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'No' to Permanent Secretaries

GOB will wait for report from People's Constitution Commission



The Government of Belize (GOB) has decided to delay the delivery of a promise contained in its Plan Belize campaign manifesto to revert the public service back to having Permanent Secretaries instead of Chief Executive Officers. The announcement came this week via an update on negotiations between GOB and the Joint Union Negotiating Team (JUNT) comprised of the Belize National Teachers Union (BNTU), Association

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GOB ignores Min. Wage Task Force, implements \$5 rate: NTUCB President



By Michelle Sutherland
The Government of Belize, which formally announced Thursday that the minimum wage will increase to \$5.00 in January 2023, has ignored the recommendation of the Minimum Wage Task Force, National Trade Union Congress of Belize

(NTUCB)'s President Luke Martinez explained. "For the protection of workers, and consistent with the International Labour Organization (ILO)'s Balanced and Evidence-based approach, the task force—in line with its mandate—voted

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More Water for Fire Trucks!
Government pledge to secure funding for more effective fire response



Pg. 4

The deadly fire claimed the life of octogenarian Elita Coleman, who was trapped inside the home.



In April 1961 the Soviet Union’s Yuri Gagarin the Soviet cosmonaut, became the first human launched into outer space. On his safe return to earth he commented: “I looked and looked, but I did not see God.”

Gagarin did not find God because he was not looking in the right place. He was like the Samaritan woman at the well who aspired to see God on “yonder holy mountain.”

Jesus said to her: “You worship what you do not know... God is spirit, and the true worshippers will worship the Father in the spirit and in truth.” (John. Ch.4)

God’s spirit is everywhere. His presence is manifested in all things, from the tiniest electron spinning around its core, to the giant planets rotating around their sun.

God sent his Son Jesus, who took on the form and character of a man, to reveal himself to us men and women, so that we may no longer walk in darkness and ignorance, but by the light of God’s illuminating presence.

Jesus worked many signs and wonders to prove that He shared in the divine nature of God, and he taught the human race about the Father, who is the Creator and master of all.

Most important among these, He taught us that we can reach the Father through prayer and good works, and by respecting and caring for our fellow men and women as if they were our own brothers and sisters.

Jesus is the eternal light and savior of our world. He has made the most momentous contribution to our civilization and our knowledge base. By revealing the divine origin of creation He has given a whole new meaning to human existence and aspirations.

By this measure a man, no matter how despised and wretched, and a woman, regardless of how abused and disposed, can become children of God and heirs of heaven.

God now has become the great equalizer by whom all of mankind can be saved.

That then is the meaning of Christmas; of Jesus making it possible for men and women to become sons of God.



ONLY RIGHTS NO PRIVILEGES

My friend told me:

“If you’re going to write, do so about Christmas. Leave the CONSTITUTION ALONE.”

My reply: “No! The two go together!”

Everybody wanted to be on the Commission. Each one wants to push his own agenda.

But, but the Supreme Law of the Land must be about the EQUAL RIGHTS OF ALL EVERY SINGLE one of us!

The constitution cannot assign a special privilege to you, or to me, because we feel that we are different. AND are entitled to be so.

...Yes! I would like to express my sexuality freely... with man? With women?

Hmm... Another right requires that your free expression requires that you to stop build family and preserve the human race...

One of the most crucial issues is we have been taught only rights...

Are there not also...duties?

Have you not known about responsibilities???



EMPHASIS must be made here to a most significant fact!!

All, EVERY SINGLE Belizeans belongs to a national society, a country made up of a VAST MAJORITY of PEOPLE who BELIEVE IN GOD.

NON-Believers are a TINY, MINISCULE MINORITY.

MUST I REPEAT...

DEMOCRACY means the minority will have its SAY. DEMOCRACY means the MAJORITY MUST HAVE ITS WAY...

XMAS is the time when we are all reminded that EVERY SINGLE ONE OF US IS A SISTER or BROTHER OF JESUS CHRIST! WE ARE CHILDREN OF ALMIGHTY GOD!

This is why the PREAMBLE...must have EIGHT (8) PILLARS to include DIVERSITY (7)

(8) TOLERANCE...

(9) ALL ON OUT TINY FRINGES TO STAY WITH US AS (1) ONE LITTLE ENLIGHTENED UNITED COMPACT LITTLE NATION. LET US BE A TORCH OF TRUTH & LOVE TO THE WHOLE UNIVERSE!

CHRIST MASS!

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Signed: Paul Rodriguez OBE

No to Permanent Secretaries

GOB will wait for report from People’s Constitutional Commission

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of Public Sector Senior Manager (APSSM) and Public Service Union (PSU).

The JUNT explained that at the meeting with Prime Minister John Briceño; Deputy Prime Minister Cordel Hyde; Minister of Education Francis Fonseca; Minister of Public Service and Constitutional Reform Henry Charles Usher; and Financial Secretary Joseph Waight, the government took the position to wait for advice from the People’s Constitution Commission (PCC).

GOB also said that the Unions were free to use their seat on the PCC to make recommendations on the matter.

Following the announcement, The Reporter spoke with Cesar Ross, head of the Good Governance Unit in the Ministry of The Public Service, Constitutional and Political Reform, and Religious Affairs, who said that GOB was exercising prudent judgement by awaiting word from the PCC.

“The problem is if

they went ahead and changed it and then the commission’s recommendation countered that, then what would they do?”

Ross said. “So rather than jump ahead and do something that would contravene the reform consultations, the government is saying ‘Let’s see what the consultation produces. Do they recommend a structure that has Permanent Secretaries rather than CEOs?’”

The public service employed the use of Permanent Secretaries up until the Said Musa administration of 1998, when the CEO system was introduced. The functions of the Permanent Secretaries and the CEO were essentially the same. The main differences between the two roles were the requirements. The post of Permanent Secretaries was given to long-standing members of the public service that had operated within the ranks of their ministry and as such had institutional knowledge of the Ministry itself as opposed to just the ministry’s mandate.

P e r m a n e n t Secretaries also enjoyed more stable job tenure as the appointment and/or firing of a permanent secretary was a process governed by the Public Service Regulations, not political will. This process ensured continuity across successive government administrations. CEO’s, alternatively, are contract workers who are not required to have public service background and

who can be replaced with the expiration of a government administration.

In the “NURTURING THE NATIONAL CONSCIENCE” section, Page 34 of plan Belize, the People’s United Party (PUP) pledged to “Revert to Permanent Secretaries, i.e. senior career public officers, as accounting officers of the Ministries,” among several other good governance promises.

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GOB ignores Min. Wage Task Force, implements \$5 rate: NTUCB President

Cont'd from pg. 1

in favor of a phased-in approach,” Martinez explained, pointing to concerns that too fast increases could potentially cost jobs or accelerate inflation.

Furthermore, Martinez underscored that central to the task force’s deliberations was the need for the amendment to the regulation to have a minimum-wage-adjustment formula embedded into the law. “The formula should have been enshrined into law, because we do not want any government to be able to play politics with wages,” stressed Martinez.

Martinez explained to *The Reporter* that the NTUCB remains convinced that workers really need \$7.00 an hour, which is the ultimate goal.

However, he said that there was also prudence in adhering to the ILO’s guidance as it pertains to having a “Balanced and Evidence-Based” approach. He explained that recent studies may place the \$7.00 goal (and even the \$5.00) closer the country’s living wage, which is not the same as the minimum wage.

The NTUCB President also said that he was “disappointed” that the process did not make use of sufficient data and statistics to adequately guide the process. Martinez, in making that point, referenced the ILO’s Minimum-Wage Fixing Recommendation’s Article 10, which states: “To the extent possible in national circumstances, sufficient resources should be devoted to the collection

of statistics and other data needed for analytical studies of the relevant economic factors.”

On Thursday, December 22nd, Honourable Oscar Requeña, the Minister with responsibility for the Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government, officially signed into law the official implementation of the \$5.00 wage increase, which will take effect on January 1st, 2023, for all categories of workers.

The Ministry’s release also notified that the Ministry of Labour is currently reviewing a wage-setting methodology that will be used periodically to determine future minimum wage increases. It is likely that this is a

reference to the minimum-wage adjustment formula that Martinez said was necessary.

The wage increase was signed into law in accordance with the Wages Council (Wages Regulation) (Consolidation) (Amendment) Order, 2022, Statutory Instrument No. 169 of 2022, and Wages Regulation (Manual Workers) (Amendment) Order 2022, Statutory Instrument No. 170 2022.

The Minimum Wage Task Force, of which Martinez was a representative, was established in March 2022. The then Government press release informed that the task force was to “oversee the implementation of the five-dollar minimum

wage commitment of Plan Belize.” The release also added, “On November 25, 2021, Cabinet requested that the ministry develop a plan for the gradual implementation of the government’s commitment.”

On July 1, 2022, another government press said, “The Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour, and Local Government appointed a Minimum Wage Task Force on March 2, 2022, to oversee the gradual implementation of

the five-dollar minimum wage, a commitment of Plan Belize.” The same release explained that the hired consulting firm was to “submit a Plan for the Gradual Implementation of the Five-Dollar Minimum Wage.”

More recently the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI), which also had representation on the task force and likewise cited the ILO’s approach, had told the media that they are concerned that too large increases could trigger adverse economic effects.

Cane farmers propose one-year counterproposal



BSCFA's Alfredo Ortega

By Britney Gordon

The Belize Sugar Cane Farmers Association (BSCFA) has agreed to a one-year interim agreement with the Belize Sugar Industries (ASR/BSI), Chairman BSCFA’s Committee of Management Alfredo Ortega confirmed today.

BSCFA met Friday, December 22, to discuss the proposal, which Ortega explained was presented by the Minister of Agriculture Jose Mai. After much deliberation, the association agreed to a one-year renewal of the contract, and awaits the response from the principals of ASR/BSI, who had previously proposed a two-year interim agreement.

Despite the association accepting the proposed one-year agreement, Ortega explained that the BSCFA wishes to proceed with caution and intends to call for arbitration.

The association maintains that the next logical step is arbitration after the failure of negotiation and mediation.


An interview with a BSCFA member highlighted concerns about the proceedings of the arbitration, as it is unclear whether the association's request

will be accepted by all parties. The local farmer explained that currently, the Sugar Industry Act does not detail the proper steps and time frames that the association will need to follow in order to act. “It causes fear among the farmers. Time is against us and we need money,” she explained.


As a result, the BSCFA appointed a task force to draft a proposal to include a “Default Mechanism” clause in the Sugar Industry Act. The Default Mechanism clause would “ensure that an authority comes to mediate and find a solution in the event that the entities cannot reach an agreement prior to the commencement of Crop.”

According to Ortega, the association is pushing for the implementation of this clause so that “uncertainty does not persist in situations like these.” The Default Mechanism would act as a permanent, binding clause that the Sugar Industry Control Board (SICB) can legally enforce the parties’ compliance when requested by a manufacturer or by any of associations.

On Tuesday, December 20, ASR/BSI had released a statement calling for the BSCFA to accept a two-year interim agreement.



The Management & Staff of




would like to take this opportunity to wish all our vauled customers a

Merry Christmas

and a Prosperous New Year

Thank you for your continued support.



More Water Fire Trucks!

Government pledge to secure funding for more effective fire response



Residents allege that the fire trucks arrived at the scene without sufficient water.

By Michelle Sutherland

In the aftermath of this week’s deadly house fire that claimed the life of 83-year-old, Elita Coleman Minister with responsibility for the Fire Department Orlando Habet said that his ministry will be placing a greater emphasis on securing funding to improve the department’s response efforts to emergencies.

The Minister in responding to multiple claims by residents in the area that the two responding fire trucks had arrived at the scene of the fire without any water told *The Reporter*, “We need to secure funding for water bowzers to follow fire trucks and to work with municipalities for installation of hydrants or installation of water reservoirs. My understanding is that they always arrive

with water. However, all our trucks have limited capacity for water, some less than others.”

He also claimed that it has always been a priority by his ministry to purchase the relevant equipment needed, but the issue has always been in securing funding. The minister also pointed out that fire hydrants once existed in some of these areas but that they were eliminated through urbanization.

Habet also argued that the blame for lives lost during a fire cannot be placed squarely on the shoulders of the Fire Department because there are multiple factors to consider, including a complete diagnosis of the kind of fire. He said that in the case of an old rotten building, that would burn within minutes leaving no room for

the department to act.

In the case of a chemical-induced fire, those spread and burn quickly and afford firefighters a small window of opportunity to act. In some cases, according to Habet, some of these infernos cannot be put out with water alone and needs other ingredients like foam, etc. All this boils down to one very important factor which Habet said is the time that the Fire Department receives the information.

But, according to one resident, Amber Grenardo, who alleged that she had called the fire department herself to report the fire, she said that if the firefighters had responded 15 minutes earlier, the elderly woman could have been saved. Apart from claiming that the firefighters took about half an

hour to arrive on the scene, Grenardo claimed that not only did some of them respond without their relevant suits and gear, but that the two fire engines did

not have any water in them.

Grenardo also alleged that when the firefighters went to refill the fire trucks they took an hour and a half to arrive back on the scene and by that time the elderly woman had already been burnt alive inside the house.

Station Supervisor, Kenneth Mortis, refuted those claims saying that by the time fire personnel responded the house was already engulfed in flames and there was nothing else they could do to save Coleman.

“As far as the truck coming to a fire scene without water, that is something that I will probably hear until the next fifteen generations to come. This is an after-midnight fire. The truck came from nowhere but the fire station. Again, I can only try to over-emphasize that these trucks don't carry an indefinite amount of water. Combined with both trucks, you're looking at

approximately 2,000 gallons of water. We know how to take that and maximize it to a capacity of about 7-10 minutes before we exhaust the tank. We are trained to effectively combat these blazes with the limited supplies and resources we have until we can break off and allocate supplementary water supply,” commented Mortis.

Coleman was allegedly burnt alive inside her home on Reggae Street in Belize City sometime after midnight on Saturday. She had been locked inside the home for the night when a fire broke out leaving her trapped. Neighbors say that before she died, Coleman could be seen standing by the window begging to be rescued before her body caught on fire. Apart from the scorching heat, fire personnel say that the burglar bar windows on the house also prevented access and had served as an additional trap for the elderly woman.

STATUTORY NOTICE

TO CREDITORS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to Section 36 of the Administration of Estates Act Chapter 197 of the Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2000 that all creditors having any claims or demands upon or against the Estate of **CHRISTEL LINWOOD STRAUGHAN NEE HYDE**, also known as **CHRYSTEL LYNWOOD STRAUGHAN** nee **HYDE**, deceased of No. 3716 Meeting Street, Cumming Georgia, 30040 One of the United States of America died at Wellstar North Fulton Hospital, Roswell Fulton, United States of America on the 25th day of July, 2018 without leaving a will in whose estate Grant of Administration No. 230 of 2022 has been granted to **Eva Espat**, No. 5 Bally Garden, Belize City, Belize should lodge such claims or demands with the said **Eva Espat**, Administrator, c/o Barrow & Williams LLP, Attorneys-at-Law of No. 84 Albert Street, Belize City, Belize, on or before the expiration of three months from the first publication hereof AND NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that at the expiration of the said three months the Administrator shall proceed to distribute the assets of the said **CHRISTEL LINWOOD STRAUGHAN NEE HYDE**, also known as **CHRYSTEL LYNWOOD STRAUGHAN** nee **HYDE** deceased, amongst the parties entitled thereto having regard to all the claims and demands of which particulars are lodged and the Administrator shall not be liable for the assets of the deceased or any part thereof so distributed to any person or persons whose claims or demands they shall not then have had notice.

DATED the 22nd of December 2022

BARROW & WILLIAMS LLP
Attorneys-at-Law
for Eva Espat

NOTICE OF DISSOLUTION

Notice is hereby given to all interested parties that the below company has been dissolved and struck off the International Business Companies Register.

Company Name	Date of Dissolution
Executive Management Services, Ltd.	12th December 2022

Frontier International Business Services Limited of New Horizon Building, Ground Floor, 3 1/2 Miles Philip S.W. Goldson Highway, Belize City, Belize C.A is the liquidator of the company.

Frontier International Business Services Limited
Registered Agent

Holiday Greetings

FROM THE HPI COMPANY

We would like to take this time to wish everyone a holiday season filled with cheer, happiness and good health. It has been a challenging year for our community but it has been inspiring to see everyone coming together through hard times.

To our customers, we thank you for your continued business and we look forward to serving you again in the coming year!

MERRY CHRISTMAS
& HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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DEC 23- 8AM TO 1PM / DEC 30- 8AM TO 1PM

CLOSED

DEC 24 TO 26 & DEC 31 TO JAN 2



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Caribbean nations dissatisfied with Dutch slavery apology

By Britney Gordon

The Netherlands has become one of the few countries to apologize for its role in slavery; however, critics argue that the failure to seek input from the Caribbean on the matter reflects insincerity.

In his speech presented at the national archive on December 19, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte acknowledged the inhumanity of the crimes, stating, “There was no limit to the arbitrary cruelty of the slave system. And, thus, no limit to the injustice and the sheer terror.”

Rutte went on to explain that centuries of oppression and exploitation still have an effect on the region to this very day in issues such as racist stereotypes, discriminatory patterns of exclusion, and in social inequality.

The apology, which was applauded by activists, was met



Dutch Prime Minister’s apology faces criticism within the Caribbean.

with criticism from nations affected by slavery. Particularly, from Surinamese slave descendants, who demand some form of reparations be implemented. It was also rejected by activists in the Dutch Caribbean territory of St. Maarten, who have also demanded reparations. “We’ve been waiting for a few hundred years for true reparatory justice. We believe that we can wait a little further,” said former minister, Rhoda Arrindell,

Disparagers wrote off the apology as

rushed, arguing that it should have been issued by the Dutch king, Willem-Alexander, on July 1 of next year, which is the 150th anniversary of the end of slavery in Suriname.

While the issue of reparations remains unresolved, the Netherlands has instead opted to establish a US \$212 million fund for initiatives to help tackle the legacy of slavery in the Netherlands and its former colonies as well as to boost education about the issue.



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would like to express our sincerest gratitude to the people of Belize who have supported GraceKennedy over the past 40 years here in Belize and 100 years as a global Company.



We extend our gratitude and appreciation to all our Employees, Directors, Customers and Business Partners for 2022 and wish you all the best for 2023.

WE WISH YOU A MERRY *Christmas* AND A *Happy New Year* 2023

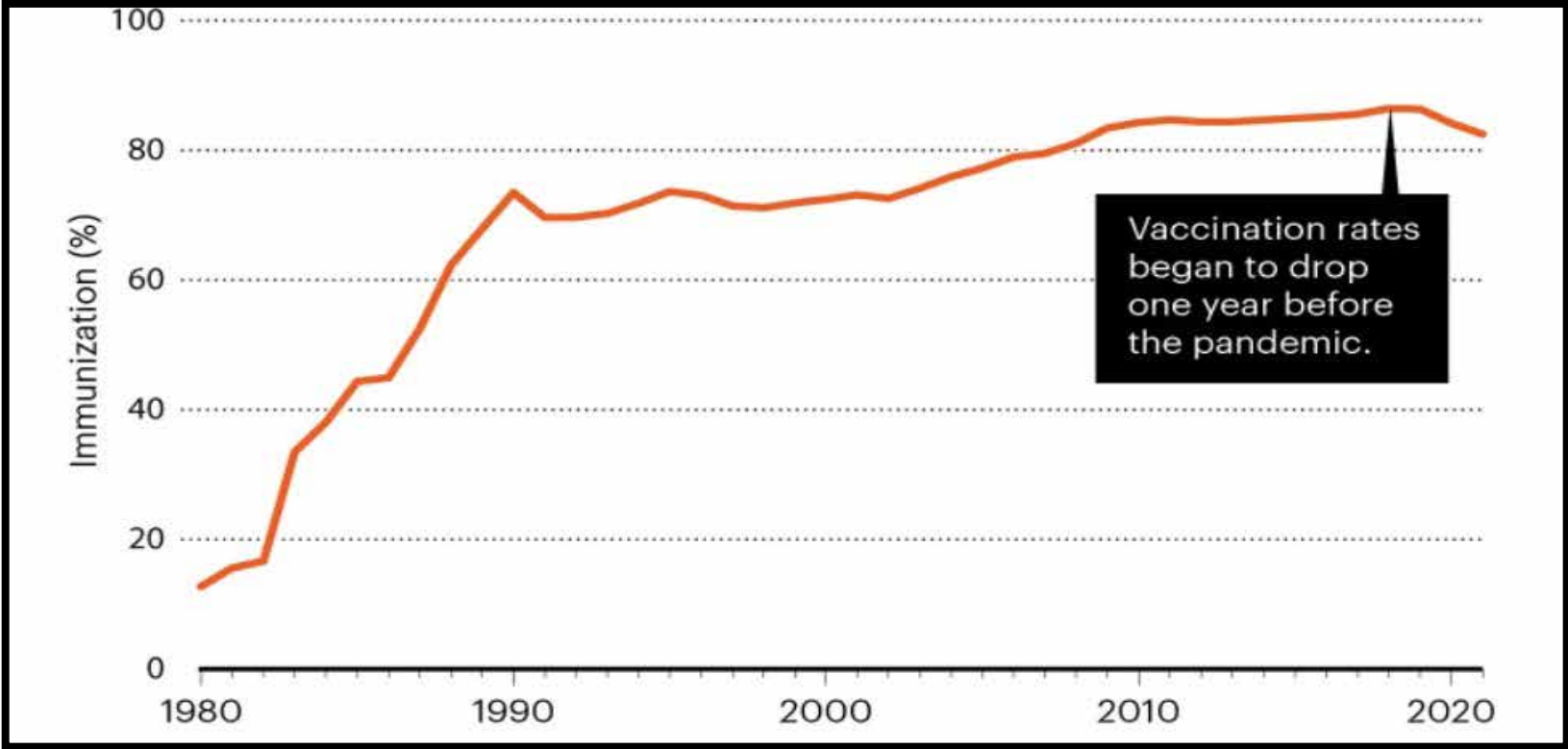
Fewer people are getting vaccinated after the pandemic

By Britney Gordon

As a result of the pandemic's influence on available resources and public health services' ability to respond to health crises, the global vaccination rate has hit its lowest point since 2008.

In the past two decades, vaccination rates have hit a remarkable figure. In 2014, global vaccine coverage overall had reached 85 percent for many vaccine-preventable diseases and in 2015 polio, measles, and rubella had been eliminated in the Americas despite persisting in other regions.

However, after years of progress, the measles vaccine rates slowed down in the years preceding the global pandemic. In a post-pandemic world, progress has been essentially erased. 2019 saw frequent outbreaks of the disease at an alarming frequency. More than



200,000 measles deaths worldwide were observed in that year, a 50 percent increase in comparison to 2016.

The decline is attributed to the critical state of the public healthcare sectors, inadequate resources for vaccination programs, and the low priority given to immunization efforts in some countries. In addition, vaccine hesitancy has been on the rise since the pandemic. The phenomenon garnered such strong backing, the World Health Organization (WHO) named the trend one of the greatest threats to global health in 2019.

According to WHO, the majority of the targeted vaccination campaigns for children in vulnerable communities were paused during the course of the pandemic. Nearly 60 percent of the 183 vaccination campaigns scheduled were either canceled or delayed by May 2020.

Kate O'Brien, head of the immunization program at WHO, stated that they have been working to implement the agency's district health information system, called DHIS2 in member nations, which allows the country to share information about vaccine administration and coverage.

O'Brien also stressed the importance of targeting 'zero-dose' children, referring to the children who have yet to receive any formal vaccinations. She noted that most of these children live below the poverty line in settlements with inadequate housing and basic services, rural villages, and conflict zones. WHO aims to cut the number of zero-dose children by half, according to its 'Goals of the Immunization Agenda 2030'. WHO estimates this could save as many as 50 million lives over the next 10 years.



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Redistricting task force wrapping up

By Michelle Sutherland

The redistricting task force is moving ahead at full speed in an attempt to gather the relevant data to get the process completed as soon as possible, Chair of the Redistricting Task Force Chief Elections Officer Josephine Tamai told The Reporter this week.

Tamai informed via text, “I am not able to give an update on the redistricting exercise; however, I can inform you that the task force continues to work diligently on this exercise to ensure completion by July 2023.”

The process which is expected to take place over the next couple of months will see the realigning of the country's 31 constituencies according to the relevant standards. This will be carried out independently by the Election and Boundaries Commission (EBC), which is chaired by attorney Oscar Sabido.

Sabido recently confirmed to the media that the EBC will be fully engaged in the process but will do so according to Belize's Constitution and in line with the law.

According to Sabido, the process will include taking proper legal advice from competent persons who are well versed with the redistricting laws. Those law, however, as Sabido pointed out, need to be relevant to Belize's jurisdiction and not the United States so that the process can be as legally correct and fitting to the country.

With such huge disparities, among the 31 constituencies, which over the years have undoubtedly affected the results of Belize's elections, there have been several calls from the population to have the process undertaken.

That has led to the Belize Peace Movement (BPM) launching a legal battle against the government for them to commence the redistricting exercise as soon as possible. While that languished in the court for three years, last week the BPM emerged victorious over the government, resulting in the Supreme Court issuing a consent order.



Chief Elections Officer Josephine Tamai

That order, among other things, is now requiring that the EBC resolve the redistricting challenges, as soon as possible with full oversight by the BPM.

Under the consent order, the EBC will also be required to provide a report of their recommendations to the BPM by July 2023 as well as to the Attorney General's Ministry so that a bill can be drafted and presented to the National Assembly for the same time period.

The report is also required to take into consideration the Sean Trende Report, dated October 2020 which lays out his findings on the disparities that exist within Belize's 31 constituencies.

Another historic deal struck at COP15

By Britney Gordon

Following the securing of the historic ‘loss and damage’ fund at COP27, governments signed to protect Earth’s ecosystems at COP15, agreeing on a ‘30 by 30’ target.

After nearly four years of negotiations, The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) was held from December 7-19 and saw the signing of a “once-in-a-decade deal” to halt the destruction of Earth’s ecosystems. The deal, referred to as the ‘30 by 30’, aims to conserve 30 percent of the Earth’s ecosystem by 2030 with an emphasis on preserving indigenous and traditionally significant areas. It also seeks to reform US \$500 billion of the US \$1.8 trillion environmentally damaging subsidies spent globally every year.


Although over 200 countries signed the agreement, it was initially met with objections from Cameroon, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

The African states stated that the deal could not be supported because it did not create a new fund for biodiversity, separate to the existing UN fund. However, the objections were later dropped after further discussions between the DRC’s environment minister, Ève Bazaïba and Chinese COP15 president, Huang Runqiu.

As a part of the deal, governments will be required to ensure that large companies supply adequate Environmental Impact Assessments which will detail the “risk, dependencies and impacts on biodiversity.” The implementation of these assessments may lead to significant change in irresponsible practices and encourage accountability for biodiversity loss.



SUDOKU



Medium Puzzle

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

Sudoku rules are extremely easy: Fill all empty squares so that the numbers 1 to 9 appear once in each row, column and 3x3 box.

Tip. Use a soft erasable pencil. Start with the easy puzzles, then move on to the harder ones. Make small pencilmarks to show which numbers are allowed in empty squares. This will come handy when analyzing techniques are used. Never guess! Only make moves based on logical deductions. There is only one unique solution for each puzzle.

Answer to Puzzle

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

UDP: ‘Let the people decide!’

John Saldivar wins NPC vote

By Michelle Sutherland

Belmopan voters will soon have to decide whether or not Saldivar should take back the role as the UDP’s standard bearer for the constituency, as the former National Security minister survived last Saturday’s National Party Council (NPC) vote.

Following the virtual meeting, Chairman of the UDP Michael Peyrefitte, told the media, “The NPC had its say, and then now the people of Belmopan will have their say. We can’t imagine a better outcome than that. Whatever the NPC would have said, Mr. Saldivar made it clear that if the NPC says he can’t run, he can’t run. If the NPC says he can run, he can run. Nobody

necessarily won or lost on Saturday. The people of Belmopan will have their say and that’s as much about it as anybody should make of it.”

Peyrefitte explained that following the US Designation against Saldivar, the Special Committee had met and made a decision to disallow Saldivar’s candidacy in the UDP with immediate effect. However, Saldivar managed to trigger an emergency meeting of the NPC to review that decision. On Saturday the NPC met virtually and following a vote among its members, 42 members voted in favour of his candidacy while 40 voted against him. Even with such a thin margin, the Special Committee’s decision was reversed, and Saldivar is now



UDP top authority allows John Saldivar to run.

being allowed to contest the upcoming convention.

While the Committee’s decision to disallow Saldivar’s candidacy should have been final and binding Peyrefitte explained, “Well it would have been final and binding as far as the special committee is concerned. It’s like, for example, if I go to the magistrate’s court and a magistrate makes a decision, that decision from the magistrate’s court is final and

binding but it can be appealed to a higher body and that was what happened.”

Following the virtual meeting, however, there were allegations made by both Patrick Faber and Albert Area Representative

Tracy Taegar Panton that they were not allowed to access the meeting, despite being NPC members. In Faber’s case, he alleged that he was abruptly kicked out of the meeting while Taegar alleged that two of her members were not allowed to even enter the virtual meeting. In his defense, Peyrefitte responded that both Faber and Panton “tend to make allegations every single day,” and at the end of the day as the chairman, he simply does not have

the time to entertain all of those. “There was nothing wrong with the meeting,” reiterated Peyrefitte.

For now, Saldivar’s candidacy lies in the hands of his former constituency members, as he will now be contesting against Retired Colonel George Lovell and businessman Emil Torres at a convention scheduled for February 5th, 2023. Former mayor of Belmopan Khalid Belisle has withdrawn from the race.



MERRY
Christmas
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Three ways data is helping Belizean businesses recover from COVID-19

By Anila Qehaja and Amilin Mendez

Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) play an essential role in the Belizean economy. They account for 90% of all businesses and provide 50% of all employment in the country.

The global pandemic has exacerbated many of the underlying constraints that MSMEs face on access to finance, export readiness, diversification and more recently, digitalization. However, a UNDP socio-economic impact assessment — a survey methodology implemented in more than 50 countries to measure the impact of crises — has provided valuable information to help the affected MSMEs recover from this challenging time.

Starting with clear socio-economic data

Decision-makers need reliable data now more than ever as the pandemic continues to have devastating effects on health, economic and environmental systems.

UNDP surveyed businesses through a digital, nationwide socio-economic impact assessment to get a clear snapshot of how MSMEs were affected by the ongoing health crisis and how they were coping with this new reality. The survey considered marginalized groups, like informal merchants, youth and indigenous communities.

Out of the surveyed businesses:

44% experienced a revenue decrease of more than 50%.

45% started using digital platforms more (Facebook, Instagram, etc.).

Only 27% of businesses received pandemic-related MSME support — with men receiving significantly higher support than women. 43% that didn't receive support weren't aware it was available.

The data collected now serves as a key guiding tool to support affected Belizean businesses nationwide

in three main ways:

1. National strategy to support MSMEs

Foundational to the design of Belize's national MSME Strategy for 2022–2025, data coming out of the socio-economic impact assessment provided key insights that informed six priority areas to help MSMEs see success despite COVID-19 challenges:

- (1) Improving access to markets
- (2) Enhancing capabilities and innovation
- (3) Facilitating access to finance
- (4) Developing conducive business environment
- (5) Ensuring coherence and effective coordination
- (6) Setting up required institutional and governance frameworks

With MSMEs representing the primary source of net job creation and the driving force of innovation in the private sector, the importance of the national MSME Strategy cannot be understated. Considering MSME's key role in achieving 8 out of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the successful implementation of the Strategy is a critical step in Belize's sustainable development agenda.

2. National MSME Roadshow

The national MSME Roadshow 2022 is an ongoing country-wide campaign geared toward supporting the MSME sector through the pandemic. The Roadshow aims to register informal businesses — a crucial goal in a country where the informal economy represents 46% of all economic activity, second only to Haiti in the Caribbean region.

The roadshow is also identifying MSMEs for a national MSME Directory, funded by UNDP, to create public awareness, promote national businesses, and provide an online platform where Belizean products can be displayed and purchased.



MSMEs featured their products at Road Show.

3. Digital transformation and capacity building

Based on the identified need for increased digital literacy, almost 300 MSMEs received training on topics like technology, digital marketing, and content development. Women and youth

represented 90% of learners who received training in nine locations across the country.


Data also inspired the creation of the Virtual Knowledge Center (VKC) which features digitized learning materials to guide MSMEs in using technology to respond

to changes in the business environment. Developed by BELTRAIDE — the national trade and investment promotion agency — the VKC also houses the National MSME Directory, the Export Catalog, the Belize Investment Portfolio, and opportunities for jobseekers, investors, and exporters.

Lastly, six Digital Connect Centers were created to bridge the digital divide in the country. In addition to providing safe spaces, computers, and reliable internet, the strategically located centers also host

business development programs, digital literacy training, and digital bootcamps for Belizean youth in six communities.

Numbers have important stories to tell — but are we listening closely? The country of Belize sure is. Data uncovered the challenges and enabled the design of measures to help Belizean MSMEs recover from the impact of the pandemic. These personalized measures are the result of data-driven decision-making to support a vulnerable sector, making good on UNDP's global commitment to leave no one behind.



CENTRAL BANK
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www.centralbank.org.bz

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Central Bank Deregisters Evangel Credit Union Limited




Belize City, 14 December 2022: The Governor of the Central Bank of Belize (Central Bank), in his capacity as Registrar of Credit Unions, advises that pursuant to section 63 (2) of the Credit Unions Act, 2011, Chapter 314 of the Laws of Belize, Evangel Credit Union Limited has transferred its engagements to Holy Redeemer Credit Union Limited.

The public is hereby notified that effective 7 December 2022, Evangel Credit Union was dissolved, and its registration cancelled. Consequently, pursuant to section 20 (3) of the Credit Unions Act, Evangel Credit Union shall cease to exist as a body corporate effective 7 December 2022.

- ENDS -

ISSUED BY:
THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
CENTRAL BANK OF BELIZE

1 GABOUREL LANE.
BELIZE CITY, BELIZE
T: +501 223 6194
E: communications@centralbank.org.bz



REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST
INDIVIDUAL CONSULTING SERVICES

Institution: Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing
Country: Belize
Project: Additional Financing for George Price Highway Rehabilitation Project
Sector: Infrastructure, Environment and Natural Disasters
Abstract: Individual Consulting Services – Production of a Video on the Process of Conducting an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the Department of Environment

Loan/Credit/Grant No.: 4616/OC-BL
Deadline: January 5th, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.

The **Government of Belize** has received financing from the **Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)**, towards the cost of the **Additional Financial under the George Price Highway Rehabilitation Project** and intends to apply part of the proceeds for consulting services.

The consulting services (“**the Services**”) include the contracting of an Individual Consultant for a minimum of thirty (30) days for the Production of a Video on the Process of Conducting an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the Department of Environment.

The Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing now invites eligible Individual Consultants to indicate their interest in providing the Services. Interested Consultants should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services.

A Consultant will be selected in accordance with the procedures set out in the Inter-American Development Bank: **Policies for the Selection and Contracting of Consultants financed by the Inter- American Development Bank (GN-2350-15, January 2020)** – Section V, 5.2 Selection of Individual Consultants based on Comparison of Qualifications of National Individual Consultants.

Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours:

Program Management Unit
#1 Power Lane, Belmopan, Cayo District
Office Hours: Monday – Friday 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.
Tel: 501-822-0100/1942
Email: pmupcmow@gmail.com, gphrp.3344@midh.gov.bz
or procurement.officer.midh@gmail.com

Expressions of interest must be delivered in a written form to the address below (**in person, or by mail, or by e-mail**) by **10:00 a.m. (Local Belize Time)** on **January 5th, 2023.**

Attn: Mr. Rolando Chan
Program Coordinator
#1 Power Lane, Belmopan
Cayo District, Belize
Tel: 501-822-0100/1942
E-mail: pmupcmow@gmail.com, gphrp.3344@midh.gov.bz
or procurement.officer.midh@gmail.com

UDP Albert Area Rep: US designation against Saldivar is a ‘black eye’ for the UDP

By Michelle Sutherland

Albert Area Representative Hon. Tracy Taegar Panton, who was one of the candidates to vote against John Saldivar’s candidacy in the UDP, says that the United States’ designation against Saldivar is a black eye for the party with far-reaching effects.



Albert Area Rep. Hon. Tracy Panton

Panton told *The Reporter* that she is not in agreement with the NPC’s decision for Saldivar’s fate to be determined by the upcoming Standard Bearers Convention, and had even voted in favor of upholding the Special Committee’s decision to disallow his candidacy with immediate effect.

“I don’t know if John Saldivar is guilty of the things he is being accused of. What I do know is that the designation of the US State Department of John Saldivar and his family is not a frivolous one,” opined Panton. “In my view, such a designation affects not only John Saldivar and his family. It is a black eye for the United Democratic Party as a whole (not only the people of Belmopan) and the country.”

For his part, UDP Leader Hon. Moses “Shyne” Barrow said, “I have done my part.” He added that he will withhold further comments on the matter and instead focus his attention on other pressing party matters as well as national issues at hand. He claims that he has already publicly expressed his views on Saldivar’s candidacy in previous interviews with the media as well as a press release he had issued shortly after the NPC’s vote over the weekend.

In that statement, Barrow has said that while he had initially supported the Special Committee’s decision to immediately disallow Saldivar’s candidacy for the best interest of the party, he would yield to the NPC’s decision to allow the people of Belmopan to decide Saldivar’s fate in the convention set for February 5th, 2023.

This he said is because “the NPC is the highest decision-making body of the UDP after the National Convention, thus, as Party Leader I am bound to yield to the Democratic majority of the NPC.”

In previous interviews, Barrow had said, “I am certainly not happy about having a candidate that has been dogged by allegations of corruption; it’s not good for the party.”

He even claimed to have asked Saldivar to quietly withdraw his candidacy for the greater good of the party; however, when Saldivar refused, that prompted the formation of a Special Committee to determine his faith. While the Committee had voted to kick Saldivar out of the party, he had managed to trigger an emergency NPC meeting.



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from the Board of Directors, Management and Staff of Belize Water Services





Our Holidays Office Hours

Offices Close	Offices Re-open
Friday, December 23, 2022— 1:00 PM	Tuesday, December 27, 2022
Friday, December 30, 2022— 1:00 PM	Tuesday, January 3, 2023

****NB:** The Belize City Office will be closed on Saturday, December 24, 2022 and Saturday, December 31, 2022.

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The possibilities of leave it in the ground financing

Is it More Profitable to Leave Oil in The Ground Than Take It Out At All?

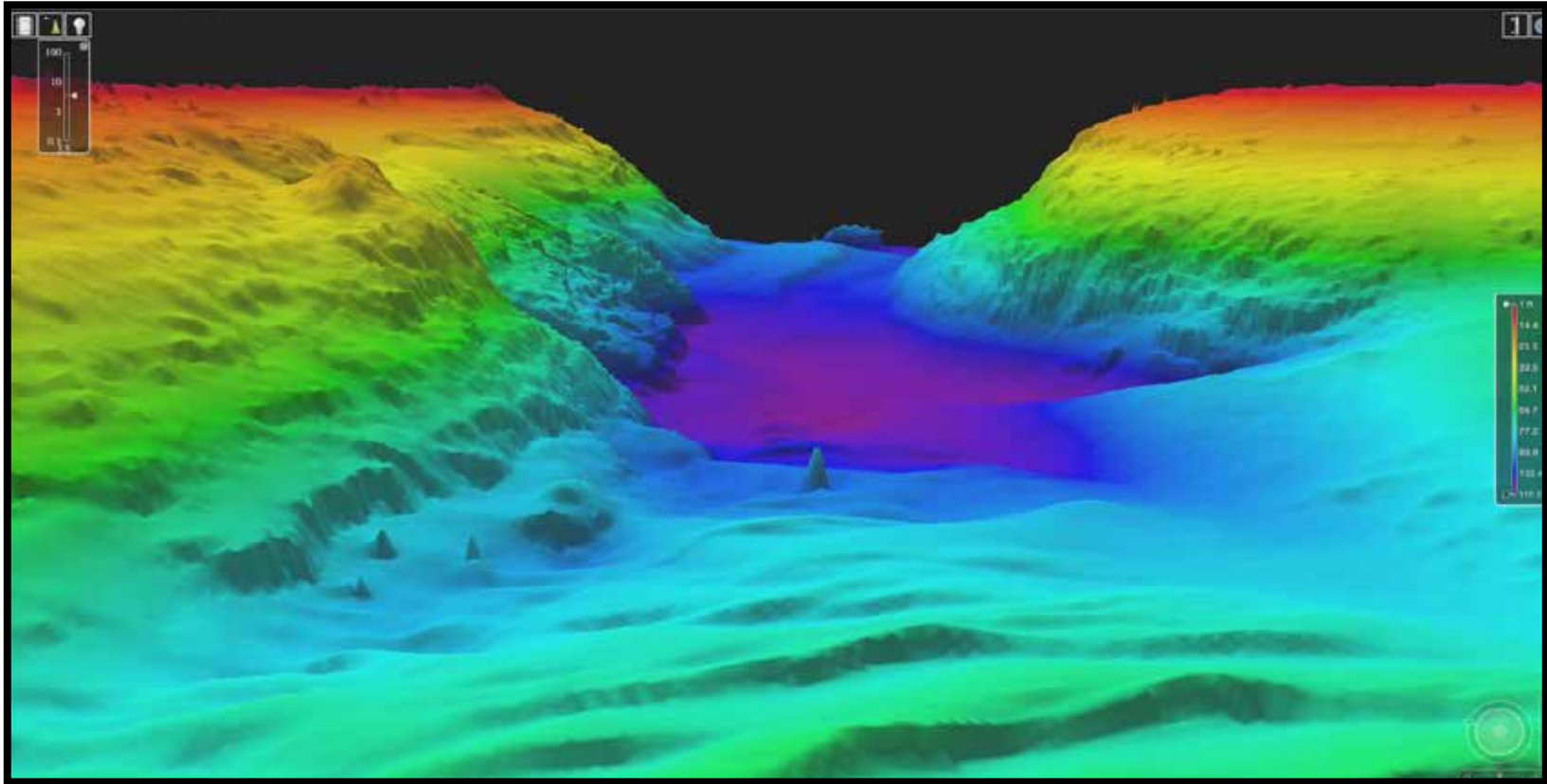
By André Habet

In this time of escalating impacts of the climate crisis, the world will need to take more drastic measures to reduce CO2 emissions before runaway climate change more dramatically transforms the Earth. This need was most clearly rendered this year by the floods in Pakistan that have left 33 million people displaced. It is for this reason and many more that countries as a collective force need to take more drastic measures to actively reduce CO2 emissions before it's too late. Two such avenues are the cessation of fossil fuel extraction and the expansion of global climate finance to aid countries in deploying mitigation and adaptation strategies and building resilient infrastructure.

Climate finance often involves arrangements between international financial institutions or conservation organizations and carbon-negative countries. Belize had its first major brush with climate finance in 2021, when it was the second country in the world after Seychelles to successfully negotiate a Blue Bond agreement with The Nature Conservancy. This effectively restructured Belize's debt on the infamous \$533 million Superbond in exchange for a commitment by Belize to classify 30% of its waters as marine reserves.

The Blue Bond requires Belize to make an unprecedented commitment to mitigate harm to the sea by initiating revisions to the Environmental Impact Assessment process and protecting the sea from harm via other economic activities, such as fishing and oil exploration and extraction. Therefore, it was a shock to many in the conservation community when Oceana announced a call for a referendum to determine whether the 2017 offshore oil drilling moratorium should be lifted.

This announcement emerged from a September 6 discussion with Prime Minister John Briceño that Oceana Belize Vice President



Bathymetric Image of the sea floor from the National Center for Environmental Information (2022)

Janelle Chanona stated was held “principally to discuss the strengthening of the offshore oil moratorium.” According to Chanona, during the meeting PM Briceño shared the Government of Belize’s intention to conduct seismic testing, which typically precedes oil extraction. Chanona says, “The Prime Minister asserted that there was no need to go to the public with this decision before lifting the moratorium in order to conduct the seismic surveys.”

The process of seismic testing is itself a hazard for marine systems. While emitting sound waves from air guns into the water may seem innocuous, Nadia Bood of the World Wildlife Fund and the Coalition to Save Our National Heritage says that the process ‘disorients marine life’ and is potentially fatal to those in the affected area, even audible to divers during initial seismic assessments conducted in 2012.

News of the government’s intent to conduct seismic might have been shocking to those who remember the Prime Minister as one of the advocates for the moratorium in 2016, telling Channel 7 at the time, “the Belize Barrier Reef gives us more than 600 million dollars every year.” According to Nadia Bood, the figure is closer to at least 1 billion dollars per a 2000 report.

Bood explained that the

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Contn'd on pg 15

The possibilities of leave it in the ground financing

Is it More Profitable to Leave Oil in The Ground Than Take It Out At All?

Contn'd from pg 14

“figure is outdated and would likely be higher if a new assessment were conducted.” Offshore oil extraction would therefore jeopardize one of Belize’s most significant economic assets in one fell swoop with one of its most unique ecological areas. It was a twist, therefore, to hear the Prime Minister later tell the press that no seismic was scheduled to be conducted soon but that Belize needed to “take stock of what we have.” This stock-taking, he went on to say, “does not mean that we have to go and do any drilling. It simply means that we can go to the more developed countries,

we can go to the big international NGOs to say well, we have this asset. We want to keep it there but help us; we have extreme poverty.” The availability of climate finance by leaving oil in the ground has mostly been untapped so far globally. Neither Bood nor Senator Chanona was aware of any examples of this occurring. In the Americas, the most notable attempt was The Yasuni Trust Fund in Ecuador. The Trust was established in 2007, committing to leaving an estimated 850 million barrels of oil in the ground to combat climate change in exchange for \$350 million dollars per year

for ten years. However, by 2013 the Trust had failed to receive the expected initial financing from Germany, which had decided to instead contribute to the UN’s REDD+ forest carbon programs that notably only protect the land above the ground. Pamela L. Martin and Imme Scholz discussed in a 2014 International Development Policy ‘Policy Debate’ paper the lessons of the Trust’s failure. Martin states that this failure was partly due to doubt about Ecuador’s former President Correa’s commitment to leave the oil in the ground as he actively “pursued [oil extraction] at the same time they were collecting

contributions to keep the oil in the ground.” Additionally, Martin writes the Trust failed because the UN REDD+ program provides “an easy alternative for industrialized nations to claim to act on climate change initiatives without having to reduce fossil fuel production and consumption.” For now, the Government of Belize has decided against pursuing seismic testing, which Belize Natural Energy petroleum engineer Mandela Wade said could’ve also been profitable to Belize through selling geophysical data via Belize’s partnership with Lynx Information Systems. However, if

Belize decides to conduct seismic testing with the intent to pursue ‘leave it in the ground’ finance it’ll face a significant uphill battle. Not only would the country have to demonstrate an unwavering commitment not to extract any oil deposits it discovers, but it’ll also have to hope that the countries most

responsible for climate change will finally decide to pursue a post-petroleum future. **This story was published with the support of the Caribbean Climate Justice Journalism Fellowship, which is a joint venture of Climate Tracker and Open Society Foundations.**

Ex Canadian national cleared of charges relating to Hopkins mass shooting

By Michelle Sutherland

After five months of languishing behind bars at the Belize Central Prison, Canadian national and retired soldier John Roy Smith, 43, has been released back into society after being cleared of murder charges relating to a mass shooting at a nightclub in Hopkins Village which claimed multiple lives.

On Tuesday of this week, Smith was cleared of the murder charges against him after the sitting magistrate in the Dangriga Magistrate Court found that there was insufficient evidence to try him for murder and as such he did not have any charges to answer to, and was free to go.

Shortly after his release, into the waiting arms of his common-law wife, his father, and several friends who had gathered to witness the case, Smith told the press, “It feels great because I have maintained my innocence since the first day. I should never have been put in prison to begin with, and I’m sorry that people got hurt that night. I had nothing to do with it and I’m a free man now and I’m going to go live free.”

Smith’s attorney, Richard Dickie Bradley, said that initially, his client’s charge was upgraded from abetment to commit murder to two counts of murder, along with the other accused persons. Bradley, however, indicated that after a careful revision of the files by the Director of Public Prosecution along with her legal team it was decided that the evidence collected by the police was not

John Roy Smith sufficient to hold up in court.

“Insufficient is a better word. It’s just not at a level where you could say give it a try and let the court decide,” said Bradley. As a result, the magistrate was informed that the charges were to be dropped.


In fact, according to Bradley, his client should be hailed a hero, because in the aftermath of the stampede Smith had attempted to rescue persons from the scene by giving them a lift in his vehicle and had even driven all the way to the police station in Hopkins.

Smith was jointly charged along with Sherwin Moore, 35; Kenyon Moore, 25; and Brian Andrews, 28, for the murder of Noah Moro, 23 and Emilio Garcia, 56.

The deadly shooting at the Wabinaha Nightclub in Hopkins Village left several persons injured. This included at least three police officers and a female minor. At the time, multiple gunmen kicked open the door of the nightclub and opened fire at the unsuspected patrons.


Police had reported that the motive for the shooting was the result of an argument over Moro’s girlfriend whom one of the shooters wanted to court.





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- Information Systems Maintenance:** Implements authorized changes to systems in production.
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- Training:** Provides training on application and end-user software.

The applicant should possess the following:

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Submit the following documents by **Friday, 30 December 2022:**

- Central Bank Employment Application Form (available online)
- Curriculum Vitae
- Three references (one must be from previous employer)
- Copies of school transcripts, degrees, and any other personal certificates

Applications should be addressed to:

Manager, Human Resources Department

Central Bank of Belize

P O Box 852 or Gabourel Lane

Belize City, BELIZE

Ref: Systems Analyst – Information Technology Department

Email: hr@centralbank.org.bz or online at www.centralbank.org.bz

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MINISTRY OF INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING



INVITATION TO CONSULTING FIRMS TO SUBMIT EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Operation Data

Country: BELIZE
Operation: Expansion and Rehabilitation of the Philip Goldson Highway
Operation No: Loan Agreement No. 2295

Consulting Data

Name of the Consultancy: Consultancy Services for Construction Supervision of the Expansion and Rehabilitation of the Philip Goldson Highway
Selection Method: Quality and Cost Based Selection
Reference number: PGHUP-CAB-001

The Government of Belize – Ministry of Infrastructure Development & Housing has received financing from the Central American Bank for Economic Integration for the Expansion and Rehabilitation of the Philip Goldson Highway, and it is intended to use a portion of the funds for consulting services contracts.

The Consulting services ("the services") include: A two phased assignment. **Phase #1**, is to assist the GOBZ in reviewing the existing (November 2017) detailed design and make adjustments to its content and cost estimates reflecting conditions that have changed since its completion and current cost escalations due to various national and international factors. **Phase #2**, of this consultancy is to assist the GOBZ in providing project management of those road works, including contractor supervision and contract administration throughout the project implementation process, inclusive of the defects liability period.

The Government of Belize – Ministry of Infrastructure Development & Housing invites eligible consulting firms to express their interest in providing the requested services. Interested consultants shall provide information indicating that they are qualified to provide the services and may partner with other firms in the form of a Joint Venture (JV) or subconsultants to improve their qualifications. The criteria for shortlist selection are found within the respective Terms of Reference.

Interested Consulting Firms can obtain the Terms of Reference at no cost by requesting them by email:
peu@midh.gov.bz

Consultants will be selected using the method of Quality Cost-Based Selection described in the Regulations for the Application of the Procurement Policy available in www.bcie.org.

Interested consultants can obtain more information at the address indicated at the end of this invitation, during business hours.

One electronic copy of the Expression (s) of interest together with the information indicated in the Terms of Reference must be submitted to the address below. The file(s) containing each submission should include the name and address of the applicant and shall be clearly marked "Expression of Interest - Consultancy Services for Contract Supervision of the Expansion and Rehabilitation of the Philip Goldson Highway") and shall be received by no later than (10:00 a.m. local time on Monday 31 January 2023).

The burden of proving receipt of the e-mail will be on the applicant and will not be met solely by a read receipt or sent items report generated by the applicant's computer. Confirmation of receipt can be requested at the address listed below.

Ministry of Infrastructure Development & Housing - Project Execution Unit

Mr. Evondale Moody

Engineering Coordinator

Ministry of Infrastructure Development & Housing

Power Lane, Belmopan, BELIZE

Tel: +501-828-5220

Email: peu@midh.gov.bz





FUN FACTS!



History of Christmas Stockings



The origin of the Christmas stocking involves a folkloric tale of a kindly Saint Nicholas and a despondent family. This folklore tells the story of a nobleman whose wife had died, leaving him penniless and the sole parent to their three daughters. Left with no money for a dowry (which was an integral part of finding advantageous marriage suitors at the time), the nobleman was concerned for his children’s opportunity to marry well. Without a sizable dowry, no one of equal wealth and status would be interested in coupling

with them, and with nothing to inherit, they would be left destitute. Hearing of this father’s dilemma, Saint Nicholas came to their family home and filled the girls’ stockings, which were hanging above the fireplace to dry, with solid gold spheres so that they would be able to marry after all. Versions of this quaint tale have been circulating for decades, each featuring their own twist, but regardless of the specificities, this story has continued to fuel Christmas decorating for hundreds of years. As with many other holiday traditions,

the custom of hanging Christmas stockings didn’t cross the Atlantic until the 19th century. In 1823, Clement Clark Moore wrote the poem The Night Before Christmas and the stocking is mentioned twice; once at the beginning, “the stockings were hung by the chimney with care” and again near the end, “He spoke not a word but went straight to his work, and filled all the stockings.” Literary and artistic evidence from the period shows that the custom was spreading across the United States during this period; famous illustra-

tor Thomas Nast’s work, Christmas 1863, has three large panels featuring the type of holiday celebrations that were occurring during the period . The panel entitled “Morning” depicts children opening presents and retrieving stockings which are hung above the fireplace. Writer George Webster also published a book entitled Santa Claus and His Works in 1869 with his illustrations being completed by Nast. Within his story, stockings were continually mentioned as a way for Santa to deliver presents to good children.



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Sports Guild

Argentina takes the World Cup Trophy

By Leon C. Guild

The much anticipated FIFA World Cup is now over and as the South American country of Argentina turned out to be the Champion a lot of people who had already made the call that France would have been victorious are still stupefied.

“How the hell did we not see that coming?” If you were generally neutral to the two countries but decided to side with France, ask yourself, did you make that decision based on the inferiority complex? I mean anyone who averagely follows the sport will tell you that Argentina is no underdog. But did you fall prey to the old hat trick ‘First World’ vs. ‘Developing Country’ schematics? Well I sure did.

I forgot to do my homework first. But, thank God, unlike rapper Drake I am not a betting man. Drake bet \$1 million that Argentina was going to win and still lost the deal even though Argentina pulled through. His bet was that Messi and his crew would have won hands down and not go the penalty shootout.

After a tense penalty shootout, Argentina emerged victorious. Argentina's goalkeeper, Emiliano Martínez, blocked France's second attempt, and French winger Kingsley Coman missed his penalty. The match ended with a final score of 3-3 and Argentina leading 4-2 in penalties. The victory marked Messi's first World Cup triumph to put the icing on the 35-year-old's glittering, trophy-laden career, while Argentina have won international football's biggest prize for a third time. Let’s also keep in mind that Lionel Messi is about to retire, and what an awesome way to exit this is!

France, whose own star forward Kylian Mbappe scored a hat-trick in the final and won the Golden Boot Award, missed the opportunity to become the first country since Brazil in 1958 and 1962 to retain the World Cup, and they failed to secure a third triumph over their own, having won the 1998 and 2018 tournaments.

A day after their loss to Argentina in Sunday’s dramatic World Cup final, three French players were targeted with racist online abuse. According to Washingtonposts.com, some of the abuse, targeted French standouts Kingsley Coman and Aurélien Tchouaméni, who missed decisive shots in the 3-3 defeat that concluded in the 4-2 penalty shootout.

The abuse, which reportedly included monkey and banana emoji, also was aimed at teammate Randal Kolo Muani, who has since turned off comments on his Instagram posts. Meta, which owns Instagram, said in a statement to the Athletic that “we’ve removed the disgusting comments for breaking our rules.”

The French national team on Tuesday condemned the abuse, as did Coman’s club, Bayern Munich.

“FC Bayern strongly condemn the racist comments made toward Kingsley Coman. The FC Bayern family is behind you, King,” the team wrote. “Racism has no place in sport our society.”

Having beaten France, the Argentinian team returned home at the Ezeiza airport in Buenos Aires and even at 2:40am local time thousands of people gathered to get a glimpse of the local heroes. Messi, as the Captain, stepped out first holding the trophy with the team’s Coach right behind him. The players will now spend the night at the Argentine Football Association (AFA) training complex near the airport.

They will then begin a tour of the Buenos Aires city centre from midday on Tuesday with millions expected out in the streets on what President Alberto Fernández declared a national holiday.

Disclaimer: the opinions expressed by our columnists are theirs alone, and are not necessarily reflective of the newspaper’s stance on the issues touched. We believe it is critical that our columnists be allowed freedom to generate discussion through their expressions on any number of topics.



**Atlantic Bank**

Happy Holidays!

from our Board of Directors,
Management & Staff

**Christmas Holiday
OPENING HOURS**

December 23, 2022
All Branches and Drive Thrus
close at 3:00 PM

December 30, 2022
All Branches and Drive Thrus
close at 1:00 PM





In Good Faith?

The Role of the Minimum Wage Task Force

Contributed by the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry

“On November 25, 2021, CABINET requested that the ministry develops a plan for the GRADUAL implementation of the government’s commitment to a five-dollar minimum wage. ...The government recognizes that any increase to the present minimum wage would have implications for various sectors. As a result, the PHASED minimum wage increases must be linked to productivity growth and Belize’s competitiveness”—Ministry of Labour via March 2, 2022, press release.

In our last installment of the Business Perspective, we had taken the time to elaborate a little on the economic reasoning and principles governing our support for a phased-in approach to the minimum-wage uprate. This time around we won’t venture into those technical points again. Here, we are looking

at something a far more fundamental: The role of the Minimum Wage Task Force (“Task Force”).

As can be gleaned from the opening quote to this article, the Task Force was formed based on a request from Cabinet for a body to guide the “gradual implementation of the government’s commitment to a five-dollar minimum wage.” Inherent in the mandate of the Task Force was the “good faith” understanding that the end result would be a phased-in approach.

That is, of course, a self-evident point. Fundamentally, if the goal was always to implement the \$5.00 increase immediately, then why establish the Task Force with the mandate to “oversee the implementation”?

In July this year, the government would go on, via the Task Force, to even hire a consulting firm to help in the carrying out of the group’s mandate.

“The Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour, and Local Government appointed a Minimum Wage Task Force on March 2, 2022, to oversee the gradual implementation of the five-dollar minimum wage...[The contracted consulting firm] will submit a Plan for the Gradual Implementation of the Five-Dollar Minimum Wage,” the Ministry announced via a July 1, 2020, press release.

Therefore, even from publicly available documents, it can be demonstrated that it was never only the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) holding the view that a phased-in approach was most prudent. This was the shared view of the tripartite partners, as informed by the International Labour Organization (ILO)’s “Balanced-and-Evidence-Based” approach.

Without getting into specifics, the BCCI will simply say, at this juncture, that the final recommendations from the Task Force were finalized and submitted to the Government in December 2022.

More precisely, the Task Force had been engaged in decision-making meetings even up to as recently as the week of Monday, December 13th, 2022. At the time of writing, that was basically only nine days ago.

Nevertheless, since this year’s Independence Day, the Prime Minister and others have been declaring that there will be full implementation as of January 1st 2023.

And yet, again, in a media interview aired on Wednesday, December 21st, the Prime Minister said, “The plan is that we want to implement it on the 1st January in full.”

Well, less than 24 hours after that interview aired, a press release emerged from the Ministry of Labour to announce that “the minimum wage for all categories of workers has increased to \$5.00 per hour effective January 1, 2023.”

It is our firm view that the members of the Task Force acted in good faith. And, certainly the non-government stakeholders legitimately expected “good faith” to have been exercised by our government partners in development.

Ultimately, the Task Force, a creature forged out of a Cabinet decision, did its job: its members deliberated and voted in accordance within its mandate. Majority voted in favor of a three-year phased-in approach. The Task Force also agreed on a Minimum-Wage formula that would be used to guide future, annual increases.

The dedicated members of the Task Force reasonably weighed the macroeconomic conditions and considered, *inter alia*, the admonitions contained in the ILO’s *Minimum Wage Policy Guide* regarding too fast, too soon increases.

Of course, no one—including members of the Task Force—expected that the recommendations emanating from the process would have been taken in full.

The legitimate “good faith” expectation would have been closer to middle grounds being forged where possible.

However, the release from the Ministry of Labour, issued on December 22nd, announcing the immediate jump to \$5.00, forces the question as to whether or not this entire exercise was merely for show.

On the Task Force, there was representation from the National Bank of Belize, the Central Bank, the Ministry of Economic Development, the University of Belize, the National Trade Union Congress of Belize (NTUCB), and the BCCI.

Cabinet’s announced decision on this signals the degree to which stakeholders can truly place confidence these supposed consultative mechanisms. This was a litmus test of sorts on the adherence to the tenets of good governance and the level of commitment to meaningful and “good-faith” consultations.

Disclaimer: the opinions expressed by our columnists are theirs alone, and are not necessarily reflective of the newspaper’s stance on the issues touched. We believe it is critical that our columnists be allowed freedom to generate discussion through their expressions on any number of topics.

Weh Wi Ga Fi Seh

Krismos di kohn!
Kangrats tu di nyoo
Kriol Kongsl leedaz!

Meri Krismos, Bileez!

Kangrats agen tu di nyoo leeda dehn a di Nashanal Kriol Kongsl:

Prezident: **Marilyn Gentle- Garvin**
Vais-Prezident: **Michael Kemp. Jr.**
Jenral Sekriter: **Kimberly Westby** ; Asistant Sekriteri, **Ayla Franklin**
Chrezhara: **Deshawn Dawson** ; Asistant Chrezhara, **Amber Pitts**

Jain di Kriol Kongsl tudeh tudeh:
<https://forms.gle/yJnwTSzJjXfUC7Wf6>

MERI KRISMOS 2022 ahn Hapi Nyoo Yaa 2023!

1. Kleen op di hows gud gud gud. Wi wash dong dehn doti waal ahn skreen. Wi palish op wi priti priti boad fernicha!

2. Soak wi froot dehn fu mek blak froot kayak ahn wait froot kayak. Den wi bayk ahn bayk ahn bayk ...lait kayak tu!

3. Brok dong! Akaadyan, gitaar...lee jromz....brokdong! Ahn wi daans jankunu er wach as wi Garifuna Bileezyanz kohn rong wid jankunu daans!

4. Prayz Gaad: Goh da cherch Krismos Eev nait er Krismos Day.

Dis da di taihn fu shyaa ahn fu memba dat Jeezas da di reezn fu di seezn! Da tap, wi shyaa sohn a di ting dehn weh oal-taim Bileez peepl doz laik du rong Krismos taihnm, ahn weh lat a wi stil du tudeh day!
Da aal paat a Krismos, Bileez way!

Silvaana Udz, Ed.D da fahn Bileez. If yu waahn tel shee bowt sohnting speshal fu put eena dis Kriol aatiki, eemayl: sudz142@gmail.com Vizit: www.nationalkriolcouncil.org



INVITATION TO BID

SEVENTH POWER PROJECT

CAYE CAULKER INTERCONNECTION

Installation of Submarine Cable and Design, Construction and Commissioning of Substation and Switching Station for the Caye Caulker Interconnection to San Pedro, Ambergris Caye; under the Seventh Power Project.

Belize Electricity Limited (BEL) has received financing from the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) towards the cost of the Seventh Power Project and intends to apply a portion of the proceeds of this financing to eligible payments under a contract for which this invitation is issued. Payments by CDB will be made only at the request of BEL and upon approval by CDB and will be subject in all respects to the terms and conditions of the Financing Agreement. The Financing Agreement prohibits withdrawal from the financing account for the purpose of any payment to persons or entities, or for any services or works, if such payment, to the knowledge of CDB, is prohibited by a decision of the United Nations Security Council taken under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. No party other than BEL shall derive any rights from the Financing Agreement or have any claim to the proceeds of the Financing.

BEL now invites electronic bids from eligible bidders for the Installation of Submarine Cable and Design, Construction and Commissioning of Substation and Switching Station for the Caye Caulker interconnection to San Pedro, Ambergris Caye; under the Seventh Power Project. The works include, but are not limited to the following:

- **Lot 1: Installation of 34.5kV Submarine Cable between North Caye Caulker Substation and San Pedro Switching Station; and**
- **Lot 2: Design, Construction and Commissioning of North Caye Caulker Substation and San Pedro Switching Station.**

Bidders may quote on one or both of the two lots set out in the bidding document. Consideration will be limited to firms or joint ventures of firms which are legally incorporated or otherwise organised in, and have their principal place of business in an eligible country and are either:

- (a) More than 50% beneficially-owned by citizen or citizens and/or bona fide resident or residents of an eligible country or by a body corporate or bodies corporate meeting these requirements; or
- (b) Owned or controlled by the government of an eligible country provided that it is legally and financially autonomous and operated under the commercial law of an eligible country and otherwise meets the eligibility requirements of the CDB Guidelines for Procurement (2006).

Procurement eligibility is extended to include all countries which are not CDB Member Countries.

Eligible bidders will be required to submit full qualification information with their bids establishing their eligibility to bid and qualification to perform the contract if the bid is accepted. Tender and qualification information are to be submitted in the English Language on the prescribed forms inserted in the Bid Documents. Submissions that do not provide the information required, or do not demonstrate the prospective bidder's ability to perform satisfactorily, will not qualify and will not be considered for further evaluation.

Qualification requirements include, inter alia:

A Lot 1: Installation of 34kV Submarine Cable between North Caye Caulker and San Pedro Switching Station

i) Financial Situation

The Bidder shall furnish documentary evidence that it meets the following financial requirement(s):

- i) Financial Performance: Submission of audited balance sheets or if not required by the law of the Applicant's country, other financial statements acceptable to the Employer, for the last five (5) years to demonstrate:
 - (a) The current soundness of the applicant's financial position and its prospective long term profitability, and
 - (b) Capacity to have a cash flow amount of Two-Hundred and Fifty Thousand US dollars (\$250,000 USD) equivalent.
- ii) Average Annual Turnover: minimum average annual construction and design turnover of One Million US dollars (\$1,000,000 USD), calculated as total certified payments received for contracts in progress or completed, within the last five (5) years.

ii) Experience and Technical Capacity

The Bidder shall furnish documentary evidence to demonstrate that it meets the following experience requirement(s):

- i) General Construction Experience: Experience under construction contracts in the role of contractor, subcontractor, or management contractor for at least the last five (5) years prior to the application submission deadline, and with activity in at least nine (9) months in each year.
- ii) Specific Construction Experience: Participation as contractor, management contractor or subcontractor, in at least 3 contracts within the last five (5) years, each with a value of at least One Million US dollars (\$1,000,000 USD), that have been successfully and substantially completed and that are similar to the proposed works. The similarity shall be based on the physical size, complexity, methods/technology or other characteristics as described in Section V, Employer's Requirements of the bidding document.
- iii) Construction Experience in Key Activities: For the above Specific Construction Experience or other contracts executed within the last five (5) years a minimum construction experience in the key activities of:
 - (a) Installation of 34.5 kV submarine cable is required.

B Lot 2: Design, Construction and Commissioning of North Caye Caulker Substation and San Pedro Switching Station

i) Financial Situation

The Bidder shall furnish documentary evidence that it meets the following financial requirement(s):

- i) Financial Performance: Submission of audited balance sheets or if not required by the law of the Applicant's country, other financial statements acceptable to the Employer, for the last five (5) years to demonstrate:
 - (a) The current soundness of the applicant's financial position and its prospective long term profitability, and
 - (b) Capacity to have a cash flow amount of One Million US dollars (\$1,000,000 USD) equivalent.
- ii) Average Annual Turnover: Minimum average annual construction and design turnover of Four Million US dollars (\$4,000,000 USD), calculated as total certified payments received for contracts in progress or completed, within the last five (5) years.

ii) Experience and Technical Capacity

The Bidder shall furnish documentary evidence to demonstrate that it meets the following experience requirement(s):

- i) General Construction Experience: Experience under contracts in the role of designer for at least the last five (5) years prior to the Application submission deadline, and with activity in at least three (3) months in each year.
- ii) General Construction Experience: Experience under construction contracts in the role of contractor, subcontractor, or management contractor for at least the last five (5) years prior to the application submission deadline, and with activity in at least nine (9) months in each year.
- iii) Specific Design Experience: Participation as designer, in at least 3 contracts within the last five (5) years, each with a value of at least Two-Hundred and Fifty (\$250,000 USD), that have been successfully and substantially completed and that are similar to the proposed works. The similarity shall be based on the physical size, complexity, methods/technology or other characteristics as described in Section V, Employer's Requirements of the bidding document.
- iv) Specific Construction Experience: Participation as contractor, management contractor or subcontractor, in at least 3 contracts within the last five (5) years, each with a value of at least Two Million US Dollars (\$2,000,000 USD), that have been successfully and substantially completed and that are similar to the proposed works. The similarity shall be based on the physical size, complexity, methods/technology or other characteristics as described in Section V, Employer's Requirements of the bidding document.
- v) Design Experience in Key Activities: For the above (iii) Specific Design Experience or other contracts executed within the last five (5) years a minimum design experience in the key activities of:
 - (a) Design of substation with 34.5/6.6 kV transformation is required.
- vi) Construction Experience in Key Activities: For the above (iv) Specific Construction Experience or other contracts executed within the last five (5) years a minimum construction experience in the key activities of:
 - (b) Civil works including any earthworks or construction project; and
 - (c) Installation of major electrical equipment and supply and installation of substation bus-works are required.

Bidding Documents may be obtained by eligible bidders from the first address below for a non-refundable fee of One Hundred US Dollars (\$100 USD). Requests must be made by written application including email. Written applications must be clearly marked: **"Works for San Pedro Switching Station and North Caye Caulker Substation for Seventh Power Project"**, along with the name, address and contact information of the bidder for which Bidding Documents are being requested. Payment should be by wire transfer or bank draft made payable to: **Belize Electricity Limited**. Information to pay by wire transfer can be obtained from the first address below. Proof of payment is required before bidding documents are issued.

Documents will be promptly dispatched via registered email, but under no circumstance will BEL or their authorized agents be held responsible for late delivery or any other issue related to the issuance of the documents.

A pre-bid meeting will be held at **9:00 a.m. Belize time on Wednesday, January 11, 2023**, at the second address below and will be followed by a joint site visit conducted by BEL at **1:30 p.m. Belize time on Wednesday, January 11, 2023** at the fourth address below. Interested bidders should attend. All costs associated with a bidder's attendance will be at the bidder's own expense.

Electronic submissions via registered email with subject title **"Bid for Works for San Pedro Switching Station and North Caye Caulker Substation for Seventh Power Project"**, must be received at the third address below no later than **10:00 a.m. Belize time on Friday, February 10, 2023**. A virtual bid opening will take place at **11:00 a.m. Belize time on Friday, February 10, 2023** from a meeting link sent from the third address below in the presence of bidders' representatives who choose to attend virtually.

1. Address for Correspondence

Email:
bidcorrespondence@bel.com.bz

2. Address for Pre-Bid Meeting

Training Room
BEL Corporate Headquarters
2½ Miles Philip Goldson Highway
Belize City, Belize

3. Address for Bid Submission

Email:
bidsubmittal@bel.com.bz

4. Addresses for Site Visits

Site Visit 1: Proposed North Caye Caulker Substation site
Site Visit 2 : Proposed San Pedro Switching Station site

BEL reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, and to annul the process and reject all bids, at any time prior to award of contract, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected prospective bidder(s) or any obligation to inform the affected prospective bidder(s) of the grounds for BEL's action. BEL will not defray any costs incurred by any bidder in the preparation of bids.

US Gov't refuses to share information with the UDP on Saldivar's designation

By Michelle Sutherland

The United States Department of State has refused to offer any evidence of corruption to the United Democratic Party (UDP) on former government minister John Saldivar despite their request.

A part from responding to the UDP's letter the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Emily Mendrala, in a letter dated December 20th, only confirmed that they had received the UDP's request. Chairman of the United Democratic Party Michael Peyrefitte; however, confirmed that Mendrala did not attach any evidence or indicate whether she will share any at a later date. "[The Letter] did not say much," UDP Party Leader Moses "Shyne" Barrow said.

Barrow went on to inform *The Reporter*



Moses "Shyne" Barrow

that with the lack of evidence, the letter does not change anything as it relates to Saldivar's status in the party up until the Standard Bearers Convention in February. "Unless the Commissioner of Police arrests and charges Mr. Saldivar for willful suppression (corruption) then the people in Belmopan will have to decide," indicated Barrow. He explained that criminal charges

against Saldivar would result in his immediate dismissal, thereby, making him ineligible to contest the upcoming convention. In their letter to the UDP, Mendrala wrote, "Under the U.S law, foreign government officials and their immediate family members about whom the Secretary of State has credible information of direct or indirect involvement in significant corruption

are generally ineligible for entry into the United States." It then referred the UDP back to its November 15th statement regarding the designation against Saldivar.

In closing, the Department of State once more reiterated that corruption undermines the integrity of Belize's democratic institutions and fuels perceptions of impunity, diminishing confidence in governance. The letter also reminded that the United States remains committed to addressing corruption

in all its forms by ensuring that their authorities are applied and have maximum effects, coordinating with allies and partners wherever possible.

Saldivar's fate within the UDP will be determined in February of next year at the area representative convention for Belmopan. This is following a decision by the UDP's National Party Council last week, which voted in his favor to let his fate be decided by his constituents. All this came as a result of a decision that was

taken by a Special Committee which considered Saldivar's designation by the US State Department and voted for his immediate removal from the party.

Since mid-November, Saldivar, along with his wife and children, has been barred from entering the United States, after they designated him to be "significantly corrupt." Since then the Belize Police Department has also launched a criminal investigation into Saldivar's time in office in an effort to unearth any evidence against him.

Merry Christmas
&
Happy New Year 2023!

From the management and staff of

Way Printing Company Limited

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Belize City
Tel: 227-3799

MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND
HAPPY NEW YEAR 2023!

FROM THE MANAGEMENT AND STAFF OF

Nando's Wholesale LLP

Visit us at
1.5 Miles George Price Highway
Belize City, Belize Central America
Tel: 501-222-5000 or 280-8080
E-mail: nandos@nandos.bz

CLASSIFIED ADS

LIQUOR LICENSE NOTICE: Notice is hereby given that Mohammed Kasim Ahmed & Jahed Ahmed of Market Square, Belmopan City, Cayo District is hereby applying for a renewal for Shop Liquor License for Father Supermarket. Situate at Market Square, Belmopan City, Cayo District for the year 2023. Under the Intoxicating Liquor Act (Revised Edition) of 2000.

LIQUOR LICENSE NOTICE: Notice is hereby given that Alvin Hyde Sr. of Belmopan City, Cayo District is hereby applying for a renewal for Shop Liquor License for Hyde's Mini Market. Situate at Market Square, Belmopan City, Cayo District for the year 2023. Under the Intoxicating Liquor Act (Revised Edition) of 2000.

LIQUOR LICENSE NOTICE: Notice is hereby given that Joseph Hyde of Roaring Creek Village, Cayo District is hereby applying for a renewal for Shop Liquor License for Hyde's Meats & Grocery. Situate in Roaring Creek Village, Cayo District for the year 2023. Under the Intoxicating Liquor Act (Revised Edition) of 2000.

LIQUOR LICENSE NOTICE: Notice is hereby given that Peter Chiac of Pomona Valley, Stann Creek District is hereby applying for Shop Liquor License for Grave Yard Store. Situate in Pomona Valley, Stann Creek District for the year 2023. Under the Intoxicating Liquor Act (Revised Edition) of 2000.

LIQUOR LICENSE NOTICE: Notice is hereby given that Sonia Amaya of 8.5 Miles Hope Creek Village, Stann Creek District is hereby applying for Public & Special Liquor License for Macarena Cool Spot. Situate at 8.5 Miles Hope Creek Village, Stann Creek District for the year 2023. Under the Intoxicating Liquor Act (Revised Edition) of 2000.

LIQUOR LICENSE NOTICE: Notice is hereby given that Bernard Nunez of Hopkins Village, Stann Creek District is hereby applying for Night Club Liquor License for Wabinaha. Situate in Hopkins Village, Stann Creek District for the year 2023. Under the Intoxicating Liquor Act (Revised Edition) of 2000.




Holiday Hours

St John's Credit Union Ltd advises its member-owners that our offices will be closing at

**1:00 p.m. on Friday,
December 23rd and 30th 2022**

Our Board of Directors, Officers,
Management & Staff wishes everyone a

*Merry Christmas
& Happy New Year*




Belize Global Travel Services Ltd. and Aero Dispatch Services Ltd.

Would like to inform their customers of their working hours for the Christmas and New Year weekend.

The office will be closed on Friday, December 23rd, 2022 at 1:00 pm
and will reopen on Tuesday, December 27th, 2022 at 8:00 am
And will be closed on Friday, December 30th, 2022 at 1:00 pm
And will reopen on Tuesday, January 03rd, 2023 at 8:00 am

The management and staff take this opportunity to thank all their valued customers for their patronage and wish everyone a safe and blessed Christmas and a Happy and prosperous New Year



NOTICE

GOVERNMENT OF BELIZE TREASURY BILLS
ISSUE NUMBER 1/2023

Tenders are invited for an issue of Government of Belize Treasury Bills. The amount of the issue will be \$83,200,000.

The Bills will be issued in electronic form only evidenced by an electronic book entry in the Central Securities Depository of the Central Bank of Belize in multiples of \$200 and will be repayable at par 91 days after issue. They will be issued on Wednesday, 4 January 2023 and will be redeemed on Wednesday, 5 April 2023.

Each tender must be for \$200 or a multiple of \$200 and must specify to five decimal places the amount, which is offered for each one hundred dollars face value of the Bills sought.

Members of the public who wish to participate in the auction must submit their bid to the Central Bank of Belize electronically to bids@centralbank.org.bz or at the designated drop off box no later than 12:00 noon on Friday, 30 December 2022.

The Auction in the Central Securities Depository System (CSD) will be opened from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm on Wednesday, 4 January 2023.

Successful bidders should arrange to settle via the Automated Payment & Securities Settlement System of Belize (APSSS).

Bank: Central Bank of Belize
Account: GL1CORP0402627

The Government of Belize reserves the right to accept or reject any and/or all tenders in whole or in part.

CENTRAL BANK OF BELIZE

Notices are placed on Central Bank of Belize Website (www.centralbank.org.bz)

LICENSE NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that
Mr. Sixto Chan
Is applying for a Shop Liquor
License for
James Brodie & C. Ltd.

To be operated at
9 Shopping Center
Belmopan, Cayo District

Under the intoxicating Liquor License
Ordinance Revised Edition 2000 for the
year 2023-2024





New omicron subvariant spreads in China

We’ve all heard the complaints - that it’s expensive, stressful, with too much food and booze - but the festive season can also have hidden health benefits. The festive season gets bad press when it comes to health, but the reality is that Christmas can boost your health and well-being. Here’s why:

YOU SING

Whether it’s a candlelit carol service or a raucous rendition of I Will Survive at the pub karaoke, most people enjoy a good old singsong at Christmas. And it doesn’t just lift the spirits. According to Swedish researchers, singing helps to control our breathing and regulate our heartbeat and pulse. Warbling alone is good, but singing in a choir is even better.

We’ve all heard the complaints - that it’s expensive, stressful, with too much food and booze - but the festive season can also have hidden health benefits. The festive season gets bad press when it comes to health, but the reality is that Christmas can boost your health and well-being. Here’s why:

YOU GIVE – AND RECEIVE

Studies show that when we give and receive gifts, the brain releases the feel-good chemical dopamine. Giving also releases the “cuddle” hormone oxytocin.

And while writing and posting cards might seem like a chore, it’s a chance to boost charity coffers. The Institute of Fundraising suggests buying cards directly from the charity you want to benefit or checking the back of packs first to see how much is donated as it can be as little as 7%.

YOU GET TOGETHER WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The average family manages just 36 minutes of quality time together a day, according to recent research, with hectic work schedules and domestic chores leaving little time for family fun. Yet a separate poll reveals 95% of parents believe the key to happiness lies in spending quality family time together.

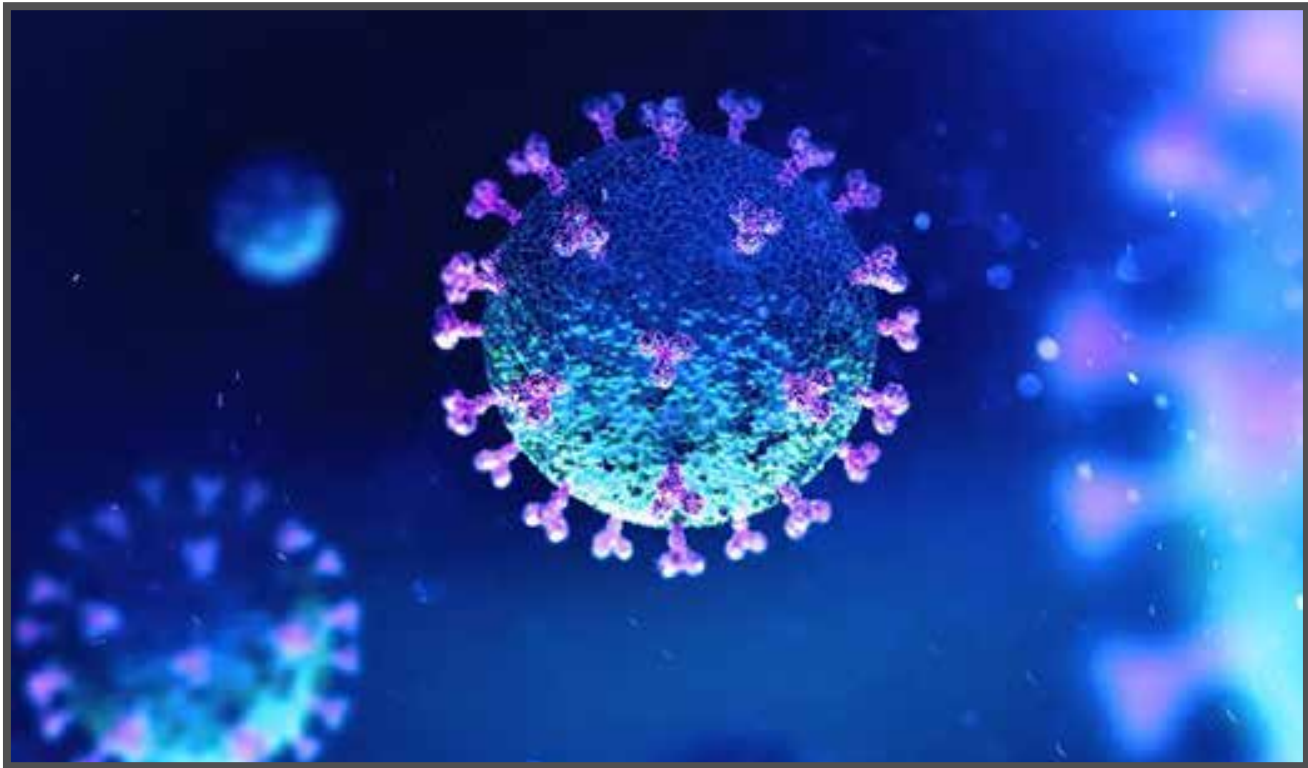
Suzie Hayman, trustee of the charity Family Lives, says: “We all need connection and attachment, and sharing time together strengthens relationships. But remember that friends can be equally important, so don’t set rules – particularly with teenagers. We all need some time out as well!”

YOU EAT MORE FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

It may be loads of preparation and stress, but your Christmas dinner makes clocking up your five-a-day a cinch – and that’s without the melon starter and post-dinner dates!

YOU EAT TOGETHER

Less than half of families sit down at the dinner table together at mealtimes, research has found. A total of 14% never do, opting



instead to eat in front of the TV. Yet, thankfully, sitting down to Christmas dinner is one tradition 88% of families are holding on to.

Researchers at Rutgers University in New Jersey, US, found families who regularly eat dinner together at home benefit in many different ways, from less obesity, as you pay more attention to what you’re eating, to happier mental states.

The study found that it’s not just the time and eating together that matters, but the nature of the interactions. Families who spent time watching TV together or eating fast food outside the home had poorer dietary intake.

YOU CATCH UP ON SLEEP

Who has time to snatch 40 winks in the afternoon, apart from Christmas time?

Yet a short nap after lunch can reduce stress, help cardiovascular function and improve alertness and memory, according to a report from the Spanish Society of Primary Care Physicians. They advise taking a siesta on a sofa or comfy armchair rather going to bed, where you’re more likely to fall into a deep sleep.

A Nasa study showed that when pilots were allowed to take a nap for just 26 minutes during their working hours, their efficiency increased by 34%. So, no need to feel guilty about nodding off after lunch.

The benefits are similar to yogic breathing, which has a beneficial effect on blood pressure. A study for the annual Sing for your Heart campaign by Heart Research UK found that singing is a “great aerobic exercise, giving your heart and lungs a fantastic workout”.

YOU’RE ON YOUR FEET MORE

Although our perception of Christmas is slumped on the sofa, watching James Bond, we actually spend more time on our feet. Parties, Christmas shopping and slaving away in the kitchen mean we’re far less sedentary than usual. And that post-Christmas-dinner walk or Boxing Day stroll will give your heart and lungs a good workout and boost circulation, leaving you glowing.

In fact, make it a daily routine, as a study has found that walking for two-and-a-half hours a week, or 20 minutes a day, could save 37,000 lives a year. **YOU MAKE – AND RELIVE – FAMILY TRADITIONS** Whether it’s buying a new tree bauble every year, leaving a mince pie out for Santa or watching It’s A Wonderful Life, family traditions unite all generations, says Suzie Hayman.

“You’re creating memories together, reinforcing the family unit. Even for step-families or those who have lost a loved one, reminiscing about past traditions – and creating new ones – offers an opportunity to talk things through.”

To recapture the magic of Christmas, take in a pantomime, attend a carol service, visit a Christmas market or just wear a festive jumper.

YOU PLAY GAMES

It’s not just children who enjoy games at Christmas. Everyone’s spirits can be lifted by the light-hearted competitiveness that family games invoke.

Suzie says: “Christmas board games provide the ideal opportunity to create some genuine family socializing.

“Unlike watching TV or playing on the Wii or Xbox, it’s an interactive experience where you’re facing each other and making eye contact.”

And getting out the Monopoly or Cluedo also keeps your mind pinsharp, a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine found.

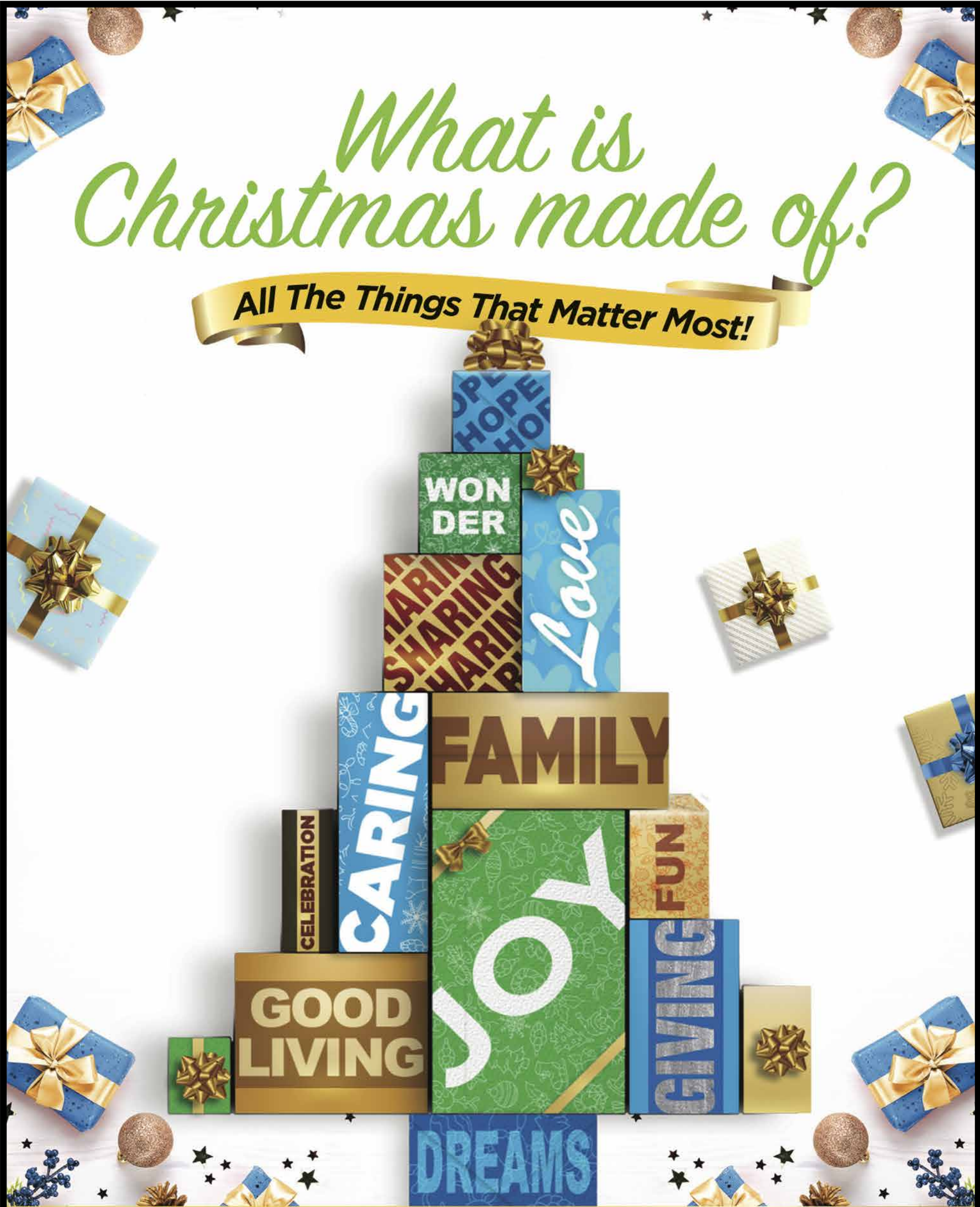
YOU MAKE RESOLUTIONS

Yes, we know many resolutions bite the dust before the end of January, but at least we start thinking about possible health improvements after Christmas.

According to a survey last year, the most popular New Year pledges were to “do more exercise” followed by “lose weight” and to “eat more healthily”.

And there are a few tips to increase your chances of success, says Richard Wiseman, professor of psychology at Hertfordshire University, who tracked more than 3,000 resolution makers.

Men were 22% more likely to succeed when they set goals for themselves, such as losing a pound a week rather than just saying they wanted to lose weight. And telling others their resolutions increased women’s chances of keeping them by 10%.



May all your wishes come true this holiday season.

Merry Christmas
from Sagicor

