

Honourable Minister Johany Ebanks
Statement - Celebrating a Year of Achievements
24th June, 2026

Mr. Speaker, I want to shine a light on the progress the Ministry of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure has made over the last 12 months.

I would like to take a moment to speak on behalf of my ministry and the hard-working men and women who push to make things happen every single day.

When I came into this Cabinet in May last year, I set out to do certain things. Today, I am letting the public know what has been delivered. **Promises made, promises kept!**

Now, I want to be clear from the start. This is not about taking anything away from what we have accomplished collectively as a government. This administration has done great work and at every turn we have put the people of the Cayman Islands first. I'm sure by now you have all seen our Meaningful Momentum Brochure - that highlights some of our major accomplishments. And we are proud to be part of that bigger story.

But sometimes, in the excitement of celebrating the big picture, we miss the details. And I'm not talking about minor details. I am talking about the kind of details that, had they been overlooked, would have stopped everything in its tracks. The problems that were quietly solved before anyone else even noticed them, for example, and the small victories that kept everything moving.

When you stop and actually look back at this past year, it is remarkable. A lot has happened. More than people realise. More, honestly, than we even sometimes give ourselves credit for. In one year - just one year - my ministry has shifted, adapted, delivered and pushed forward in ways that deserve to be acknowledged.

Of course, this past year wasn't easy for anyone. But I'll tell you this... when I look at what we've accomplished, I feel proud. Not just proud of the results, but proud of *how* we got there.

With integrity.

With teamwork.

With a commitment to progress.

Now Mr Speaker, as you are very well aware, I have a large portfolio - there is a lot to cover, but before I do so please allow the sergeant to distribute a copy of our Ministry's year in review to every member in this House.

Now that you have a magazine in your hands, I want to make sure you actually know what is inside of it.

Mr Speaker, people often ask what it means to head a ministry with such a wide portfolio covering five heavy sectors. The honest answer is that they are all connected. You can't hand a Caymanian family the keys to a home if the land strategy hasn't made that land available.

The land strategy means nothing without the data to back it.

Farmers can't expand onto new plots if the road to get their produce to market doesn't exist.

Every decision in one sector creates the conditions for a decision in another. Right now, I want you to hear and understand how it all fits together.

Planning

Mr. Speaker, let us start with planning.

What we understood very quickly is that planning isn't just one of five distinct responsibilities under this Ministry — it is the foundation that makes everything else possible. Without proper planning, you end up with housing without land, agriculture without tenure, roads that cannot sustain growth, and a government trapped in a cycle of crisis management. That, Mr. Speaker, is not what this administration came here to do.

Over the past year, we have done the heavy lifting. We built the frameworks. We established a simple rule: you pass the legislation *before* you sign the contracts; you gather the data *before* you draft the policy.

That is why I am deeply disappointed by the conduct of the Opposition. We invited them into the room to help resolve the critical, long-standing issues between the Department of Planning and the National Conservation Council. They chose to boycott.

They claim to have the best interests of the Caymanian people at heart, yet when it is time to sit at the table and do the actual work, they don't show up. They go on the radio to complain that the process isn't public. But I ask you, Mr. Speaker—how can we take a proposal to the public before we have even built a viable solution?

Many hands make light work, but some members of the Opposition prefer the sidelines. They explicitly stated they would work with whomever was elected. Well, here we are, trying to solve a issue that directly impacts our economy and threatens the very way of life of our people — and their seats at the table remain empty. Is their commitment to this country real, Mr. Speaker, or is it just lip service?

A good friend of mine a mentor a person I can call on at anytime once shared a mantra that guides my work every day: *politics must be defined by tangibility, measurability, and visibility*. This administration is delivering exactly that— while some members of the Opposition deliver nothing but noise."

Over the last 12 months, we focused on publishing an updated building code so that the homes being built meet a standard that will still be fit for purpose in fifty years. You will remember we completed the Environmental Impact Assessment on the East-West Arterial before breaking ground, so the road doesn't cost the surrounding ecosystem more than it gives the eastern districts.

These examples on their own are not finished products. They are conditions that make the next several years of actual delivery possible. Surely we can agree, you must first lay the foundation before you build the house. And even before then you must have the land. Because you can plan all you like, but if you don't control the land, the plan stays on paper.

Lands

Land in the Cayman Islands is finite in a way that carries genuine consequences.

As the available footprint shrinks, land prices climb. As prices climb, homeownership moves further out of reach for the average Caymanian. That chain of events doesn't fix itself. It requires a government willing to intervene deliberately and strategically — and sometimes, simply willing to buy things before they're gone. Because the other thing about land that is lost to private development is that you don't get a second chance. You cannot renegotiate public access to a beach in fifteen years.

So we acted now.

Turn to page 29. Over the last year, we had \$25 million for land acquisition. The focus wasn't on buying land for development's sake — it was on reclaiming public space before it disappeared into private hands permanently. The work has focused on beachfront access, historical sites, and urban green spaces — the kinds of spaces that quietly define what it means to live on this island, and that tend to vanish without fanfare until one day

someone asks where they went. Central Scranton Park is one example. On page 31, you'll see the breakdown: 125 acres secured in Cayman Brac for public use.

Mr Speaker, let me not leave out my district because a lot of work is going on in my district. We secured 14 acres in North Side specifically earmarked for agriculture.

Now, page 30 also has something that, frankly, we should all note. The Residential Property Price Index — the RPPI. Director of Lands and Survey built this, with support from the International Monetary Fund, and what it gives us is an official record of property price movements in the Cayman Islands going back to 1998. The practical effect is this: we can now design housing based on what the market has actually done, not what we think it has done. Financial institutions can make better lending decisions. Families can check whether the price they're being quoted is reasonable.

The same page 30 also covers the stamp duty reform — directing revenue toward affordable housing and land-related improvements. And page 31 - the Agriculture Land Lease Programme, which opened new plots to local farmers. I'll come back to that shortly, but the land connection is worth naming right here: tenure security is the difference between a farmer who dabbles and one who invests. Without confidence in the land, there's no rational reason to put money into it.

When we talk about what the Department of Agriculture has been trying to build, it starts with land. Specifically, with who can access it, and what they can do with it once they can.

Agriculture

But let's stop here so I can ask a question, and I want you to be honest with yourself when you answer it.

When last did you buy something at the supermarket that was actually grown here?

Grown in Cayman soil, by a Caymanian farmer.

For most of us, Mr. Speaker, the answer is not often enough.

The reality is that more than 90% of what we eat comes from somewhere else. And that truth has consequences.

Our acting Deputy Director of Agriculture noted early in my term that if imports halted for whatever reason, we'd have about two weeks before this island had a real problem on its hands.

Two weeks of food.

That's our buffer.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members — I'm not going to stand here and tell you we're going to grow everything we need. We can't. Only 2% of our land is arable. We're a small island with a population that, understandably, has gotten used to walking into a fully stocked supermarket. That's not changing overnight.

But I believe we can produce more local food and give rise to a generation of Caymanian farmers who are actually supported rather than just celebrated at the agriculture show once a year. I entered public life believing it. And this year we started doing it.

In August 2025 we opened the first government-operated egg production facility at the Department of Agriculture compound in Savannah. I cut the ribbon. This facility isn't competing with private farmers. It's there to help them. It show farmers exactly what proper poultry production looks like up close — the housing, the biosecurity, the standards — with a government extension officer right there to walk you through it. The eggs go to Meals on Wheels, Caribbean Haven, Savannah United Church. Directly to the people in our community who need good food and can't always access it.

Behind that facility is the National Egg Strategy Programme — NEST — supporting 17 Caymanian farmers right now, with a target to double domestic egg production and take 40% of the local market. I put that number in the magazine on page 22 because I want it on record.

Moving to page 25 — the Backyard Garden Programme, launched July 2025. We delivered grow boxes to people's doors. Soil, seeds, basic guidance. Cucumbers, callaloo, tomatoes, sweet peppers — things Caymanian families actually cook with. The pilot reached 210 non-commercial and potential agricultural producers across all three islands. Sure, one grow box isn't going

to solve food security. But 210 households growing something they weren't growing before is a great start.

Meat is our biggest food import category. So we've been working on that too. The Department has been building a breeding herd of Jamaican Red Poll cattle — these are animals specifically chosen because they actually do well in our climate. This year we started getting those genetics out to local farms. And in April, we reopened the stud bull programme so farmers can access that breeding stock for their own herds.

However, none of that livestock work means much if farmers don't have land to work with. Our Agricultural Land-use Licence Policy was designed specifically to tackle the fact that only 2% of our land is arable. Through this framework, we're making subdivided Crown land available to farmers at affordable cost. The first 15 plots are being distributed. And alongside that, we're building a system to properly register farmers and map where food is actually being grown across these islands. It sounds basic — because it is. But it's the kind of foundational information we didn't have before, and without it you can't plan for the future well.

While we're talking about making better use of what we have we must talk about the arrangement we now have with Caribbean Utilities Company (CUC). When CUC trims vegetation around power lines that material now goes to the Department of Agriculture for soil improvement instead of landfill. I want more of that kind of thinking across government. We don't always

need more money. Sometimes we just need to pay better attention to what we already have.

And the 2026 paid internship programme — page 27 — is open to Caymanian students 17 and over, in veterinary services, plant protection, agricultural health inspection, among others. If we can't get young Caymanians to see agriculture as a career worth having — not a backup plan, not something their grandparents did, but a real profession with a real future then everything we've set up so far will eventually wind down. The internship programme is how we make sure that doesn't happen.

Housing

Now — all of this ... land, food production, all of what we've spoken about so far— they're only as useful as the homes people have to go back to at the end of the day.

Currently, we need over 3,000 homes for Caymanians.

Not in a decade.

Not "in coming years."

Now.

Behind that number are real people. Families paying rent because there's no other option. People doubled up with relatives who love them but can't house them indefinitely. Young Caymanians who are working full time and still consider homeownership a pipe dream. And if we don't move with

urgency, that number climbs to 5,000 additional units needed within the next fifteen years.

So we passed the Registered Land Amendment Act 2026. In plain terms — your lender must now tell you in advance before your interest rate changes. If things go wrong, there has to be a genuine conversation before any foreclosure process begins. And your property must be independently valued so you're not losing equity to an outdated process that doesn't reflect what your home is actually worth. No homeowner should find out about critical financial consequences only after the damage is done. That's now the law.

But fixing the financial framework is one thing. You still have to build the houses.

Turn to page 11. The article there is called "Building for the Future" and I want to explain what that title means in practice.

What it means is this: every home my Ministry builds — starting with North Side Flamingo Point — is built to engineering standards that account for earthquakes and hurricane-force winds. And that standard now applies to every developer on this island, not just government projects. I've decided that building well matters more than building fast, and I've asked my team to hold that line even when the pressure to move quickly is real.

Mr. Speaker, let me be clear: nobody in this Honourable House understands the absolute urgency of putting roofs over our

people's heads more than I do. I feel that weight every single day. But I also want to remind the detractors who are shouting for us to just throw up walls overnight—rushing into building at the scale our people need without a resilient, sustainable plan is a recipe for disaster. We are not just building for the next election cycle; we are building for the next generation.

As the old saying goes, Mr. Speaker: **time is longer than rope.**

Those who are rushing us will be the very same ones pointing fingers if a storm comes and compromises poorly planned structures. I refuse to let that be the legacy of this Ministry.

That is why, for the past couple of months, my Ministry has been proactively meeting with top-tier international developers. We have cast the net wide, engaging experts with proven track records in building resilient homes and structures across every single continent. We wanted to see what works globally so we can find exactly what is best suited for the unique environment of the Cayman Islands.

We wanted the best data, the best technology, and the best partners. We want to get it right, Mr. Speaker. And I am pleased to inform this House that we are now actively narrowing down the options we have been exploring. We are moving forward with purpose, we are moving forward with a plan, and we will build homes that stand the test of time.

Page 13 has the 10-Year Public and Affordable Housing Strategic Plan. We knew patchwork solutions weren't going to move the

needle on a shortage of this scale. So we built a decade-long roadmap with real data behind it — including a Residential Property Price Index so we actually understand what the market has been doing. The Registered Land Act and the 10-Year Plan work together deliberately. One protects you once you're in a home. The other gets you there.

We were tabled the Cayman Islands Public and Affordable Housing Policy — 98 actionable recommendations. Not suggestions. Not things to revisit when the budget allows. Things we are doing, with timelines and accountability. Page 20 tells you how we built it. We went out. Town halls across Grand Cayman and Cayman Brac. Over 1,000 residents, real conversations. More than 1,200 survey responses.

You spoke and we responded. Shared equity pathways. Lease-to-own models. Mortgage guarantees. Down-payment support. A newly empowered Housing Authority that will acquire land and deliver homes directly rather than waiting on the private market. A streamlined permit process with statutory timelines.

I'm not going to stand here and tell you 3,000 homes are coming tomorrow. What I can tell you is that the conditions for building them properly are now in place — the standards, the data, the legal protections, the strategic framework. Year two is where those conditions get used. And I will be back here next year to account for it.

Infrastructure

Now, I want to touch on something that affects all of us - infrastructure. Infrastructure is the thing that either works quietly in the background or makes your life difficult in ways that add up fast.

Let me start at the port on, page 14.

For years — and I mean years — the Port Authority of the Cayman Islands was operating with aging equipment. One of those cranes had been in service for 43 years. Now think about everything in Cayman that arrives through that port. Food, medicine, building materials, consumer goods... all of it coming through one entry point, on machinery that was held together by experience and hope.

So we invested \$5 million in a Harbour Crane. It arrived in late 2025 and was commissioned in December. Purpose-built maritime equipment — not the modified construction cranes that were being used before. Superior stability, faster turnaround times, **no more "hook speed" bottlenecks that were slowing cargo flow**. And scheduled maintenance on older units no longer means a total standstill of cargo operations.

We also sent Caymanian operators and technicians to Germany for specialised factory training. Because the hardware is only as good as the people running it. PACI Board Chairman Cline Glidden said it well — this crane not only enhanced productivity, it improved safety for staff and ensures the Port Authority can meet the growing demands of our economy.

The port investment is a great example of how we think about infrastructure as a ministry: decisively, strategically, with the long-term future in mind. And that same thinking carries over to how we've approached the roads. Turn with me to page 28.

Cayman's roads are under pressure. The island is growing — economically, physically, in population — and the transport network has been trying to keep pace for years. This year, the Ministry shifted from reactive maintenance to a forward-looking strategy. Less patching, more planning. Here's what that looks like.

The biggest piece of news I can give you on infrastructure is the East-West Arterial. Ten miles of road connecting Hirst Road to Frank Sound Road. Construction resumes September 2026. I've said that publicly, it's in the magazine on pages 18 and 21, and I want to say it here too so there's absolutely no ambiguity: September 2026.

This road is also a hurricane evacuation route for a corridor that currently doesn't have one. I want people to understand that dimension of it, because it's not just about commute times. It's about what happens when a serious storm comes and we need to move people quickly and safely. We went through the full Environmental Impact Assessment process — it's done, the approvals are in place, and we did it that way because building a road through that ecosystem without an idea of its potential impact would have been irresponsible.

Of course, we can't talk about roads without mentioning the Traffic Amendment and Validation Bill 2026. Mr Speaker, e-bikes

and e-scooters became common on our roads faster than our laws could track. The old Traffic Act didn't distinguish between someone on a push bike and someone on a motorised device doing 30 miles per hour. That gap had real consequences — for licensing, insurance, enforcement, and for what happened legally when something went wrong. We closed the gap. Devices over 15 mph are now motor vehicles. Licence, insurance, age restriction of 17, mandatory helmet. Enforcement started March 1, 2026, and we ran months of public education before enforcement began.

From there, the question became: how do you enforce road safety at scale when you can't put an officer at every corner?

The Request for Proposals went out in February 2026 for fixed and portable speed cameras. I want to be clear about what this system is actually for, because I know "speed cameras" lands differently depending on who you ask. The cameras identify the black spots — the specific locations where near-misses happen repeatedly, where accident rates are consistently elevated. That data tells us where to invest in road improvements. And consistent, predictable enforcement changes how people drive over time. If you're driving the speed limit, these cameras are invisible to you. That's the point.

I also want to give a proper moment to the human side of road safety— the "After the Impact" docuseries, the Annual Road

Safety Poster Competition, the partnership with Cayman Cycling. Because cameras and legislation are only part of the picture. I've watched some of the docuseries content. These are real people telling real stories about how a single decision on the road changed everything.

Conclusion

Mr. Speaker, I grew up on this island.

I grew up watching my family navigate the same things that most Caymanian families navigate — the cost of living here, the question of whether you can afford to stay, the quiet anxiety that comes with not knowing if the next generation will be able to call this place home the way we did.

And somewhere between that upbringing and this Honourable House, I made a decision that the best way I could honour what this island gave me was to try to give something back to it.

That's not in the magazine.

But it's one of the reasons I took this job.

Because when I look at the families waiting on affordable housing, I don't just see a housing deficit. I see people I recognise. When I look at the farmers trying to make a living on limited arable land, I see the same determination that built this island in the first place. When I look at the eastern district residents who have been patient about that road for longer than

they should have had to be — I know those roads. I've sat in that traffic.

I won't pretend year one solved all of that. What it did was put in place the conditions under which we can. Now comes the part where we show up every year after this one and deliver on what those foundations promised.

I said to myself that I wanted to give you an honest account of this past year. I believe I've done that.

This country gave me everything. Everything I am doing as Minister of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure, is my attempt to return the favour.

Thank you.