



Contribution of The Hon. Clay Sweeting

Member of Parliament

(Central and South Eleuthera)

Minister of Works and Family Island Affairs

Budget Debate – Fiscal Year 2026 -2027

A Budget That Builds On Progress

June 2026

House of Assembly

Commonwealth of The Bahamas

Draft 2026–2027 Budget Communication

Madam Speaker,

Madam Speaker,

I rise today with a profound sense of gratitude to Almighty God, whose will was made manifest on May 12, 2026.

The re-election of the Progressive Liberal Party for a second consecutive term represents a significant vote of confidence from the Bahamian people. It reflects the trust that voters have placed in the government's vision, leadership, commitment and progressive agenda. Winning two consecutive terms is no small achievement and hasn't been accomplished in decades. This reflects major public support and the ability to deliver on promises made while navigating economic and social challenges. The result signals that Bahamians believe that the country is moving in the right direction and in the hands of a Prime Minister who exhibits stability, humility, experience and drives PROGRESS to guide the nation through the next chapter of development.

I extend heartfelt thanks to our Honorable Prime Minister, the Member for Cat Island, Rum Cay and San Salvador—a leader who has guided, I want to say just my political journey, but from the contributions over the past few days, I

think I am safe to say, he has poured into many of us, believed in our abilities, and placed his continued confidence that we as a team are the right fit to Build on Progress.

I stand deeply honored by the confidence placed in me by the hardworking, resilient, and determined people of Central and South Eleuthera. I want to thank the hardworking members of Team Sweeting who ensured that we knocked on doors, organized events and most important connected and never lost our connected with people. In a seat that was determined by less than an hundred votes in three election cycles, Madam Speaker the people of Central and South showed up and showed out.... winning two straight with a margin never seen in that seat before and increasing he margin just 4 weeks ago.

Madam Speaker, no doubt that Central and South is PLP country.

It is Sweeter with Sweeting!

I would also like to acknowledge the woman who continues to stand firmly by my side, Delia and To my son, Davin—my pride and joy—who now celebrates his graduation from primary school and prepares to enter middle school, you

are a daily reminder of why we do this work. Through every challenge and every triumph, my family remains my greatest source of strength.

Madam Speaker, I am deeply honored that our Prime Minister has once again entrusted me with the responsibility of leading the Ministry of Works and Family Island Affairs.

After serving my first term in office and as Minister of Works & FIA for two years, I have come to one unavoidable conclusion: in a ministry as critical to the future of this nation as the Ministry of Works, transformational change cannot be completed in a single term. Roads are not rebuilt overnight. Airports are not modernized overnight. Sea walls, docks, bridges, water systems, government complexes, and critical infrastructure do not appear with the wave of a wand.

Real progress requires vision. It requires consistency. And above all, it requires time.

That is why my return to this office is both humbling and energizing. We are not returning to simply continue projects. We are returning to finish what we

started, accelerate what is underway, and push beyond what many believed was possible.

Because the people of the Family Islands deserve more than promises—they deserve results.

They deserve modern infrastructure.

They deserve reliable roads, resilient communities, and economic opportunities that are not confined to New Providence.

They deserve to see the success of The Bahamas reflected not only in our capital, but on every island, every settlement, every rock, and every cay.

For too long, development has moved in cycles. Five years of progress followed by years of stagnation. We must break that cycle.

The work before us is bigger than politics. It is about nation-building. It is about ensuring that a child growing up in Rock Sound, Murphy Town, Bullock's Harbour, or Staniel Cay has the same opportunity to thrive as a child growing up anywhere else in this country.

And so, Madam Speaker, I return to this ministry with renewed purpose, renewed energy, and renewed determination.

The foundation has been laid.

The progress has begun.

Now, the time has come to build higher, move faster, and deliver more.

Because the Family Islands cannot wait. Because the nation's capital cannot wait.

Because the people deserve nothing less.

And because the future of The Bahamas must reach every island, every community, every rock, and every cay.

Madam Speaker,

Our focus this fiscal year has been sharpened. It's a strategic tightening of our focus on infrastructural works across the nation and allows for the Ministry of Works' team to dedicate 100% of its energy on heavy infrastructure. I would like to welcome to the Ministry, Bradley Fox as Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry. He has already been aggressively advocating on Abacos behalf.

Madam Speaker, I AM confident that the mandate of my Ministry remains clear, absolute, and monumental: we are the custodians of the physical blueprint of this nation.

From the paved corridors of New Providence to the critical docks, sea walls, airports, and government institutions and structures across our 700 islands and cays, we bear the responsibility for all infrastructural works undertaken.

Standing under the national banner of "**A Budget That Builds On Progress,**" We are no longer just planning for the future; we are actively pouring the concrete, laying the asphalt, and securing the structural foundations of long-term prosperity for every single Bahamian.

Madam Speaker,

When the Member for St. Barnabas presented a Budget that Builds on Progress and he too highlighted the progress that is transforming our islands through infrastructure. This Budget continues the Davis Administration's commitment to ensuring that development reaches every corner of The Bahamas. The Ministry of Works & Family Island Affairs is the Ministry that builds that progress. Through investments in roads, airports, docks, clinics, utilities and

digital modernization, we are strengthening the physical foundations upon which economic growth depends. From the Family Islands Airport Renaissance Programme to major healthcare and transportation projects, we are moving beyond plans and studies and into a period of sustained execution. The result is visible across the country: stronger communities, improved connectivity, expanded opportunity and infrastructure that supports both economic growth and a better quality of life.

Madam Speaker,

When Bahamians think about infrastructure, they naturally think about roads, airports, docks, bridges and government buildings.

And rightly so.

Those are the physical structures that connect our islands and support our economy. But in 2026, infrastructure is no longer only physical. The future of government is also digital.

While this Administration continues to invest in asphalt, concrete and steel, we are simultaneously investing in something equally important: the modernization of how government serves the Bahamian people.

Digitization

Madam Speaker,

For decades, many government processes relied on paper files, manual approvals, fragmented records and systems that did not communicate with one another.

A building permit might require multiple visits. Project information could exist in several different locations. Critical records were often stored in filing cabinets rather than accessible digital systems.

This Budget changes that.

The Ministry of Works and Family Island Affairs has embarked upon the most ambitious digital transformation programme in its history, a comprehensive three-year strategy designed to modernize operations, improve transparency, strengthen accountability and deliver faster services to the Bahamian people.

Madam Speaker,

This is not digitization for the sake of digitization. This is government working smarter, responding faster and becoming more transparent and more accountable to the Bahamian people.

Under this initiative, thirteen integrated systems will be rolled out across my Ministry, creating one connected Ministry operating from a single source of truth. These systems will modernize everything from drainage management and infrastructure asset tracking to permit approvals, project management, contractor payments, citizen reporting and executive oversight.

For the first time, Ministry leadership will be able to monitor critical infrastructure operations in real time. Projects will be tracked from planning to completion. Assets will be monitored more efficiently. Contractor payments will move through transparent digital workflows. Permit approvals will become faster and easier. And citizens themselves will gain new tools to directly engage with government services.

Madam Speaker,

One of the most exciting elements of this programme is the creation of a Ministry Digital Operations Hub.

This will serve as a centralized gateway through which Bahamians can access services, submit applications, track requests, report infrastructure concerns and receive updates on active Ministry projects.

A modern Ministry must not only build infrastructure, it must also communicate effectively with the people it serves. As part of this digital transformation, the Ministry has launched its new **"In The Works"** WhatsApp channel, providing Bahamians with direct access to project updates, construction milestones, roadworks notices, infrastructure announcements and behind-the-scenes insights into the work being carried out across our nation. Through this platform, citizens will be able to follow projects as they move from planning to completion, gaining a clearer understanding of how public funds are being invested and how infrastructure is improving lives.

I encourage all Bahamians to stay connected by joining the Ministry's **WhatsApp Channel** where they can find episodes of our series **"In The Works"** and follow our official **Facebook, Instagram and and yes our Tik Toks pretty nice too**, where project updates, progress reports, public advisories and Ministry initiatives are shared regularly.

For too long, government projects were only seen at the ground-breaking and the ribbon-cutting stage. We believe that Bahamians want to see the entire journey from announcement to completion.

Madam Speaker,

Transparency is not achieved by simply completing projects. Transparency is achieved when people can follow those projects every step of the way.

Imagine a resident in Inagua, Mayaguana, Long Island or Eleuthera being able to interact with the Ministry without travelling to Nassau.

Imagine reporting a pothole, drainage issue or damaged infrastructure directly through a digital portal and tracking the status of that report in real time. That is the future we are building.

Madam Speaker,

We are also modernizing Building Control through the Electronic Permit and Regulatory Information System (EPRIS), digital plan reviews and cloud-based inspection processes.

These improvements will reduce paperwork, improve efficiency, strengthen compliance and support the development community with faster approvals and clearer communication.

For contractors, engineers, architects and investors, time matters. And this Administration understands that a modern government must move at the speed of opportunity.

Madam Speaker,

Perhaps most importantly, this digital transformation supports a broader vision.

By 2029, the Ministry of Works and Family Island Affairs aims to become one of the most technologically advanced public infrastructure authorities in the Caribbean combining digital citizen services, modern field operations and real-time executive intelligence into one connected ecosystem.

This is what progress looks like.

Roads, Drainage and Transportation Infrastructure

Madam Speaker,

If there is one issue that Bahamians speak about more than almost any other, it is the condition of our roads.

They speak about the potholes they drive through, about flooding after heavy rainfall, about traffic congestion; and they speak about the need for safer roads for their families and communities.

And this Budget continues one of the most aggressive road, drainage and transportation infrastructure programmes undertaken in recent history.

Madam Speaker,

The Ministry's Road Pavement Rehabilitation Programme now exceeds \$98 million and includes major investments in arterial roads, community roads, pavement rehabilitation, road markings, drainage improvements and traffic safety enhancements throughout New Providence.

Recognizing the urgent need to improve driving conditions, the Ministry previously engaged private contractors under a dedicated pothole patching initiative valued at approximately \$2 million. These contractors have supplemented Ministry resources, allowing rapid intervention across multiple communities while reducing safety risks and preventing further deterioration

of the road network. The programme has become an important part of our strategy to stabilize roads ahead of major rehabilitation works and during periods of heavy rainfall. However, we cannot and will not continue business as usual. You will see an aggressive approach to the implementation of technology, and new methods of repairing roads. Its 2026 and we cant continue to patch and manage the road network as we did in 2000.

At the same time, over \$13.8 million has been invested in sidewalk construction throughout New Providence, providing safer pedestrian access near schools, public facilities, commercial centres and residential communities.

Madam Speaker,

This Administration understands that transportation infrastructure is about more than paving roads. Governments are continuous. It was important to me and the Ministry that whomever sits in the chair at MOW has a clear, concise, technically supported road map to creating a transportation network capable of supporting future growth and development beyond any administrations tenure.

Non political, but data driven.

That is why the Ministry has completed a comprehensive 20-Year Transportation Development Strategy for New Providence, identifying twelve major highway improvement schemes and establishing short, medium and long-term solutions to improve mobility, connectivity and traffic flow throughout the island.

Additionally, more than sixty road junction improvement opportunities have been identified, with ten priority junctions designed within the last year and five already implemented. Seventeen school traffic safety initiatives have also been identified to improve safety for students, parents and educators travelling to and from schools throughout New Providence.

To further improve transportation efficiency, the Ministry is advancing a series of smart transportation initiatives, including the upgrading of seven remaining legacy traffic signals throughout New Providence and their integration into the Traffic Management Centre as part of the Government's Smart City Nassau initiative.

Madam Speaker,

These improvements will strengthen traffic flow, enhance emergency response coordination and improve road safety for motorists and pedestrians alike. More importantly, they demonstrate that this Administration's transportation vision extends beyond roads and asphalt to include the intelligent management of traffic movement throughout the capital.

Madam Speaker,

Road infrastructure and flood mitigation must go hand in hand.

For decades, residents of communities such as Coral Harbour, Pinewood Gardens and other low-lying areas have endured recurring flooding, property damage and significant disruption to their daily lives.

This Administration is taking decisive action.

The Coral Harbour Road and Drainage Improvement Project, valued at more than \$4.4 million, continues to advance through a multi-phase programme designed to address longstanding flooding challenges. Through larger catch pits, improved drainage systems and roadway upgrades, this project will bring long-term relief to residents who have endured flooding for far too long.

In Pinewood Gardens, mobilisation has already commenced under a new Flood Mitigation Pilot Project valued at approximately \$2.9 million. This innovative initiative will utilize stormwater collection systems, pumps and deep disposal wells to tackle chronic flooding in Pinewood, in the areas of Sapodilla Boulevard, Pigeon Plum Road and also Joan's Heights. More importantly, the project will establish a model that can be replicated in other flood-prone communities throughout New Providence.

Madam Speaker,

The Ministry has also identified and mapped 289 flooding hotspots throughout New Providence, allowing engineers to prioritize interventions based on evidence and real-world data rather than assumptions. A new drainage monitoring system is also being implemented to assess well capacity during storm events, improving planning, emergency response and long-term infrastructure design. These are not temporary fixes. These are long-term solutions designed to build resilience and protect communities for generations to come.

The Gov has secured IDB funding in the amount \$80 million as a Flood resilience loan to bolster resilience against recurrent flooding the above identified zone.

Madam Speaker,

The progress taking place in New Providence is mirrored throughout the Family Islands.

In Abaco, more than \$17 million has been committed to road improvements in Sweeting Village, Central Pines, Cherokee Sound and Man-O-War Cay, bringing modern road infrastructure and improved water services to communities that have waited years for these upgrades.

In South Andros, approximately eight miles of roadway between Driggs Hill and Mars Bay are nearing completion, while in the Berry Islands, a \$12.8 million investment is transforming seventeen miles of roadway in Great Harbour Cay. In South Bimini, residents are already benefiting from the rehabilitation of 3.5 miles of roads valued at \$2.81 million.

Madam Speaker,

In Eleuthera, work continues under the transformative \$163 million Public-Private Partnership Road Improvement Project, one of the largest infrastructure investments ever undertaken on the island. Approximately 150 miles of roadway and potable water infrastructure are being upgraded, bringing lasting improvements to residents throughout North, Central and South Eleuthera.

North Eleuthera, this government has not dismissed your cries for better roads, a capital injection of \$11.9 million is allocated for road improvement programme that will rehabilitate roads in The Bluff, Upper Bogue and Lower Bogue.

The Exuma Road Improvement Project, valued at more than \$62 million, is now approximately ninety-five percent complete and continues to serve as a model for Family Island PPP development. Residents are already benefiting from safer roads, improved drainage, sidewalks, seawalls and upgraded transportation infrastructure.

Meanwhile, significant road and infrastructure investments are advancing in Long Island, Inagua, Cat Island, San Salvador and Mangrove Cay, ensuring

that no island is left behind and that opportunities continue to expand throughout our archipelago.

Madam Speaker,

Perhaps most importantly, this Administration is planning not only for today, but for the future.

Using an evidence-based infrastructure prioritization framework, the Ministry has identified and sequenced more than 150 infrastructure projects with an estimated value of approximately \$1.5 billion. This ensures that future investments are strategic, transparent and aligned with national development priorities.

That is what responsible governance looks like.

Transport Strategy 2045 – Planning the Future of New Providence

Madam Speaker,

As we continue investing in roads, drainage and transportation infrastructure today, we must also prepare for the transportation demands of tomorrow.

That is why the Ministry of Works and Family Island Affairs has completed the Draft Transport Strategy 2045 for New Providence, a comprehensive twenty-year blueprint designed to transform how people, goods and services move throughout our capital.

The Strategy recognizes a simple reality.

New Providence is home to approximately 300,000 residents and nearly 1,000 miles of roadway. More than ninety percent of our population lives on the eastern half of the island, while major employment centres remain concentrated in Downtown Nassau, Paradise Island and around Lynden Pindling International Airport (LPIA).

The result is increasing pressure on a transportation network that was never designed to accommodate today's levels of vehicle ownership and economic activity.

Madam Speaker,

Traffic congestion and gridlock, for many years, has become a constant source of frustration and a major talking point for residents of New Providence.

They have also spoken about long commutes, unsafe roads, flooding.

And they have spoken about the need for a transportation system that works for a modern Bahamas.

This Strategy provides the roadmap to achieve exactly that.

One of the most important findings is that New Providence has reached the point where isolated road projects alone will not solve congestion challenges.

Instead, we must adopt a coordinated network approach that improves key transportation corridors, addresses bottlenecks, enhances safety and introduces smarter traffic management systems.

Madam Speaker,

The Strategy builds upon the success of the New Providence Road Improvement Project, which transformed transportation on the island through the construction of more than ten miles of new roadways and major upgrades to existing corridors. Those investments helped shape modern New Providence, but population growth and increased vehicle ownership now require the next generation of improvements.

The Strategy therefore, **Madam Speaker,** identifies twelve priority transportation corridors for improvement, including the Gladstone Road

Corridor, Sir Milo Butler Highway Corridor, East Street Corridor, Mackey Street Corridor, Carmichael Road Corridor and the North Coast Corridors which serve much of the island's economic activity.

At the centre of the plan is the creation of a new east-west transportation spine by connecting Fire Trail Road and Soldier Road and extending transportation links toward Western New Providence. This initiative will relieve pressure on existing corridors, support future development and improve connectivity across the island.

Madam Speaker,

Safety remains at the heart of this Strategy.

According to the World Health Organization, road traffic accidents remain one of the leading causes of death in The Bahamas. More than 6,000 traffic collisions were recorded in 2022 alone, resulting in 59 fatalities.

The Ministry therefore commissioned the International Road Assessment Programme, commonly known as iRAP, to undertake a comprehensive assessment of New Providence's road network.

Many sections of roadway received low safety ratings, particularly for pedestrians and other vulnerable road users. The assessment identified high-risk corridors, dangerous crossing locations and opportunities for targeted safety investments that can save lives.

This Administration intends to act on those recommendations.

Because every road fatality is one too many and every family affected is one family too many.

EVERY LIFE saved through better infrastructure is an investment worth making.

Madam Speaker,

The Strategy also addresses a challenge that every Bahamian and visitor knows all too well parking and mobility in Downtown, Nassau.

The study found that extensive curbside parking reduces roadway capacity, contributes to congestion and creates unsafe conditions for pedestrians. The movement of vehicles in and out of angled parking spaces disrupts traffic flow along some of our most important transportation routes while reducing the space available for safe pedestrian movement.

At the same time, the Strategy highlights the need for improved pedestrian infrastructure throughout Downtown, Cable Beach, Arawak Cay and other areas frequented by residents and visitors, who enjoy walking to take in the beauty of our capital. Better sidewalks, safer crossings, improved wayfinding (signage and orientation) and enhanced accessibility will allow people to move more safely while supporting tourism and local businesses.

Madam Speaker,

What makes this Strategy different is that it is **NOT** simply a vision document.

It **IS** an action plan.

Over the next five years, the Ministry will focus on implementing a formal road hierarchy, establishing a Bahamian Street Design Code, modernizing traffic management systems, improving wayfinding, introducing urban traffic control technologies and advancing strategic infrastructure projects that increase capacity while improving safety.

In the longer term, intelligent transportation systems, real-time traffic monitoring, smart traffic lights and integrated corridor management will

fundamentally transform how transportation infrastructure is planned and operated throughout New Providence.

Architecture

Building Communities Through Modern Public Infrastructure

Madam Speaker,

Infrastructure is not only measured by roads, docks, airports and bridges.

It is also measured by the buildings where Bahamians receive government services, educate their children, access public programmes and interact with their Government.

The Architectural Section of the Ministry continues to design, renovate and construct public facilities that improve service delivery and strengthen and enhance communities.

Madam Speaker,

In Harbour Island, work continues on one of the most transformative government infrastructure projects currently in design. The proposed Harbour Island Administration Building, valued at approximately \$17.5 million, will

provide modern facilities capable of meeting the growing needs of residents, businesses and government agencies operating on the island.

Complementing this investment is the proposed restoration and redevelopment of the Historic Harbour Island Administration Residence, a further \$10 million investment that will preserve an important piece of Bahamian heritage while providing modern accommodations and support facilities. These projects represent a combined investment of approximately \$27.5 million in Harbour Island's future.

To the my MP, North and the people of Harbour Island, this Administration is working for you and investing in infrastructure that matches the growth and importance of your community.

Again Madam Speaker,

In Governor's Harbour, progress continues on several critical government facilities. Design and development work has advanced on the Administration Complex, a proposed \$18 million redevelopment that will modernize government operations and improve public access to services. Additionally, significant upgrades are planned for Ministry of Works facilities in North and

Central Eleuthera, ensuring that public officers have the resources and work environments necessary to serve residents effectively.

These investments are not simply about buildings. They are about delivering better government services to the people of Eleuthera.

Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) Are Central to Infrastructure Delivery

Madam Speaker,

This Administration has moved beyond the traditional model of waiting for Government alone to fund every project. Through innovative Public Private Partnerships (PPP), we are accelerating development across the country.

Madam Speaker,

As a low-lying archipelagic nation, climate resilience is no longer a future consideration. It is a present necessity and this Administration understands that protecting our environment and protecting our infrastructure must go hand in hand.

Through the IDB-funded Climate Resilient Coastal Management and Infrastructure Programme, important environmental restoration projects are now underway that will strengthen ecosystems, improve water flow, reduce flood risks and enhance resilience throughout our islands.

In East Grand Bahama, the successful restoration of West Gap Creek has re-established critical tidal exchanges between the ocean, mangrove systems and inland ecosystems.

This project has improved water quality, restored important marine habitats, strengthened fisheries and enhanced the resilience of surrounding communities. More importantly, it demonstrates how environmental restoration can directly support economic activity, tourism and community well-being.

Building upon that success, works are expected to commence by end of year on the McLean's Town Causeway and Infrastructure Project. This initiative will include a new reinforced concrete culvert system, drainage improvements, roadway embankments and other works designed to improve water movement, strengthen infrastructure resilience and protect surrounding communities from future climate-related impacts.

Seawalls

Madam Speaker,

As climate change continues to impact vulnerable coastal communities, this Administration remains committed to investing in resilient infrastructure that protects lives, homes and public assets.

In Mangrove Cay, Andros, construction is scheduled to commence on the Burnt Rock Seawall Project, a major coastal protection initiative valued at more than \$4.1 million. This project will protect the adjacent roadway, reduce flooding risks and provide long-term resilience against storm surge and sea level rise.

Similarly, plans are advancing for the reconstruction of the seawall system in High Rock, Grand Bahama. Following the devastation caused by Hurricane Dorian, this project will restore critical coastal protection infrastructure while incorporating drainage improvements, roadway reconstruction, sidewalks and beautification features designed to strengthen and revitalize the community.

These projects reflect a fundamental reality: we are not simply rebuilding what existed before. We are building stronger, safer and more resilient communities capable of withstanding future storms and climate challenges.

Building Bridges to the Future

Madam Speaker,

Few projects symbolize this Administration's commitment to execution more clearly than the Glass Window Bridge.

For decades, Bahamians spoke about the need for a permanent solution at one of the most iconic and vulnerable transportation links in our country. Studies were commissioned. Reports were prepared. Recommendations were made.

This Administration moved beyond study and into construction.

I am pleased to report that the procurement process for the new Glass Window Bridge has now been successfully concluded, with Island Site Development Ltd identified as the preferred contractor following a comprehensive technical and commercial evaluation process.

The recommended contract award is valued at approximately \$71.7 million, supported by a contingency allowance of \$7.17 million.

I would like to reiterate this encompasses a new dock in Hatchet Bay, a temporary bridge and a full touristic element at GWB.

Madam Speaker,

This project is now advancing toward financial close, which is anticipated within the next two to three months. In the meantime, advance works are already being mobilized, including geotechnical investigations at the proposed pier locations to maintain project momentum and accelerate delivery.

For years the Glass Window Bridge represented a discussion. Today, it represents an active construction programme.

Once completed, the bridge will stand higher, stronger and safer than the existing crossing, significantly reducing weather-related disruptions and improving connectivity between North and South Eleuthera.

For the people of Eleuthera, this is not simply a bridge. It is a lifeline and an economic corridor. It is a promise that is finally becoming reality.

Madam Speaker,

The Bridge Authority, also a part of the Ministry of Works and Family Island Affairs, is working to complete structural assessments on critical bridge infrastructure throughout The Bahamas, including priority bridges in Eleuthera, Andros, Exuma and New Providence. These assessments are helping to guide a comprehensive programme of bridge rehabilitation and replacement nationwide.

Looking ahead, this Administration is advancing plans for seven new bridge replacement projects throughout the Family Islands. This multi-million-dollar bridge replacement programme, significant capital investments, will improve transportation safety, strengthen economic connectivity, support tourism development and enhance resilience for generations to come. (ANNEX 17)

Madam Speaker,

From Glass Window Bridge to Ferry Bridge, from Fresh Creek to Stafford Creek, this Administration continues to build the connections that keep our islands moving forward.

Because when we build bridges, we do more than connect land. We connect people and opportunity. But more importantly, we connect the future of The Bahamas. And through this Budget, we continue building those connections for generations to come.

Structural Engineering Section

Ports, Docks and Maritime Infrastructure

Madam Speaker,

For an archipelagic nation such as ours, maritime infrastructure is not a luxury, it is a necessity.

Our docks, seawalls and bridges are the lifelines that connect communities, support fishermen, facilitate commerce and strengthen local economies.

This Budget continues the Davis Administration's commitment to ensuring that Family Island communities have safe, resilient and modern maritime infrastructure capable of supporting future generations.

In Moore's Island, Abaco, construction continues on the rehabilitation and replacement of critical dock infrastructure, including the main mailboat dock

and fishing facilities in Hard Bargain and The Bight. This transformative project, being executed by Newbold Construction at a cost of more than \$8 million, is now approximately 65 percent complete and will provide safer access for residents, fishermen and commercial operators alike.

Abaco, I want you to know that this Administration has not forgotten you. We are rebuilding critical infrastructure that will serve your community for decades to come. The Member for Central and South Abaco will elaborate on some of these projects and plans.

Madam Speaker,

In Green Turtle Cay, works are now underway on the refurbishment of the Government Dock through a contract valued at \$3.39 million. This project will significantly improve cargo handling capacity, strengthen marine safety and support economic activity throughout the cay. The works are expected to be completed during the fourth quarter of 2026.

In Black Point, Exuma, construction is progressing on a major \$6.04 million dock redevelopment project being undertaken by Bahamas Marine Construction Company Limited. Once completed, the new facility will include

expanded docking facilities, a fishermen's dock, a new boat ramp and improved landside infrastructure to better serve residents, visitors and commercial operators. Completion is anticipated during the fourth quarter of 2026.

Madam Speaker,

As a son of Eleuthera, I am particularly proud of the transformation taking place across my home island.

Over the past year, we have commenced major dock infrastructure projects in Spanish Wells and secured materials to begin the reconstruction of the dock in Harbour Island; investments that are improving marine access, supporting local businesses, strengthening the fishing industry and enhancing the visitor experience.

These projects represent our commitment to ensuring that Family Island communities receive the same level of infrastructure attention and investment as any other part of The Bahamas.

The breakaway dock at James Cistern is completed; and at the beginning of May, in Tarpum Bay, we officially opened a part of the dock there and works are well advanced to completing this \$1.66 million investment that will provide

improved docking facilities, fish-cleaning stations, enhanced public amenities and additional coastal protection through the planned construction of a breakwater. Upon completion, this facility will stand as one of the most modern fishing and community dock facilities in South Eleuthera. This is the largest capital investment in Tarpum Bay in many years and a true game changer for the fishermen and residents of South Eleuthera.

Madam Speaker,

In North Andros, I am pleased to report that the extensive dock refurbishment programme for Nicholls Town, Red Bays, Lowe Sound, Conch Sound and Mastic Point has been successfully completed at a cost of approximately \$5.8 million.

These docks are critical economic and social lifelines for residents, fishermen and small businesses throughout North Andros. Beyond the reconstruction of the docks themselves, the project included upgraded marine lighting, dredging works, gazebos for residents and visitors, and the construction of protective seawalls to safeguard nearby road infrastructure from future storm damage and coastal erosion.

We said we would do it. We funded it. We built it. Progress!

Madam Speaker,

This Budget also positions us for the future.

During this fiscal year, major new maritime projects will commence in Bullocks Harbour, Berry Islands; Palmetto Point, Gregory Town and Harbour Island, Eleuthera; Sweetings Cay, Grand Bahama; Cockburn Town, San Salvador; Crooked Island; Ragged Island and throughout Abaco. These investments represent tens of millions of dollars in new infrastructure works that will improve connectivity, support economic growth and strengthen climate resilience throughout our archipelago.

We've completed projects. We're building projects. And we're launching new projects.

Madam Speaker,

As I reflect on the projects and initiatives outlined so far, a common thread emerges. Whether it is modernizing government through digital transformation, expanding airport infrastructure, strengthening climate resilience, constructing bridges, rehabilitating docks, investing in healthcare

facilities, or building modern public buildings throughout our archipelago, The investments we are making today will create safer communities, stronger economies, more efficient public services and greater opportunities for future generations. They demonstrate that this Administration understands that infrastructure is not an end in itself, it is a tool that unlocks economic growth, improves quality of life and strengthens national development.

Madam Speaker,

From Grand Bahama in the north to Inagua in the south, from our largest populated islands to our smallest settlements, this Administration continues to build on progress. We are ensuring that no island is left behind, no community is overlooked and no Bahamian is forgotten.

And while much has been accomplished, there is still more work to do.

Madam Speaker,

I now turn to Family Island Affairs -The Department of Local Government, who this year, is celebrating 30 years of Local Governance in the Commonwealth of The Bahamas. This year we Celebrate under the theme “Local Voices National Progress – Stronger Together”. Since it’s inception, Local Government has empowered family island communities by amplifying local voices, preserving cultural identity, and fostering sustainable development that contributes to national growth and unity. In observation of this 30th Anniversary of the Department of Local Government, I take this opportunity to honor the visionaries, administrators, council members and public servants whose dedication has strengthened local governance and improved the quality of life throughout the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Madam Speaker,

That department of local government Continues to make strides in its efforts to ensure that it meets the mandate to provide every resident in every family island with the highest quality of services. The department boasts of being the only agency in the central government that plays an integral role in the operation of every other agency and department.

Madam Speaker, my ministry has received cabinet approval and has commenced an aggressive push for the regularization of 116 staff members across the length and breadth of the Commonwealth from temporary and contractual employment to permanent and pensionable employees of the government. Additionally, the same is being conducted for 14 qualified family administrators currently engaged on a contractual service. As mandated in the Local Government Act, The Department made an aggressive push to bring training to the Family Island, in order to standardize accounting operations and enhance proficiency.

Additionally Madam Speaker,

The amendments to the local government act demanded a revision of the local government manual of procedures. A Select Committee headed by consultant A.E. Williams Was engaged to undertake the revisions, I am pleased to announce that this exercise has already been completed and in short order the new local government manual of procedures will be ready and available for distribution.

Madam Speaker,

Junior Local Government is not merely a program; it is an investment in the future leadership of the Family Islands and, ultimately, the future of our nation. It serves as an incubator where young Bahamians are introduced to the principles of service, civic responsibility, and community engagement. It is where tomorrow's Chief Councillors, Members of Parliament, entrepreneurs, educators, and community advocates begin to discover their purpose and develop the skills necessary to lead.

The Department remains steadfast in its commitment to cultivating generational leadership through this transformative initiative. This year, we expanded the program to include five additional schools, bringing total participation to forty-seven schools across The Bahamas. Among these new additions is The Beacon School in Grand Bahama, ensuring that students with special needs are also afforded the opportunity to develop their leadership potential, contribute to their communities, and have their voices heard. This expansion reflects our belief that leadership knows no boundaries and that every child, regardless of circumstance, deserves the opportunity to shape the future of our country.

What is most inspiring, Madam Speaker, is that these young leaders are not waiting for tomorrow to make a difference—they are making an impact today.

Across our islands, Junior Councillors are actively engaged in community outreach initiatives, supporting senior citizens, establishing backyard farming projects that help supply food to their communities, creating peer mentorship and tutoring programs, and undertaking infrastructure improvements within their schools.

These projects may seem modest in scale, but they represent something far greater. They demonstrate compassion, innovation, responsibility, and a commitment to service. They reveal a generation that understands that leadership is not about titles or positions; it is about action and the willingness to improve the lives of others.

Madam Speaker,

Behind every functioning local government district is a dedicated Family Island Administrator who often leaves the comfort of home and family behind to serve communities across our archipelago. These public servants are called upon to relocate from island to island, adapting to unfamiliar environments and making personal sacrifices in order to ensure that government services remain accessible to the people they serve.

Madam Speaker,

My Ministry has identified a number of Local Government districts where administrative offices and government residences have deteriorated significantly and are now in urgent need of renovation, rehabilitation, or complete reconstruction. These buildings are more than physical structures; they are the places where critical decisions are made, community concerns are addressed, and public services are delivered to Bahamian families every day.

To address these challenges, the engineering team within the Ministry of Works will undertake comprehensive assessments of these facilities to determine the scope of work required. During this budget period, we are committed to advancing these improvements so that our administrators are equipped with the resources and environment they need to effectively serve our communities.

Madam Speaker,

For the 2026–2027 fiscal year, every single council in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, all 33 districts, on every single island will receive an increase in their budget allocation. This will ultimately have been allocated to Family Island District Councils, reflecting the enhanced stipends for Councillors,

Town Committee Members, and Statutory Board Members as provided under the Local Government Act, 2024. In less than 5 years, this PLP administration has increased the budget allocation, not once but twice for Local Councils. The last time a council budget received an allocation change, I sat on the local government board, when the then FNM cut the budget for local councils.

Madam Speaker,

As we continue to modernize the delivery of government services, the Ministry remains committed to leveraging technology to make government more accessible, responsive, and efficient for all Bahamians. A key component of this effort is the establishment of Help Desks across our Local Government districts. These Help Desks will serve as vital information hubs, assisting residents and visitors alike in navigating government services, accessing applications, understanding procedures, and obtaining timely and accurate information. By bringing information closer to the people and embracing more technology-driven solutions, we are reducing barriers, improving customer service, and ensuring that individuals can access the support they need without unnecessary delays. This initiative represents another step toward building a

more connected, modern, and citizen-focused public service throughout the Family Islands.

Closing

Madam Speaker,

As I conclude my contribution, I am reminded that budgets are ultimately about choices and might I add, I am glad the Bahamian people made the right choice.

Choices about the future we want to build for our people, about what we prioritize and choices about where we invest.

Since 2021, this Administration has made a deliberate choice to invest in the Bahamian people.

We ushered in a New Day.

We challenged the Status Quo.

We expanded opportunities Island by Island.

And today, we continue building on that progress.

The story of this Budget is not written in speeches. And if ya know me, and like Bishop Williams said yesterday, less talk and more action!

Madam Speaker, I encourage every Bahamian to look beyond the rhetoric and look at the results.

Progress you can see in the roads being paved; airports being transformed; docks being rebuilt; bridges moving from concept to construction.

Progress in the clinics being modernized; the schools, government buildings and public facilities taking shape across our nation; in communities that are seeing investment after decades of waiting.

Progress in the opportunities being created for Bahamian contractors, engineers, tradesmen, entrepreneurs and workers.

From Abaco to Inagua.

From Bimini to Mayaguana.

From Andros to Eleuthera.

The message is clear:

No island is too small.

No settlement is too remote.

No Bahamian is forgotten.

That is precisely what this Budget seeks to accomplish.

Because progress is not a slogan.

Progress is an airport that connects an island to opportunity, a bridge that keeps communities connected.

Progress is a clinic that provides care closer to home. Progress is a government that delivers on its promises.

Madam Speaker,

This Budget is not about where we have been but where we are going. Building a stronger economy with stronger communities; a stronger Bahamas.

Look at the projects under construction.

Look at the investments being made.

Look at the opportunities being created.

Look at the progress being delivered.

Because the evidence is all around us.

Madam Speaker,

This is a Budget that Builds on Progress.

A Budget that invests in people.

A Budget that strengthens communities.

A Budget that prepares our nation for the future.

And a Budget that continues the important work of ensuring that progress reaches every island, every settlement and every Bahamian.

May God continue to bless the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, and on behalf of the people of Central & South Eleuthera wholeheartedly support this 2026 - 2027 **Budget That Builds On Progress.**