



CONTRIBUTION TO PARLIAMENT

BY

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**DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND
MINISTER OF TOURISM, INVESTMENTS & AVIATION
AND MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR THE EXUMAS
AND RAGGED ISLAND**

2025/2026 BUDGET

THURSDAY, JUNE 12, 2025

Mr. Deputy,

It is a profound honor to rise in this Honorable House to make my contribution to the 2025/2026 Budget Debate on behalf of the people Ragged Island and the more than 365 islands in the Exumas and, whom I am grateful to represent for the second consecutive term.

Mr. Deputy,

God has been exceedingly good to us in the past four years, and I am extremely grateful to Him for his mercy and grace.

When I say “us”, Mr. Deputy, I do not speak solely to the Progressive Liberal Party or the members of this House or those of us who have seen better times after a period of prolonged darkness in the wake of Hurricane Dorian and the COVID-19 pandemic and the collective national horror that was the Minnis administration and the competent authority.

While there are far too many who still struggle, we have seen continued economic growth and increasing fiscal stability.

Our government finances are better than ever as we have backed away from the fiscal cliff with upward growth projections and an improved economic outlook.

But we have been most fortunate in that our Creator has continued to bestow among us the gift of life, with which we can continue to work and worship and make wonders of the tools God has given us.

And to that I say thank you.

Before I get into the meat of my budget presentation, let me first say that as the prime minister rightly pointed out, there have been a lot of politricks coming from the other side during this budget debate.

Of course, that should be no shocker considering that the leader of the opposition coined the phrase in his book “Politricks” in 2003, and 20 years later, he appears to have dusted off the playbook to define his own leadership.

It’s not working, mind you. The people see through it, mind you. But there is no doubt he has studied the playbook and is unsuccessfully running the plays.

It is actually somewhat shocking to me the shallowness and petulance with which they have approached this debate.

They are off to a bad start.

Petulant, Mr. Deputy, almost, childishly rude and impatient in their responses; unable to hold themselves together to respond cogently and at the appropriate time. I believe the book “Politricks” talked about this too co-incidentally.

During the prime minister's opening of this budget debate, he was interrupted repeatedly, petulantly, by members of the opposition on supposed points of order that had no point at all.

Then when the speaker admonished you to let the member for Cat Island, Rum Cay and San Salvador talk, the member for Marco City snapped from his chair, "We will not be silenced."

But here's the thing, Marco City, no one is trying to silence you. We only want you to abide by the rules.

I haven't had the time to read Marco City's now infamous book, but I wonder if there is a chapter in there where you abide by the rules that you promised to play by.

Or is it all just politricks no matter the place or the oath you take?

No matter what politricks you aim to play, the rules of this place still apply. If you don't want to follow them, you all know what to do.

Speaking of politricks, the member for East GB appears to be a quick study.

East GB, I want to remind this House, is a former Minister of State for Finance.

He sits in the seat of a former minister of finance who resigned under the competent authority, but we don't need to get into all of that today.

However, I contend that East GB last week misled parliament when he said there was a surplus previously.

He laid a document trying to prove it and that was quickly disproved – by the very document he laid.

The opposition plays politricks, Mr. Deputy, but they seem to never learn that governance is serious business.

I also recall that the member for East GB said VAT reduction from 12 percent to 10 percent would result in over a 100 million reduction in VAT receipts.

That wasn't true either, Madam Deputy.

VAT collection grew in the 2022-2023 fiscal cycle to \$871 million and is projected in this upcoming fiscal cycle to grow to \$1.2 billion.

We told them that we would grow the economy and grow tax revenues and that is what we did.

Mr. Deputy, as it pertains this budget, let me first express my deepest gratitude to the Prime Minister, the Honourable Philip Edward "Brave" Davis, for his steadfast leadership, vision, and deep commitment to the people of this country.

I also extend heartfelt thanks to the people of Exuma and Ragged Island, whose enduring trust, support, and partnership continue to inspire and ground me in this important work.

It is because of them that I serve with passion and resolve, and I reaffirm my commitment to being a relentless advocate for their progress and prosperity.

I thank my wife and children for their sacrifices and support.

Mr. Deputy,

As I rise in support of this budget, I cannot do so without acknowledging the extraordinary work of my colleagues seated throughout this chamber and the other place – men and women who have shouldered the weight of the people's business with discipline, innovation, and resolve.

As I just indicated, the Member for Cat Island, Rum Cay and San Salvador, our prime minister and minister of finance, has led this administration with vision and purpose, navigating us through post-pandemic turbulence, economic shocks, and climate threats – all while holding firm to the promise of expanding opportunity, one island at a time.

His stewardship of this economy has resulted in growth across multiple sectors and a resounding vote of confidence from international financial agencies.

And not to put too fine a point on it, but above being a leader, he is a man who cares.

He cares whether children have breakfast before schools, he cares whether our elderly can live lives of dignity, he cares about protecting the vulnerable among us, the rights of women and children and he cares about equality and fairness, through the lens of race, gender, age and religion.

And compassion as a human is where great leadership begins.

And he hasn't done it alone. The Member for Tall Pines has moved the needle in health and wellness.

Under his leadership, we've seen significant investment in healthcare infrastructure, including the procurement of ambulances and medical vehicles for underserved islands, the modernization of facilities, and a renewed focus on mental health and community wellness, longevity and regenerative medicine.

The Member for South and Central Eleuthera, our Minister of Works, has had boots on the ground daily.

From roadworks to flood mitigation to docks, bridges and the massive infrastructure rollout across New Providence and the Family Islands, the work has been relentless, the pace breathtaking, and the impact undeniable.

The Member for Englerston has been a force unto her own, ensuring our students are better fed, with \$1 million spent on making sure they get free breakfast; making sure they are safer with new security measure she outlined, and that our educational system moves toward modernity with technological integration and renewed support for educators.

The Members for Carmichael and Marathon have worked hand in hand with communities to relaunch Urban Renewal and to revitalize housing programs, particularly through the Department of Housing's push to expand homeownership in growing constituencies like Carmichael and Southern New Providence, and the creative push for rent to own.

The Member for Golden Gates has delivered consistent results in labor and public service reform, advocating for fairness, training, and modernization in the public sector – ensuring our people get the service they deserve from the state, and managing harmonious relationships with the labor movement – despite a little noise in the market by some.

The Member for Pineridge has revitalized Grand Bahama's investment outlook, facilitating major projects, embracing the prospects of Africa, improving investor confidence, and delivering a roadmap for economic resurgence that's already bearing fruit with, among others, the beautiful Grand Bahama Programme, collaboration with local leaders and entrepreneurs, community empowerment and government grants.

The Member for Fox Hill has worked diligently in the area of foreign affairs, ensuring our diplomacy matches our ambition on the global stage, re-establishing our place in the world.

And he has been a fierce defender of the PLP against the nonsense of the opposition at every turn.

And let me not forget the Member for Pinewood, whose oversight in social services has translated into real, felt relief for Bahamians navigating the hardest seasons of life – ensuring the safety net holds strong and the ladder of opportunity is still within reach.

The member for Pinewood has also committed to bring relief to the people of Pinewood and the dangerous flooding that has taken place for more than a generation.

And the list goes on. I could talk about Freetown and the fight against crime.

I could talk about Garden Hills, who oversees myriad programs that have helped uplift our youth and put them on a path to a promising future.

I could talk about our attorney general and the heavy lifting he has done with tax fairness, and widespread legislative reform that he has made look effortless but has been one hell of a task he has risen to.

I could talk about Elizabeth and her steady work in energy reform.

I could talk about the member for Centerville and the transformative work in agriculture and food security.

I could talk about Fort Charlotte keeping our borders safe from illegal irregular migration or Golden Isles or Yamacraw for supporting the Prime Minister's work in climate advocacy and resilience.

I could go on and on, but we would be here all day.

I shout out to my colleagues to show that we are about results; we are about governance, and we are about teamwork. Whether you are a chairman a parliamentary secretary or on the back bench, your contributions matter.

These members have not just occupied seats; they have served with purpose.

And together, as a Cabinet, as a government, we have advanced a transformative agenda that puts Bahamians first, spreads opportunity more equitably, and sets the stage for continued national progress.

Mr. Deputy, nearly four years ago, the Bahamian people gave us a mandate to move this country forward.

Since then, we haven't missed a beat.

Not to say that there haven't been missteps, not to say there isn't more to do; but we stayed the course.

Not to say that we have delivered on every commitment, but we do have at least another year left, notwithstanding the politricksters opposite standing firm in their delusion about an early election.

Boy, I have never seen a crew so eager for a beatdown, but here we are.

Every budget cycle under this administration has been about forward momentum.

We have stayed focused.

We have delivered on promises.

And we have built a better Bahamas – one island, one community, one Bahamian at a time.

Today, I speak to this House on behalf of a sector that has been, and remains, the cornerstone of that progress – tourism.

Not to be cliché, but to be perfectly real, or to keep it 100, as the kids say, tourism is the lifeblood of our economy.

It is the driver of nearly every other industry and the engine that powers the dreams of thousands of Bahamians from every walk of life.

When we talk about national revenue growth, about surging GDP figures, and about rising employment numbers, we are fundamentally talking about the growth of our tourism sector.

In 2024, we achieved historic highs in tourism, with record-setting arrivals, record-setting revenue, and record-setting optimism.

We ended 2024 with over 9 million cruise visitors and a total of over 11 million visitors to our shores.

We are growing visitor spend. We are strengthening our partnership with the cruise lines, and we are resolutely focused on growing stopovers.

For our part, these record setting numbers were the result of targeted marketing, strategic partnerships, robust policy, and the tireless work of our teams across the Ministry of Tourism, Investments & Aviation.

And I hear all the arm-chair pundits talking about diversifying away from tourism. We must actively seek to build around tourism, respect it and continue to build it and benefit from it. I am confident that tourism will continue to be the leading industry for The Bahamas during our lifetime.

Yes, we have more work to do, but our people are feeling it. Guests are staying longer and spending more and returning. This is not luck. It is the result of strategies that are unapologetically creating opportunities for Bahamians.

And to all those teams and industry partners and many more, I say thank you.

Mr. Deputy,

When we speak of a rebound in our tourism sector, we speak not in generalities or hopeful predictions – we speak in numbers, in facts, and in year-over-year growth that reflects strong strategic execution across markets.

From January to April of this year, foreign air and sea arrivals to The Bahamas reached 4,372,642, a significant increase over the 3,914,883 recorded for the same period in 2024. This represents a year-over-year growth of 11.7 percent and, even more strikingly, a 64.9

percent increase when compared to the same period in 2019, our last full pre-pandemic year.

Let's examine this growth in detail.

Nassau and Paradise Island – our flagship destination – saw total arrivals grow from 1,870,438 in 2024 to 2,059,987 this year.

That's an increase of 10.1 percent year-over-year and 26.4 percent compared to 2019.

Importantly, Nassau/Paradise Island welcomed over 493,000 air arrivals from January to April 2025, compared to 503,461 in the same period last year — a slight decrease— yet still up 9.1 percent from the 2019 figure of 498,252.

This modest dip in air-only arrivals to Nassau/Paradise Island is because of headwinds I will explain as well as constrained room capacity as noted by the Central Bank in its latest economic developments release.

Grand Bahama remains the fastest growing island with air arrivals up 14.5 percent, and we are confident that the opening of Celebration Key in Freeport next month will send sea arrivals skyrocketing.

Abaco has rebounded remarkably well, registering 172,792 arrivals this year, up 7 percent from 2024 and 48.3 percent over 2019. Abaco's air arrivals have grown 13.7 percent year over year, second only to Grand Bahama.

This steady upward trend speaks to the growing appeal of our Family Island experiences and our deliberate push to diversify tourism driving traffic to all of our 16-island destinations.

Bimini, which began accelerating cruise visitors only recently in 2022, saw a massive 29.7 percent increase in total arrivals this year. That's an extraordinary 152.1 percent increase from 2019.

While air arrivals to Bimini declined by 11.5 percent this year, this is largely a reflection of construction during the survey period for the new airport and the temporary cruise berth adjustments. We are anticipating announcing new int'l airlift here soon.

Sea arrivals are clearly compensating for this dip and reaffirming Bimini's place as a growing hot spot for leisure tourism.

Eleuthera showed a major increase of 55.7 percent in arrivals from last year and 59.2 percent from 2019.

And the only thing holding Eleuthera back any further is room space.

Interest is extremely high, but room capacity remains a challenge that is currently being addressed with the development of many new properties.

Exuma, which was at its peak in 2024, experienced about a 10 percent dip in arrivals over the first four months of this year, which we attribute to the redevelopment of the Sandals Resort into a larger, more family friendly Beaches Resort this year that will accommodate more guests and further bolster Exuma's economy.

Smaller popular islands like Cat Island, Long Island and San Salvador are also worth noting. San Salvador saw a small but meaningful 4.2 percent increase from last year.

Many islands, supported by our Family Island airlift expansion, are being positioned for steady, sustainable tourism growth.

In total, The Bahamas received 660,268 foreign air arrivals from January to April 2025, compared to 662,815 during the same period last year — a fractional decline of 0.4 percent, but up 1.0 percent from 2019. The broader picture, however, is one of success: we have achieved record-breaking levels in total foreign arrivals. That's the real headline.

Mr. Deputy, these numbers are not coincidental. They are the result of deliberate strategy — expanding airlift, strengthening our tourism brand globally, diversifying our offerings,

investing in infrastructure, and supporting our people. And while there is still work to do in some islands, the momentum is undeniable.

The Bahamas is not just back – it is booming.

Notwithstanding our success and our regional leadership in tourism we cannot rest on our laurels. There are challenges that we will face in the coming months, that I will speak to now.

These challenges include softening in the tourism travel markets and forward bookings bear this out.

Much of this can be attributed to geopolitical issues triggered by the policies of our northern neighbors, including policies on travel bans and advisories that will disrupt travel.

Taxes and tariffs beyond our control will likely drive up cost of living and precipitate uncertainty.

Much stricter and changing immigration laws will affect Caribbean nationals, who may face challenges when traveling to or living in the United States that will cause them to stay put.

The possibility of a US recession in the second half of 2025 is also another serious factor we must stay alert about.

Many international research firms like JP Morgan and Goldman Sachs say it's as high as a 45 percent chance there will be a recession.

This outlook is supported by first quarter data of an overall slowdown in the economy of the US, negative GDP growth in the first quarter, and declining consumer sentiment.

Whether it materializes or not, this forecast alone will impact many would be travelers who are likely to take a cautious approach to travel.

The point is that uncertainty shortens booking windows, makes the business less predictable.

Notwithstanding, our proximity gives us a decided comparative advantage for last minute impulsive travel.

We have a strong brand, multiple destinations within The Bahamas and all the natural attributes that we boast.

Our strategies have a short-term reactive component but is also very long term focused. We will continue to have strategic focused marketing.

Mr. Deputy, for the first time since Independence, we are projecting a budget surplus.

This, despite having lowered VAT overall.

This, despite increasing exemptions for construction and first-time real estate sales for new homeowners.

This, despite lowering the tax threshold for many real estate transactions, and many more fiscal measures.

We have delivered for the Bahamian people in ways those opposite could not dream of.

And let me tell you, they are apoplectic about it.

That's a big word, so let me drill it down – when they hear good news about this administration, when they hear good news for the Bahamian people, they get upset, enraged, angry even.

The IMF report is good, but the FNM upset.

The Moody's report is good, but the FNM upset.

The S&P report is good, but the FNM upset.

The Central Bank report is good, but the FNM upset.

The report from the Bahamas National Statistics Institute is good, but the FNM upset.

The country projects a balanced budget with a surplus – not the just the PLP mind you, the country, this is the national budget – the county forecasts a surplus, but the FNM is upset.

Infrastructure work is going on in most islands, but the FNM upset.

We have 50 plus industrial agreements signed bringing more money to workers, but the FNM upset.

Civil servants getting a pay raise, the FNM upset.

Minimum wage increases, the FNM upset.

When the Caribbean Journal said we were Tourism Destination of the year and had Minister of the Year, the FNM was upset. They said we were lucky.

Everything good for the country seems to upset the FNM.

Why is that? What's that about?

Why is it when we hear good news for the country, the leader of the opposition seems to question the veracity of what independent agencies verify, and people can see with their own eyes?

Now, some of us a little touchy in this place, so I won't talk about people's jobs. But one thing for sure is that some people on the other side in here are still professional actors – a noble profession, I might add.

Acting like they understand the big picture; acting like they care for the people of Grand Bahama when really what they hoping for is that we're not successful in delivering for them.

They act like they understand the rules of Parliament but violate them at almost every turn when Parliament meets.

They act like there's no strife within their party and that all its members are pleased with the current leadership, but they know that that's not so.

They act like they have a vision, but they blind to what is needed to move this country forward.

But for all their presence on the stage, I can tell when they are not acting.

They don't have the skill to mask when they don't like good news for Bahamians.

They like the nosey neighbor who see you struggling to get your new refrigerator inside; they peek through the blinds but never come out to help.

We are building brand new homes and giving out keys and they don't like it.

We're building new hospitals, and they don't like it.

We're building new airports, and they don't like it.

We're building new schools, and they don't like it.

We're building roads, bridges and putting in new infrastructure throughout The Bahamas and they don't like it.

We just signed a big deal in Grand Bahama Island, and they don't like it.

We're going to have a beautiful development at Grand Lucayan – first-class, along with the redevelopment of Port Lucaya and the airport coming too, and they don't like it.

You would think they would be happy for Grand Bahama – especially having three out of the five seats in the House of Assembly, but they're not.

All they cast is doubt and aspersions – they just don't like it.

They had five MPs and did very little, so we have taken away their excuses for poor performance and showed them that two is greater than 5 – and they definitely don't like it.

We're about action – not talk, and they don't like it.

We're about delivery – not distraction, and they don't like it.

We tabled land reform bills that will represent the biggest generational shift in landownership in this country in modern times.

We are about empowering Bahamians to own, to build, to prosper – and they don't like it.

We're pushing forward with energy reform, tax fairness, investments in tourism, education, and national development, and they don't like it.

But let me tell you something: like it or not, we're going to keep delivering until the last nail knock.

So, you might as well stop peeking through the blinds and come outside and help.

We will continue to work until the final bell rings.

Because the PLP does not believe in unfinished business. We believe in finishing strong – finishing the job.

Yes, Mr. Deputy, our critics in the opposition have questioned our progress at every turn.

But let me tell you this, the PLP is nowhere near finished.

Wait until you see what we have in store for this next term.

Back to tourism.

Mr. Deputy, our tourism product in The Bahamas is not just about numbers, it's how we transform those numbers into prosperity.

It's about innovation and evolution, and people.

It is about creating a future in which Bahamians own more, lead more, and benefit more.

It is about taking the guests "Beyond the Beach" and beyond Nassau/Paradise Island to explore Culture, Heritage and Religious Tourism. Sports, Meetings, Conventions, Adventure, Eco-Tourism Space Tourism and TechTourism.

That is why we are driving technological innovation through Smart City initiatives and the launch of a Digital Landing Card.

This is a major milestone, which brings together both Customs and Immigration in a single digital platform, is designed to modernize and streamline the entry experience for Bahamians and international visitors alike, while also strengthening national security, improving data intelligence, and enabling greater inter-agency coordination.

We also look forward to the powerful marketing and visitor intelligence this platform will generate, offering real-time insights into traveler demographics, source markets, and travel patterns. This will significantly enhance our ability to improve tourism stopovers, fine-tune promotional strategies, and strengthen our understanding of visitor arrivals across all 16 islands of The Bahamas; improving visitor spend Island by Island.

I am pleased to advise that Cabinet has approved its launch, and we will be implementing expeditiously.

The Innovate242 initiative, and Incubation Centers will serve as hubs for entrepreneurial growth and TechTourism.

We're deploying Google Street View mapping of The Bahamas' roads to increase global visibility and help tourists and locals navigate our beautiful islands with ease.

Through the Nassau Smart City WiFi Project, we have delivered free public WiFi downtown, empowering small businesses and enabling greater visitor engagement.

In addition, our AI-powered digital marketing campaigns are driving unprecedented traffic to Bahamas.com, and new content enhancements are bringing our eco-tourism and sustainable travel initiatives to the forefront.

The improved chat and itinerary builder on our tourism websites are transforming the way potential visitors plan trips to our islands.

We have introduced personalized email marketing powered by a new platform and a first-party data strategy that is improving conversion and long-term tourism growth.

Our Bahamas Digital Edge Webinar Series and national digital literacy training sessions are upskilling hundreds of stakeholders.

The Women in Tech series, in collaboration with the Canadian High Commission, is fostering greater inclusion and innovation in the tourism tech space.

The rollout of our Tourism Learning Management System (LMS), powered by AI, will soon become the gold standard for on-demand, on-island hospitality education and certification.

At the heart of this transformation is the redeveloped Tourism Development Corporation. This is one of the most revolutionary initiatives in the history of tourism in The Bahamas.

The TDC is a hands-on, results-driven engine of empowerment.

Since 2023, we have engaged hundreds of new entrepreneurs in Abaco, Bimini, Exuma, Grand Bahama, and New Providence across the eight major sectors of tourism. We are rolling out to Eleuthera this month and to Cat Island and Andros by July.

It gives me great pride to stand before you today and reflect on the remarkable work we have done to empower Bahamians through our many tourism-focused development initiatives.

Our commitment to micro, small, and medium-sized enterprise development is equally evident in our monthly webinars, which have focused on knowledge growth and tech support as well as a focus on education and upskilling.

Yes, a steady stream of knowledge-sharing, skill-building, business planning, and international certifications, all tailored to help our people thrive in tourism and related industries.

In six cohorts so far, we've trained and certified 372 lifeguards on Exuma, Eleuthera, Grand Bahama, and New Providence, with the seventh cohort scheduled for the end of this month in New Providence.

These efforts not only create jobs but also raise safety standards in our tourism offerings to mitigate risk and create opportunities.

The Hospitality Assured program, managed in conjunction with the Caribbean Tourism Organization and the Hospitality Institute of the United Kingdom, has made The Bahamas the envy of our regional peers.

Another signature program is Home Sweet Home – our grant and vacation rental support initiative. Through this program, we've awarded up to \$1.1 million in funding to Bahamians across 12 islands, enabling them to complete, upgrade, and modernize their vacation properties, which improves average daily rates and can create wealth.

This effort includes hands-on training and the creation of Standard Operating Procedures to raise the quality and competitiveness of our local accommodations.

We also launched our Pilot Incubation Center, a game-changing initiative that has helped 13 Bahamian entrepreneurs move their businesses from home-based setups to physical storefronts.

. The vendors have received support funding for business plan and website and ecommerce development to not just focus on local but also international business.

A new cohort is now being transitioned into the pilot space as we prepare to establish larger centers in Grand Bahama, Exuma, New Providence. In fact, I am proud to tell you that physical construction on the Grand Bahama Incubator at Royal Palm will begin in earnest this week.

In partnership with the Bahamas Development Bank, we introduced the Grant Loan Offering (GLO), which combines \$100,000 in grant funding from the Tourism Development Corporation with technical support focused on financial planning. This program provides our entrepreneurs with the resources and guidance they need to secure sustainable success.

We've also invested in critical linkages to strengthen our tourism product. The Agri-Tourism Council has provided international certifications, supported farm-to-table event upgrades, and funded local farmers through technical support and grant funding.

Similarly, the Creative Tourism Council has energized our Orange economy through mentorship programs, training sessions, festivals, exhibitions, and film productions. We've sponsored and supported these initiatives in meaningful and tangible ways, with additional funding in grants and support going toward the continued development of our nation's creative professionals.

Youth entrepreneurship remains a top priority. Through our Generation Impact program, we've hosted high school entrepreneurship symposiums, sponsored youth product expos, and conducted in-school entrepreneurship courses, all enhanced with BahamaHost training.

And in September, we'll be launching the very first TDC Junior Achievement High School Cohort – a pioneering initiative that will seed the next generation of Bahamian business leaders.

Through our Street Musicians Program, six new street performers now occupy downtown Nassau with the rhythms of rake and scrape and Junkanoo and we are looking for more right now. So, this is a call to the musically inclined to seize these opportunities.

This not only enhances the visitor experience but also supports local musicians in a meaningful way.

In our ongoing effort to beautify downtown Nassau, we've commissioned five talented muralists to transform selected walls along the eastern corridor into vibrant canvases celebrating our heritage, creativity, and national pride.

We are helping Bahamian artists turn public spaces into vibrant expressions of identity and pride – while also creating new economic opportunities in arts and entertainment.

We foreshadow that this will take root and morph into an art district hopefully into one of the side streets where we can have bars, coffee shops and opportunities for artists, artisans and artistic expressions including poets. Yes, we are creating real opportunities for creative artists to thrive.

Additionally, we launched the SPARK Program – a structured grant facilitation effort supporting entrepreneurs in the Blue, Green, and Orange Economies and Space Tourism. Through this program, qualified applicants can apply for up to \$10,000 in grant support for their business expenses.

Together, these programs reflect a deep and enduring commitment to expanding opportunity across the tourism landscape – Island by Island.

They show what is possible when vision is paired with action, when strategy is tied to execution, and when Bahamians are given the support they need to innovate, grow, and succeed.

We are building a more resilient, inclusive, and dynamic tourism economy – one investment, one island, and one Bahamian at a time.

We will continue to use traditional marketing strategies that work as well as digital marketing and AI powered tools.

There is no doubt that given the challenges we will need to spend more to achieve the same result.

I thank the Minister of Finance and my colleagues for their awareness and understanding that we must continue to keep our shoulders to the wheel, and our money working for us.

We have launched new tourism missions in Canada at the end of this month. I returned from a mission to Orlando and Miami 2 hours ago, telling the story of our Lifetime of Islands.

We are actively exploring emerging markets including the Middle East and India.

We are enhancing our overall product and focusing on key niche markets including Digital Nomad programming, medical tourism in partnership with the Ministry of Health, and niche sectors like fly fishing and game fishing and eco-tourism – especially in the Family Islands.

To bolster this strategy, we are making it easy to connect.

We started direct flight service to Farmers Cay and Ragged Island already and we're starting Rum Cay before the end of the month.

Mr. Deputy,

As we continue our work to drive tourism growth and diversify the Bahamian economy, our strategy is rooted in product development and market expansion ensuring that the benefits flow to Bahamians across every island.

The Tourism Development Corporation will continue to use its resources to support targeted initiatives that add value to our tourism offerings and create meaningful opportunities for our people.

We're also enhancing our visitor experience with improved ICON signage, helping to showcase the unique cultural and historic landmarks of our islands with consistent, quality branding and wayfinding. Yes, two down and we will not stop until all 16 island-destinations are done.

Mr. Deputy, we are leaning into medical tourism.

The global market is growing rapidly, and The Bahamas is well-positioned with modern legislation to capitalize.

We've lowered VAT to just 5 percent on stem cell therapies, which supports the development of longevity and regenerative medicine right here at home. We're doing this in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health as we work to establish The Bahamas as a regional hub for cutting-edge care and medical tourism.

We continue to proudly support our regattas, homecomings, and festivals, because we know that culture is not just who we are – it's also a powerful economic engine.

These events drive domestic tourism, support local businesses, and create jobs in every community they touch.

As we strengthen our tourism product, we are also being bold and aggressive in expanding our international airlift — because access drives arrivals, and arrivals drive economic activity.

We have secured new airlift from Toronto, Montreal, Halifax, Calgary, Hamilton and Ottawa, with partners such as Sunwing, Air Canada, WestJet, and another major carrier to be announced shortly.

These additions are critical to unlocking more of the Canadian market and extending the reach of our Family Islands.

We are continuing to ramp up airlift from Florida, using Bahamasair strategically to connect key source markets with our Family Islands and increase frequency during peak periods.

Regrettably, yesterday we saw the collapse of Silver Airways that services many of our islands from cities in Florida. We regret this and that it has caused some inconvenience, however, we have swiftly mobilized Bahamasair that will provide additional flights and more capacity on these routes beginning June 23rd to fill the void. We are also actively engaging our other airlines partners to do likewise.

I'm pleased to report that Makers Air will be providing daily direct service to New Bight, Cat Island, and will be adding a third flight to Long Island. These enhancements are directly tied to our mission-driven marketing efforts and reflect growing demand for our more untouched, authentic island destinations.

As we continue to monitor our competitiveness to sharpen our strategic focus. as we look to our Caribbean counterparts and some of the gains they have had.

A number of our regional neighbors – many of them smaller and traditionally lesser-known tourism destinations – embarked on a deliberate and coordinated campaign to expand their connectivity through increased airlift.

Antigua, St. Lucia, St Martin, Grenada, St. Kitts, Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos – these are so-called “boutique islands”.

We do not concede ground, but to be clear we must continue to sharpen our edge.

The advantage of our product is that we have a market to match of similar size and offering. We will continue to expand connectivity both direct int’l as well as domestic commuter services.

We will be consistent in the message they sent to the marketplace: “We are open, we are safe, we are ready, and we have product worth flying to.” And these efforts are paying off.

What we must do now is meet the moment with coordination, boldness, speed and more financial muscle.

To continue to grow and compete we must continue to target investment in room inventory – particularly in the all-inclusive space.

I have said before we need to double our inventory over the next 5 to 7 years in order to stay in the stop-over game.

I will talk shortly about some of the things that are happening in this space.

The all-inclusive model has evolved. It is no longer just for the budget-conscious traveler.

It is now a fixture in the luxury market, in the family market, in the couples’ market.

Major global brands – Hyatt, Marriott, Hilton – have entered the space in a serious way.

If we are to remain competitive, we must ensure our pipeline of hotel investment includes a healthy mix of boutique, luxury, and all-inclusive offerings.

The future of Bahamian tourism is not one-size-fits-all – it is diverse, adaptive, and shaped by the demands of today’s traveler.

Mr. Deputy, we cannot discuss connectivity without revisiting a model that we in The Bahamas helped to conceptualize – using Nassau as a hub to serve the Family Islands.

We must now expand and re-energize our hub concept throughout the region.

The 16-island destination model is working.

Airlines and our guests find it attractive.

We recently launched our Lifetime Campaign in major cities across the USA emphasizing that “we are not just one island, but we are a lifetime of them”.

It will allow us to maximize airlift efficiency and profitability across several territories as we seek to attract long haul services from Middle East, Asia and Africa

We are accelerating the advancement of our fully integrated, inter-island airlift system – complete with regional interline and code-sharing agreements, carrier partnerships, and Family Island incentives where necessary.

Mr. Deputy, the matter of safety cannot be overlooked.

Many of the boutique islands we compete with have benefitted from the perception – and in many cases the reality – of being safe, tranquil destinations with no or low travel advisories.

Our distribution partners have made it clear: safety is a key selling point.

It gives travelers confidence, especially in a world still recovering from the disruptions of COVID-19 and ongoing geopolitical uncertainty.

The Bahamas must protect and promote its reputation as a safe destination. This is a call to all Bahamians to not disrupt the goose that lays the golden eggs.

One such example is rogue jet-ski operators which resulted in a US advisory specific to this activity.

In response, the government formed a multi-agency task force to support and resource the work of the Port Department.

The TDC has supported this work with the purchase of jet-skis and other equipment to bolster surveillance and build more confidence in this popular activity.

This is only an example of the strategic cross-agency collaboration with law enforcement and MOT to ensure proactive engagement and communication.

Also, we must continue to tell our own story to the international community to ensure accurate, up-to-date representations of the conditions on the ground and the diversity of destinations in our archipelago.

Mr. Deputy, we are not asleep at the wheel.

Our eyes are wide open. Our strategy is aligned. And our commitment is resolute.

What we are calling for today is a strengthened public-private partnership.

The kind of partnership that recognizes that the world is shifting – and that only a unified, consistent, and nimble response will allow us to outpace the competition.

There is no room now for silos. No room for fragmentation.

Our communications, our marketing, our airlift planning, our financial services and investor outreach – these must all be cohesive.

We must speak in one voice to one goal: keeping The Bahamas at the forefront of Caribbean travel.

The roadmap is clear. The challenges are real. But so too is our readiness and our resolve.

We have the tools. We have the team. We have the tenacity. The Bahamas will not just keep pace – we will lead.

Mr. Deputy,

In the vein of continuing to invest in targeted niche markets, both to support the growth in the number of visitors, but also to deepen their relationship with The Bahamas.

One area which has significant, under-explored potential, is tourism relating to the Film and Television industries.

Over the years, we have licensed a number of productions to be filmed here but have been constrained by the lack of physical infrastructure and limited talent pool.

In terms of the physical infrastructure, we lack dedicated Film and Television studios, along with all the ancillary equipment and services which support them.

In terms of the talent pool, despite the high-level interest expressed by those in the creative industries, we do not have in significant numbers, highly trained, highly skilled talent, in the creative, performing and production arts.

Thankfully, with the upcoming opening in September of the new Creative and Performing Arts School of The Bahamas, CAPAS, we will soon have talented Bahamians trained to world-class level, to bolster the ecosystem.

CAPAS has signed a partnership with one of the top 3 Hollywood agencies, the United Talent Agency, not only to support that training, but also to help attract international productions to film in The Bahamas, and to use Bahamian talent in as many cast and crew positions as possible.

In the past, one of the biggest obstacles to productions filming here has been the lack of incentives for filmmakers.

We are one of the few jurisdictions in this space which does not provide concessionary tax arrangements to attract productions.

This has put us at a serious disadvantage and made us non-competitive.

In order to support the CAPAS graduates in finding work, and to build a studio infrastructure here, the time has come to correct this.

I am therefore pleased to inform the House that in the coming months, I will be introducing legislation to provide a framework for tax incentives and duty-free concessions for audio-visual productions.

This opens the door not only to single productions, but also to the prospect of long-running series being shot in The Bahamas.

We wish to be the first country of choice not only for any production which requires a tropical setting, but also which requires talent of the highest order.

The potential benefits to tourism, education and culture cannot be overstated.

Mr. Deputy,

I continue to return to the point that we need more rooms as a part of the long-term growth strategy of stop over visitors.

We have attracted many of the world's top brands like Montage, Six Senses, Park Hyatt, Bvlgari, Rosewood, Ritz Reserve and others which bolsters our reputation as a premier luxury destination.

We also celebrate our authentic Bahamian-owned boutique resorts like Curly's Beach Resort in Bennet's Harbor Cat Island.

Through public and private investments, we are expanding hotel stock on Cable Beach, Downtown Nassau, and we have launched an RFP for a new hotel at the Lynden Pindling International Airport. I am encouraged by the interest that we see with new hotels and residences on Bay Street.

I am further encouraged by the renewed interest of Bahamians investing in the hotel industry.

Our Home Sweet Home program is giving Bahamians a real stake in the vacation rental industry for persons listed on AirBNB and other booking engines.

These efforts mean more beds, more stays, and more dollars circulating in the economy in the pockets of Bahamians on every island of the Bahamas.

In aviation, our portfolio continues to soar.

Two young women – Aysia Thurston and Brittany Ford – are excelling at the Qatar Aeronautical Academy.

We have recently signed an MOU with Middle Tennessee State University to expand access to aviation education.

We are developing more MOUs globally and launching The Bahamas Aeronautical Academy to consolidate training for flight attendants, airport managers, avionics, aviation mechanics, air traffic controllers, and more.

We are also investing in our future leaders.

The Emerging Leaders Program we launched for Tourism we are not expanding to aviation, to recruits the brightest and the best Bahamians, ages 18 to 35, with degrees in tourism, hospitality, marketing, entrepreneurship, aviation, innovation, economics or business.

We also have a robust Cadet Program for future aviators that we will be expanding through the Bahamas Aeronautical Academy.

Our partnership with SpaceX emphasized the point that the sky is the limit. When we see Bahamian aerospace engineers like Aisha Bowe, James Murray and Denton Gibson working in the aerospace industry but outside the Bahamas, it further triggers the need for us to be more innovative and aspirational in creating opportunities for Bahamians.

Mr. Deputy, we are not standing still.

We've just signed a game-changing Memorandum of Understanding between Bahamasair and Emirates Airline for an interline agreement.

That's right – Emirates. One of the biggest, most respected names in aviation.

This deal connects our national flag carrier to a global network that spans Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and well beyond.

This isn't just a photo-op and a handshake.

It's a serious step forward. Starting soon, travelers from across the Emirates network will be able to book a trip to The Bahamas on a single ticket – no complicated fragment bookings. Direct from anywhere Emirates flies to anywhere Bahamasair flies.

From cities like Dubai, Mumbai, Nairobi or Seoul, people will be able to plan their journey here as seamlessly as if they were flying to New York or London, with a final destination to Inagua, Exuma, San Salvador as the case might be.

This partnership gives us reach.

It gives us visibility.

And it sends a clear message: The Bahamas isn't just a Caribbean destination – it's a global one.

But the benefits don't stop at the booking page.

Emirates will also work with Bahamasair to offer training, technical support, and opportunities to improve service delivery.

That's capacity building in real time, from one of the best in the business.

Our airline will be stronger for it. Our team will be sharper. And our visitors? They'll feel the difference.

We're also exploring access to the Emirates Skywards frequent flyer program – one of the top loyalty platforms in the industry. That means more high-value travelers could have The Bahamas on their radar, earning and redeeming miles to get here. That's smart marketing. That's real reach.

This partnership strengthens our position for both passengers and cargo.

Even better, this agreement comes with a joint marketing strategy, as we pursue more emerging markets.

This is a chance to tell our story to the world in new languages and new audiences, in new places, and on a scale we've never had access to before.

Mr. Deputy, this is what building forward looks like. We've been saying for years that we want more out of our national airline. Now, we're delivering. We've said we want better access to long-haul markets. Here it is.

It's proof that The Bahamas is thinking big—and acting bold. We are ready to compete, to connect, and to grow.

And we're just getting started.

Bahamasair remains a vital part of our strategy. We are optimizing operations, reviewing and expanding routes, exploring fleet upgrades, and improving our customer experience to ensure Bahamasair is not just a carrier but a symbol of national pride, safety and reliability.

On coming to office, we launched the Family Island Renaissance Project to revitalize 14 airports.

It was and is an aggressive undertaking.

We have made progress and there is still more to do.

We are in varying stages of these development.

We recognized the myriad demands on our resources. We understood that to expedite these developments we required Private Public Partnerships, dispelling the notion that the Government must fund everything.

We have completed Great Harbor Cay and Ragged Island.

On Cat Island, Bimini, George Town, Exuma, and Mayaguana construction is actively underway.

We are doing modest works across the country and in North Eleuthera in particular to improve the working conditions now as we build new terminals.

Several months ago, we executed an arrangement with the Saudi Fund for Development for the funding of several airports.

We have been steadily working to complete the onerous process that is very similar to some multi-lateral agencies.

We have not drawn down any proceeds from the SFD and the committed funding remains available to us.

Understanding, however, the expediency required in executing these projects we have also entered into a PPP agreement with Island Airport Development Group and Plenary Capital who have a track record of executing quickly.

With the collective funding available through these various facilities, we anticipate construction will begin shortly on North Eleuthera, Grand Bahama, Governors Harbor Runway, Long Island, Black Point, Rock Sound and Crooked Island.

Long Island, you are the land of my mother's birth, and I assure you once more that we will be signing contracts shortly for your new runway. We will do for you what they couldn't get done even though you been good to them for 50 years.

We are reviewing several proposals for Public Private Partnerships on several other airports including North Andros.

Each of these projects represents jobs, opportunity, and expanded access.

The Bahamas has also witnessed an unprecedented wave of investment, signaling a robust commitment to national development and prosperity and enhanced investor confidence in the Bahamas.

Since assuming office, our administration has facilitated over \$12 billion in investments across various sectors and across various islands, complemented by hundreds of millions in government-led initiatives. This equates to at least 10,000 new jobs and thousands of new hotel rooms.

In addition to the many mega projects announced there are eco-resorts, high-end residences, boutique hotels, and major tourism anchors across the islands.

These investments are at various stages of development.

The \$700 million Celebration Key port project is expected to be completed and opened during July 2025 – that's next month.

We expect that we will double overall arrival on Grand Bahamas Island by December 2025.

They are hiring, selecting vendors and have advanced a very aggressive construction site. This is real!

We are also seeing active construction on the \$600m Grand Bahama Shipyard expansion, the Norwegian Cruise Pier in the Berry Islands, the Royal Caribbean Island Club on Paradise Island, the Torch Cay Resort in Exuma and many, many others.

We are creating real jobs and real entrepreneurial opportunities, infrastructure and empowerment opportunities Island by Island.

When I look at the phenomenal growth in tourism and the advancement of these projects there is no doubt that we are seeing the lowest unemployment levels in decades.

And the numbers don't lie, and yes, we are making progress.

So, no matter how upset the politricksters become and how they seek to denigrate our work, we making progress for the Bahamian people island by island.

That's right, Mr. Deputy, who mad - stay mad.

Turning to Downtown Nassau.

Downtown Nassau is finally beginning to receive the transformation it has desperately needed for far too long.

We are witnessing 30 – 40 years of decay. We are now doing something about it. But let me be clear that fixing decades of decay will not be an overnight thing.

This government is moving aggressively to breathe life back into the heart of the capital, to return it to its rightful place as a vibrant, walkable, commerce-driven hub of Bahamian culture, heritage, and innovation.

But let me also be clear about this: the government cannot do this alone.

Revitalizing Bay Street requires a true partnership – a collaboration between public and private stakeholders, and critically, the full participation of the Bahamian people.

We are embracing a “Live–Work–Play” strategy that reimagines the area as more than a daytime retail zone – instead, it becomes a dynamic neighborhood where people live, do business, and enjoy world-class leisure experiences.

Already, we’ve seen tangible signs of momentum.

At least two new hotel projects are under active consideration, along with a major entertainment development that could serve as a cornerstone for the Downtown revival, especially east of East Street.

These represent credible interest and the beginning of real change.

We are turning old into new. We have demolished 10 buildings. We anticipate next week to begin the demo of the Levy building. We believe that this is an ideal space for a boutique hotel with residences and a marina. Talk about opportunities, Island by Island.

We are leading by example, but we are not done yet. If it is an historical building, we ask that you access the incentives under the Downtown Revitalization Act. To owners of dilapidated properties that are not protected we ask you to fix or demolish. If you don’t, we will – at your cost.

I thank many of the property owners who have already risen to the occasion.

We are calling on Bahamians, especially those who own property in the downtown area, to join this movement.

There is enormous potential here – from restaurants and rooftop bars, jazz lounges to rake n scrape spots, galleries, shops, and live entertainment venues. Our international cruise partners have indicated interest in later stays, and that creates a real opportunity for a thriving nightlife economy along Bay Street.

But we must meet that demand with experiences worth staying for. The product has to be there.

To that end, we are launching an exciting new initiative this quarter — a “mood market” concept we’re calling “Bites on Bay”.

Food trucks have already been ordered, and this space will serve as an anchor for a vibrant, family-friendly entertainment hub.

We want Bahamians and visitors alike to return to Downtown, not just for shopping, but for energy, culture, and atmosphere.

We need more quality restaurants, more rooftop bars, and more creative spaces – and the good news is, we have credible investors ready to support those willing to step up.

Through the support of the Tourism Development Corporation and the Small Business Development Centre, we will be putting out a formal call for entrepreneurs with specific plans to engage, build, and invest.

This is about creating major opportunities for entrepreneurship and empowerment, with real backing, real resources, and real support.

We are also accelerating investment through the TDC, which is developing an incubation center focused on authentic Bahamian goods and services.

This will provide a platform for emerging entrepreneurs and creators to bring their products to market and to visitors in a way that reflects the true essence of The Bahamas.

This is more than a facelift for Bay Street.

This is about reclaiming a piece of our national identity and turning it into a living, breathing economic engine.

We are not waiting for change – we are helping to build it.

And we invite every Bahamian to be part of it.

I want to take a few minutes to speak about my beloved Exumas and Ragged Island.

In 2017, I laid out a bold and practical vision for my constituency – eVision2030 – a strategic plan designed to unlock the full potential of Exuma and Ragged Island through deliberate action, sound policy, and sustainable development.

We updated this plan in 2021 to reflect the changing times and evolving needs of our people. I consider this plan my contract with the people I serve.

This contract outlined 10 core commitments – each one grounded in the belief that our communities deserve opportunity, dignity, and long-term prosperity.

I am pleased to report steady and meaningful progress under this framework.

First, on the matter of jobs and job readiness, we have made significant headway. Exuma enjoys strong employment and near full employment. We've established a local jobs and skills bank, ensuring that those seeking employment can connect with available opportunities. If you are willing to work, we are here to help you find your path.

Second, Entrepreneurship & Empowerment we have conducted workshops for business planning and technical support. We've worked closely with financial institutions and development agencies to ensure that Bahamians with ideas and ambition have access to capital, support, and mentorship. We're seeing a surge of new ventures – from tour operators and artisans to food vendors and service providers.

Real benefits are taking root from

Third, Youth Development: Each year we hold youth symposiums, college and entrepreneurial fairs opening gateway of opportunities for our youth as we support the schools and communities across the district. We have built and restored parks and playgrounds. CAMP BAF conducted by Mrs. Cooper is seeing its tenth consecutive year, this summer.

Fourth, on Health & Wellness along with the Minister of Health we are advancing the satellite clinic in the Exuma Cays, the work on the Ragged Island clinic, we are seeking to expedite the satellite clinics in the Exuma Cays and with the Help of the member of Tall Pines we expect additional nurses and doctors and technicians to arrive soon. We have conducted health fairs and sponsored and supported dental and eye care clinics alongside private partners.

Fifth: Scholarship & Education: We celebrate the opening of the Staniel Cay School, the Ragged Island School and the BTVI satellite campus on Exuma. through the Louise Cooper Scholarship Fund we have supported dozens of students and through our annual college fair we have connected many with full scholarships to universities and colleges abroad. We have given Exumians access to training in cutting-edge fields – such as aviation, marine science, technology and hospitality. I take this calling seriously, reflecting on the fact that as a poor boy from Forbes Hill I would not have been able to go to college, and my life trajectory could have been incredibly different.

Six, Infrastructure: We have restarted the works on the George Town Airport. We will be executing construction contracts on the Black Point airport soon. We have completed 40 miles of roads in Exuma, the smoothest in the country. We have installed new water mains to Barratterre, George Town and Little Exuma with additional facilities in Rolle Town. We have built a new bridge in Staniel Cay and there is more to be done. We know that Exuma was punished during the last administration, but we are finally getting our share.

Seven: On Public Safety we have launched the Exuma Fire Brigade. We have strategically donated and positioned water trailer in strategic locations across the island and I am pleased to announce that we have donated a fire truck to the Exuma Volunteer Fire Brigade. We thank RPF and the MNS for their support with training and structuring of this Brigade. Next week we are donating fire extinguishers to stalls at the fish fry and other food vendors across the island

Eight, Community Development: we continue to strengthen our community associations and cultural institutions. Facilities such as the Forbes Hill Cultural Centre and the new entrepreneurial incubation hub provide safe, inspiring spaces where residents can gather, collaborate, and build. We have refurbished more than five basketball courts. We actively support homecoming, festivals and the almost 10 regattas throughout Exuma.

Ninth, we have continued to champion the values of local government and volunteerism. From community cleanups to civic campaigns, the spirit of Exuma and Ragged Island is alive and active.

And tenth, sustainable development guides every decision we make. We are relaunching Exuma Pride. We are encouraging responsible and respectful development. We are attempting to build communities that honor the natural beauty of our islands while securing a future for generations to come. We will be updating our master plan designing for future orderly expansion and to restore George Town. We have attracted \$1.5bn of new

investments to the island, many of them are already creating jobs and opportunities. We have encouraged Fidelity Bank to come to Exuma to expand access to banking and as a partner to ensure Exumians have appropriate access to capital for housing, business and to continue to improve overall standard and quality of life. Ultimately, we hope to be able to hold Exuma up as the model for development for communities – Island by Island.

Madam Deputy, this progress is only possible because of the collective effort of the people – the residents, the TeamCooper volunteers, the entrepreneurs, the public servants, and the community leaders who continue to put their hands to the plough and their shoulders to the wheel. I thank them all.

As I travel throughout Exuma and Ragged Island, I see the difference in people’s lives – in the infrastructure they use, the new roads, the new water mains, the new schools, the jobs they hold, the homes they build, and the confidence they carry. It reminds us that with smart execution we can transform even the most remote communities.

To the people of Exuma and Ragged Island, I thank you for your trust. The journey continues, and together, we will keep pushing forward.

As we approach the next general election, whenever that may be, I remind this House and the Bahamian people that this budget is about impact. It is about Expanding Opportunities. It is about people.

It is about completing what we started and building what is to come. The Progressive Liberal Party asks for a second term not for glory, but for duty – to finish the work, to solidify our legacy, and to build a Bahamas where no one is left behind.

Mr. Deputy, I am proud of our work. We have expanded opportunity – one island at a time.

Mr. Deputy,

As I conclude, I would be remiss if I did not express my deep appreciation to the hardworking men and women across the various agencies under my remit.

These teams, often working behind the scenes, play a critical role in advancing our national development goals and keeping key sectors of our economy running efficiently and professionally.

From the Tourism Development Corporation, which continues to drive innovation and product development across our islands, to the Hotel Corporation and Hotel Licensing Department, which remain focused on standards, partnerships, and opportunity – their dedication is moving the sector forward in real and measurable ways.

I also thank the Bahamas Investment Authority Hotel Unit, the Gaming Board, and Nassau Flight Services, each of which supports our vision of a modern, responsive, and diversified economy.

In aviation, we are supported by an outstanding team across multiple entities.

The Airport Authority, the Civil Aviation Authority of The Bahamas, and the Bahamas Air Navigation Services Authority are all working in concert to modernize our infrastructure and ensure safety, compliance, and excellence in service delivery.

The Lynden Pindling International Airport, through Nassau Airport Development Company (NAD), continues to set the bar as the region's premier airport. NAD's work was recognized by the Airport Council International who awarded LPIA the 2024 Best Airport for Latin America and the Caribbean region. Freeport Airport Development Company (FAD) has also been instrumental in our continued focus on providing quality service as we restore Grand Bahama's position as a strong aviation hub.

And of course, I extend sincere thanks to the team at Bahamasair – not just as our national flag carrier but as a great source of national pride, and as a strategic tool in supporting

economic development, expanding airlift, and connecting our islands. Their efforts are central to our broader goals.

Mr. Deputy, the work of these agencies gives me great confidence in our direction and in the capacity of Bahamians to lead and deliver across every sector we touch.

Mr. Deputy, we have put in the work as an administration over the last nearly four years.

We've turned vision into action. And now, with the support of the Bahamian people, we will finish the job we set out in our Blueprint for Change, and with a second term, we will take the Bahamas into territory that our forefathers hoped for in their wildest dreams.

Because The Bahamas is about promise turned reality, vision becoming that which we can touch and feel. It is, in small part, about a young boy growing up in poverty with no running water, no electricity and no lunch money, latching on to the promise of those who set up systems for him to progress and achieving success.

I assure the Bahamian people of my continued commitment to good governance, servant leadership and the highest standards of Integrity in public life.

That Bahamas is for all of us. And it is our intention that the Progressive Liberal Party helps to realize it for all who would reach for it.

Exuma and Ragged Island support this Budget!

I pray that God will bless you all and continue to bless the Exumas & Ragged Island and Commonwealth of The Bahamas.