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# T Caymanian Times



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Friday, December 3, 2021

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## Dwayne Seymour moves to PACT



See story on page 9 >>

► Dwayne Seymour becomes a PACT member

## Covid not stopping Christmas

George Town was lit up again this year thanks to the annual Rotary Club of Grand Cayman's Christmas tree lighting ceremony, which took place on Monday in Heroes Square, now in its 56th year. The Governor Martyn Roper and his wife Lissie were in attendance at a small but important informal ceremony, whereby Mrs Roper did the honours, switching on the Christmas tree light, thereby signaling that Christmas is well and truly on its way in the Cayman islands. The Premier delivered a Christmas message and Christmas carols were duly sung. The Governor said the event always felt like the start of the Christmas season and it was a wonderful sight to see the lights going up across the Islands.



► Governor Martyn Roper catches up with steel pan guru Earl la Pierre at the annual Heroes Square Christmas tree lighting ceremony

## Budget to return Cayman to compliance

By Lindsey Turnbull

The cost of the Cayman government's response to the Covid pandemic has seen its expenses grow greater than that anticipated in the 2019 Budget, and, as a result, as at the end of 2021, the Cayman Islands will now not be compliant with the Principles of Responsible Financial Management, as prescribed by the Public Management Finance Act (PMFA), the same principles as found in the Framework for Fiscal Responsibility (FFR) which is also part of the PMFA.

In his Budget speech in Parliament last Friday, Deputy Premier and Finance Minister, Chris Saunders, did say, however, that, commencing 2022, govern-



► Deputy Premier and Finance Minister Chris Saunders

SEE BUDGET, Page 2





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# Budget to return Cayman to compliance

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

ment would return to full compliance with the Principles. He also confirmed there were no new fees or taxes levied on the public.

Already facing an uphill battle given the impact of the Covid response and recovery on government finances, core government was forecast to achieve an operating deficit of \$98.3m at the end of 2021 and \$59.6m

at the end of 2022. Minister Saunders said the forecast for the operating deficit for the end of the year was a "much improved" \$29.7m, approximately \$69m better than where it was first forecast when they arrived in office. They predicted a budget surplus of \$19.4m for 2022, which represented \$79m better than when they first arrived in government, which was a combined improvement (when taking the 2021 and 2022 forecasts into account)

turning around \$147.6m over the two years.

However, Minister Saunders acknowledged an operating deficit was a breach of the Principles of Responsible Financial management under the PMFA, as the PMFA required the government to achieve an operating surplus.

"Compliance with this Principle is a requirement. It is not optional," he explained. "Failure to comply means that we will have to surrender control of the budget to the UK, stripping us of the most basic privilege of deciding for ourselves how to spend our own money."

The Minister said the UK Government was aware of the likely deficit for the 2021 financial year, but it had not sought in any way to control government's budget because it understood the deficit for 2021 was realistic in a global pandemic and had given its support to the PACT government anticipated budgeting.

"In 2022 and 2023 we will be in full compliance with the Principles," he stated, adding that the PACT government was

committed to getting the country back to being able to control its own budget.

In order to meet all of the government's planned capital investments, over the budget period of 2022 and 2023, they would be borrowing up to \$349.1m, with \$299.1m in 2022 and a further \$50m in 2023. None of day-to-day expenses would be met by borrowing. Such costs were met entirely by the Government's operating revenue.

Core government was expected to earn operating revenues of \$940.9m in 2022 and \$978.1m in 2023. Together, operating and financing expenses were expected to be \$921.5m in 2022 and \$950.4m in 2023. Core government operating surpluses were forecast to be \$19.4m in 2022 and \$27.7m 2023

Closing cash balances would be \$404.8m 2022 as at 31 December 2022 and \$312.2m as at 31 December 2023. Core government capital investments would total \$170.1m 2022, and \$133.4m in 2023. Government planned on investing \$30.4m in 2022 and \$28.9m in 2023 in statutory authorities and government companies.



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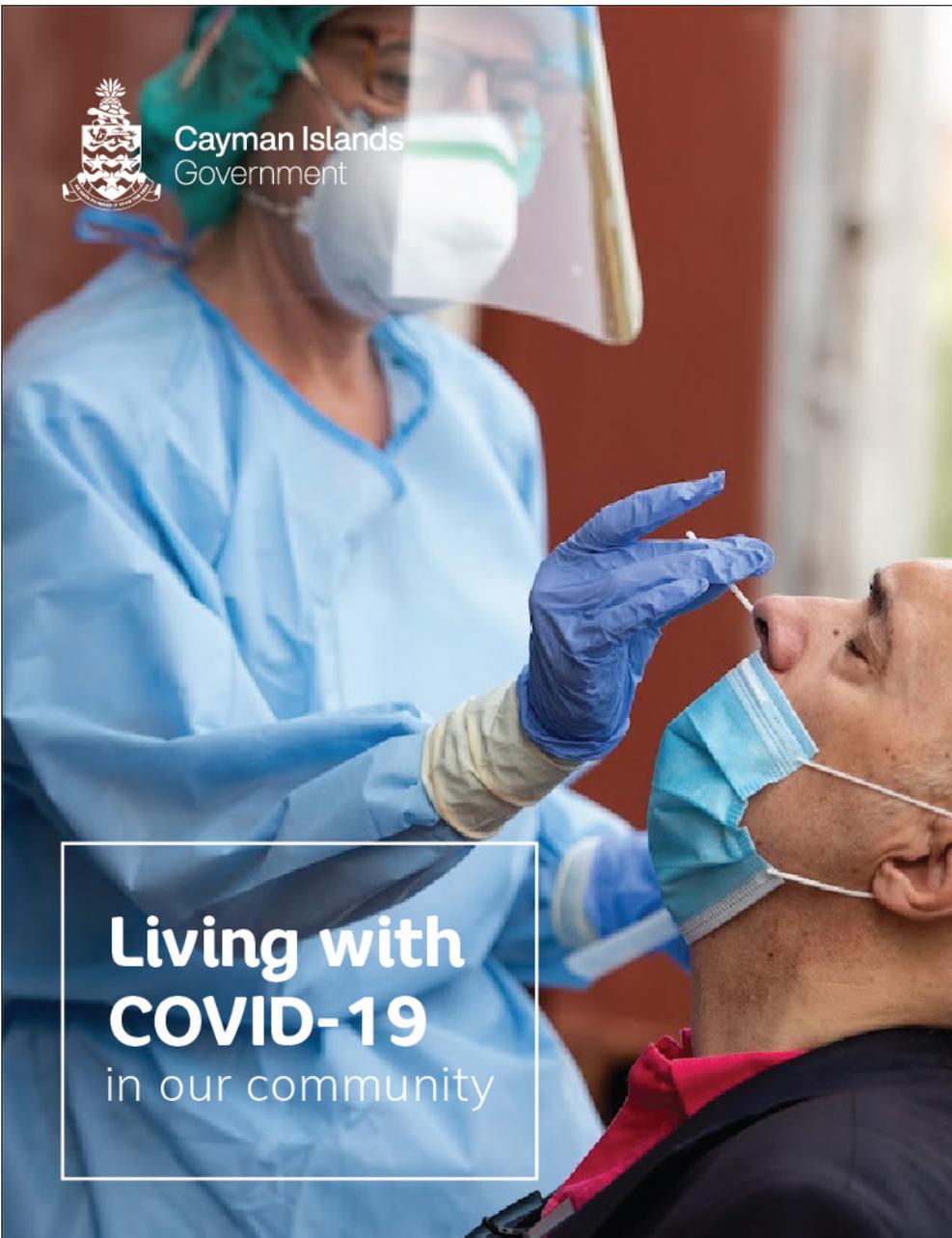
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# Much work ahead to meet COP26 pledges

By Lindsey Turnbull

At the National Conservation Council's General Meeting held on 24 November 2021, West Bay member Lisa Hurlston-McKenzie with responsibility for Sustainable Development & Climate Change, gave her thoughts on the outcome of COP26 (the UN's recent Climate Change Conference) and the implications for the NCC's work.

She acknowledged the NCC's pleasure at seeing the Premier Wayne Panton - whose responsibility includes sustainability and climate resiliency - attend COP26 which was held in Glasgow, Scotland, along with the National Trust youth contingent, and hoped they had offset their carbon footprint from their travels.

## Meeting COP26 pledges

She felt, as part of the global community, the NCC's challenge ahead was to devise measures that would meet some of the various pledges that were set out in the Glasgow Climate Pact, in particular, ending deforestation and reversing or restoring degraded lands by 2030, as well as cut-



► Lisa Hurlston-McKenzie, NCC Board member

ting methane emissions by 30% by 2030. This would effectively avoid 0.3 degrees of warming by 2040.

"But, despite these pledges and the nationally determined contributions by most contracting parties to halve their emissions by 2030 and be net zero by 2050, this only limits global warming to between 1.8 and 2.1C above pre-industrial levels, far from the 1.5 degrees needed to avert the worst effects of climate change on small island in low lying states," she warned. "With current warming at roughly 1.2C, our people are already witnessing climate impacts on their homes, livelihoods and natural environments. Therefore, the Cayman Islands must stand up policies actions within this decade to adapt to this sobering, longer-term reality of yet more delayed action and ambition from the international community."

Since COP26, the Paris Agreement now officially extended to the Cayman Islands and there were aspects of it which required reporting on the state of adaptation efforts and other priorities that would be required.

As a result, the NCC had much work to do, in particular on the ground work already laid for tracking deforestation rates by the DOE, which continued to report on the wetland loss for the west side of Grand Cayman.

"Expansion to include other forest habitat loss would address the Glasgow Climate Pact under the Paris Agreement and complement the National Energy Policy's requirement for tracking the rate of development," she stated.

## Protecting precious resources

They also needed to follow up on calls from the public to ramp up protected area nominations for Cabinet consideration, particularly high value conservation areas that function as important carbon sinks and enhance the resiliency of settlements and these natural systems.



"Being very strategic about these nominations would entail accounting for removals of these natural systems in our national greenhouse gas inventory to better report per capita emissions, that recognise the role of sinks and reservoirs in offsetting some of our current 15 tonnes per person greenhouse gas footprint," she explained. "It would also allow us to better site select for systems rehabilitation and enhancement projects delivered by government, hopefully in consort with the private sector and others."

*"I'm encouraged by those banking and financial institutions with local presence but global reach, who spearheaded COP26 sessions that have sought advice on reducing biodiversity loss locally" – Lisa Hurlston-McKenzie, NCC Board member*

The NCC needed environmental protection fund allocations in the coming years that were commensurate with the task of enhancing Cayman's natural system of protected areas for these purposes.

Mrs Hurlston-McKenzie urged the NCC to look with greater focus at Plan Cayman and to marrying it to an updated climate change policy. This would utilise information from the natural capital accounting project, incorporate opportunities for

nature-based solutions arising from the upcoming climate change risk assessment into specific area plans, and supporting regulations, and develop user-friendly climate risk resilient tools for development of project reviews.

## Finance sector seeks climate resiliency

The multi-dimensional vulnerability index still under development was one to watch, she said, having already provided preliminary scores for the Cayman Islands, as well as the global resilience index initiative being employed by some insurers and financial institutions.

"I'm encouraged by those banking and financial institutions with local presence but global reach, who spearheaded COP26 sessions that have sought advice on reducing biodiversity loss locally and climate impacts in an effort to adjust their lending and investment practices and to develop products seeing that greater uptake of renewable energy across the sectors, green infrastructure and other adaptation projects," she stated, adding that such entities were those which may have signed up to the UN Principles for Responsible Banking or Investment.

The methane pledge would also require the Cayman Islands to have a focussed management of existing forest and grasslands and to limit their conversion to other land uses, and also when directing Cayman's agricultural, waste disposal and water treatment practices and embracing technological opportunities. And, of course, for reducing transport emissions, particularly from cars, she added.

Mrs Hurlston-McKenzie said she remained hopeful that the NCC would get the support to deliver these tasks ahead which would set the Cayman Islands on track to aligning with the global targets pledged.



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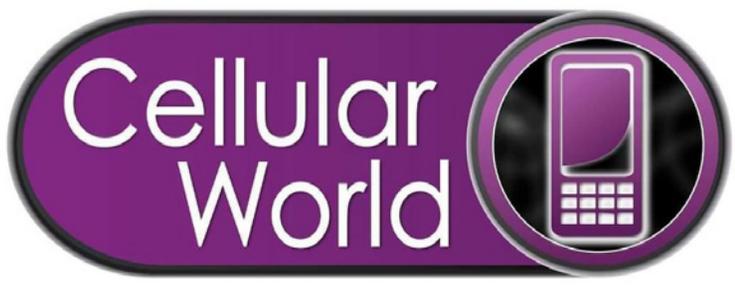
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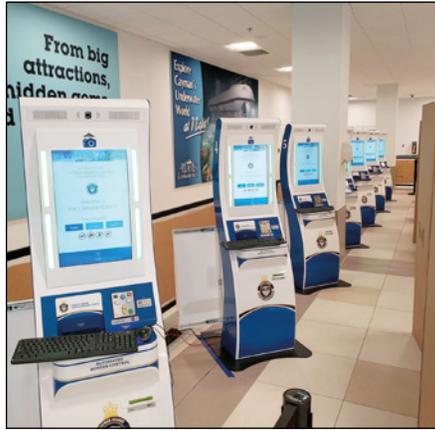
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# Automated border control kiosks at ORIA

Customs & Border Control Service has launched Automated Border Control (ABC) kiosks at Owen Roberts International Airport. The self-service kiosks allow eligible travellers arriving into Grand Cayman to complete the landing process themselves. The ABC kiosk solution has been designed to be both intuitive and user-friendly.

Director of CBC, Charles Clifford, said: "The Automated Border Control kiosks were initially launched a few months ago in a limited capacity. This allowed us to monitor the performance, make adjustments, and to garner travellers' feedback while we had less than normal arrivals. We are pleased to report that nine kiosks fully operational and available for use. This permits the landing process to be expedient and more efficient thereby allowing eligible travellers an improved customer experience."

The kiosks are similar to those in other countries whereby individual travellers, or those travelling in family groups, are prompted to scan their passport, have their photograph taken by the kiosk camera and answer a series of questions. Each traveller will complete this process and once the information entered is verified, a receipt will be issued for each individual. Travellers will then take their printed receipt along with their other travel documents to a CBC Officer. Using the kiosks are completely voluntary and persons preferring to be processed



by CBC Officers will still have the ability to do so. All arriving passengers will still need to adhere to the Control of Covid-19 Regulations at ORIA.

Through close collaboration with the Ministry of Border Control & Labour and CBC, the kiosk programme and machines were developed and provided by the Canadian Bank Note Company (CBN). CBN is an established and experienced provider of secure and leading-edge custom border security solutions to Governments all over the world. CBN has implemented border management systems in various countries across the Caribbean. Similar to the Cayman Islands, the Governments of The Bahamas, Bermuda and Grenada worked with CBN to augment their border management systems capacity with ABC technology in the form of kiosks and e-gates.



► Pink Ladies Kathleen Murphy, Anne Stein and Maxine Drake

## A sea of pink at Camana Bay

The Pink Ladies annual Christmas bazaar was held in the form of an outdoor market last Saturday at Camana Bay, with a plethora of stalls groaning with goodies all set up for perusal and purchase. Beautiful gift baskets, home made ornaments,

some lovely plants and more were all for sale, with proceeds going to the worthy causes that this great group of ladies support. The market was a great addition to the festive season and was well supported by the public.



► Kids loved the Christmas decorations



► Pink Lady Tatiana Tibbetts showcases some lovely items for sale

# Caymanian Times

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## Christmas Lighting Safety Tip



Try to avoid using the traditional larger Christmas light bulbs and use LED bulbs instead. LED bulbs are more energy efficient, which reduces your energy usage. Additionally, they don't burn as hot, which reduces the chance of fire. One of the most common causes of holiday-time fires results from bulbs being too close to gutters filled with dry leaves or on trees with dry branches.



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Electrical malfunction is the leading cause of home fires every year. Be very careful when decorating.



# CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEW ATTORNEYS-AT-LAW

The partnership and staff at the Maples Group wish to congratulate Ciara Hansen and Jordan Southway who recently completed their Articles of Clerkship and were admitted as attorneys-at-law in the Cayman Islands this year.

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► The Layman Scott High School graduating class of 2021



► The platform party at the recent Layman Scott High School graduation ceremony

# Layman Scott High School students graduate

A small group of family members and friends gathered at the Aston Rutty Civic Centre on 20 November to be a part of Layman E. Scott High School's 2021 graduation ceremony, held under the theme, 'There is no end, only new beginnings'.

During his address to the 21 graduates, Acting Principal Devon Bowen used the opportunity to hail them for their resilience.

"You have shown independence and maturity in the way you engaged with remote learning. As you reflect on the past year, be

comforted in the knowledge that while it was tough, it was character-building, and you have all stood up to the challenge," he said.

Mr Bowen also charged graduates to make difficult choices as they move forward.

"Get outside your comfort zone and make brave choices along your life's path," he asserted.

Guest speaker, Workforce Opportunities & Residency Cayman (WORC) Executive

and Layman Scott alumna, Marshienne Juman, urged graduates to be persistent in all their efforts, adding, "You do not have to be great to start, but you have to start to be great."

Class valedictorian Tiana Grey echoed a similar sentiment.

"As we stand on the cusp of our future, let us remember, we must work hard at all stages of our lives from this day forward to succeed; not only academically, but socially, morally and emotionally," she said.

Tiana, along with salutatorian David Tibbetts, were awarded for their outstanding academic achievement. They were among seven students graduating with high honours, having achieved passes in nine or more subject areas including English and maths.

Kevin Roberts, Alphonso Gayle, Sahadeo Sohan, the LSHS Steel Pan Band, Kasandra DaCosta and Kenny Ryan also participated in the evening's proceedings.

# Consumer protection bill in the works

During his parliamentary Budget speech last Friday, Finance Minister Chris Saunders outlined that the government was removing duty on day-to-day essential items, such as baby food, baby diapers, female and adult sanitary products. However, as a precaution to ensure that these savings were being passed through to the consumer, government had to go a step further and intended to bring out a consumer protection bill.

"Time and time again, we are seeing so many items on which there is no Customs Duty being the most expensive on the shelves," he said. "Just recently, we noticed that with the lateral flow test kits, where the government made the decision to make the kits duty free, and some of the prices that are being charged are borderline immoral."

Minister Saunders also called out price gouging on building supplies, such as cement.

"We also recently expanded the number of international markets for cement, which is vital for our construction industry, that may be sourced at lower prices. And again, in many instances the savings were not passed on to consumers," Minister Saunders worried.

As a result, government was going to have to enact legislation to ensure compliance.

"I want to put everyone on notice, that if savings are not being passed on to consumers, this government will take the nec-



► Deputy Premier, Finance Minister Chris Saunders

essary steps to ensure that they will be, even if we have to partner with others or import the items ourselves. It is that important to us," he stated.

Minister Saunders went on to say that too much money was being taken out of the pockets of people and they were not receiving value for their hard work.

"It cannot be business as usual, where many people are taken advantage of with some of the prices being charged on essential items," he said.

# Seymour switches sides

By staff reporter

Former member of the Progressives-led government and Opposition, Dwayne Seymour, this week defected to the ruling PACT (People-driven, Accountable, Competent and Transparent) coalition.

Mr Seymour, who will remain an independent, became the second member of the Progressives team to switch sides coming out of the 2021 election. The other was Juliana O'Connor-Connolly who retains the education ministry in the PACT government.

His move marks the fourth switching of political allegiances, as two other members of the current PACT coalition had also briefly signed on with the Progressives in the heat of the government formation negotiations following the April polls.

When he declared: "the message is clear!" at the end of a hastily arranged meeting on Tuesday night to alert his constituents of the impending change - and seeking their blessing for the move - it was clear that the PACT coalition had secured another feather in their cap.

The move further solidifies Premier Wayne Panton's PACT team's hold on power now giving them 13 of the 19 seats in Parliament, leaving the Progressives on the opposition benches with six seats.

Speaking as Parliament resumed debate on the PACT administration's first budget, Mr Seymour echoed sentiments he expressed during his Tuesday night meeting announcing his intentions.

"Mr. Speaker, as you know, over the past week, members of the government bench, in particular the Hon. Chris Saunders, Deputy Premier, and the Hon. Jay Ebanks used this forum to public call upon me to cross the floor and join the government bench. While this was crafty political manoeuvring, it was not a decision that I took lightly or one that I was willing to make without first going back to my constituents. As members on both sides of this honourable parliament know, this was not the first overture from the government, but it was the first one in public."

The former health minister will take up the role of Parliamentary Secretary in the PACT government serving under Deputy Premier and Minister of Labour Chris Saunders on the Labour portfolio, assisting Minister Kenneth Bryan with delivering his transportation plan, and working on executing housing and agriculture policies for Minister Jay Ebanks.

Mr Seymour was formally welcomed to the PACT fold by Pre-



► Dwayne Seymour switches sides

mier Wayne Panton at the start of Wednesday's Parliament, sitting shortly after he was sworn in by Governor Martyn Roper.

"This is a proud moment for the PACT government and indeed for the Cayman Islands," Premier Panton declared in welcoming the news member to his coalition of independents.

"The Minister for Planning has called the member for Bodden Town East, our newest Parliamentary Secretary, the missing link to the PACT government. I see this is an example of placing the country and our people first as returning to government helps to make a difference in the lives of not only his constituents in Bodden Town East, but to the Caymanians and the rest of the country as a whole. We warmly welcome into the fold," Mr Panton stated.

It's the latest shift in a year of politics in Cayman that witnessed a series of twists and turns during the formation of the government following the April elections.

The move initially sent shockwaves through Mr Seymour's Bodden Town constituency and the wider Cayman body politic and comes amidst speculation that all might not be well in some factions of the PACT independent coalition.

However, remarks by both Mr Seymour and members of the governing coalition, who showered him with support on Tuesday night, confirmed that this relationship has been on the agenda since the election and moves to get the Bodden Town East MP onside have been intensifying.

What is also clear is that the parting of ways came without acrimony, a point made by both Mr Seymour, the new PACT compatriots and a statement from his erstwhile political associates in the Progressives camp.

Mr Seymour, the independent MP and former minister of health

in the previous Progressives-led coalition had also campaigned

with the Progressives under the Alliance banner and sat with them on the Opposition benches.

Appealing to his constituents during Tuesday night's meeting Mr Seymour made a number of observations about the path he was embarking on. Among them: "Everyone is saying get something done for Bodden Town East. Go and get it. They're saying the government is inexperienced but what experience has shown me is that they're getting things done."

"Please trust me on this, ladies and gentlemen. I've never led you down the wrong road and I have always delivered for my district of Bodden Town East."

"Some may have a problem with that, I know. And I apologise if you don't like the decision that I'm making. You can call me and I'll come and speak to you once the situation matures in that area."

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# Caymanians moving up the ladder at MDAL

Nicola Anderson-Wildman, Charles Brown and Neyka Webster have all been given the chance to further their careers by taking on the role of Acting Deputy Chief Officer in the Ministry for District Administration and Lands (MDAL). Using a job rotation technique, the three senior leaders have each been awarded the opportunity to act in the Deputy Chief Officer role for a period of six months.

Head of the Civil Service and Deputy Governor, Franz Manderson, said that while only one candidate could fill the role, all three qualified candidates had an opportunity to further develop leadership and management skills that would better position them for prospective senior roles.

"I am proud to support this very innovative approach to recruitment within our civil service and wish each candidate the best," he said.

The three Caymanian candidates will be seconded from government posts. Nicola Anderson-Wildman is MDAL's Chief Financial Officer and has begun her ADCO tenure first. Charles Brown will act in the second rotation and is a Senior Policy Officer with the Ministry of Planning, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure (PAHI). Neyka Webster will close out the rotation schedule, under secondment from the Ministry of Tourism and Transport where she is the CFO.

The Acting Deputy Chief Officer role holds responsibility for supporting the Chief Officer in the overall direction, management and administration of the activities within the Ministry by way of monitoring their delivery of outputs, coordinating their strategic and operational planning, providing day-to-day management support, and modelling appropriate

leadership behaviours expected of civil service managers, as specified within the CIG's Core Competency Framework. Additional responsibility includes, coordinating a diverse team of department heads, units and sections under the remit of the Ministry in their delivery of strategic and operational services. The ADCO candidate will be an integral member of the Senior Management Team and deputise for the Chief Officer as required.

Nicola Anderson-Wildman holds a Chartered Professional Accountant (Canada) and a Certified Public Accountant (Delaware, U.S.A) qualification, with a Postgraduate certificate in Business Administration (merit) from the University of Liverpool and a Level 5 qualification from the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM). She also holds a double major, Bachelor of Science (BSc.) in Accounting and Economics from UWI, Mona. Mrs Anderson-Wildman has proven experience with strategic development and senior-level management, particularly, with budgeting and procurement. She has contributed to the strategic development of the Civil Service over the last thirteen plus years. She is a former member of the Performance Improvements Technical Advisory Committee and the Steering committee for the New John Gray High School projects. Mrs Anderson-Wildman brings a combined twenty-plus years' experience in management from both the private and public sectors.

Charles Brown is an architect, with a Master of Architecture from the University of Edinburgh and a Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Miami. His professional experience includes a variety of infrastructure projects, including: road



► Nicola Anderson-Wildman

projects (from main arterials to small neighbourhood streets), capital projects (such as the South Sound Boardwalk and coastal park enhancement projects). He has participated in the development of a number of policy matters including the National Energy Policy. More recently Mr Brown has been engaged with a number of digitally focused projects, such as, the National Identification Card project and the enhancement of online services for the Department of Planning and the Department of Vehicles and Drivers' Licencing. Mr Brown is also an active member of the Congress for the New Urbanism.

Neyka Webster is a Certified Public Accountant (New Hampshire State, USA) with a Master of Science (MSc.) in Finance from the Lancaster University, UK. Her un-

dergraduate studies include a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Accounting and Finance from the University of the West of England. Mrs Webster has worked in the accounting field for the past fifteen years, in the private sector and as a CFO for the Civil Service for the past nine years. Notably, her experience spans providing strategic financial advice to various levels of management, including: budget management, high-level reporting and compliance with various areas of finance and operations, and monitoring and advising on Ministry outputs. She also has an Executive Certificate in Global Leadership from UCCI and Florida International University. In 2020, Neyka Webster was appointed as a member of the Public Procurement Committee by the Governor.



► Charles Brown



► Neyka Webster

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or call **9162000 / 9458463**

THIS WEEK IN TIME

# 5 December 1831 Cayman's first parliament was formed

Pedro St James is a popular spot for visitors to the Islands and it is often called 'The Birthplace of Democracy' in the Cayman islands. This is because the first meeting to discuss the possibility of developing a local parliament took place on 5 December 1831 at this very loca-

tion, a great house with huge historical significance for the Cayman Islands, located in Savannah. The house represents the seat of parliamentary beginnings in the Cayman Islands and has therefore earned its place in the history books of the country.



► Pedro St James The Birthplace of Democracy in the Cayman Islands



► Beautiful locally-made tea towels will brighten up any kitchen. They cost CI\$25 for one or CI\$40 for two.

## 22 Sleeps 'til Christmas! Cool gifts, locally made

Christmas is just around the corner, so each week until the big day we bring you a sample of great gifts you can buy on island that won't break the bank!

3 Girls and a Kiln is a really cool store and art studio where you will find the '3 Girls' -Aimee Randolph, Claire Rohleder and Deborah Kern - producing amazing ceramics, woodwork, artwork and a whole host of other great items that make perfect Christmas gifts. Recently moved to

their new location, next to Island Jewelers, across from Next Chapter in Camana Bay, 3 Girls and a Kiln is definitely worth a browse for great gift-giving ideas for all the family.

*If you are a local business owner and your goods or service would make great Christmas presents that are CI\$30 or under then please email us at [lindsey@caymaniantimes.ky](mailto:lindsey@caymaniantimes.ky) and we will try and feature them.*



► Glow forged Cookies for Santa tray CI\$25



► Glow forged laser cut ornaments made from recycled and donated wood CI\$18 each

# Budget special

*Over the next three pages we bring you everything you need to know about Cayman's all-important 2022-2023 Budget. Where will Cayman's finances be at the end of the year? How has Covid-19 impacted government funds? How will government pay for its day-to-day running of the country and will it be able to afford new projects, such as the John Gray High School and mental health facility new construction? Who will benefit from government funding over the next two years? All these questions and more are answered for you.*

## BUDGET FORECAST FOR END OF YEAR

# How Government finances are shaping up

By Lindsey Turnbull

During his parliamentary address last Friday, outlining the 2022-2023 Budget, Deputy Premier and Finance Minister Chris Saunders advised where the government expected its finances to be in 2021.

### Operating Revenues and Expenses

Minister Saunders said core government was forecast to achieve an operating deficit of \$98.3m at the end of 2021. Operating revenues were expected to be at \$932.3m, which would be 10% higher than estimated in the original 2021 Budget, delivered in 2019. Revenues for 2021 would be \$70m better than 2019, before the pandemic.

"Confidence to do business in the Cayman Islands remains at an all-time high," he stated.

This was primarily due to strong growth in stamp duty, stamp duty on land duty, private fund fees, other company fees, and proceeds from liquidated entities. Revenues from core government were higher than predicted largely due to the impact of the volume of dutiable transactions, along with the continued growth from local real estate markets and the solid reliable performance of the financial services sector, he advised.

Revenue streams from private funds had also brought in strong revenues for the 2021 financial year, which mitigated the shortfall from the lack of tourism industry. The Minister called the private fund fees "a beacon of light" amidst the challenges and thanked the previous government for implementing it. Revenues

from other stamp duty was forecast to be \$8m better than budgeted and stamp duty on land transfers higher by \$54m. Revenue from private funds was looking likely at \$52.4m, while mutual fund admin fees would be \$6m and other company fees would also be \$6m.

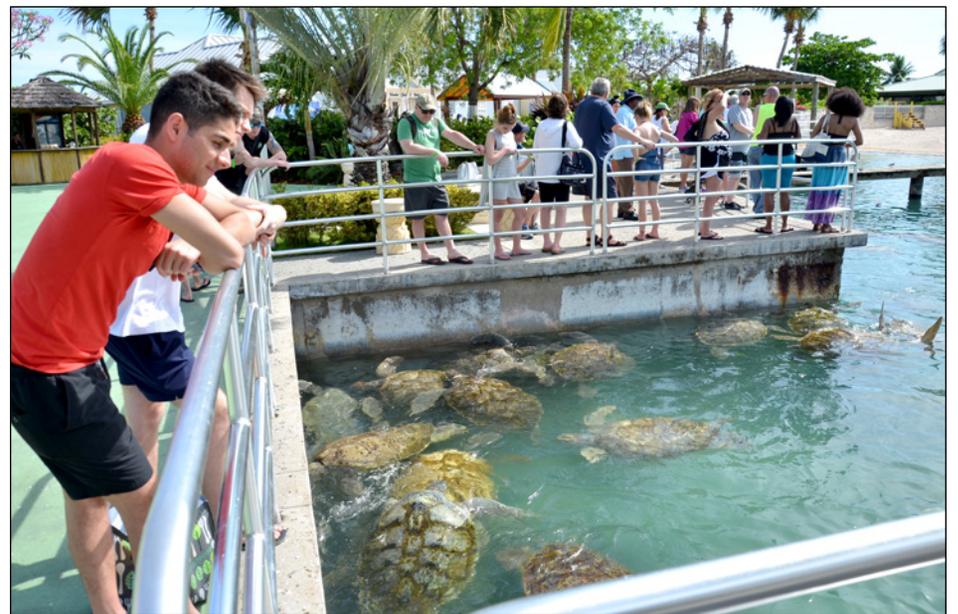
Operating and finances expenses had been impacted by the Covid response and recovery and, as such, were forecast at \$962m for 2021, 24% or \$188m greater than the \$774.4. original forecast. \$115 or 12% were Covid-related expenses not budgeted in 2019 when this year's budget was prepared. \$60m would have been spent on stipends given to displaced workers, \$47.7m on testing supplies and operational costs for Travel Cayman. \$3.4 went to business initiatives, \$2m to micro/ small business, \$1m to the most vulnerable and \$800,000 to meet the public's healthcare and insurance needs.

A further \$10.5m was provided as supplementary budget funds for the Storm Grace response and recovery also not budgeted in 2019. Out of this, \$3m was given to farmers, \$3m for housing, \$4m for business initiatives and \$500,000 for clean-up and repairs. Donations to NGOs were anticipated to be \$23m higher than budgeted due to increased funds provided to the public, including tertiary healthcare, care of the indigent, for seamen, the elderly and disabled, after school programmes for children and food support for the elderly.

### Statutory authorities/ Government companies

Output from public authorities and government companies was projected to be \$34m more than original budgeted, primarily due to increased funding to the Health Services Authority.

Transfer payments were forecast to be \$103m million greater than originally budgeted and this was due to support given to displaced workers formerly working in the tourism sector. Other operating expenses were also expected to re-



► The Cayman Turtle Conservation and Education Centre cost the government \$10.7m in 2021

sult in an increase of \$34m over budget which was a direct result of Covid-related expenses.

Statutory authorities and government companies were forecast to have a net operating deficit of \$54.3m, compared to the original budget of a deficit of \$16.9m.

Major loss leaders were expected as follows:

- Cayman Islands Airport Authority: \$28m
- Cayman Turtle Conservation and Education Centre: \$10.7m
- HSA: \$7.5m
- Port Authority: \$7.2m
- CINICO: \$3.5m
- Cayman Airways: \$3.1m.

Even though these government companies and statutory authorities were losing money, these entities provided essential services to the Cayman people and were economic enablers, and in the case of Cayman Airways, economic accelerators, the Minister stated.

"Simply put, they are necessary for the magic of what we have for the Cayman miracle to work," he said.

### Economy shrinkage expected

As a backdrop to Cayman's contracted economy, the Minister clarified that where world economies had struggled to cope with the pandemic, all economies were affected as global economic activity contracted by 3.1% in 2020, compared to a

growth rate of 2.8% in 2019. Global economic activity was set to expand to 5.9% in 2021 before decelerating to 4.9% in 2022 and 3.6% in 2023.

Cayman's Gross Domestic product (GDP) contracted by 6.7% in 2020 as a result of reduced activities associated with the pandemic.

Economic contraction in 2020 impacted all sectors, with the exception of the health and social work sector, which increased by 15.7%, and the financial services sector which increased by 0.3%

In 2020, Cayman's industry sectors contracted as follows:

- Hotel and restaurants by 76.6%
- Transportation by 31.5%
- Transport, storage and communication by 14.4%
- Wholesale and retail by 4.3%
- Construction by 4.4%
- Business services by 4.7%.

### Prices going up

In 2020 the average CPI increased by 1%, with major rises as follows:

- Food and non-alcoholic beverages by 5.1%
- Communications by 5.9%
- Education by 4.4%

Contraction in the local economy in 2020 contributed to lower demand for labour. Total employment declining by 12.1% to reach 41,644 and the unemployment rate rose to 5.2% in 2020.



► The CIAA cost government \$28m in 2021

ECONOMIC FORECAST FOR 2022 - 2023

# In the black for 2023

By Lindsey Turnbull

Deputy Premier and Finance Minister Chris Saunders announced last week in his Budget address in Parliament that Cayman's domestic economy was expected to recover partly, with an estimated growth of 1.2% in 2021. Economic activity was expected to accelerate by 5% in 2022 and an average each year of 3.2% between 2023 and 2025.

**Hotels and restaurants** were expected to contract further by 88% in 2021, but the sector was expected to recover partially, with an average annual growth rate of 224.9% per year between 2022 and 2025.

The **transport** sector would contract 26.9% in 2021 and recover with an average annual growth rate of 12% in the next four years, while the **wholesale** sector would increase 2.2% in 2021 and 3.7% each year from 2022 to 2025. **Financial services** were expected to expand 1.9% in 2021 and average growth of 1% per year between 2022 and 2025.

**Construction** projects, including the NCB, Hyatt, Mandarin and Indigo hotels, John Gray High School, the construction of a mental health facility and continued expansion of roads, meant the industry was expected to grow 9.4% in 2021 and average 5.3% growth from 2022-25. **Business services** would expand by 3.7% in 2021 and see an average expansion of 2.2% from 2022-25.

**Inflation** would be 1.3% in 2021, 3.4% in 2022 and an average of 2% over the following three years. The **unemployment** rate would be 5% in 2021 and 4.4% in 2022 and averaging 3.6% in the remaining three years.

In 2022 government operating revenue was anticipated at \$940.9m and in 2023 it would climb to a total of \$978.1m, while operating expenses would be \$921.5m in 2022 and \$950.4m 2023.

Major cost drivers would be personnel costs, totalling \$437.2m in 2022, and \$459.3m in 2023. These costs were from the recruitment of teachers, as well as bolstering the police, fire, prison and border and control services, increasing resources



► Cayman Airways is to get \$7.2m from government in 2022 and \$6.5m in 2023

for the promotion and regulation of the financial services industry and increased civil servants' health insurance premiums.

Supplies and consumables were also going up, with the government budgeting \$149.4m in 2022 and \$149.2m in 2023. Depreciation was budgeted for \$45m in 2022 and \$47.5m in 2023 and reflected the increase in value of the government assets as various capital projects were completed, the Minister indicated.

### New borrowings

Government's line of credit allowed it to borrow up to \$299m in 2022 and \$50m in 2023, a total of \$349.1 m over the next two financial years. In June 2022, any amount advanced unpaid under the line of credit already established by the previous government would be converted into a 15-year fixed rate amortising loan.

The time had come where the government could not afford to continue depleting its cash reserves and might need to draw on line of credit to ensure that the minimum number of cash days remained compliant with the PMFA. Government would only draw down on the loan funds if and when it was absolutely necessary to do, Minister Saunders said.

With respect to the \$349.1m intended borrowings, in 2022 \$303.5m would be used to fund capital investments by core government and \$59.4m invested in statutory authorities and government companies, of which \$45.6 would be met by borrowings.

Government was therefore expected to incur financing costs of up to \$14.7m costs in 2022 and \$16.9m in 2023, and these would be expenses covering interest and financing costs. Overall debt was expected to increase to \$485.4m in 2022 and decrease marginally to \$482.1m in 2023. Cayman's debt-to-GDP ratio was predicted at 9.3% in 2022 and 8.7% in 2023, still one of the lowest debt-to-GDP ratios in the world. Government was currently looking to refinance its existing debt at lower interest rates, Minister Saunders confirmed.

Outputs on Statutory authorities and Government companies would come in at \$161.9m in 2022 and \$164.8m 2023. This would be used to fund most of the following:

- Cinico \$50.1m 2022/\$51.6m 2023
- HSA \$42.4m 2022/\$42.2m 2023
- Cayman Airways \$18.6 in 2022 and 2023
- Cayman Islands Monetary Authority \$31.8m 2022/\$33.5m 2023

Outputs from non-governmental output suppliers would be \$42.5 in 2022 and \$50.8m in 2023, broken down as follows:

- \$20.9m 2022/\$21.6m 2023 for medical expenses for uninsured and under-insured
  - \$2.7m per year towards legal aid
  - \$7.4m in 2022/\$14.9m 2023 for the public schools' meals programmes,
  - \$2m per year for the care for indigent and disabled elderly people.
- The transfer of payments would total \$61.5m 2022/\$52.9m 2023, for funds to deliver critical social programmes for young people and financial support for some of the most vulnerable in society, as follows:
- \$10m per year for local and overseas scholarships for more than 2,500 students.
  - \$13.7m 2022/\$14.5m 2023 for temporary permanent assistance to support the most vulnerable
  - \$11.1m per year ex-gratia to retired seamen
  - \$10.3m in 2022 for stipends for people in tourism sector

The operating deficits of statutory authorities and government companies would total a net debt of \$35.2m 2022 and 19.1m in 2023, as follows:

- CIAA \$14.9m 2022/\$3.2m 2023
- Cayman Turtle Conservation and Education Centre \$8.8m 2022/\$7.1m in 2023
- Cayman Airways \$7.2m 2022/\$6.5m in 2023.

In 2022, core government was forecast to earn an operating surplus of \$19.4m but when factoring the operating deficit of public entities, the entire public sector will have a net deficit \$15.8m.

In 2023 core government would earn an operating surplus \$27.7m. When factoring operating deficits of public entities, the entire public sector was forecast to have an overall net surplus of \$8.6m for 2023.



► \$7.4m has been allocated for public schools' meals programmes in 2022 and \$14.9m 2023

# Opposition worries about Government's "massive borrowing"

Going through Deputy Premier and Finance Minister Chris Saunders' budget address from Friday, Opposition Leader Roy McTaggart said that very little, if any, time had been devoted to discussing the government's overall financial strategy.

"To give us the chance to question and debate that financial strategy requires the sitting government to clearly state the direction it is taking and the fiscal principles it is working to," he said.

When his party was in power, they worked towards: the achievement of year-on-year substantial budget surpluses; no new taxes or fees levied on families or business and reducing existing 'tax burdens' where possible; no new borrowing and the paying down of existing government debt; and all capital investment to be paid for from operating revenues, he advised.

"These were principles that we kept repeating but, more importantly, they were principles we lived by," he said. "We believe that was the right financial strategy to follow then and, we believe, it is the strategy The Cayman Islands needs to continue going forward. Strong finances today provide the resilience to meet the challenges and uncertainties of tomorrow."

## Borrowing the biggest concern

Most worryingly, the PACT Government had turned its back on the past eight years of prudent financial principles that brought stability to government finances and had underpinned consistent economic growth, he advised.

"Our biggest concern with the PACT budget, therefore, lies not in the detail of the resource allocation decisions, but the disregard it shows for the long-term financial interests of the Cayman Islands," he worried. "At the heart of this budget lies a single choice made by this Administration. That choice is to go down the path of massive borrowing once again."

Over the period of the Progressives-led Governments, the national debt fell from around \$560m in 2013 to under \$250m on the day they left office. A reduction of over \$300m or over 55% in Cayman's national debt, he said.

"That meant a rock steady credit rating with major agencies; reduced financing costs, so more to spend on services for people; and more flexibility to meet future challenges, including Covid. Most importantly, it meant that government paid its way, investing for the future while not saddling future generations of Caymanians with the millstone of debt around their wallets," he stated.

The PACT Government had thrown a highly successful strategy into reverse. Instead of prudently paying down debt, they were "borrowing with abandon". In taking out new loans totalling some \$350m, \$20M more than stated during the SPS, to fund infrastructure, the government was negating with one stroke the hard work done by the last two Progressive Governments.

"By the end of the period, debt will have spiralled back up to around \$400m. In just



► Opposition Leader Roy McTaggart

the two years covered by this budget, the proportion of debt to Government revenue nearly doubles, while the cost of servicing that debt goes up by nearly a third," he stated.

Mr McTaggart said Cayman was not the United States.

"There are limits on our ability to borrow – legal limits, and I would add perhaps

common-sense limits. At the same time, as interest rates rise from their historic low, and it is increasingly likely that they will start to rise in 2022, debt financing costs will increase putting further pressures on revenue budgets. How then can government respond? Will it be forced then to put up taxes to balance the books?" he questioned.

# Health insurance not fit for purpose

In his response to the budget speech, Opposition Leader Roy McTaggart said the Opposition felt Cayman's pensions systems needed to be updated, if not overhauled. As a result, he was pleased to see the government intended to review the system and offered them their full support in bringing forward appropriate changes.

"On the other hand, the health insurance system is, I fear, no longer fit for purpose," he stated. "The numbers of people, especially the elderly, having to declare themselves medically indigent and the resulting spiralling costs to the public purse alone are enough to demonstrate the failings in the current system."

Mr McTaggart felt that government believed it has a "ready-made solution" in expanding the role of CINICO.

"Indeed, we started to look at this ourselves and members may recall my stating such," he said. "CINICO may be part of the answer, but we came to realise that it would need to be part of a well-thought through reform of the system and not a knee-jerk reaction."



Mr McTaggart felt it was ironic that elsewhere in his speech, the Premier quoted the World Bank's research on the consequences of market imperfections yet seemed willing

to ignore the fact that simply giving CINICO a bigger role could serve to further distort and destabilise what was already a "poorly functioning health insurance market".

the government did finally bring forward.

"And of course, I trust that they will involve the Opposition members of this House," he added.

# Swimmers on Olympic quest head to Abu Dhabi

After the Olympic Games, and two unprecedented training seasons, the world swimming elite will compete again at the 15th FINA World Short Course Championships (25m) 2021 in Abu Dhabi, 16-21 December. Among them, a Cayman delegation composed of four athletes with diverse strengths and experience: 22-year-old Florida State University Senior Lauren Hew; 19-year-old University of Northern Colorado Sophomore Alison Jackson; 20-year-old St Thomas University Miami student Liam Henry; and 15-year-old Cayman Prep & High School Year 11 student James Allison.

While all except James have previous Junior National team experience with the CARIFTA Swimming Championships (James was selected for the past two years' CARIFTA teams which were cancelled due to Covid) this will also be the first senior team appearance for Liam.

Cayman's new technical director Jacky Pellerin will lead the Cayman delegation, accompanied by Coach Darren Mew.

Mr Pellerin said: "Cayman will be represented by a small team,

which I am privileged to lead – the first in my new role here in the Cayman Islands as Technical Director. I look forward to working with our swimmers and to drawing on my previous international experience both on deck and at the FINA congress where I will represent the Cayman Islands Aquatics Sports Association. Coach Darren Mew is also travelling with the team, and he too brings considerable international experience to the team."

After a long, two, pandemic impacted years Cayman Islands Aquatic Sports Association is delighted to see its swimmers once again representing the Cayman Islands internationally.

Meanwhile, as James, Liam, Lauren and Ali focus on their final preparations and training, Cayman swimming looks forward to supporting its team that is in Cali as part of the Cayman Islands team at the first Junior Pan American Games. Swimmers Jillian Crooks, Jordan Crooks, Raya Embry-Brown, and Kyra Rabess; and Artistic swimmers Alexandra Owen and Abbie Carnahan are accompanied by Coaches David Pursley and Romina Giraldo.



► Top row, l-r: Alison Jackson, Coach Jacky Pellerin, Coach Darren Mew. Bottom row, l-r: James Allison, Lauren Hew, Liam Henry.

# Enjoy a feel-good Christmas musical

By Christopher Tobutt



► Mother and daughter, Lisa Welman and Jodie Welman, who play Mrs Potts and Chip

Saving Christmas Island is a feel-good Christmas musical extravaganza to help us count our blessings for the Holiday and New Year, written by Caitlin Tyson, who also plays Mauna, one of the lead characters in the show. It opened at the Harquail Theatre on 27 and 28 November, but there are two more dates, on 18 and 19 December. With a cast of more than 30, it features well-known and loved characters like Buddy the elf, the Grinch, Santa Claus, and other Disney favourites, and is guaranteed to lift spirits.

It follows Mauna and her friends as they come to her island to spend Christmas. But she's feeling a little bit stuck and trapped, and wanting to experience new things. So, she wishes for a "magical winter wonderland," type of Christmas, instead of her own island's warm, tropical beauty, and, without giving too much of the story away, the moral is: be careful for what you wish for.

"There is someone in the shadows who casts a curse to turn their beautiful idyllic island into a freezing cold, not-so-wonderful wonderland," Ms Tyson said. "So, they go on this adventure to try to save Christmas forever before it's ruined. They seek out the Grinch who is their only person they've heard about who ever saved Christmas, and with his help, they try to save Christmas, but there are a lot of twists and turns and bumps



along the way, but in the end it's a story about friendship, forgiveness, and being grateful for what you have."

Since studying acting in New York, and then coming back to win Miss Cayman 2018, Ms Tyson has been busy writing and producing her first movie, 'All Out', in October last year. She began writing Saving Christmas Island partly as a way to resolve her own feelings she was experiencing after the Covid lockdown of 2020. "I was actually feeling a bit stuck and trapped myself, and I was trying to find all these things to be grateful for, because Cayman was in such a great position compared to

the rest of the world, but still the Covid pandemic took a big toll on all of us, so this was my outlet to release all of that," she said. "We can always look outside and wish for something more, but sometimes it's what we already have that we should be grateful for."

It's the first time onstage for Lisa Welman and her 11-year-old daughter, Jodie, and they are loving every minute of it.

"I'm playing Mrs Potts who is from Beauty and the Beast," Lisa said. "And I'm playing Chip, her son, who was turned into a teacup," Jodie said, "We're both very excited."



► Catherine Tyson, the show's Director, with Wendy Miller, the Enchantress who places a spell over the island

# COMMUNITY EVENTS

## Overseas Scholarships for the 2022/2023 academic year

Ongoing until 31 January 2022

- Ministry of Education (MOE) invites all eligible Caymanians to submit applications for Overseas Scholarships for the 2022/2023 academic year. The period of application closes at 11:59 pm on Monday, 31 January 2022. Successful applicants will be able to access funding from September (Fall) 2022 onwards. For additional information on MOE government overseas scholarships, visit [www.gov.ky/education/scholarships](http://www.gov.ky/education/scholarships).

## Christmas Pop - Up Market

**4 December** - Come out and support local artisans and choose from a wide variety of locally made items at the Central Terrace, 2nd floor Bayshore Mall from 11am to 3pm. Items include jewelry, soaps, pottery body scrubs, massage oils and many more.

## Jeep345 Parade - Camana Bay

**4 December** - All are welcomed to watch the parade of festively lit jeeps from 6pm to 8pm through the Town Centre at Camana Bay on Saturday, 4 December. Join them at Abacus for their toy drive for Big Brothers Big Sisters.

## Centre for Theological Leadership Training (CTL) Cayman Islands - Christmas Seminar

**5 December** - The Centre for Theological Leadership Training presents a Christmas special seminar on "The Uniqueness of Jesus in the context of Pluralism" on Saturday 5 December from 10am to 11:30am via Zoom. The guest speaker will be Rev. Dr. Steve Jennings. Zoom information is as follows: Meeting ID: 2485559547, Pass Code: 5SZPSI. Everyone is welcomed to tune in.

## St. Alban's Church of England - December Services of Holy Communion

**5 December** - December Services will be held on Sunday 5 December and Sunday 19 December as well as on Christmas Day on Sunday 25 December. All Services begin at 9:30am. As is customary, Morning Prayers will continue on alternate Sundays at 9:30am. The Rt. Rev. Dr. PJ Lawrence, Bishop is the celebrant at all Services of Holy Communion.

## Elmslie Church Carol Concert

**7 & 9 December** - Get into the Christmas spirit with a traditional carol concert performed by the Cayman National Choir and the Cayman National Orchestra at the Elmslie Church, Harbour Dr. from



► Jingle Bell Walk/Run

7:30pm to 8:45pm on each night. Call 949 - 7923 for more information.

## Cayman Animal Rescue Enthusiasts (C.A.R.E.) Bingo Bells Fundraiser

**9 December** - C.A. R. E. Cayman is having a Bingo fundraiser on Thursday 9 December at Bevvv and the Lazy Lizard (Old Margaritaville) West Bay Rd. starting at 6:30pm. For \$50. you get 5 games of Bingo with an arm's length of raffle tickets and a welcome drink. All proceeds will go directly to CARE, helping to fund their free spay & neuter programme. Reservations are required, so please email [carecaymanfundraising@gmail.com](mailto:carecaymanfundraising@gmail.com) to book your spot.

## First Baptist Church - Celebrate Christ! - Celebrate Christmas!

**10 & 12 December** - Celebrate the Christmas Season with the

outstanding First Baptist Choir and Soloists! Enjoy the sights and sounds of the season at the First Baptist Church of Grand Cayman as they present their annual Festival of Christmas Praise - a spectacular evening of Christmas worship!

Friday, 10 December and Sunday 12 December at 7pm at the First Baptist Church of Grand Cayman across from the Lions Centre. Call 929-0692 or go to [fbc.org.ky](http://fbc.org.ky) for more information.

## Mission House Holiday Caboose Breakfast Cookout

**11 December** - Enjoy a fantastic traditional Caymanian styled breakfast including porridge, fritters, local eggs, sweet plantain, cassava cake, swanky, coffee and fever grass tea at the Mission House, Bodden Town on 11 December from 8:30am to 10:30am. After breakfast, watch a demo on

how to make your own 'Smoke Pan' traditionally used to help keep mosquitoes away and a complimentary tour of the Mission House. Tickets are \$35 for adults and \$15 for children. NTCI members receive a 10% discount. Go to <https://nationaltrust.org.ky/events/> for more information.

## Jingle Bell Walk/Run

**12 December** - All are welcomed to participate in the Cayman Islands Crisis Centre's annual event on Sunday 12 December at the Holiday Inn beginning at 7am. For information or to register, please email [fundraising@cicc](mailto:fundraising@cicc).

## Decorate a Gingerbread House - Cayman Heart Fund

**18 December** - Cayman Heart Fund is hosting a gingerbread house decorating party on Saturday 18 December at the Marriott Beach Resort from 10am to 12:30pm. Enjoy this family bonding and holiday fun event and take home your own tasty creation. For additional information, contact Allison Olarou of Cayman Heart Fund at 915 6324 or at [info@caymanheartfund.com](mailto:info@caymanheartfund.com). A limited number of tickets are available online at [eventpro.ky](http://eventpro.ky). Proceeds from this event will go towards the Cayman Heart Fund's many Community programs including free health screenings.

Send your community events to [wendy@caymaniantimes.ky](mailto:wendy@caymaniantimes.ky)

## MOMENTS OF INSPIRATION



# THE PASSION OF DEVOTION

## Revelation 4:8

The passion of devotion lies in prayer. The Spirit of devotion fills the hearts of God's children and characterizes their devotion. The inspiration and center of their joyful devotion is the HOLINESS OF GOD. That holiness of God claims their attention and inflames their devotion.

When we are truly engaged in joyful devotion, there is nothing dull, nothing lifeless, about our Heavenly worship. You see the ministry of prayer, if be anything worthy of the name, is a ministry of passion, an intense longing for God. When the woman at the well encountered Jesus that day it was life-changing. She understood the true devotion of worship.

# The real reason you skipped your workout

It's normal to exercise less this time of year.

Most will blame this on all of the holiday activities that they have to take care of.

The parties, the shopping, the baking, the wrapping...

While it's true that there's a lot to do, that's not really why you aren't working out. You've been just as busy in the past and you managed to keep your workouts consistent.

So what is it? Why did you skip your workout?

It's because of stress.

The stress is real this time of year.

There are obligations and expectations coming at you from every angle, and somehow you are supposed to juggle it all with a smile on your face.

It's a setup for mismanaged stress to wreak havoc on your healthy routine.

Mismanaged stress leads to overeating, overdrinking, headaches, weight gain, anxiety, fa-



► Ernest Ebanks

tigue and trouble sleeping. All of this overwhelm makes the idea of heading to the gym for a workout pretty unappealing, especially when the other option is to get another hour of sleep.

So the question for you, my friend, is how will you better manage your holiday stress?

Will you continue to allow stress to increase your calories and rob your workouts over the next couple of weeks? Will you be heavier and more exhausted as you ring in the new year?

Or will you combat stress in the most proactive, effective way?

By exercising.

A good workout gets your blood pumping and releases happy hormones.

A good workout makes you more likely to eat healthier.

A good workout makes your sleep deeper and more restful.

A good workout is the best way to feel a burst of natural energy.

I'm here to help you get the **BEST workout possible!** Call Ernest at **Body Shapers Personal Training Fitness Studio 325-8696** or email [bodyshaperscayman@gmail.com](mailto:bodyshaperscayman@gmail.com) today and let's get you on the schedule!

WEEKLY WEATHER FORECAST

Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
						
83° / 77°	84° / 77°	84° / 77°	85° / 77°	83° / 80°	82° / 80°	83° / 79°
Breezy with partial sunshine	Sun and clouds with a shower	Periods of sun with a shower	Partly sunny with a shower	Breezy; a shower in the a.m.	Plenty of sunshine	Mostly sunny

# The race is on to contain Omicron

By staff writer

The next few weeks are crucial as governments and health experts rush to grapple with the latest challenge thrown up by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The emergence of the Omicron variant has become a global priority as scientists scramble to learn more about it in the hope of stopping it in its tracks. This strain of the virus, first uncovered in South Africa by that country's scientists, is said to display characteristics that could make it even more transmissible than the current virulent Delta strain.

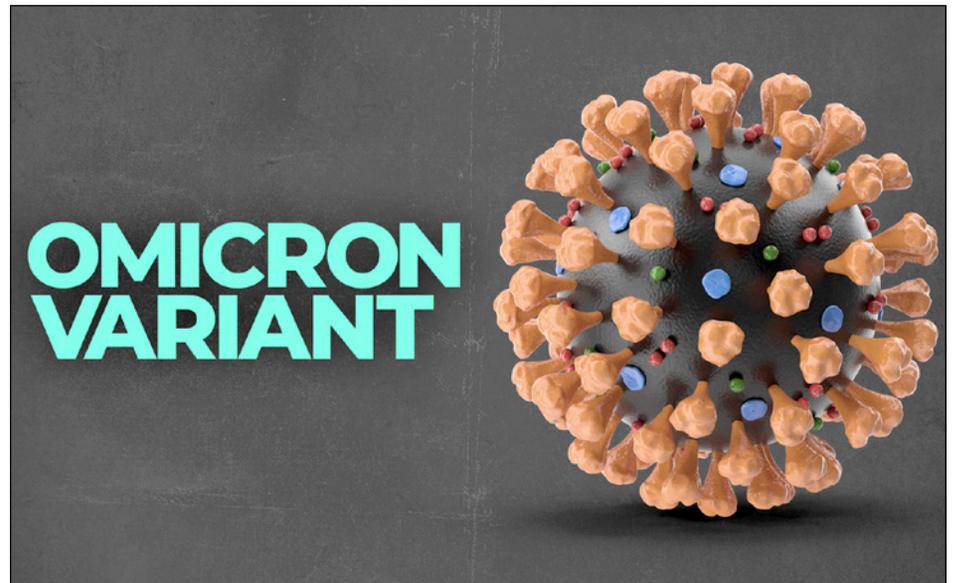
Already several countries have adopted a series of measures they describe as precautionary in response to the potential threat of Omicron. Mask mandates are now being more vigorously enforced along with an aggressive campaign to boost vaccinations including booster shots. Many countries including Cayman have taken a first preventive step against Omicron by restricting travel initially with South Africa and several other southern African countries where cases linked to the variants were first identified.

In just over a week since the news broke of the discovery of this new variant, reports of cases have been increasing across the world leading to concerns that if it maintains its current pattern of spread it could seriously disrupt the gains made in battling the Delta variant.

The World Health Organisation has cautioned that initial studies suggest that the Omicron variant may spread more quickly than other variants of Covid-19 with preliminary findings indicating that it might also pose an increased risk of reinfection. Some countries have imposed severe travel restrictions and quarantine requirements with Japan imposing a temporary ban on international arrivals by non-citizens.

### UK and US restrictions

The UK government has published a travel 'red list' and has also stipulated that people arriving from those countries will not be able to enter unless they are British, Irish nationals, or UK residents. All international arrivals must take a Day 2 PCR test and self-isolate in a government-ap-



proved hotel at their own expense until they receive a negative test. The British government is also stipulating that face masks must be worn in shops and on public transport in England with fines starting at £200 (US\$266.85) now being slapped on violators. In the UK, the new measures will be reviewed within three weeks based on what trend the Omicron variant takes.

The United States is reimposing a travel ban on South Africa and other affected southern African countries where the Omicron variant has been found. US citizens and permanent residents are exempt but they will need to show a negative COVID test before boarding their flight even if they are fully vaccinated. Another test, three to five days after arriving in the US, is recommended.

There's been an uproar by the African countries which have been 'red listed' by the UK and other countries because of Omicron. They have criticised the decision calling it "selective and discriminatory" as it omits western countries where the variant is also present.

### Research ongoing

Scientists and governments are concerned about the findings from their ini-

tial investigations into the variant due to the sheer number of mutations Omicron appears to carry. Research is continuing. With more than 30 mutations identified, it's being labelled as a variant of concern with many unanswered questions about its potential severity. Experts say they are looking into three main factors regarding Omicron: how quickly the variant spreads; if it's capable of causing more serious disease; and whether it might be resistant to current Covid-19 vaccines. They also say that Omicron can also be spread between people who are double-vaccinated.

Companies that have been at the forefront of manufacturing Covid-19 vaccines say they are already conducting lab tests and hope to have a drug that responds to Omicron possibly by early next year. While it's still unclear just how severe the Omicron variant might be to those who contract it, scientists say so far symptoms appear to be mild, or its carriers asymptomatic.

With the world still grappling with the ongoing onslaught of the Delta Covid variant, the coming period is going to be critical in determining the trend of Omicron and its likely impact on economic recovery and public health.






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## CARIBBEAN BRIEFS

## Antiguan mum gets \$900k space tickets

An Antiguan woman and her daughter will be flying into the Earth's orbit having won two tickets worth \$450,000 each from space tourism company Virgin Galactic.

Virgin Galactic founder Sir Richard Branson surprised Keisha Schahaff, a health and energy coach, with the news at her home in Antigua a month ago and Schahaff decided that she will share the once in a lifetime opportunity with her 17-year-old daughter, a science student living in Britain who dreams of one day working for NASA.

In a social media post, an excited Schahaff wrote that she is "ready for the biggest adventure of her life".

Schahaff won the prize after entering a fundraiser lottery with a \$10 ticket organised by Virgin Galactic on the Omaze platform, which raised \$1.7 million. The money will be donated to the NGO Space



► Keisha Schahaff with Sir Richard Branson

for Humanity, which works for wider access to space.

Schahaff will be among the first of Virgin Galactic's space tourists, but her place in the line has yet to be determined. It could take several years.

Virgin Galactic has already pre-sold over 700 space tickets: 600 between 2005 and 2014, and another 100 since August, when they were relisted for a price of \$450,000. The first flights will be at the end of next year.

## Barbados likely to inspire others

Barbados becoming a republic will probably inspire other countries to do the same, royal watchers believe.

It looks inevitable that other countries will follow Barbados in removing the Queen as head of state to appoint an elected leader and transition to a republic.

Barbados held a colourful celebration as the clock struck midnight on Monday and the island declared itself a parliamentary republic after 396 years of British rule.

The event – which was attended by Prince Charles and VIPs like Barbadian Rihanna – marked the appointment of the ex-British colony's first elected president, Dame Sandra Mason, while the Queen was removed as head of state.

Barbados is the 18th country to remove the Queen in favour of a native head of state since Her Majesty took the throne in 1952.

The Queen remains head of state in just 15 nations: Australia, Antigua and Bar-



► Prince Charles officially hands over to Dame Sandra Mason

buda, Belize, Canada, Grenada, Jamaica, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Solomon Islands, The Bahamas and Tuvalu and the UK.

Barbados' decision to have its own leader could have a "domino effect" on other former British colonies. For decades Jamaica, where the two main political parties support severing ties, has openly discussed it. Jamaica celebrates its 60th independence next year.

## Honduras wants Castro to clean up now

Xiomara Castro, Honduras's first woman president, faces a daunting set of challenges. Castro won Monday's general election by a clear margin and now faces tough obstacles in a country wracked by gang violence, drug trafficking, corruption, Covid-19 and widespread poverty.

According to Transparency International, Honduras is 157th out of 180 countries in its corruption perception index, making it one of the most graft-tainted places in the world.

Under outgoing President Juan Orlando Hernandez, the anti-corruption fight in Honduras suffered heavily in 2020 as he relaxed laws on corruption and pardoned government offenders accused of embezzling millions.

Castro will be to reverse laws and legislative reforms that previously allowed the current government to protect corrupt officials. It is a battle that she cannot win on her own, though and will rely on international support to do so.

The migrant problems need to be addressed too. More than a dozen migrant caravans have set off from Honduras since 2018 in the hope of reaching the United States.

Some of these consisted of thousands of people and former US president Donald



► New Honduras president Xiomara Castro has a tough job

Trump at one point threatened to deploy the US military to stop them. In 2021 alone

50,000 Honduran migrants have been sent home from either the US or Mexico.

The main solution is to create jobs. Castro's LIBRE party in its campaign promised mass employment. The Covid pandemic hit jobs particularly hard with unemployment almost doubling from 5.7 percent in 2019 to 10.9 percent in 2020. Around 59 percent of the population lives in poverty.

Drug trafficking has become such a problem in Honduras that it even pervades the upper echelons of government.

## KLM back to Trinidad after long absence

Trinidad and Tobago is welcoming KLM Royal Dutch Airlines back after a 20-year absence. It couldn't have come at a better time for the country's weakened tourism industry.

The airline is now operating flights between Amsterdam Schiphol Airport and Piarco International Airport in Trinidad.

KLM is currently operating three weekly flights, on Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, from the Netherlands to Trinidad and Tobago, with a layover in Barbados.

T&T Tourism Minister Randall Mitchell said: "This is a new market for Trinidad and we also intend to capitalise on the connections that the Schiphol Hub offers.



► KLM is flying three times to T&T now

This flight has opened numerous possibilities for targeting other non-traditional source markets. Initial data shows that people are not only coming from Amsterdam but from Asia and other parts of Europe."

## St Lucia targets health tourists

The Saint Lucia Tourism Authority is focusing on culture, heritage and history as the market reopens in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

Tourism Minister Ernest Hilaire said that the economic benefits of tourism will ensure to include craftsmen, artisans, farmers and other local establishments.

Spokesman Thaddeus Antoine said: "Saint Lucia Tourism Authority will endeavour to keep improving the overall tide of tourism, creating development opportunities while also stimulating sustainable and inclusive growth opportunities, especially for our Saint Lucian people who are desirous of growing within the industry.



► St Lucian tourism promotes its culture more now

"In the coming weeks, the authority will launch an awareness program intended to showcase the value of the tourism industry locally and multiply our touchpoints to ensure an all-encompassing programme."

Caymanian  
**Times**



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# DEATH ANNOUNCEMENTS

## Churchill's

Funeral Home

We have been asked to announce the passing of Ms. Sherlene Laura Mothen, who passed away on Friday, November 26, 2021. A Service of Thanksgiving will take place at the Presbyterian Church of Boatswain Bay, Boatswain Bay Road on Saturday, December 04, 2021 at 2:30 p.m. Viewing: 2:00 – 2:30 p.m. Interment: Boatswain Bay Cemetery. Donations can be made to Jasmine Hospice.



Condolences can be registered at [churchillsfuneralhome.com](http://churchillsfuneralhome.com)

## Churchill's

Funeral Home

We have been asked to announce the passing of Mr. Gilbert Connolly who passed away on Thursday, November 18, 2021. A Thanksgiving Service will be held at Countryside Church of God, East End, Grand Cayman on Saturday, December 4, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. Viewing: 9:00-10:00 a.m. Interment will follow at Gun Bay Church Cemetery. This Funeral Service will be livestreamed on the Churchills Funeral Home Facebook page starting from 9:45 a.m.



Condolences can be registered at [churchillsfuneralhome.com](http://churchillsfuneralhome.com)

## Churchill's

Funeral Home

We have been asked to announce the passing of Margaret Elizabeth Carmola who passed away on Tuesday, November 09, 2021. A Thanksgiving Service will be held at Kings Seventh Day Adventist Church, George Town, Grand Cayman on Sunday, December 05, 2021 at 1:00 p.m. Viewing: 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. Interment: Prospect Cemetery



Condolences can be registered at [churchillsfuneralhome.com](http://churchillsfuneralhome.com)

## Churchill's

Funeral Home

We have been asked to announce the passing of Sir. Paul Peter Leonce, who passed away on Saturday, November 13, 2021. A Service of Thanksgiving will take place at Elmslie Memorial United Church, 108A Seafarers Way, George Town, Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands on Saturday, December 4, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. Viewing: Closed Casket Interment at: Prospect Cemetery. Donations can be made to the ALS Foundation.

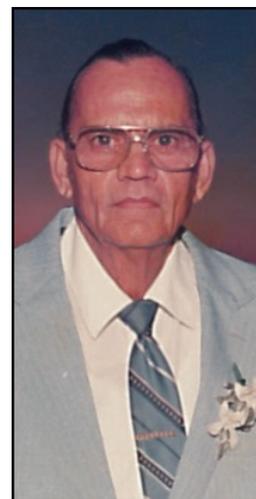


Condolences can be registered at [churchillsfuneralhome.com](http://churchillsfuneralhome.com)

The family of the late **Darwin Harmon Bush**, also known as Buddy Bush, regret to announce his passing on Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> November 2021.

A private family funeral service will be held.

Condolences can be registered at [bodenfuneralservice.com](http://bodenfuneralservice.com) & Bodden Funeral Service Facebook page



### Gilbert Connolly, Interim Secretary

During his 35-year career in the Cayman Islands Civil Service, Mr. Gilbert Connolly embraced the opportunity to enhance his education. He holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from Pace University, New York, a postgraduate diploma in management from Nottingham University and City University, London, and an executive master's in business administration from the University of Toronto and the University College of the Cayman Islands (UCCI). Mr. Connolly's pursuit of higher education is consistent with his long-held belief that a successful career should be built on a solid educational foundation and a high work ethic. Mr. Connolly held several senior positions in the civil service, retiring as the CEO and secretary of the Tourism Attraction Board (TAB). His most notable achievement in this position was the rebuilding of the board's attractions after the devastating 2004 Hurricane Ivan. He is most proud of conceiving of and spearheading in 2012 the renaming of the Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park Visitors' Centre to the Kirkland Nixon Visitors' Centre, in honour of the contributions of Mr. Nixon, then the chairman of the TAB but since deceased, to the development of the Botanic Park and for wide-ranging services to the community. Mr. Connolly was appointed by the Supervisor of Elections to assist in four general elections. His last appointment was in 2013 when he served as a Domestic Observer. Mr. Connolly is a founding member of the Cayman Islands People's Party (CIPP) and was appointed Interim Secretary in 2019. He is deeply concerned with the neglect of poor and jobless Caymanians, the education sector, and the Islands' political direction antithetical to the principles of the CIPP. He is therefore deeply committed to fulfilling the mission and the principle of participatory democracy established under the CIPP's Constitution.

### Peggy Camp Lampkin

July 10, 1933 – October 28, 2021

The Hand family is sad to announce the quiet passing of their beloved mother. Known locally as Ms. Peggy, she was a resident of Pease Bay for the past 43 years and loved by all who knew her. She is survived by her daughter, Norma Virginia Hand; son, Robert Aldridge Hand, and his wife Scarlet; and a grandson, Judson McCrae Hand, and his wife Alana. The family would also like share their deepest appreciation for the unwavering care and loyal friendship of Robert V. Bodden. More than just a friend, Robbie treated Ms. Peggy as if she were his own mother and was always there by her side looking out for her. The family plans to conduct a private celebration of her life. You can honor Ms. Peggy's love of Cayman by adopting a section of beach and working together to keep it clean ...because when the cruise ships come back, so will the trash washing up on her beautiful shores!



# SUDOKU

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

## Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

		9	2	6	4	8		
			3		5			
1								2
6	4						8	3
2								1
5	1						4	9
9								7
			8		6			
		1	9	3	2	5		

Difficulty Level ★★★

4/09

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### Answer to previous puzzle

5	8	2	6	9	7	3	1	4
4	9	1	2	8	3	5	7	6
3	6	7	1	5	4	8	9	2
2	5	9	8	1	6	7	4	3
7	1	8	4	3	5	6	2	9
6	3	4	9	7	2	1	8	5
9	2	5	7	6	1	4	3	8
1	4	6	3	2	8	9	5	7
8	7	3	5	4	9	2	6	1

Difficulty Level ★★★

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## CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

**ACROSS** 38 Freed of wrinkles

1 Not dressy

7 Fight memento

11 Immediately

12 Account

13 Third-largest island

14 Leaf carriers

15 Pays to play

16 Wine grape

17 Tragic king

18 Gloomy

19 Turn suddenly

21 Stripling

22 Hit film of 1999

25 Alphabet end

26 "Frozen" queen

27 Goofs

29 Auction bids

33 Adrien with an Oscar

34 Eye color

35 Foray

36 Couch potato's need

37 Skin woe

**DOWN**

1 Plotting group

2 Be penitent

3 In a way, informally

4 Rattle

5 Best pair

6 Summer sign

7 Flight part

8 Cheese-filled pastry

9 Charlie Parker played it

10 Took a breather

16 Docking spots

18 Café offerings

20 Abrasive powder

22 Patio's kin

23 Jane Eyre, for one

24 Went wild

25 Horses' kin

28 More unusual

30 UV stopper

31 Hamper

32 Snow gliders

34 Vengeful goddess

36 Brink

R	I	S	E	N	T	A	B	L	E
U	N	C	L	E	O	C	E	A	N
S	T	A	K	E	Y	E	A	S	T
S	O	N	D	E	E	C	S	I	
E	N	D	L	A	D	H	I	T	
T	E	A	S	E	R	O	B	E	Y
	L	U	S	T	F	U	L		
E	L	S	E	H	O	R	A	C	E
R	A	H	B	E	L	N	R	A	
A	T	E	E	N	L	K	I	T	
S	I	E	G	E	O	B	E	S	E
E	N	T	E	R	W	A	T	E	R
R	O	S	E	S	S	A	S	S	Y

### Yesterday's answer

- 10 Took a breather
- 16 Docking spots
- 18 Café offerings
- 20 Abrasive powder
- 22 Patio's kin
- 23 Jane Eyre, for one
- 24 Went wild
- 25 Horses' kin
- 28 More unusual
- 30 UV stopper
- 31 Hamper
- 32 Snow gliders
- 34 Vengeful goddess
- 36 Brink

## Word Search

U	F	Y	R	E	S	R	U	N	A	L	F	B	E	Y
A	D	Y	R	T	N	A	P	C	L	O	S	E	T	L
Y	R	O	T	A	V	R	E	S	N	O	C	D	D	O
O	A	F	M	F	G	T	U	L	C	T	S	R	U	B
O	Y	M	R	A	L	L	E	C	P	R	F	O	H	B
K	M	O	O	R	G	N	I	N	I	D	N	O	C	Y
I	B	O	B	U	O	C	S	L	W	L	P	M	L	L
T	A	R	A	S	T	D	C	U	P	B	O	A	R	D
C	L	T	T	B	C	V	I	Y	H	A	P	D	E	N
H	C	S	H	O	A	H	T	R	D	C	D	B	C	R
E	O	E	R	E	I	F	T	O	R	U	R	D	L	E
N	N	U	O	P	D	D	A	A	T	O	T	O	U	D
U	Y	G	O	E	L	O	U	N	G	E	C	S	P	R
I	Y	O	M	B	N	Y	S	T	A	I	R	S	F	A
C	L	A	N	D	I	N	G	O	S	U	R	R	E	L

- Attic
- Balcony
- Bathroom
- Bedroom
- Cellar
- Closet
- Conservatory
- Corridor
- Cupboard
- Den
- Dining Room
- Guestroom
- Kitchen
- Landing
- Larder
- Lobby
- Loft
- Lounge
- Nursery
- Pantry
- Pool
- Porch
- Stairs
- Studio
- Study
- Yard

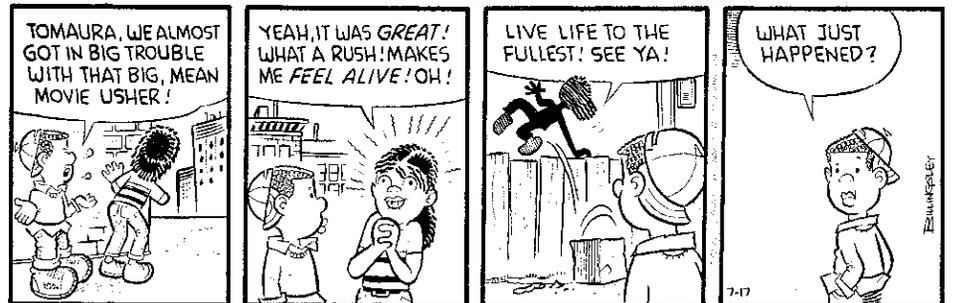
Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions - forward, back, up, down and diagonally.



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## CURTIS

By Ray Billingsley



## THE AMAZING SPIDER MAN

By Stan Lee



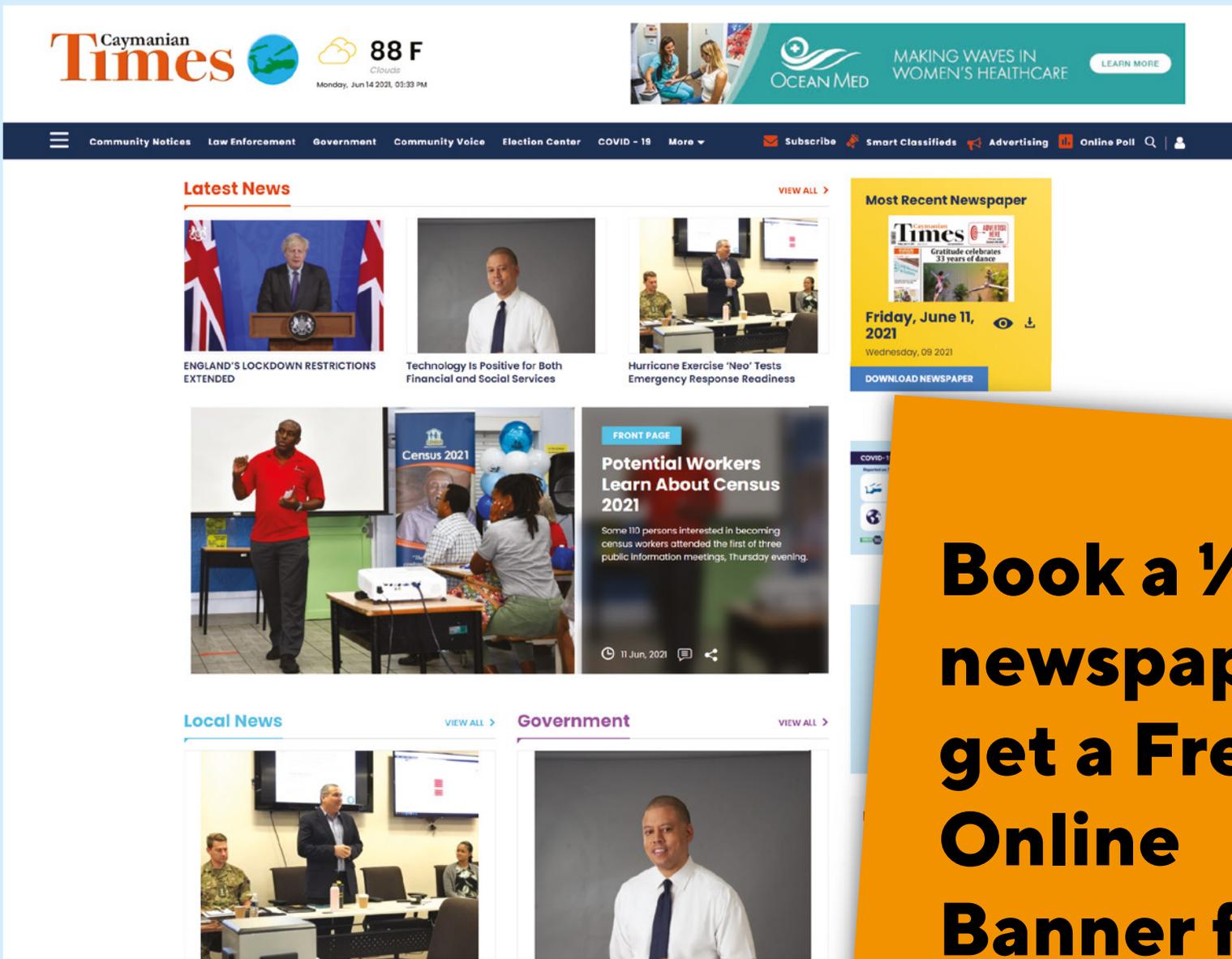
## JUDGE PARKER

By Woody Wilson & Mike Manley



# Caymanian Times

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