

Foreign Exchange Summary

as at August 23, 2019

Member State	USD	CAD	GBP	Euro
Bahamas (BSD)	1.00	0.74	1.21	1.11
Barbados (BBD)	2.03	1.53	2.50	2.26
Belize (BZD)	2.02	1.52	2.48	2.25
Guyana (GYD)	210.45	158.01	257.09	232.78
Haiti (HTG)	94.12	70.76	115.14	104.30
Jamaica * (JMD)	137.12	103.58	165.27	151.66
OECS (XCD)	2.71	2.03	3.30	2.99
Suriname (SRD)	7.52	5.59	9.21	8.33
T&T (TTD)	6.77	5.34	8.67	7.88

*Rates applicable for Customs & GCT purposes

Business News In Brief

Barbados to abolish immigration/customs forms

Passengers arriving at the Grantley Adams International Airport in Barbados will no longer be required to fill out immigration/customs forms, also known as ED forms, as of September 1 after a recent Cabinet decision gave the nod for the use of the forms to be scrapped. According to Minister of Home Affairs Edmund Hinkson, starting next month, there will be a full transition to the use of the 48 kiosks at the airport. He advised that the kiosk system has been tested for almost a year and has been fine-tuned to ensure that the passenger information gathering system meets all the markers for Customs, Immigration & the Statistical Services. ([ING](#))

BOJ to stop accepting Bermudian currency

The Bank of Jamaica (BOJ) is advising that as at August 26 it will no longer exchange the Bermudian dollar at its banking counter. According to the BOJ, the decision was taken in a context where the bank has been unable to repatriate this particular foreign currency. "In that regard, after giving value for the Bermudian dollar to the public at our banking counter, the bank cannot obtain value in return. Given this development, the only recourse at this time is to cease accepting the Bermudian dollar," the BOJ noted. In a subsequent interview, BOJ Deputy Governor, Natalie Haynes, says the refusal of the correspondent bank in the USA to accept the Bermuda currency necessitated the change. ([BOJ](#))

Scotiabank now threatens branch closure in Antigua

Scotiabank is threatening to pursue all its options including closure of its operations in Antigua and Barbuda. In a letter dated August 19, Brendan G.J. King, Senior Vice-President International Banking of the Bank of Nova Scotia in Canada advised the Government of Antigua that "if we (BNS) are unable to consummate the sale to Republic Bank, we will need to re-examine all of our options, including the closure of our operations in Antigua and Barbuda." This after Republic Financial Holdings Limited advised the Antiguan Government on July 31 that "... we regret to advise that we have decided to no longer pursue the negotiations re: the sale of any portion of the Antigua Branch. We advised BNS of our decision earlier today and will proceed to close on the other branches and banks." Previously on August 9, Antiguan PM Gaston Browne had written to Scotiabank indicating that his administration "and a consortium of local banks continue to have an interest in the purchase of Scotiabank Antigua." ([JG](#))

Corporate Movements

- ⇒ Red Stripe, part of the Heineken International Group, has announced the appointment of Luis Prata as its new Managing Director, effective August 19, 2019.
- ⇒ Claudette Cooke has been appointed Executive Director, Jamaica Broilers Group Foundation effective September 1, 2019.

Online procurement coming to the Bahamas

The Bahamas has failed to meet the minimum fiscal transparency requirements in a 2019 Fiscal Transparency Report released by the U.S. Department of State last week. The Bahamas was one of 140 countries assessed. According to Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Finance Peter Turnquest, "the state department's framework for assessing fiscal transparency places emphasis on transparency around the awarding of government contracts and natural resource licenses, as well as more robust government audit mechanisms." According to Turnquest, those elements mentioned are all part of the government's soon-to-be-introduced Public Procurement Bill, "which will require all prospective government bids to be posted online and call for the publication of all contracts awarded by the government". Turnquest said the government will also introduce the Public Financial Management Bill, which will replace the FAAA. ([NG](#))

Stock Market Summary

as at August 23, 2019

Jamaica Stock Exchange

Overall Market activity resulted from trading in 36 stocks of which 13 advanced, 19 declined and 4 traded firm. Market volume amounted to 63,085,464 units valued at over J\$295,520,033.84. Wigton Windfarm Ltd Ordinary Shares was volume leader with 33,816,612 units (53.60%) traded. JSE Index declined by 2,724.67 points (0.52 %) to close at 524,971.18.

Barbados Stock Exchange

1 security advanced & 1 traded firm as 6,759 shares traded on the Regular Market, with a total value of BD\$21,787.73. Goddard Enterprises Ltd was the volume leader trading 6,668 shares at \$3.26. Index closed at 3,318.74.

Trinidad & Tobago Stock Exchange

Overall Market activity resulted from trading in 13 securities of which 5 advanced, 2 declined and 6 traded firm. Trading activity on the First Tier Market registered a volume of 95,923 shares crossing the floor of the Exchange valued at TT\$1,981,074.89. GraceKennedy Limited was the volume leader with 30,000 shares changing hands for a value of TT\$108,958.32. The All T&T Index advanced by 0.09 points (0.01%) to close at 1,762.35. The Composite Index advanced by 0.15 points (0.01%) to close at 1,388.76 and the Cross Listed Index advanced by 0.03 points (0.02%) to close at 137.46.

Guyana Stock Exchange

Market activity resulted from trading in 4 stocks of which 1 declined and 3 traded firm. Market volume amounted to 23,100 units with Banks DIH (DIH) being volume leader with 11,576 shares traded. The LSI closed at 586.58.

Eastern Caribbean Securities Exchange (ECSE)

Market activity resulted from trading in 3 stocks with a volume of 10,526 shares. St Kitts Nevis Anguilla National Bank Ltd was volume leader with 9,100 shares traded. Index closed at 150.49.

CARICOM Business is a weekly newsletter produced by the Directorate of Trade & Economic Integration.

Editorial Manager: Joseph Cox ; Email: tei.info@caricom.org

Business News In Brief

Fitch downgrades Suriname outlook to negative

Fitch Ratings has affirmed Suriname's Long-Term Foreign Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) at 'B-'. The Rating Outlook has been revised to Negative from Stable. The negative outlook reflects Fitch's expectation that large government deficits and financing needs will continue to lead to a rapid increase in government debt/GDP. Fitch expects Suriname's government debt/GDP to rise to 79% at end-2019 from 72% in 2018, well above the current 'B' median of 50%. Preliminary fiscal data indicates that the government deficit is on course for approximately 10% of GDP for 2019. Uncertain financing options, highlighted by on-going monetary financing from the central bank, add to downside risks. Financial system vulnerability remains a contingent liability. The government deficit rose to 12.3% of GDP in 2018, above expectations due to payment of supplier arrears, wage increases, subsidies and transfers, and interest costs. High financial dollarization (45% of credit and 63% of deposits in May 2019) is also a concern in the context of low capital buffers. [\[WISE\]](#)

Cayman tipped to cut proposed loan for bond pay-off

The Cayman Islands Government has confirmed that it will meet the bond payment of US\$312 million that is due to be repaid on 24 November this year and may not need to borrow as much as previously anticipated to pay off that bond and still maintain its cash flow obligations. As government finances strengthen, the CIG has been cutting debt and will be reducing the new loan it expected to take out to repay the bond. According to Financial Secretary Kenneth Jefferson while the Legislative Assembly approved additional government borrowing up to CI\$153 million in 2017 to help with the repayment, it may now not need to borrow as much as appropriated. The government plans to repay the bond with a combination of loan & the State cash balances. By August 2020, State debt could be reduced by 50% from its peak of almost \$800 million in 2010/11 when the UK had banned Cayman from additional borrowing. [\[CNS\]](#)

International Oil Prices as at August 23, 2019

Futures	Price	US\$ Change	Change
WTI Crude	US\$54.17	-1.18	-2.13%
Brent Crude	US\$58.80	-0.70	-1.18%
OPEC Basket	US\$60.50	-0.16	-0.26%
Natural Gas	US\$2.156	-0.007	-0.32%