (OAS) Assembly in Panama City, Panama on Wednesday The Bahamas Minister of Foreign Affairs Fred Mitchell delivered the national statement of The Bahamas which focused on protecting the weak and using government powers fairly and wisely.

In this regard he spoke to a number of ongoing situations in the region where either help or fair play is needed.

He thanked the OAS for its role in observing the May 12 th general elections that saw the incumbent government of Prime Minister Philip Davis returned. "The Bahamian people expressed their will freely and resoundingly," he said.

See Story Cont. Pg. 2



Minister of Foreign Affairs
Hon. Fred Mitchell

MITCHELL REMINDS OAS MEMBERS TO USE POWER JUDICIOUSLY



Minister of Foreign Affairs Hon. Fred Mitchell

Story Cont. Pg. 1

He said, "We believe in The Bahamas in the rule of law, uplifting the oppressed, equity and justice for all, regardless of race, colour, creed or national origin. We support the lawful right of all people to migrate lawfully to another country and return to their country. Thousands if not tens of thousands of Bahamian citizens and CARICOM nationals have done so and contributed to the rich tapestry of all of our neighbours."

"We in The Bahamas believe in the judicious use of power," said Mitchell. "This requires an understanding that the world belongs to all, the rich and the powerful, the strong and the weak. The strong must have a moral compass that ensures that all survive. And that is why

the OAS was invented, and the lessons of history compel us today to support its continued existence.

Mr. Mitchell reminded members that the continued existence of the OAS requires members to pay their bills and for the OAS to manage those funds and it affairs in an "equitable manner".

Mitchell also reminded members that the lessons of history compel members to support the values of multilateralism. He said, "It is better to keep talking than shooting guns. And we do not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries except by invitation. In this regard we support the work in Haiti, and we are examining what role we can play in Bolivia to support the legitimately elected government there."

Continuing he said, "We support the Cuban

people and their right to independence and territorial integrity, and their right to participate in the world economy, the work of the hemisphere and the right to eat and healthcare. We apply the same values to Haiti that struck the first blow for African people in the world for freedom."

Mitchell said The Bahamas agrees that there is still need in this world for affirmative action and reparations from past discriminations for people of African descent.

He also reminded that for The Bahamas and many other small island states climate change is existential and The Bahamas calls upon all nations to accept the science and take the steps to pay for adaptation and mitigation and end the reliance on fossil fuels.

Story Cont. Pg. 4

DARVILLE PROMISES IMPROVEMENTS IN NHI

Story Cont. Pg. 1

He referenced reports that a local pharmacy would no longer accept patients under the prescription programme and noted that the government had acknowledged supply challenges within the system in a statement issued on June 12.

Johnson said the reports were particularly troubling when viewed alongside previous concerns about delayed NHI payments to healthcare providers. I have also been informed that some diagnostic centres and laboratories have declined to accept NHI patients, he said.

He called on the government to provide answers regarding the total amount owed to healthcare providers and suppliers under the NHI programme, whether payment delays had contributed to providers restricting services, and how many healthcare providers have withdrawn, suspended or limited services over the past three years.

Johnson stressed that his questions were not intended to assign blame but to provide clarity for Bahamians who depend on the healthcare system.

For a senior citizen who is dependent on medication or parents seeking treatment for their child, the reliability of our healthcare system is not an abstract policy issue. It is a matter of daily life, he said. The concerns come as the government moves to significantly increase funding for NHI in the upcoming fiscal year.

During his budget communication in the House of Assembly, Health and Wellness Minister Dr. Michael Darville acknowledged that there have been challenges with late payments to some NHI providers. He revealed that the 2026/2027 Budget allocates \$72.2 million to the NHI Authority, representing an increase of \$24.5 million over the previous year's allocation.

Darville said a substantial portion of the additional funding is expected to be directed toward paying NHI providers and strengthening the programme. Dr. Darville also outlined several initiatives aimed at improving healthcare delivery and infrastructure throughout the country.

Among them is the creation of an independent Health Task Force that will examine operations and service delivery within public hospitals. According to Darville, the review will be completed within 12 weeks and will include consultations with healthcare professionals at all levels.

He also highlighted a number of major healthcare projects planned under the government's second-term agenda, including the construction of a new hospital in New Providence, accelerated completion of the Freeport Health Campus, renovations to Princess Margaret Hospital's kitchens and operating theatres, completion of a new dialysis unit and repairs to the Legacy Ward at PMH, expansion of eye care services, and the purchase of new mammogram machines for PMH and Rand Memorial Hospital.

Additional plans include upgrades to the recently acquired Harbourside Hospital, including laboratory, diagnostic and CT scan services.

Darville said the investments are intended to strengthen the healthcare system and improve the physical environment in which healthcare is delivered.

The exchange highlighted differing views on the state of the nation's healthcare system, with the opposition pressing for answers on service delivery and provider payments while the government points to increased funding and infrastructure investments as evidence of its commitment to improving healthcare for Bahamians.



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Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Science and Technology the Hon. Chester Cooper

TEACHER SHORTAGE

Story Cont. from Pg. 1

If fewer individuals are entering the profession while experienced educators continue to leave or retire, the shortage will only worsen, Johnson said.

Dr. Johnson also questioned the government's emphasis on constructing a new school in Grand Bahama, arguing that many schools already have adequate classroom space and that the more pressing issue is a lack of teachers.

Buildings do not educate children. Teachers do, he said.

The opposition senator urged the government to work closely with unions and other stakeholders to develop a comprehensive long-term strategy to recruit and retain educators, warning that failure to address the issue could have serious consequences for the country's education system.

While differing on some aspects of the government's approach, both senators agreed that ensuring classrooms are adequately staffed will be critical to improving educational outcomes and meeting the needs of students across The Bahamas.

CARTWRIGHT: POVERTY REDUCTION MAIN FOCUS OF DAVIS ADMINISTRATION

Story Cont. from Pg. 1

The Minister of Social Services Barbara Cartwright shared a portion of the government's plans during her maiden speech in the Senate as debate on the 2026/2027 budget continued.

She began by stating that "the Ministry of Social Services is not just another government agency; it is the conscience of our nation."

It is the safety net that catches the fallen, and the ladder that helps the ambitious climb. This is the philosophy that will lead me; and by the grace of God, I will not fail."

Cartwright said while she may not be a social service worker by profession, throughout her adult life and in every job or appointment she has held she has performed social work in some shape or

form. "I am a woman who cares deeply for people, especially the poor, the vulnerable, and those who too often feel unseen," she said.

Cartwright says the government has a plan to bring those people who are suffering, above the poverty line. She noted that the ministry's work reaches every corner of the nation and supports children, families, older persons, persons with disabilities, victims of abuse, persons facing hardship, and citizens who find themselves at the lowest and hardest point in their lives.

She said, "Poverty reduction is one of my central mandates. Poverty is never about money alone. It is the result of many negative factors one faces in their life – some forced, some unforced, some inherited. Whatever

the genesis, poverty destroys institutions, and it destroys relationships at every level between husband and wife, parent and child, friend, and friend. When those bonds deteriorate, the consequences are dire."

Continuing she said, "The strength of the Bahamian family determines the strength of the Bahamian society. That is why it is so important that we do all we can to lift families out of poverty. Our work will build on the progress gained over the past five years under this Davis-led Administration. More citizens have been approved for health assistance. Support has reached more families in need. But the demand for shelter is on the rise. Shelter is now one of the clearest and most urgent needs facing the Ministry."

Cartwright said providing access to affordable, safe, and secure shelters is one important way we can lift our people out of poverty.

She said, "When our fellow citizens have no safe place to sleep, that is more than a housing issue. It is a social issue. It is a family issue. It is a child protection issue."

And it begs our full attention. For too long, the narrative of Social Services has been one of handouts. With this budget we are signaling a fundamental shift in our philosophy. Our goal is not merely to provide social assistance; it is to promote empowerment and human dignity. There is no dignity in permanent dependency.

There is no pride in a system that keeps people trapped in a cycle of just enough to survive. The Ministry of Social Ser-

vices should not just be a place where you go when you have failed or have challenges, but a place you go so that you may finally succeed."

In addition to reducing poverty the new social services minister said there needs to be a greater focus child support, child abuse, incest and domestic violence that often times happen behind closed doors.

She said, "In the deepest darkness, our country has for far too long been reactive waiting for a report, waiting for a bruise, waiting for a tragedy. This must end."

Cartwright shared some of the funds allocated to the Ministry of Social Services will be spent during this fiscal year.

The 2026/2027 Budget allocations for my ministry totaled \$64.2 million. The allocation represents a 3.7 percent increase over the 2025/2026 budget. Budget for the administrative arm is 8.9 million. The allocation for the Depart-

ment of Social Services has increased from \$53 million to \$55.2 million, an increase of \$2.1 million.

Cartwright described the staff in the Ministry of Social Services as "the heart of our operations."

According to Cartwright there is a total of just over five hundred staff members in 26 locations spread across the country. She noted that the budget allocates \$18.9 million to cover personnel emoluments for staff which is 12.6 percent increase over last year's figure of \$16.8 million.

Cartwright said having worked closely with Prime Minister Philip 'Brave' Davis for over eight years, "I can attest to his deep love for our country and compassion for the Bahamian people. Serving under his leadership has made accepting his offer to sit as a cabinet minister and senator an easy one. I hold no illusion about the difficulty of this task. I am deeply honoured to be entrusted with it."

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2022 CENSUS REVEALS 1 IN 10 BAHAMIANS HAVE A DISABILITY

BY ALEXANDRIA RECKLEY
Journal Staff Writer

More than ten percent of Bahamians live with a disability according to the 2022 Census Disability Report released this week by the Bahamas National Statistical Institute and children with disabilities age five and older are further disadvantaged because few of them are enrolled in school. The institute released its third report the 2022 Census of Population and Housing:

Disability Report, which provides detailed insight into the demographic, social, educational, and housing characteristics of persons with disabilities in The Bahamas.

The Disability Statistics Short Set (WG-SS) of Questions consists of six core functional domains used internationally to measure disability: seeing, hearing, walking or climbing stairs, remembering or concentrating, self-care, and communicating. The report is the first to be released since Covid 19. At the press release conference on June 19th, BNSI Managing Director Dr. Jamiko Deleveaux, spoke of the success of the census.

He said “we had about 85% coverage rate in The Bahamas, which is pretty good compared to the region. I think the United States had about 55 to 60 percent response rates for their 2020 census. And I also know that within the region, our reports that we’ve been able to produce and the two upcoming puts us as a well accomplished 20 census”

The institute is proud of the results and plans to incorporate what was learned from the report to improve their efforts and methodology in their 2022 census. Dr. Jamiko Deleveaux hopes that the public uses the information to support their decisions for new opportunities. He told reporters “I hope that the individuals look at the report to look at the population to be able to say, how can I help?”

“What is the community made up of? Where can I assist? Do you need more schools? Do you need more teachers? With the aging population on the family island and the high percentage of individuals with disability on the family islands, do I need to open a new clinic?”

Following the publication Erin Brown, a Disability Inclusion Consultant attending the BNSI press conference told reporters how the lack of accommodation is one reason for the significant statistics regarding the low enrollment numbers of children in schools. She said,

“We see that a lot in tertiary education and higher education where we have students coming in and they haven’t been assessed not once from preschool to grade 12.”

Explaining that there are some who may be assessed while others may not be. She told reporters “What is happening is when they now come there, because currently if you are 16 and older and considered your’ve tapped out of the free government services. If you haven’t received occupational therapy, if you haven’t received the speech pathology, any assessments, you now must pay out of pocket.”

The gaps highlighted in education are also influenced by stigma, Ms. Brown said. She also mentioned that this begins from the early stages of life and how parents equip their child for transitions. “What I recognize is when you are a parent, you want the best for your child. If your child has been diagnosed with a disability, you become that voice for that child. But what happens during that time when that child now becomes a young adult.”

“We haven’t been successful in articulating or inspiring or equipping them with how to advocate for themselves. And so, when they get into these spaces like university where it’s not about the parents anymore, they’re still trying to find their voice. They’re like, well, how do I say that to a teacher” Erin Brown told reporters.

The Office of Disability Services at the University of The Bahamas has since then created a safe space for students and recruited 120 students since last year who need assistance.

This is progress, especially knowing now that last census report was last published in 2010 and there has been a significant increase in the number of individuals with disabilities”.



BNSI Managing Director Dr. Jamiko Deleveaux

KOMOLAFE ADDRESSES OVERSIZED CABINET



Free National Movement Member and Senator Arinthia Komolafe

BY CLEMIA NEELY
Journal Staff Writer

During her contribution to the Senate Budget Debate on Tuesday, Free National Movement Member and Senator Arinthia Komolafe argued that “at a time when Bahamians are struggling to make ends meet, the current administration boasts of having one of, if not the largest Cabinet in modern Bahamian history.”

According to Senator Komolafe, the reality is that all costs associated with the Davis administration’s Cabinet which she maintains is oversized, result in a disadvantage to the Bahamian people.

“The current Davis administration has made 29 of the members in that other place Cabinet ministers and additional people have been appointed as parliamentary

secretary. For context, Jamaica with a population of 2.8 million people has 18 Cabinet ministers. Trinidad and Tobago with a population of 1.5 million people has 18 Cabinet ministers. And our neighbours to the north, the United States of America with a population of 340+ million people has 15 Cabinet ministers.”

She went on to say, “When compared to our Commonwealth counterparts, Australia, the United Kingdom, and India, the numbers are like our regional counterparts. Canada with a population of 41 million and 14 ministers. Australia has 28 million and 18 ministers. The UK has 70 million and 22 ministers. And India has 1.4 billion and 30 ministers.”

“Rather than true decentralization of government and devolution of powers to bring government closer to the people, the current administration has increased the size of central government, she said. This is deeply concerning to her because apart from the Bahamian people having to bear the financial burden of this expanded government, it also threatens the foundation upon which our parliamentary democratic system is based,” she said.

Also, connected to this matter, Senator Komolafe addressed the appointment of persons connected to the gaming industry to the Cabinet of the Bahamas.

“This is also a matter of concern for the Bahamian people. Unfortunately, the gaming board has engaged in linguistic gymnastics rather than directly answering a simple question: Do the two Cabinet ministers in question or their family members have direct or indirect financial or beneficial interests in a licensee of the gaming board?” She was referring to the Cabinet appointments of Sebas Bastian and Leslia Miller-Brice, who both have ties to the gaming industry.

MITCHELL REMINDS OAS MEMBERS TO USE POWER JUDICIOUSLY

Story Cont. from Pg. 2

He ended with an analogy where he used the Star Wars Trilogy in which the three movies show that the powerful can be brought down by the small and meek.

“That is why we in The Bahamas argue for the judicious use of power. And there is this African aphorism people who say that a small voice doesn’t matter have obviously never spent the night in a

dark room with a mosquito.”

Mr. Mitchell paid respects to Albert Ramdin Secretary General of the Organization of American States elected in March of 2025, marking a historic milestone as the first Secretary General from a CARICOM member state representing Suriname.

“Our support for you as a CARICOM national is strong; you are an important symbol to our nationals of all of our

countries; you brought a ray of hope to the region.”

The Secretary General of the OAS is the highest-ranking official within the organization responsible for directing the general assembly for a five-year term, and may not be re-elected more than once.

Continuing Mitchell said, “On this international day for women diplomats is see that Guyana has put forth another CARICOM national to the secretary general of the United

Nations.”

Mitchell noted that it did not “escape him” during the summit between the two most powerful countries in the world (United States and China) in May this year in Beijing there were no women at the table, so there is still a way to go.

MARIO MOXEY APPOINTED BCC PRESIDENT



Pastor Mario Moxey

BY CLEMIA NEELY
Journal Staff Writer

Senior Pastor of Bahamas Harvest Church Mario Moxey, who previously served as the Bahamas Christian Council’s Vice President and has been involved in the organization for about 16 years, has been officially installed as the new President of the Bahamas Christian Council for the 2026-2029 term. Under the theme ‘One

Voice, One Church, One Nation’ President Moxey outlined his vision for this new role.

“And so, with humility before God, and love for my country, and with honor for those who have gone before me, with gratitude for those who stand beside me, and with faith for what is ahead, I accept this assignment,” he said.

“I vow to serve my country. I vow to honor the church. I vow to strengthen the council. I vow to speak with grace and conviction. I vow to pursue unity without compromising truth. I vow to work for the moral and spiritual good of The Bahamas. But above all, I vow to place the kingdom of God first.”

Following the vote back in April, Moxey said that it is both a privilege and a calling to serve God by serving the people of The Bahamas, and in particular, the Christian Churches that span our nation.

“The Church is not a minority voice trying to be heard. We are the majority voice that must choose to be the unifier. As we unify the Church, we position ourselves to help unify the nation, offering spiritual leadership, moral clarity, and a renewed sense of purpose for our people.”

Prime Minister Philip Davis congratulated the new President and said that at a time when divisions often overshadow common purpose, faith, courage, and unity are called for.

“Pastor Moxey, we congratulate you by recognizing that anyone who accepts the mantle of leadership must possess faith, courage, and perhaps an extra measure of patience. But knowing you, I have every confidence that God has prepared you for this moment and this assignment.”

He went on to say, “It is therefore most fitting that you have chosen to begin this new chapter under the theme, ‘One Voice, One Church, One Nation.’ At a time when division too often threatens to overshadow our common purpose, this theme reminds us that unity remains one of our greatest strengths. Though we may have different traditions, we share a common faith and a common responsibility to serve our people.”

Free National Movement Deputy Leader Shanendon Cartwright also offered his congratulations to the new President, emphasizing the importance of the church’s role in the moral and spiritual guidance of the nation.

“And this is, no doubt, the role of the Christian Council in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. To keep us accountable, to be the conscience of our nation, to speak truth to power wherever it is needed.”

“We pray that God continues to cover each and every one of you, Mr. President.

We pray that all of the plans that you have laid on the trustee board with you and your team will lead to ensuring that God gets the glory here in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas,” he concludes.

The new executive team includes Bishop Woodley Thompson as First Vice President, Reverend Carla Culmer as Second Vice President, Reverend Roderick Bain as Third Vice President, and Bishop Deanza Cunningham as Fourth Vice President.

Other leaders include Apostle Phalmon Ferguson, Dr. Clifford Smith, Bishop Ronald Campbell, and Reverend Diana Francis. Leaders of the Bahamas Christian Council plan to spend their new term focused on stronger unity, a clearer voice, and a greater influence across the country.



Newly Elected Christian Council

GOT NEWS? CALL OUR OFFICE AT 356-7254

U.S. EMBASSY NASSAU TO LAUNCH FREEDOM 250 WEEK WITH MOST AMBITIOUS INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION IN EMBASSY HISTORY

MARKING 250 YEARS OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE AND U.S.-BAHAMAS FRIENDSHIP

U.S. Embassy Nassau will launch Freedom 250 Week this Friday, June 26, with the most ambitious Independence Day celebration in Embassy history — a landmark event worthy of 250 years of American freedom and the deep, enduring friendship between the United States and The Bahamas.

Celebrating the theme "American Icons," the Independence Day Reception will be held on the grounds of U.S. Embassy Nassau this Friday evening. Guests will be invited on a road trip through iconic American cities and landmarks, interacting with stunning Junkanoo recreations of iconic American monuments — from the Hollywood Sign to the Washington Monument — celebrating the creativity, artistry, and shared spirit of both nations.

The formal program will feature remarks by U.S. Ambassador Herschel Walker, Prime Minister the Hon. Philip Davis, and Governor General Dame Cynthia Pratt. Pastor Mario Moxey, President of the Bahamas Christian Council, will deliver the invocation. The Bahamian national anthem will be performed by Beyoncé Knowles of New Providence, and the U.S. national anthem will be performed by Danielle Dorsett of the band Shaad Collie & The VIP's. The program will be livestreamed on U.S. Embassy Nassau's Facebook page.

The evening will also feature a special cultural moment honoring the deep historical ties between The Bahamas and the United States. Guests will view a teaser for the upcoming documentary film *Bringing Her Home: The Story of Sloop John B*, which explores the Bahamian origins of the beloved Beach Boys hit. Film producers David House and Edgar Seligman will make a special presentation, and later in the evening, guests will be treated to a sneak preview of a new, Bahamian recording of the iconic song.

Members of the general public will share in observing two moments of the evening's celebration. At approximately 7:00 p.m., four U.S. Marine Corps F-35B Lighting II aircraft from VMFA-542 out of Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina, will conduct a formation flyover of New Providence. The planes will circle the island twice, before and after a flyover of the Embassy, and be visible to the public from beaches and open spaces. The flyover honors not only 250 years of



Freedom Week

American independence, but also the decades of military cooperation between the United States and The Bahamas — and the shared commitment to security that will define the next 250 years.

At approximately 9:55 p.m., a fireworks display will be launched over U.S. Embassy Nassau, visible to the public from the surrounding area near Shirley Street.

The Independence Day celebration marks the beginning of Freedom 250 Week, a series of activities running through July 5 that includes the Global Illumination Initiative — lighting up Nassau's skyline and harbor in red, white, and blue — and the Founders Museum exhibit at Nassau Cruise Port, open to the public from June 29 through July 5.

2022 CENSUS REVEALS 1 IN 10 BAHAMIANS HAVE A DISABILITY

Story Cont. from Pg. 4

The statistics revealed alarming data, and the Minister of Social Services, Senator Barbara Cartwright told the Senate in the 2026/2027 budget debate on Tuesday June 23rd 2026 that the population of people living with disabilities has doubled over the last decade, and the ministry of social services is planning measures to address the issue. She said "In 2020, there were 10,138 persons with disabilities, which represented 2.9% of the population at the time. In 2022, 38,551, or 10.3% of the population age five years or older are disabled.

This means that over that twelve-year period, the number of disabled individuals in the country has increased almost 4-0. Based on this, my ministry will have to ensure that we make the requisite adjustments to provide more support to the disabled."

As highlighted by Dr. Deleveaux, the statistics are of national concern but remain below the global average reported by the World Health Organization. He also reaffirmed that residents of the family islands have access to resources and support services for people with disabilities. She said "I want to take this opportunity to assure those persons with disabilities who reside in the Farmington Islands that if you are in need of any assistance, we are able to send the required items to your island."

Please reach out to the NCPD office or the Department of Social Services on your island or do so by downloading the free mobile disability app which is available in your Google or Apple Store." Senator Cartwright confirmed that her ministry intends to develop additional initiatives and programs to address the findings outlined in the report.



Minister of Social Services, Senator Barbara Cartwright

KOMOLAFE ADDRESSES OVERSIZED CABINET

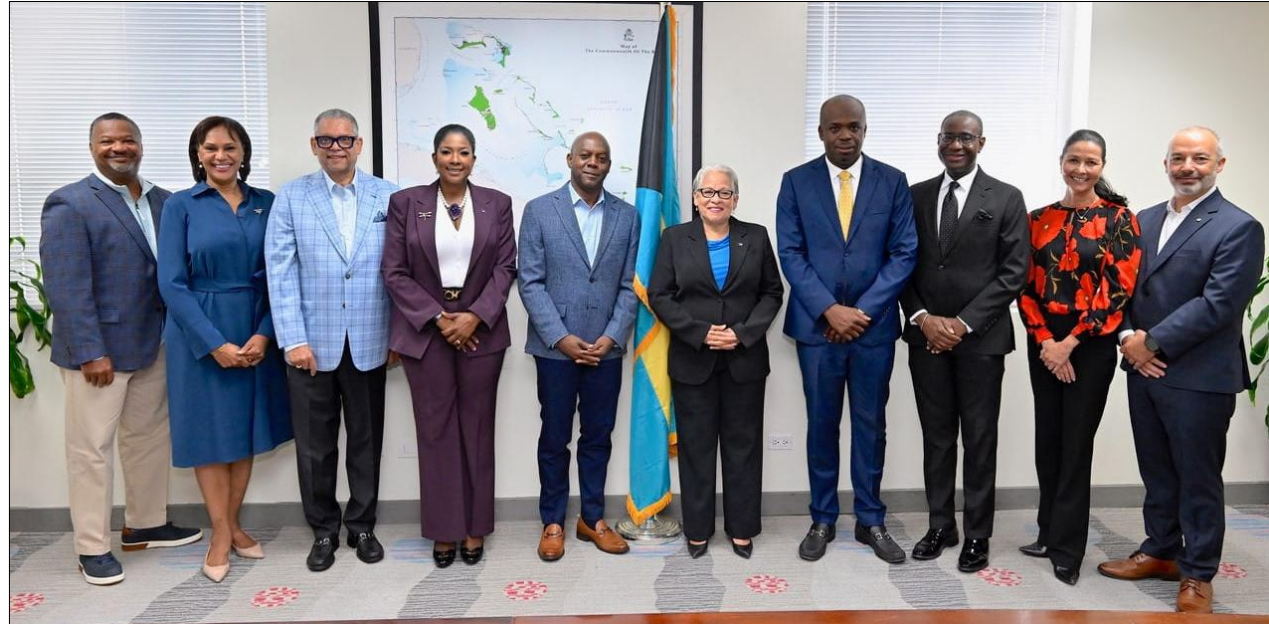
Story Cont. from Pg. 4

She explained that we are a nation of laws, and no one is above the law. The law is applied regardless of status or position. According to Senator Komolaffe, "if we the Bahamian people must bear the cost of additional ministries, then we must be absolutely satisfied that there is a vision and a strategy for these new ministries, and above all, that the rule of law is being followed by the government itself."

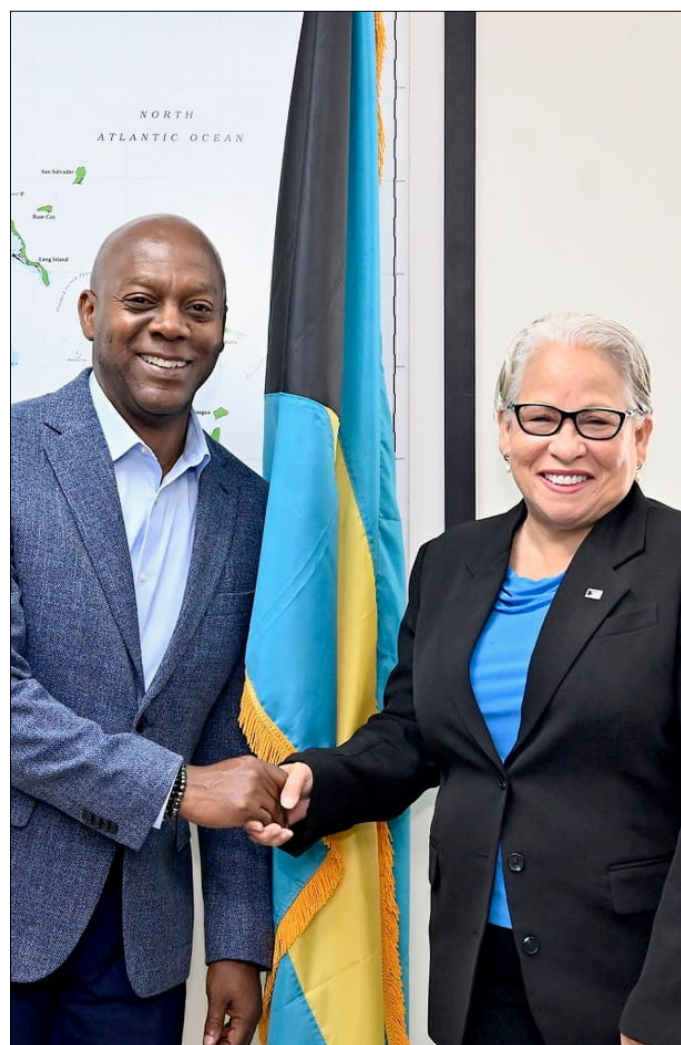
Following these concerns, Attorney General Wayne Munroe challenged the Free National Movement to take their concerns to court, stating that when they bring their actions before the court, the public can see whether they're right or whether they are just talking out of their heads.

"I know that the FNM threatened to file an action in the court, and that is where the rule of law plays out. If you have a view, you test it in front of the courts. You can stand up and talk about what you think all you like, but you can go to court and be told you're right or you're wrong. But to suggest that this government has done something that breaches the law is an imputation of three senators here."

BHTA EXECUTIVES PAY COURTESY CALL AT THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM



The Bahamas Hotel & Tourism Association (BHTA) led by President of BHTA Jackson Weech and his executive team paid a courtesy call, June 22, 2026 on Minister of Tourism the Hon. Glenys Hanna Martin and her executives -- Randy Rolle, Parliamentary Secretary, MOT; Latia Duncombe, Director General, MOT; and Dr. Kenneth Romer, Deputy Director General, MOT, and Director of Aviation. (BIS Photos/Kemuel Stubbs)



ISSUES OF TODAY
MONDAY - FRIDAY
11:30AM - 1PM
WITH **KHRISTIAN JONES** LLB(HONS)

URBAN RENEWAL MINISTER SPEAKS OF HER OWN RESCUE THROUGH THE POLICE CADET PROGRAMME

"This newly established ministry's strategic priorities are, in its simplest form, to help advance a vision that places people, families and communities at the centre of national development," said the Hon. Lisa Rahming, Minister of Urban Renewal and Community Relations as she gave her contribution, June 16, to the 2026/2027 budget debate. "This ministry is designed to address the needs of our people by driving transformative progress, face to face, door to door."

Urban Renewal and Community Relations have two distinct functions. This work is people centered and community driven, Minister Rahming said. "This work aims to leave no-one behind."

The Urban Renewal Authority will continue to function in terms of rolling out

its projects or programmes as it relates to the senior citizen associations, youth programmes, minor repairs on homes or buildings, Minister Rahming said.

"Communities measured real progress because our seniors felt supported.

"Communities measured progress because neighbourhoods saw increased police presence.

"Communities measured progress because families were afforded opportunities to own their homes.

"It is at the very heart of all this that the Ministry of Urban Renewal and Community Relations sits.

"We are particularly excited about the collaboration of the Ministry and the Urban Renewal Police Division's roll out of the STEP UP, Junior programme, for

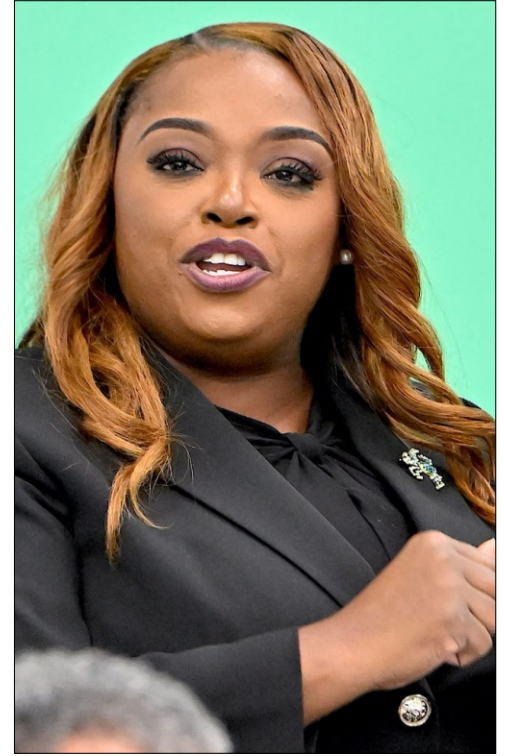
ages 12 to 16-year-olds.

"I was one of those rude young women rescued by a police cadet programme.

"They took me off the streets and taught me discipline, leadership and character.

"How many more mini-me are out there that need to buckle down on their scholastic work? How many more mini-me can be rescued off the streets to stand in this honourable house?"

A scholastic component is also intertwined with three days of immersion in Maths and English under the tutelage of qualified teachers. "It is our intent," Minister Rahming said, "that they can be filtered into the Royal Bahamas Police Force Cadet programme upon graduation from the Junior program."



Minister of Agriculture and Marine Resources, the Hon. Jomo C. Campbell

MINISTER CAMPBELL REPORTS SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN FOOD SECURITY, AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND MARINE RESOURCE PROTECTION

The Ministry also advanced a grant programme aimed at supporting agriculture and marine resource enterprises throughout The Bahamas.

A total of \$1.85 million was distributed to 118 grantees across New Providence, Grand Bahama and the Family Islands. Recipients included farmers, fishermen, cooperatives, vendors and small business operators involved in agriculture, fisheries, food processing, crafts, coconut production, straw work, preserves and other productive industries. The programme helped recipients purchase equipment, vessels, engines and production inputs while strengthening cooperative development and encouraging sustainable economic growth.

Agricultural Census Pilot Modernizes Data Collection

For the first time since 1994, The Bahamas is moving toward a comprehensive agricultural census. The National Agricultural Census Pilot Project, implemented in partnership with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the Bahamas National Statistical Institute and the Inter-American Development Bank, successfully tested modern digital data collection methods in Abaco, Eleuthera and New Providence.

Key achievements included:

- * 146 completed surveys;
- * Training of 22 enumerators;
- * Deployment of ArcGIS Survey123 technology; and
- * Successful testing of digital farmer registration, mapping and data management systems.

The pilot confirmed that a full national agricultural census is both technically feasible and achievable with proper preparation and coordination.

Expanded Family Island Services

The Ministry continued its Family Island development agenda through the opening of a new Department of Agriculture office and the first BAIC Fish and Farm Store in Cat Island. The facility provides farmers and fishermen with access to supplies, registration services, technical support and institutional assistance closer to home. Additionally, both high schools in Cat Island received \$2,500 vouchers redeemable at the Fish and Farm Store as part of a wider programme supporting 30 schools throughout the country.

The Ministry also announced plans to open two additional offices and deploy tractors, vessels, trucks, trailers and other support equipment across several islands, including Acklins, Exuma, San Salvador, Grand Bahama, Grand Cay and Farmers Cay.

Agriculture and Marine Cadet Programme Engages Youth

The Agriculture and Marine Cadet Programme continues to gain momentum since its launch in October 2025. The programme now includes:

- * 163 registered cadets;
- * 12 participating high schools;
- * Eight islands represented; and
- * Online learning support through Google Classroom.

Students receive practical training in agriculture, aquaponics, composting, livestock management and marine resource stewardship, helping create a pipeline of

future professionals for the sector.

Strengthened Marine Resource Enforcement

The Department of Marine Resources reported significant enforcement successes during the fiscal year, including the high-profile Red Dawn I and Red Dawn II operations, which resulted in substantial fines, vessel bonds and multi-year fishing bans. Recently, he explained, Operation Dragnet brought together multiple agencies and partners, resulting in the seizure of:

- * A 65.4-foot sport fishing vessel;
- * Illegal fishing equipment;
- * Illegally harvested fish;
- * Drugs;
- * A firearm; and
- * Ammunition.

The Ministry emphasized that protecting marine resources remains essential to safeguarding livelihoods, food security, national security and export earnings.

New Commercial Fishing Training Programme to Launch

To address workforce shortages within the commercial fishing industry, the Ministry announced plans to launch a National Apprentice Commercial Fishing Training Programme in partnership with the Bahamas Commercial Fishing Vessels Owners Association and the Lowell J. Mortimer Marine Academy.

The programme will provide training in:

- * Maritime safety certification (STCW);
- * Seamanship and vessel operations;
- * Marine engineering;
- * Fisheries management;
- * Dive certification;
- * HACCP certification; and
- * Fish pot construction.

The initiative is designed to develop a new generation of skilled Bahamian commercial fishermen while improving safety and workforce readiness.

Public Market and Arawak Cay Improvements Completed

Major infrastructure upgrades were completed at Arawak Cay, including:

- * Restroom renovations;
- * Storage enhancements;
- * Roof and structural repairs;
- * Plumbing and electrical improvements;
- * Lighting upgrades;
- * Fence and gate repairs; and
- * General refurbishment works.

Approval has also been granted for nine new souvenir stalls within a designated cultural activity area, with six stalls already allocated.

National Crop Schedule to Reduce Food Imports

Through the Bahamas Agricultural and Industrial Corporation (BAIC), the Ministry is implementing a National Crop Schedule aimed at reducing the country's food import bill and improving agricultural productivity. The strategy aligns crop production with market demand and identifies priority crops such as tomatoes, cabbage, onions, cucumbers and sweet peppers.