



FINANCE COMMITTEE BUDGET PRESENTATION

2026-2027

Hon. Isaac Rankine, JP, MP
Minister for Youth, Sports, Culture & Heritage

Mr. Chair,

The Ministry of Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage plays an important role *in shaping a future where every young mind is empowered with opportunity; sports is inclusive and the base for an active and healthy lifestyle; and every cultural expression celebrates the spirit of what it means to be Caymanian.*

As the Ministry responsible for Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage, we have worked diligently to ensure that all subjects under the ambit of this Ministry is all-encompassing, strategically aligned and meets the needs of our country.

In doing so, we have tasked ourselves to make certain that our young people are supported; sports whether competitive or recreation is accessible; and we have embarked on reviewing policies and legislation to institutionalize culture and heritage in the Cayman Islands, for generations to come.

The Ministry has also established key priorities which are as follows:

1. Talent Identification and Development;
2. Enhancement and Empowerment of Youth;
3. Awareness and Preservation of Culture & Heritage; and
4. Promoting an Active and Healthy Lifestyle for All.

These priorities will be achieved through the provision of policy advice, administrative services, governance support and the delivery of a range of programmes and services to the public. All while upholding good governance through transparency and accountability.

In addition to the core administrative duties of the Ministry, the Departments, Units and Statutory Authorities and Government Entities included in the Ministries remit are: The Youth Services Unit, The Department of Sports, The National Gallery of the Cayman Islands, Cayman Islands National Museum and Cayman National Cultural Foundation.

Together, all entities form a vital framework dedicated to youth empowerment, recreational and athletic physical development, cultural and heritage preservation, awareness and institutionalization across our Islands.

Mr. Chair, we are invested in empowering our young people and in doing so the **Youth Services Unit** works with young people, communities, other Government and non -Government agencies to empower young men and women so that they can realize their full potential as model citizens, contribute to national development in all its forms, and ensure the sustainability of the future of the Cayman Islands. We re-established the **National Youth Commission**, introducing a transparent Expression of Interest process to ensure inclusivity and accountability in selecting its members. The Commission is diligently working to be a strong voice for our young people, shaping policy and supporting youth across our islands. **This demonstrates our partnership with the civil service, civil society, because true progress is built on collaboration.**

The **Youth Empowerment Symposium**, is now an annual event, **empowering young Caymanians through leadership and personal development.** Our CARICOM Youth Ambassador Programme was revitalized, and I am proud to note that in 2024, Caymanian Ambassador Vanessa Burke from the district of West Bay, made history as the first

Caymanian to serve as Dean of the Regional Programme. **These initiatives celebrate the talent, resilience, and excellence within our young people.**

We have enhanced the **National Sports Commission**, providing stronger governance and strategy to elevate Caymanian athletics. In addition, we continued to provide funding annually to our existing eight (8) core focus sports in **Athletics, Basketball, Cricket, Football, Netball, Squash, Swimming and Volleyball** and to the Cayman Islands Olympic Committee. It is also common for the Ministry to provide grants to sporting associations, clubs and athletes.

The Department of Sports provides technical assistance where necessary to the focus sports, provides guidance on sport policy matters, monitors the development of sports and provides support services for various stakeholders including Schools, Sports Clubs, Communities and Sports Associations.

Restructuring and expansion of services at the Department of Sports is being done to ensure an inclusive approach to services and to be able to provide opportunities for a wider range of ages. Some special initiatives now being offered is the annual Older Persons Sports Day, Senior exercise programmes, collaborative services with the Prisons and other facilities while still offering various sporting programmes in the community and schools.

A major milestone in sports is the planning and development of the Cayman Islands Aquatic Centre, inclusive of a 50 metre - and a 25-metre pool, a true game-changer not only for local and regional swimming, but also for community engagement. **This initiative is a joint project between the public, NPO's and private sector and a strong indicator that collaboration with civil service, private sector and non-profits, is the best way to achieve results.** In a historic moment for our islands, we appointed Mr. Jordan Crooks as our first-ever Cabinet-appointed Sports Ambassador and we were proud when he represented the Cayman Islands on the global stage, breaking records and bringing home world championship medals.

Mr. Chair, for the first time in the Cayman Islands, we also proudly hosted the 4th Caribbean Forum of the World Anti-Doping Agency, which strengthens our regional commitment and supports the importance of zero substance use in sports. **This reflects a stronger and fairer Cayman that adapts to a changing world, one that upholds integrity, health, and opportunity for all.**

We eagerly anticipate the completion of the review of the National Youth and National Sports Policies in the 2026-2027 budget cycle. These policies will provide a strategic and comprehensive direction for the development of youth and sports initiatives in the Cayman Islands. With the final review we will finalize further consultation for implementation of these frameworks.

Culture and Heritage has been a key element in our work. With the recognition of Emancipation Day at the end of 2023, after a 62-year absence, this was a profound step in reclaiming an important aspect of our heritage. I am proud, Mr, Chair that we are now celebrating this part of our history annually. With the approval of Cabinet, we are now formally recognizing five new National Symbols further strengthens national pride and identity. With our National Dish, Drink, Dessert, Dance, and Dress highlighted through the “Weh We From” campaign, Caymanian identity and pride was featured through storytelling, books, and social media engagement. **Mr. Chair, initiatives such as these embody the very essence of a modern Cayman, one that is proudly rooted in our past, yet confident and forward-looking as we embrace the future.** They remind us that our cultural heritage is not a relic of history, but a living foundation that informs who we are, how we grow, and how we present ourselves to the world.

The development and the publication of a book series began with ***“Our National Heroes”*** an educational book written by Mrs. Camille Angel (née Bodden) and illustrated by Mr. Brian Watler Jr. This book takes young readers on a historical journey to learn about and increase awareness of important Caymanian figures who have helped shape our

beloved isles. ***“Our National Symbols”*** is an educational book designed to teach young readers about the symbols that help foster national identity and cultural pride. The Cayman Islands has eleven (11) National Symbols and this book highlights them all: The Coat of Arms, National Flag, National Song, National Bird, National Tree, National Flower, National Dance, National Drink, National Dish, National Dessert and the National Dress (attire). This book has been published and we are eagerly awaiting its arrival. Another book entitled ***“Freely”*** is a story of Emancipation written by Camille Angel and illustrated by Raphael Powery, is in its final stages of development for publication. Additionally, with permission from the West Bay Heritage Committee we republished the ***“West Bay Dictionary”*** a collection of West Bay words from years gone by. Over 2,000 copies of each publication have been printed and distributed to all public and private school, for classrooms and libraries, as well as the public libraries across the islands, at no cost to these institutions. An effort to ensure these materials are accessible.

Community engagement has been at the heart of our work. The operationalization of the Intergenerational Hub, Cayman Collection Centre, the Sunrise Intergenerational Cottage in East End and the Emancipation Center, have all created new spaces for cultural learning and connection. **These initiatives show that investing at the community level creates lasting benefits that strengthen the social fabric of our Islands.** In addition to the existing Culture and Heritage facilities, the

Ministry is excited to establish in this upcoming Budget cycle facilities to highlight the history of our Uniform Services and artifacts from our Eastern district, which is very unique to those areas. In precious memories of our creative and talented artisan, the late Ms Reba Dilbert, with approval and blessings from the family, we wish to open a center that will keep her memory alive by teaching our young child the skill of custom making. This all brings further excitement to our Culture and Heritage services in the new budget cycle.

Mr. Chair, with the restructuring of the Celebrate Cayman Team in the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage, we are now bringing together the Ministry's Events Unit and the Culture & Heritage Unit under a unified framework. The focus of this team will be to promote, educate, protect, and celebrate all things Caymanian, instilling pride, respect, appreciation, and national cohesion throughout our Islands.

In addition to the various works in the Ministry, our statutory authorities are fundamental in our ability to the preservation and interpretation of culture and heritage, providing educational experiences, collecting, conserving and exhibiting culturally significant objects and are custodians or heritage. The National Gallery has expanded education across all three islands, the National Museum has presented powerful exhibitions such as "Slavery Be Dead, We Be Free," and the Cayman National Cultural Foundation continues to expand its efforts in fostering artistic expression.

Mr. Chair, the Ministry has undertaken a series of impactful capital projects during the 2024-25 Budget year and we look forward to completion projects and starting new project in 2026-27.

These investments through our subjects will also reflect our government's ongoing commitment to improving infrastructure, ensuring safety and accessibility, and providing opportunities for our people across all districts.

Among the major accomplishments, the **Cayman Islands Aquatic Centre** saw the acquisition of materials and supplies for the installation of two new pools, marking a significant step toward enhancing aquatic and other sports development in the Cayman Islands. At **George Dixon Park**, ongoing works include the installation of a new multi-sport court and procurement for a canopy cover, bocce court, and bike trail, creating a more versatile and family-friendly recreational space.

The **Donovan Rankine Sports Complex** benefited from the installation of ball catch nets and refurbishment of its irrigation system, while at the **Truman Bodden Sports Complex**, the Ministry oversaw the relocation of the shot-put throwing area, replacement of goal systems for four netball courts, optimization of irrigation systems, retiling and repainting of restrooms, and replacement of hydraulic lifts for the field light poles, therefore ensuring the facility remains safe, modern, and competition-ready.

The East End Cottage **was redesigned, renovated, and reopened as the** Intergenerational Cottage for the Eastern districts, providing a welcoming space for youth and older persons to connect and learn from one another. **Restoration of the Arlette Diaz House on Goring Avenue** progressed with significant exterior work completed to preserve its historic integrity, while the Intergenerational Hub at MacLendon Drive saw the completion and occupation of newly fitted-out offices and programming spaces, further strengthening our community outreach.

Capital Projects

In terms of capital investments, Mister Speaker, the Ministry expects to allocate \$5.3 million in 2026 and \$6.9 million in 2027 toward major development works that will elevate our national facilities to world-class standards.

Key projects include:

- Donovan Rankine Sports Complex – Development of a modern player pavilion, improved lighting, and upgraded amenities to enhance local and regional sporting events.
- Ed Bush Revitalization Project – Comprehensive renovations to the central changing rooms, grounds, and fencing, as well as revitalization of the practice field to meet community needs and modern standards.

- Turf Upgrades – Installation of new turf at the Annex, Ed Bush, and Haig Bodden fields, supporting safe play and sustainable maintenance.
- National Stadium Revitalization Project (Phase 1) – Implementation of a master plan addressing parking, grandstands, field and track upgrades, and restroom facilities to transform the site into a premier national venue.
- Establishment of an Artifact Center for the Eastern Districts and for a Uniform Service.
- Restoration of existing Premises for both the National Gallery and the Cayman National Cultural Foundation.
- Museum Building Enhancements – Installation of lift access for differently abled persons and a modern fire suppression system to ensure safety and accessibility for all.

Through these projects and initiatives, we are reducing inequalities and building a Cayman that is healthier and more productive for every citizen of all ages and abilities, preserving our culture and heritage, while remaining competitive and relevant on the international stage.

In conclusion Mr. Chair, the Budget for the Financial Year 2026–2027 embodies our collective vision, uniting our youth, strengthening our sporting capacity, and honouring our Culture and heritage. It is a budget that reflects who we are as a people and where we are determined to go as a nation. The Ministry has set forth a series of strategic initiatives and capital projects that will lend to preserving culture and heritage, elevate our sporting facilities, and enhance opportunities for youth engagement across the Cayman Islands. **Through collaboration with the civil service, the private sector, and our non-profit partners—we are building the foundation for sustainable progress.**

It is clear that this Budget is about **lasting opportunities for all Caymanians**, a Cayman that is strong and fair, modern yet rooted in its proud heritage. I thank you, for the opportunity to share our vision and plans for the 2026–2027 financial years, and I look forward to working together, with my colleagues, our communities, and all our partners, to make these goals a reality for our beloved Islands.

Thank you and God Bless.