



The immigration system in The Bahamas is broken and the Bahamian people know it. Our borders are unsecure, our laws are being ignored, and public confidence in the process has collapsed.

This is not about any one nationality or group. Haitian migrants, and others who reside in The Bahamas legally and contribute meaningfully to our communities, deserve dignity and respect. But the current immigration system is broken. It's politicized, mismanaged, and wide open to abuse.



On July 14 2025, Free National Movement Leader, the Honorable Michael C. Pintard, [announced the FNM's plan to fix the country's broken immigration system](#) and restore public trust in how immigration decisions are made. The announcement comes amid growing national anxiety over the government's failure to enforce the law, protect Bahamian sovereignty, and address widespread abuses in the current system.

The FNM's bold new plan outlines immediate actions to close loopholes, hold wrongdoers accountable, and deliver a fair, lawful, and secure immigration process.



S SECURE OUR LAND AND END ILLEGAL OCCUPATION

The first pillar of the plan takes direct aim at unregulated land development and the breakdown of enforcement under the current administration.

Uncontrolled and illegal immigration threatens the very foundation of our national security. It places unsustainable pressure on our healthcare system, our public schools, our limited housing stock, and other critical resources. And Bahamians are feeling it every day in long lines at clinics and in their struggle to access basic services that are already stretched to the breaking point.

The FNM's plan addresses this crisis head-on by focusing on one of the most visible and damaging impacts of a broken immigration system: the illegal occupation of land, both public and private.

THE FNM WILL:



- **Undergo a full national audit of land occupation on public land to identify and remove illegal developments.** Swift legal action will be taken to remove illegal developments.
- **Bring new legislation to support private landowners in reclaiming their property where illegal communities have taken root.** In cases where owners fail to act, the government will step in, enforce the law, and recover the cost from those responsible.
- **Focus on stronger enforcement of existing laws, including under the Immigration Act,** which prohibits the harboring of undocumented individuals on any property.
- **Implement a permanent enforcement and education strategy** to ensure that Bahamians know their rights, responsibilities, and the consequences of violating land laws.

We will not allow our scarce land resources to be stolen or misused. This is about protecting our future. Unregulated communities compromise sanitation, public health, and environmental safety. They undermine urban renewal, destroy planning efforts, and fuel the rise of substandard housing that puts lives at risk.



A country without land discipline cannot develop with dignity, and the FNM will fix it.



H HEIGHTEN SURVEILLANCE

Our priority to heighten surveillance takes direct aim at improving border security and stopping unlawful entry into the country by land and sea. Central to this effort is a pledge to strengthen maritime enforcement.

We are seeing a clear and dangerous shift. In 2022 alone, the RBDF reported 3,605 migrant apprehensions, more than the three previous years combined. Motorised vessels are replacing sailboats, signaling a more coordinated, sustained, and illegal effort to enter The Bahamas.

THE FNM WILL:

- **Bolster Royal Bahamas Defence Force (RBDF) patrol operations and enhance coastal surveillance through close cooperation with CARICOM and our US partners** to stop smuggling networks, protect lives at sea, and ensure our borders are no longer wide open to abuse.



- **Activate the already-legislated Immigration Reservist Body.** Trained Bahamians on every island will be appointed to assist overburdened immigration officers and defend their communities. We know local knowledge is vital, and no one knows their communities better than the people who live in them. Our immigration reservists will serve with professionalism and pride.

- **Expand the use of biometric technology, including facial recognition and fingerprint systems, To support effective deportation and entry tracking.** Other countries use these systems to track and verify identities quickly and accurately, and we will do the same to streamline deportation and prevent repeat offenders from re-entering our country undetected.

The urgency of this policy pillar is underscored by tragic real-world consequences. In one 2022 case, a 33-foot vessel carrying more than 50 Haitian migrants capsized just six miles from Bahamian shores. Seventeen people, including a one-year-old child, drowned. “People smugglers are exploiting desperation. They pack unseaworthy boats beyond capacity and



profit from human suffering. We mourn every life lost in these senseless tragedies, and we are determined to shut these operations down.

- The FNM will implement clear protocols to ensure effective surveillance does not harm the tourism industry. Smugglers often use legally registered yachts and fishing boats that mimic tourist vessels, complicating enforcement. Our plan strikes the right balance enhancing patrols without disrupting legitimate maritime activity.

This is a turning point. The Bahamas needs a fair, transparent, and lawful immigration system that our people can trust. That means no shortcuts, no political favors, and no special treatment. Our mission is clear: protect our borders, enforce our laws, and restore order to our immigration system.

Why this is so important:

→ **Recent years have seen a sharp rise in boat crossings according to official figures.** The Royal Bahamas Defence Force reported 3,605 migrant apprehensions in 2022, more than in the three previous years



combined, with Haitians making up over 75 per cent of those intercepted. By mid 2023, authorities had already detained 1,736 migrants, including 1,281 Haitians (The Washington Post, 27 July 2023, [link](#)).

→ **And this is set to get worse – with Haitian migrants increasingly using motorised vessels which points to more organised, sustained efforts to leave the country.** Reuters has reported a shift in migration methods, with Haitian migrants increasingly using motorised vessels instead of the traditional wooden sailboats. This evolution points to more organised, sustained efforts to leave the country. Geographically positioned as a gateway between Haiti and the wider region, The Bahamas has become a frontline state in what regional leaders see as both a humanitarian emergency and a transnational security threat (The Tribune, 8 July 2025, [link](#)).

→ **People smugglers profit from displaced people risking dangerous sea crossings through Bahamian waters.** Smugglers use small yachts and pleasure boats, designed for 20 passengers, to pack in dozens of migrants. In one July 2022 incident a 33-foot vessel carrying at least 50 Haitians began taking on water just six miles offshore. No one wore life



jackets and at least 17 men, women and a one-year-old child drowned. Small fishing boats and yachts legally registered for tourism make it difficult for authorities to distinguish pleasure craft from smuggling vessels, and aggressive policing risks harming the vital tourism industry (The Washington Post, 27 July 2023, [link](#)).

→ **On 5 January 2025, the Department of Immigration took 34 migrants into custody after three US Coast Guard interceptions, including 15 Cuban and 11 Chinese nationals.** There were additionally 2 Romanians, 1 Jamaican, 1 Bermudian , 1 Ecuadorian, and 1 Guyanese, intercepted near Hillsborough, Florida, with a further 6 migrants; including 2 Dominicans, intercepted near Biscayne Bay (Department for Immigration, Press Release, 7 January 2025, [link](#)).

I INVESTIGATE POLITICAL ABUSE

This third pillar represents a bold initiative aimed at exposing and eradicating corruption, political interference, and institutional failure within the current Bahamian immigration system.

Make no mistake: the first step toward immigration reform is removing the Davis-Cooper PLP Administration. But we know that a change in government alone won't fix all that is broken. True reform requires independent oversight and institutional safeguards.

THE FNM WILL:

- **Form a Select Committee of Parliament** with full independent authority immediately upon taking office. This committee will have the legal mandate to summon witnesses, compel documents, and conduct a thorough investigation into irregularities, political interference, and corruption in immigration processing. The committee will go beyond



partisan boundaries by including law enforcement, immigration professionals, and whistleblowers who have witnessed or benefited from the system's breakdown and are willing to come forward.

- **Launch a government whistleblower hotline** to report misconduct, political abuse, and corruption. This system will be backed by legal protections and offer financial rewards for verified tips that lead to encouraging individuals to come forward. Whistleblower protections will also be codified in law, ensuring full immunity from prosecution and protection against victimization or retaliation.
- **Establish An Independent Oversight Board for Immigration** once the Select Committee completes its work. This board will be inclusive, transparent, and cross-sectoral with representatives nominated by both the Government and Opposition, alongside leaders from civil society. The Oversight Board will report directly to Parliament and be empowered to alert appropriate authorities when immigration decisions violate the law.

The Bahamian people must see themselves in the institutions that govern them. Immigration is not just a legal issue. It is a social issue, a national



security issue, and an economic issue. Immigration decisions must always reflect the best interests of the Bahamian people and earn their trust.

Why this is so important:

→ **The FNM has long raised concerns about ‘unfair competition’ as a result of the PLP’s failure to tackle illegal Haitian Migration.** Free National Movement deputy leader Shanendon Cartwright said: ‘What is clear to any objective observer is that illegal Haitian migration continues to escalate due to the deteriorating conditions in Haiti, and the current administration does not have a clear plan to address it (Nassau Guardian, 3 October 2022, [link](#)).

→ **In 2023, the FNM raised concerns that Bahamian laws were being ignored by the immigration department.** They did so after it was found that the Immigration Director wrote an email to the Department inquiring why some individuals were being sworn in without renunciation, contrary to the requirements of the Bahamas Nationality Act (Chapter 109). As a result, a formal request was made for the



establishment of a select committee to investigate critical inquiries surrounding immigration (Eyewitness News, 12 August 2023, [link](#)).

→ **Leaked correspondence showed that the immigration department was ignoring the requirements of The Bahamas Nationality Act.** In August, Pintard read the contents of an email written by Ferguson to Bell and Strachan on July 13, 2022, about people being sworn in as citizens of The Bahamas without renouncing their citizenship of other countries. The email read, “Good afternoon PS Strachan and Minister Bell: It has been brought to my attention that the department has been swearing-in individuals without renunciation, contrary to the requirements of The Bahamas Nationality Act, Chapter 190. Please see attached. “Kindly advise under what legal grounds are we covered by not following the law. I await your urgent response.” (Nassau Guardian, 8 September 2023, [link](#)).

→ **In 2022, despite calls from the FNM to do more to address the illegal immigration crisis, Minister of Immigration Keith Bell responded, “What immigration crisis?”**
(Nassau Guardian, 4 October 2022, [link](#).)

E END UNFAIRNESS AND ENFORCE STRONGER PENALTIES

“LET ME BE CLEAR: UNDER AN FNM ADMINISTRATION, ANYONE WHO ENTERS THE BAHAMAS ILLEGALLY WILL NEVER OBTAIN CITIZENSHIP.”

- MICHAEL C. PINTARD

This pillar confronts deep-rooted inequities in the immigration system and charts a clear path toward restoring order, fairness, and accountability to immigration laws in The Bahamas.

We cannot solve an illegal immigration crisis by denying that it exists. For too long, the system has failed to deliver justice both to the Bahamian people and to those who follow the law in good faith. Fraudulent applications, forged documents, and insider deals have polluted the process. While legitimate applicants wait, politically connected individuals are fast-tracked without merit, transparency, and accountability.



That will end under Michael Pintard's leadership.

The FNM will:

- **Ensure that no one who enters The Bahamas illegally can ever obtain citizenship.**
- **Clear the backlog of work permit applications and restore service to applicants.** By deploying mobile application units across New Providence and the Family Islands and launching an online tracking portal, we will ensure every application receives a fair and lawful determination. Good-faith applicants should not wait in limbo while politically connected individuals are fast-tracked without merit, without transparency, and without accountability.
- **Close loopholes and raise the financial bar for sponsors.** The current \$1,000 bond is no longer adequate. An FNM government will significantly increase that amount to reflect the real cost of ensuring accountability. If you sponsor someone, you must prove that you can support them fully and face penalties if you abuse that privilege.



- **Prosecute any public officer or elected official who facilitates the illegal granting of status.** If you issue documents unlawfully, bypass proper procedures, or manipulate the system for personal or political gain, you will be held accountable.
- **Regulate and audit immigration consultants to end manipulation for profit and political influence.** The FNM will require all consultants to register publicly, disclose fee schedules, and any lobbying contacts with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- **Ensure that full use is made of current legislation that allows for illegal migrants to be deported.**

This approach strengthens enforcement, protects national security, and streamlines legitimate applications. It ensures The Bahamas remains a sovereign nation governed by the rule of law.

We will not continue to reward illegal activity with the privileges of belonging.

Why this is so important:



- **Leaked correspondence showed that the immigration department was ignoring the requirements of The Bahamas Nationality Act.** In August, Pintard read the contents of an email written by Ferguson to Bell and Strachan on July 13, 2022 about people being sworn in as citizens of The Bahamas without renouncing their citizenship of other countries. The email read, “Good afternoon PS Strachan and Minister Bell: It has been brought to my attention that the department has been swearing-in individuals without renunciation, contrary to the requirements of The Bahamas Nationality Act, Chapter 190. Please see attached. “Kindly advise under what legal grounds are we covered by not following the law. I await your urgent response.” (Nassau Guardian, 8 September 2023, [link](#)).
- **Illegal Chinese workers were released from detention and allowed to return to work -reportedly after the intervention of the PLP immigration minister.** It was reported: ‘Immigration Minister Keith Bell admitted yesterday that some Chinese nationals working at the British Colonial Hilton in January were released from custody and returned to the construction site despite the “irregularities” that prompted officers to detain them’ (The Tribune, 19 July 2023, [link](#)).
- **Immigration officials ‘may have solicited Haitian migrants for bribes to prevent detention’ - the previous FNM government invested in**



anti-trafficking training to prevent such abuses. The US Government noted that officials 'Immigration officials may have solicited Haitian migrants for bribes to prevent detention'. The Bahamian Government provided in person anti trafficking training for 98 police recruits in April 2020, 24 police detectives in July 2020, and 147 military personnel between April and July 2020, plus a virtual training session for 90 members of the judiciary in November 2020 (US State Department, Trafficking in Persons Report: The Bahamas, 2021, [link](#)).

→ **A backlog of 10,000 work permit applications is costing the Treasury up to \$2 million in uncollected fees.** Domestically, the PLP-run Department of Immigration handles roughly 73,000 work- and residence-permit applications annually, yet an FNM audit reveals a backlog of 10,000 work-permit cases, costing the Treasury up to \$2 million in uncollected fees and fueling public frustration. Two FNM-led demonstrations outside Immigration offices calling for transparency have gone unanswered (FNM internal data).

→ **Work permit average processing times, before an applicant is updated, are 8-12 weeks.** Once a long-term work permit application is accurately and completely submitted, applicants should expect an 8-to-12-week turnaround before receiving an update from the



Immigration Department (Department for Immigration, Guidance, accessed 10 July 2025, [link](#)).

L **LIMIT APPROVALS**

This pillar focuses on restoring lawful and transparent entry into The Bahamas and ending the culture of political interference and neglect that has undermined the current immigration system under the Davis Administration.

We welcome those who choose to make The Bahamas their home, but you must come the right way. Those who follow the law will receive our support. Those who seek to cut the line, forge documents, or benefit from political connections will be turned away. We are committed to regulating migration with a level of oversight and integrity this country has never seen before.

“This commitment is rooted in our history. Many Bahamians remember the era of the ‘Contract’, when our forefathers and foremothers migrated lawfully to the United States through a structured, legal system. That same principle of order and accountability will guide our approach today. Political interference will not be tolerated. You have our word.



The FNM's plan to Limit Approvals is centered on restoring order and trust through clear rules and strong enforcement.

THE FNM WILL:

- **Implement robust screening procedures** in close coordination with regional allies, including US Homeland Security. Every applicant will undergo thorough vetting to confirm national status and identify any criminal history before being granted approval.
- **Uphold a strong, fair, and lawful framework fully aligned with the Bahamas Nationality Act.** That includes enforcing the legal requirement that no one is granted Bahamian citizenship without fully renouncing prior citizenship, ensuring that our national laws are respected and properly applied.

Why this is so important:



→ **In 2023, the FNM raised concerns that Bahamian laws were being ignored by the immigration department.** They did so after it was found that the Immigration Director wrote an email to the Department inquiring why some individuals were being sworn in without renunciation, contrary to the requirements of the Bahamas Nationality Act (Chapter 109). As a result, a formal request was made for the establishment of a select committee to investigate critical inquiries surrounding immigration (Eyewitness News, 12 August 2023, [link](#)).

→ **Haitian migrants and others who reside in The Bahamas legally and contribute meaningfully to our communities deserve respect and dignity.** Free National Movement deputy leader Shanendon Cartwright said: 'This is not a question of xenophobia as we all recognize that legal immigrants, particularly those from our sister Caribbean countries, have played a vital role in helping to build our nation. This is a question of ensuring a long-term sustainable future for the Bahamian people.' He added: 'For many people, there is a basic sense of unfair competition in The Bahamas for those who play by the rules' (Nassau Guardian, 3 October 2022, [link](#)).

→ **The USA is terminating Protected Status for approximately 500,000 Haitian nationals - meaning there is a risk of increased pressure on the Bahamas.** Since 27 June 2025, the US Department of Homeland



Security has moved to terminate Temporary Protected Status for approximately 500,000 Haitian nationals, effective 2 September 2025, exposing them to deportation proceedings despite ongoing instability in Haiti (US Department for Homeland Security, Press Release, 27 June 2025, [link](#)).

D DISCLOSE DATA

This final pillar addresses a fundamental truth: Bahamian people have the right to know what is happening in their country.

We know that public concern over immigration is not without cause. Our immigration system has been breached in ways that demand a serious and transparent response.

The Bahamian people are crying out, on nearly every island, for leaders that don't run away from our national security challenges. But they also aren't falling for pretenders who only make the problem worse.

The FNM's plan to Disclose Data is focused on restoring public trust through full, demonstrable transparency.

THE FNM WILL:

- Publish the long overdue report on citizenship, residency, and immigration applications, finding that have been withheld for far too



long. After two peaceful demonstrations outside Immigration offices and the Prime Minister's unfulfilled 2023 promise of a full review, we will release all findings and recommendations publicly.

- Regularly publish the number of patrol hours, interdictions, work permits, citizenship approvals, seizures, and enforcement actions for the public.

“WE'RE DEALING WITH SERIOUS PROBLEMS, AND WE DON'T NEED ANY MORE UNSERIOUS PEOPLE IN THE HOUSE.”

- MICHAEL C. PINTARD

This pillar of our national strategy is designed to bring transparency to a system that has been operating in the shadows.

Why this is so important:

- **Back in 2023 the PLP promised a 'comprehensive' review to strengthen immigration procedures – but they seem to have had no impact.** They said they would undertake a 'comprehensive review' of immigration procedures with the goal of strengthening them, so that



Bahamians can be confident that the rules promote efficiency and fairness (Nassau Guardian, 8 September 2023, [link](#)).



IMMIGRATION PLAN

Under Michael Pintard's leadership, an FNM government will launch **Operation SHIELD** — a national mission to restore order and rebuild trust.

S

SECURE OUR LAND AND END ILLEGAL OCCUPATION

The FNM will take decisive action to protect public and private land. We will not allow anyone to claim land that does not belong to them. Our land must serve the people through safe, lawful, and planned development.

H

HEIGHTEN SURVEILLANCE

The FNM will strengthen maritime patrols with our regional & U.S. partners to secure our borders. This coordinated approach will deter organised smuggling networks, protect lives, and secure our borders without disrupting legitimate maritime activity.

I

INVESTIGATE POLITICAL ABUSE

The FNM will establish a Select Committee of Parliament to investigate political interference and corruption to ensure all citizenship and residency decisions follow the law. An inclusive, transparent Immigration Oversight Board will also be established to restore accountability.

E

END UNFAIRNESS & ENFORCE STRONGER PENALTIES

The FNM will ensure that anyone who enters illegally is permanently barred from citizenship —no exceptions, no rewards for breaking the law. We will align our policies with international standards to protect national integrity and discourage illegal entry.

L

LIMIT APPROVALS

The FNM will provide priority and efficient support for migrants who follow the rules. We will have thorough vetting of national status and criminal histories of all applicants in conjunction with US Homeland Security and other regional partners. Political interference will not be tolerated.

D

DISCLOSE DATA

The FNM will publish the long overdue report on citizenship, residency, and immigration applications. We will release all findings and recommendations publicly. We will demonstrate real transparency.

RESTORE TRUST. SECURE OUR BORDERS.