



**Statement by Honourable André M. Ebanks MP
Premier and Minister for Financial Services and Commerce**

Fifth Meeting of the 2025-2026 Session of the Parliament of the Cayman
Islands
1 May 2026

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform this Honourable House that Cabinet has, this week, approved the preparation of updated drafting instructions to amend the Local Companies (Control) Act (2025) (“**the LCCA**”) to give Cabinet the power to make regulations to declare a moratorium on the grant of licences for any trade or business category for which a licence is granted.

This decision not only aligns with this Government’s stated policy mandate but delivers on a commitment undertaken in this Honourable House in July 2024.

By way of background Mr. Speaker, the LCCA, since its introduction in 1971, has served a clear purpose: to secure meaningful participation for Caymanians in the local economy. It does so by requiring at least sixty percent (60%) Caymanian ownership and control of local businesses. It also provides an exemption for entities who do not satisfy these requirements but are able to prove that there are exceptional circumstances, and Cabinet, having regard to the public interest, can – against these criteria - approve the grant of a local companies control licence (“**LCCL**”).

While LCCLs represent a small proportion of the overall market, approximately 213 out of more than 10,000 (roughly 2%) trade and business licences as at the end of 2025— are heavily concentrated in the real estate and property development sectors. These sectors have, in recent years, experienced significant upward pressure on costs, with concerns raised about affordability and access for Caymanians.

Similar concerns were also expressed during consultations between the Ministry of Financial Services and Commerce and industry stakeholders in 2022 when local Caymanian developers raised the impact of large-scale, high-end developments on the cost of materials and labour. Those discussions highlighted the increasing difficulty for smaller, Caymanian developers to compete, and for Caymanians to access opportunities within the sector.

This Honourable House responded decisively in July 2024 with the unanimous approval of **Private Members Motion 12 of 2023–2024**, calling for enhanced Caymanian ownership requirements and a moratorium on the grant of LCCLs.

Shortly after the formation of this Government, the policy team in the Ministry commenced work on this important matter. Approval for drafting instructions was initially sought from Cabinet in December 2025 in relation to the categories of real estate and property development – those being the relevant sectors from the Private Members Motion that fell within our subject area.

Following the review of an initial draft Bill, the NCFC Caucus was of the view that a general power would bolster the legislation should there be impact on additional trade and business categories.

The NCFC Caucus therefore provided directions to the Ministry of Financial Services & Commerce last week to amend the drafting instructions to provide Cabinet with a broad power to declare a moratorium on the grant of LCCLs across any trade or business category where it is deemed necessary.

The updated drafting instructions also represent a practical and timely step—advancing the intent of this NCFC Government and this Honourable House, supporting wider reform, and bolstering our ability to respond to evolving economic conditions.

To put this plainly Mr Speaker, our country, these Cayman Islands, now has more than enough talented, qualified, experienced, well-resourced Caymanians who are undoubtedly capable to conduct numerous trade or business categories and the commerce legislation must be brought up-to-date to take account of this evolution.

We recognise there was wisdom and vision when this legislation was initially introduced: at the time there would have been a recognition that we had a very small population which needed various services and businesses for which we were not yet fully equipped to conduct independently.

But surely our legislative predecessors would have envisioned that, if this beloved country got to a stage where our people have greater

capability to conduct numerous trades and businesses, then their legislative successors (i.e. us in this Chamber at present day) would in turn have the vision and the courage to make sensible adjustments to reflect the remarkable reality that Caymanians have gained a wide range of experience and expertise.

Moreover, Mr Speaker, this proposed reform must also be viewed within the wider context of the Ministry of Financial Services and Commerce's phased commerce reform programme.

The reform programme intends to deliver comprehensive updates to legislation, policy, and procedures across the business licensing regime with a focus on practical, short-term measures to support micro and small businesses.

For instance, as a part of this reform programme, for the first time in Cayman business licensing history, multi-year licences are available - there is now an increase in the duration of licences for up to five (5) years for compliant Caymanian-owned businesses. This service, administered by the Department of Commerce & Investment, went 'live' on Tuesday this week, being 28 April 2026.

Taken together, these initiatives directly support **Broad Outcome 3 - Economy: A Diversified and Resilient Economy that Supports Prosperity and Innovation.** They are aimed at easing structural deficiencies in key sectors, improving opportunities for Caymanians, and ensuring that economic growth remains inclusive yet sustainable.

The modernisation of this piece of commerce legislation also contributes directly to the delivery of **Broad Outcome 6 - 'Public Services - Efficient, Effective, Accountable and People-Centred Public Services** as, in order to operationalise these changes to the legislation, adjustments are required to the capacity, digital capability, and accountability of public services, to ensure that the department, in this case, Commerce and Investment, delivers efficient, modern, and responsive services to the public.

Thank you, Mister Speaker.