

2020

RESPONSE TO THE NATIONAL BUDGET STATEMENT



The



DOMINICA  
ECONOMY



The  
PRIME MINISTER'S  
ECONOMY



*Averting the danger of  
Government using the  
people's money to make the  
people poor, dependent and  
enslaved to the will of  
foreign masters.*

Hon. Lennox Linton

OPPOSITION LEADER

7/29/2020

## INTRODUCTION

Thank You Mr. Speaker... As you do at the commencement of every sitting of this Honorable House, and for emphasis at the start of this Budget debate, I pray the words of divine guidance intended to align our spirits with his justice, grace, mercy and peace:

*Almighty God who in Thy infinite wisdom and providential goodness has appointed the offices of leaders and councils for the welfare of society and the just government of man; we beseech Thee to behold with Thy abundant favour, us Thy servants, whom Thou hast been pleased to call to the performance of such important trusts in Dominica. Let Thy blessing descend upon us here in this House assembled, and grant that we may as in Thy presence treat and consider all matters that shall come under our deliberation, in so just and faithful a manner as to promote Thy honor and glory, and so advance the good of those whose interests Thou has committed to our charge; all which we ask in the name, and for the sake of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen*

We give thanks and praise for all those sacrificing on the frontline of the fight against the Covid 19 pandemic, all those who laboured above and beyond the call of duty to ensure that at this stage, of 17 million cases and over 650 thousand deaths worldwide, the 18 people infected with the virus here on the authentic covid resilient nature island of the world have recovered fully. Good Job!!! We extend sympathies to those who have lost loved ones around the world... we empathize with those who have contracted the virus and who are either recovering or struggling for their lives. We stand in solidarity, resilience and faithfulness with our embattled brothers and sisters in Dominica and the world community

In the presentation of the budget statement 2020/2021 a question was posed. I paraphrase:

*“In a time of trial, what must we do to achieve our transformation into... prosperity for all?”*

Understand and accept that righteousness exalts the nation but sin is a reproach to its people. Oppression, victimization and discrimination unto the least of our brothers and sisters is oppression, victimization and discrimination to all of us. Prosperity for all will only be realized in a just society and equal opportunity economy where Dominican lives truly matter.

## **THE MARIGOT CONSTITUENCY**

It was reported to this Honourable House, that naysayers doubted the new Marigot Hospital would ever be built. Really? After all the pleading and begging and beseeching for over six years inside and outside of this Parliament for the hospital to be built... after suffering so many preventable deaths in the North East Health District on account of the closure of the Marigot hospital for termite infestation, this is the most savvy politics that the Prime Minister can play to cover up neglect, incompetence and spitefulness for the people of Marigot?

Almost one hundred years ago, the people of Marigot built their own hospital. We are happy that construction of the hospital is finally progressing at a quick pace and will be completed in April 2021. The PSIP shows no spending on the hospital for 2019/2020 even though upwards of 8 million dollars was spent before the end of the close of the financial year on June 30, 2020. It means the money to build the hospital did not go into and is not coming from Dominica's consolidated fund as the constitutional rule of law requires. But the money is Dominica's money... and whatever private interest is spending it to build the Marigot hospital, the Marigot Hospital on the land of Sonny George belongs to the people of Marigot and neighboring communities. And there will be no issues of legal ownership down the road.

The community has urgent needs requiring an adequate allocation of public funds

## In AGRICULTURE

We need Feeder road development for:

Baron tantan road

Tantan pagua road

Captain Bruce road

Rose Hill Morne George road

Coffee road

Cregg Melville Hall road

Completion of the Lions/Sunly road

We need a Proper facility for the Agriculture extension unit.

We need a Food processing and packing facility for export of produce

We need a plant nursery for the production of planting material such as vegetable seedlings, citrus, pears, cocoa, coconuts and other plants.

We need Spray men to get paid so that they can spray the banana and plantain fields as often as required in defense against sigatoka disease.

We need proper management and non-politicization of the world bank project in order to achieve the desired results.

We need more shipping access to regional Agricultural markets.

## In EDUCATION AND SPORT AND RECREATION:

We need to immediately refurbish and upgrade the Wills Strathmore Stevens School.

We need government to work with the Village Councils from Marigot and Wesley to develop the Londonderry playing field as well as Lio Park in Marigot.

The concord multipurpose hard court needs to be repaired and upgraded.

The Ministry of tourism must include Marigot sights, events and festivities as part of the national tourism promotion program and calendar of activities.

Our segment of the National trail needs to be completely developed and maintained.

#### ECONOMIC AND OTHER CONCERNS:

Continued victimization of Marigot small business owners through persistent denial of access to state resources

Significant loss of income and business due to covid-19. NO STIMULUS

Many residents have lost their jobs.

Although the government is renting houses for a health center in Marigot, the people of Marigot continue to travel to Wesley for health services.

The Dam bridge and the accompanying retaining wall is still not yet complete.

The broken road at dam in front of the property of Ellsworth Prevost continues to pose a serious threat to pedestrians and motorist alike.

We are operating with less hurricane shelters due to the failure of government to repair damage shelters.

All our village roads including the Marigot portion of the Nicholas Liverpool Highway are in dire need of urgent repairs.

The bridge at bay needs to be upgraded

The Mantepo bridge needs to be able to accommodate two lanes as well as proper pedestrian sidewalk.

It is time to settle the land ownership issues existing at Melville Hall in the interest of our residents.

For more than two decades, Marigot, one of the most progressive and productive communities in this country, has been deliberately and

systematically deprived of adequate resources for the road network, housing, health, small business and village economy priorities.

But Marigot is still standing... weapons formed against the chosen representatives of Marigot have not, cannot and will not prosper... the righteous, just, Christian people of good conscience in Marigot will never be forsaken, nor will they be condemned to begging bread.

We press on to become a self-sufficient, full employment eco city with modern education, health, sporting, and recreational facilities; a road network that effectively connects the residential, commercial, agricultural, tourist and recreational areas; 1st world water and sanitation services; 100% energy requirements from wind and solar; and a minimum 4G platform for world class ICT functionality

We will not fail. Our faith is beyond question; our courage is exemplary

We shall overcome

### **FOR PERSPECTIVE – BUDGET YEAR 2018/2018**

On February 10<sup>th</sup> this year, we learnt in this honorable house that government had overspent the approved 2018/2019 budget by 322 million dollars. The presentation of a supplementary bill to retire the massive amount advanced from the contingency fund more than 7 months after the close of the financial year, is a clear violation of section 80 (2) of the constitution. But that kind of behavior has become more the norm than the exception for members of an executive who are increasingly hostile to parliamentary oversight of public finances.

We were told that the 322 million dollars spent without parliamentary approval was just fine notwithstanding the blinding evidence of election year campaign spending through Public Works, Housing, the National Employment Program and the Rapid Response Social Recovery Agency in particular.

With the election behind us, spending of \$25.8 million in 2018/2019 and \$28.6 million in 2019/2020 on the NEP has come tumbling down to \$9.5 million for 2020/2021- a whopping 67% decrease year on year. On the Rapid Response Social Recovery Agency, we spent \$37 million in 2018/2019 and \$15 million in 2019/2020. The budget estimate for 2020/2021 is \$5 million – one third of the prior year and only 14% of the Rapid Response spend in 2018/2019.

There was also a boast that the unbudgeted spending of 322 million was locally funded and the indication was that it was all CBI money. Except that with 2018/2019 CBI income of 226 million less administrative expenses of 102 million – net CBI income of 124 million by itself was inadequate.

Turns out that government's funding package for the \$322 million excess spending also included 86 million from the state's deposits at NBD and \$115 million from the increase of government's NBD overdraft – a total of \$201 million. The increase of the overdraft well beyond the legal limit gave government a 25 percent share of all NBD loans and advances at June 30, 2019.

So, the story of Budget year 2018/2019 is quite remarkable. Approved spending of 1.05 billion exceeded by 322 million but government failed to deliver 23% of the development projects approved for the financial year July 01, 2018 to June 30, 2019.

Still, the 20-year practice of silence on the implementation of budget allocations after approval by Parliament continues its merry roll down the stream of absurdity. Under our watch, there will be periodic budget performance reviews that allow parliament to note the trend of overall collection and spending and prepares Cabinet to reassess budget alignment with fiscal objectives and development priorities. We will have budget execution reports, including in-year and audited year-end reports designed to yield useful improvement messages on performance and value-for-money.

The parliamentary budget oversight focus will be on integrated budget formulation systems and monitoring procedures that are coherent and consistent across all levels of governance in the public interest.

## **FUNDAMENTAL REQUIREMENTS FOR CHANGE**

In the interest of relevance and credibility, the economic growth strategy associated with a national budget in our democracy must be assessed in the context of the economic management performance of government side by side with existing national development realities and challenges.

The allocations of revenue and expenditure for the financial year 2019/2020 and the budget statement that presents them for the approval of parliament lack relevance and credibility. They are not about national development of the people, by the people for the people... they are, regrettably, about the practice of governance for personal gain by leaders that have disconnected themselves from the people they are sworn to serve... Leaders who seem unconsciously committed to violate the oath “to honor, uphold and preserve the constitution” and to discharge the responsibilities of public office “without fear or favor; affection or ill-will”.

The single biggest national development challenge facing Dominica at this time is the need to eliminate the dangerous threat posed to our sovereignty and identity as a nation.

These twin elements – sovereignty and identity - are now up for sale and, by extension our national psyche is in the global market place being traded to hell in hand baskets of Dominica passport money by friends of Dominica’s ruling party regime.

Proposals in this budget and the performance of this government in handling the approved budgets of recent years in particular, confirm that Dominica is being transformed in the image and likeness of those who don’t share our values and don’t believe in the ethos of our society - our values and norms



The sale of our passports, the very element within our national revenue stream intended to improve our quality of life, is being used to cripple the character of our nation and cast the darkest clouds over our Nature Island space.

Dominica is in Danger. After decades of independence we are now on the verge of re colonization ... our forefathers earned the right for this country to be governed by its sons and daughters. And today, those who govern are selling our National identity by allowing their foreign friends under the guise of Citizenship by Investment to illegally collect and corruptly spend billions of dollars belonging to our people for their personal gain.

In this day and age impoverished citizens yearning for a better life are being enslaved by ruling party puppets of their passport selling masters behind the bars of need for food, clothing, and shelter assistance provided by state, while foreigners are allowed to plunder hundreds of millions from the public purse with impunity.

With our own passport money, foreign friends of the regime are deciding who will contest elections for a political party that has failed the people miserably in government for 20 years; how many hundreds of millions will be spent to buy elections and defeat the will of the people. The slave masters in the making are deciding, all by themselves, how much of our passport money will come into Dominica and how much they will keep overseas; which foreign contractors will, without competitive bid or public tender, receive hundreds of millions of dollars from our passport sales to build public facilities and build out the economic infrastructure. The slave masters in the making, insisting that Dominican lives do not matter, ensure that local contractors, service providers and born Dominicans in general suffer, deliberately deprived of opportunities funded by the sale of their passports to earn a living from using their talents and skills in the development of their own country.

Two executives involved in the construction of a hotel resort in the north have smiled all the way to their foreign bank accounts with 60 million US

dollars, 163 million EC dollars, (81.5 million dollars each) from commissions on the passport sales that financed the hotel and their share of the difference between passport sales and the cost of construction.

In the signature disgrace of our life and times under the watch of the Labour Party administration, billions of dollars belonging to the people of Dominica are being illegally privatized and diverted to foreign controllers of Dominica's passport business.

This is not an economy for the people Dominica; it is being built as a modern-day slave plantation organized by ruling party puppets of their foreign masters for their exclusive wealth creation benefit

- This budget couldn't care less that the Economy is not working for the people
- this budget couldn't care less that people's money to finance the growth of the people's economic engines are under the absolute control of foreigners
- this budget couldn't care less that the struggle to survive in Dominica is getting harder and harder
- this budget couldn't care less about the growing number of Dominicans trapped in Poverty & Dependency
- this budget couldn't care less about the chronic Youth Unemployment Crisis
- this budget couldn't care less about Low Wages, Rising Cost of Living

Because the strategic plan of those with collective responsibility for the budget is to keep the people of Dominica poor, dependent and enslaved to massa's will

The Independence to run our own affairs that we gleefully embraced on November 3rd, 1978, is working wonders for the multi-billion-dollar benefit of the foreign friends of the ruling party regime. It is not working for the farmers, the fishermen, the nurses, the teachers, the police officers,

the public officers, the doctors, the lawyers, the business men and women, the shop keepers, the disappearing middle class, the clerks, the carpenters, the masons, the electricians, the plumbers, the rich, the poor, the unemployed, the youth, the elderly, the leaders of church...

The nature island people of Dominica from all walks of life, know and understand that in the last 20 years we have been reversing into the dark ages where our ancestors fought against the odds for our freedom... for a Dominica for Dominicans... for lives that matter.

As we reflect carefully on the necessity of ensuring that our lives in Dominica matter, the United Workers Party calls on all Dominicans to join the movement for Real Change to save our country. It's a collective national responsibility that commits us to:

1. Bring an immediate end to the anti-Dominica national policy that places foreign interests above Dominican interests. Stop the relegation of Dominicans to second class citizens in Dominica increasingly unable to own land, residential/commercial property and industry while foreigners selling Dominican passports are buying up Dominica's prime real estate
2. Restore meaning and purpose to all institutions of State, including the Judiciary, Local Government, the Civil Service, the Dominica Police Force, Statutory Corporations, the Integrity Commission and the Electoral Commission.
3. Build a new economic framework, driven by the private, public, cooperative and civil society sectors for the development of the growth engines – Agriculture, Water, Tourism, Renewable Energy, Manufacturing, Construction, Information Communication Technology, Culture

Far from addressing these fundamental requirements of change, this budget and the operation of those before it, particularly those of recent years, further underline the need for real change that will ensure Dominican lives do matter in Dominica.

## REVENUE/EXPENDITURE PERFORMANCE

Let's turn now to a few observations on the revenue/expenditure performance of central government last year.

<b>RECURRENT REVENUE 2019/2020</b>					
	<b>18/19A</b>	<b>19/20B</b>	<b>19/20A</b>	<b>DIFF</b>	<b>%</b>
Tax	460.8	379.5	373.7	(5.8)	-1.5%
Non Tax	256.4	438.7	171.0	(267.7)	-61.0%
	<b>717.2</b>	<b>818.2</b>	<b>544.7</b>	<b>(273.5)</b>	<b>-33.4%</b>
P.I.T	28.3	32.0	27.6	(4.4)	-13.8%
C.I.T	52.1	24.0	41.2	17.2	71.7%
Property	8.7	8.9	9.3	0.4	4.5%
VAT	264.7	220.3	208.2	(12.1)	-5.5%
Duties	106.9	94.3	87.4	(6.9)	-7.3%
	<b>460.7</b>	<b>379.5</b>	<b>373.7</b>	<b>(5.8)</b>	<b>-1.5%</b>
Rent & Int	1.3	1.0	0.5	(0.5)	-50.0%
Fines, fees, sales	21.1	11.6	10.5	(1.1)	-9.5%
Fin. Services	0.1	0.4	0.1	(0.3)	-77.5%
CBI	224.3	417.5	151.1	(266.4)	-63.8%
Other	9.6	8.2	8.7	0.5	6.1%
	<b>256.4</b>	<b>438.7</b>	<b>171.0</b>	<b>(267.7)</b>	<b>-61.0%</b>

<b>CAPITAL REVENUE</b>				
	<b>total</b>	<b>GOCD</b>	<b>LOANS</b>	<b>GRANTS</b>
2019/2020B	481.8	292.2	72.3	117.3
2019/2020A	160.8	136.8	2.3	21.7
	321.0	155.4	70.0	95.6
% Achieved	<b>33%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>18%</b>
% Undelivered	<b>67%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>82%</b>
<b>CAPITAL SPENDING</b>				
	<b>19/20B</b>	<b>19/20A</b>	<b>Diff</b>	
Public Works	167.8	45.1	-122.7	-73%
Housing	77.4	25.3	-52.1	-67%
Trade	54.7	2.2	-52.5	-96%
Environment	44.0	37.4	-6.6	-15%
Health	24.7	6.5	-18.2	-74%
Education	22.0	1.4	-20.6	-94%
Agriculture	20.3	14.9	-5.4	-27%
Tourism	9.7	16.8	7.1	73%
Others	61.2	11.2	-50.0	-82%
	<b>481.8</b>	<b>160.8</b>	<b>-321.0</b>	<b>-67%</b>

On May 17th, 2020 the prime minister announced that the government has so far, spent almost 22 million dollars in direct costs in the response to the Covid-19 Pandemic. We don't see this amount in the actual expenditure projections for 2019/2020. What we see is health ministry project spending of \$6.5 million against a budget of \$24.7 Million - \$18.2 million or 74% less than the approved amount

<b>TAX REVENUE PERFORMANCE</b>					
	<b>19/20B</b>	<b>19/20A</b>	<b>Per Mth</b>	<b>9 mths</b>	<b>3 mths</b>
I/Rev	285.2	286.3	23.8	213.9	57.0
Customs	94.3	87.4	7.9	70.73	16.5
	<b>379.5</b>	<b>373.7</b>	<b>31.6</b>	<b>284.6</b>	<b>73.5</b>
9M A				300.2	94.8
AvB				15.6	21.3
				8%	22%

According to the Prime Minister there were weaker than expected revenue collections, during the third and fourth quarters of Fiscal Year 2019/20, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Preliminary data indicates total revenue fell short of projections by 33.4 percent”.

Before the impact of Covid our revenue collection was 15.6 million ahead of budget. We took a 21.4 million dollar hit from covid in the last three months of the year leaving us revenue shortfall of \$5.8 million against the budget.

Then we got \$37.9 million from the IMF’s Rapid Credit Facility, \$6.7 million from the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), and \$8.2 million, from the World Bank’s, International Development Association – a total of \$52.8 million. The loan fund for bus drivers and other small business owners and service providers was \$5 million, the unemployment cash assistance was \$15.7 million. Total \$20.7 million add the shortfall of \$5.8 million - \$26.5 million from \$52.8 million leaves us with \$26.3 million. What did we do with it? Or, what do we intend to do with it?

## **UNACCOUNTED PUBLIC FUNDS**

**The Venezuela Debt:** Issues of trust continue to bedevil the budget process. There is simply too much money belonging to the people of Dominica that are unaccounted for despite numerous questions and requests in this honorable house seeking resolution

On November 21, 2017, Venezuela forgave 100 million Us dollars (270 million EC dollars) of Dominica's debt under the Petro Caribe arrangement.

We asked at the time of the debt cancellation and subsequently in this Parliament in May 2018, for a full accounting of the money the Prime Minister finally accepted Dominica owes Venezuela after telling this Parliament the country had no such debt. We asked who received the Venezuela loan and how and when and into what account was it received. We asked what was the loan money used for and on behalf of Dominica to date? What is the balance available from the loan funds as at the date of forgiveness? And How soon will the entity holding the loan from Venezuela to Dominica present a cheque to government for the 100 million US dollars less any amounts legitimately spent for and on behalf of Dominica? We are still waiting for satisfactory answers.

The Minister of Finance told us in Parliament on May 1st, 2018:

“The cancellation of the debt... the \$100M which the Venezuelans have indicated, it is based on their fuel supply of petroleum products over the life of the Petro Caribe Agreement. That is the 40%.

“So, what is being done now is, once he made the announcement, there is a reconciliation of invoices, bills and receipts because in this agreement you have three different players. You have PDVSA which is the National Petroleum Company of Venezuela who is the supplier of the petroleum products. You have the joint venture of this with Venezuela and Dominica and you have the wholly owned state company, Dominica National Petroleum Company who holds a 40% deferred amount in trust...

“Once this reconciliation is done, those funds will be sent from the joint venture to DNPC and DNPC will now transfer these funds to the Treasury of Dominica to the Consolidated Fund to be used for national development projects to respond to the disaster and other aspects in Dominica”.

The money from the debt has been held by the DNPC, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Government of Dominica. So what other money from the debt does the joint venture company have to transfer to the treasury? It is the DNPC, the government's company that must transfer the funds to the government's treasury.

The struggling people of Venezuela and the hurricane affected people of Dominica whom the Venezuelans have made a huge sacrifice to help simply want to know where is the money?

**Citizenship by Investment (CBI) Revenues:** In recent responses to the budget statement I have been drawing parliament's attention to what appeared to be a discrepancy of 100 million dollars in the balance of the Citizenship by Investment account reported by the Finance Minister as at June 30th, 2017.

The explanation given for the discrepancy is that \$13.5 million is being transferred monthly from the CBI account to an airport development account opened in May 2017. But the \$149 million said to be in the account as at May 31st, 2018 means that most of the airport account transfers took place in the financial year commencing July 1st, 2017 at which time only \$40 million dollars in transfers for May and June 2017 were in the account. Again, we need a proper explanation. What happened to the \$100 million? Where is the money gone?

In May of 2017 the Prime Minister told this Honorable House that his government had capitalized the Airport Development fund with an amount of \$10 million US dollars and would be placing \$5 million US in that account monthly thereafter from the sale of Dominican citizenship. At June 30, 2020, the amount in that account should be \$526 million EC dollars. But there is no accounting. We heard the boasts in the 2019 election campaign that this is the only party in government that has set aside money for the construction of an international airport. Where is the money? All we hear now is that the airport will be built by China. This budget year, government seeks approval to spend 7 million from local funds and 40 million over the next two years from grants. However, land



purchases amounting to 50.7 million are supposed to commence this year for 213 land owners. What happened to the 526 million dollars in the International Airport Development Account?

And what happened to Dominica’s CBI revenues in 2019/2020

	18/19A	19/20B	19/20A	Diff	%
CBI Program	0.52	0.50	0.82	0.32	64%
CBI Agency Fees	0.08	2.50	0.19	(2.31)	-92%
EDF	152.40	380.00	113.06	(266.94)	-70%
Appl. Fee	0.20	2.50	0.03	(2.47)	-99%
Due Diligence	68.80	30.00	34.30	4.30	14%
C.O.N	2.30	2.00	2.70	0.70	35%
	224.30	417.50	151.10	(266.40)	-64%

These CBI revenue numbers indicate that 4,000 persons bought Dominican citizenship in 2019/2020. The revenue due to the state of Dominica on the sale of 4,000 citizenships is approximately 577 million dollars. Only 151 million dollars came into the consolidated fund leaving a balance out there somewhere of 426 million dollars

In his 1850 essay "Ce qu'on voit et ce qu'on ne voit pas" ("That Which We See and That Which We Do Not See"), French economist and author Frédéric Bastiat introduced the parable of the broken window to illustrate why destruction, and the money spent to recover from destruction, is not actually a net benefit to society.

Bastiat who developed the concept of opportunity cost, used the parable to show how opportunity costs, as well as the law of unintended consequences, affect economic activity in ways that are unseen or ignored. Consequently, the belief that destruction is good for the economy became known as the broken window fallacy.

Claude- Frédéric Bastiat said many moons ago:

“When plunder becomes a way of life for a group of men in society, over the course of time they create for themselves **a legal system** that authorizes it and **a moral code** that justifies it”.

In my response to the July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019 budget presentation of the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, I noted the report in the official estimates that money collected from CBI in 2018/2019 was EC\$226 million. This is 180.6 million or 44% less than the budgeted amount of 406.6 million.

We read on Dominica's CBI Website:

“To be eligible for citizenship of the Commonwealth of Dominica under its Citizenship by Investment Programme, you must make:

EITHER

A contribution into the Economic Diversification Fund (EDF) amounting to a minimum of USD 100,000 for a single applicant, and increasing depending on the number of dependents included in the application;

OR

An investment in designated real estate with a value of at least USD 200,000

Government says, “the Economic Diversification Fund (EDF) was established through the Citizenship by Investment Programme as one component of a national capital mobilization portfolio, with the goal of national development for Dominica.

Generated funds are utilized for public and private sector projects where a need is identified. Public sector projects identified for financing under the Programme include, but are not limited to, (1) the building of schools, (2) hospital renovations, and (3) the building of a national sports stadium. With respect to private sector projects, the Government's focus is on tourism, information technology, and agriculture.

**THE EDF OPTION:** To qualify for citizenship under the EDF option, the following contribution amounts are required, depending on the number of dependents included in the application:

1. Single applicant: a non-refundable contribution of USD 100,000;

2. Main applicant and spouse: a non-refundable contribution of USD 175,000 – average per person USD 87,500;
3. Main applicant with up to three qualifying dependents: a non-refundable contribution of USD 200,000 – average per person USD 50,000;
4. Any qualifying dependent of the main applicant, other than a spouse: a non-refundable contribution of USD 25,000 per dependent.

**THE REAL ESTATE OPTION:** To qualify for citizenship of Dominica under the real estate option of the Citizenship by Investment Programme, you must purchase authorized real estate to the minimum value of USD 200,000.

On approval in principle of an application through a real estate investment or other approved project, the following Government Fees also apply:

1. USD 25,000 for a single applicant;
2. USD 35,000 for a main applicant applying with his or her spouse;
3. USD 35,000 for a family of up to four persons, including the main applicant and up to three dependents – average per person USD 8,750;
4. USD 50,000 for a family of up to six persons, including the main applicant and up to five dependents; or
5. USD 70,000 for a family of seven persons or more, including the main applicant and six or more dependents.

According to the March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019 edition of Dominica's Official Gazette, 3,961 persons received Dominican citizenship over the 5-month period August to December 2018. We estimated that these citizens paid an average of 50 thousand USD per passport. Accordingly, we projected that CBI income for 2018/2019 was 1.291 billion EC dollars - 1.065 billion more than the of 226 million reported for the full year.

So, we asked and the people have been asking where is the money?

There was no response from the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance in Parliament even though he needed an extra 30 minutes to conclude his 20-minute wrap up of the 2019 budget debate in which the question was raised.

But on Thursday August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019, the Prime Minister disclosed on Kairi FM radio that there is a “housing” option to acquiring Dominican citizenship which was previously unknown to the people of Dominica:

*“In respect to the housing there was a special dispensation, so it is not under the Real Estate. It is treated somewhat like the (Economic Diversification) Fund option so the fees applicable to the Housing are the fees applicable if you were to invest in the (EDF) Government’s direct monetary option...”*

Under this previously unknown Citizenship by Investment option, Montreal Management Company Est. (MMCE), without competitive bid or public tender, has an arrangement with the Prime Minister under which, it “is directly funding the construction of houses” with money from the CBI.

For the avoidance of doubt, all the monies from the EDF go into the state treasury. The fees for the “Housing program” are the same as the EDF option, but the revenue stream has been illegally privatized into the control of the Prime Minister and the CEO of MMC.

The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance says:

*“The Housing Program now is the premier program because it invokes a certain consciousness on the part of investors to know that they helping somebody in Dominica with their investment to be in a home recognizing the impact of tropical storm Erika and recognizing the impact of hurricane on Dominica...”*

*“If we did not have the Housing Program and if we only had the Range and the Marriott, you would see a dramatic number in terms of revenue for the Government. The Housing Program is doing better than the fund option...”*

So, the Prime Ministers “housing program” illegally takes CBI revenues that would normally come through the EDF option into the treasury and places those moneys belonging to the people of Dominica in an account outside of Dominica’s consolidated fund. The program is exclusive to MMCE which the Prime Minister has facilitated to cannibalize the EDF with the offer of special deals.

*“If we did not have this project **and we had this agent (MMCE) selling for Dominica**, all this money would have been part of revenue in the Consolidated Fund. But what you have with the Real Estate and the Housing... you have an Escrow Account. These monies go into the development and therefore it can’t be part of revenue...”*

This statement from the Prime Minister makes it clear that the Prime Minister and the CEO of MMCE are in full control of the funds from the Housing Option of the CBI charged, collected, and received for and on behalf of the Government and people of Dominica from the sale of Dominican citizenship. Any and all revenue collected in respect of the sale of Dominican citizenship can only logically be considered ‘public money’.

the arrangement between the Prime Minister and Anthony Haiden of MMCE to collect, bank, disburse, and distribute outside of the consolidated fund public moneys collected from the sale of Dominican citizenship for the purpose of public housing in Dominica jumps the fence of Executive authority to trespass on the sacred constitutional ground of the Legislature.

Section 76 of the Constitution, the supreme law of Dominica, provides:

*“All revenues or other moneys raised or received by Dominica (not being revenues or other moneys that are payable, by or under any law for the time being in force in Dominica, into some other fund established for a specific purpose) shall be paid into and from a consolidated fund”.*

The Finance (Administration) Act 1994 defines public moneys as:

- a) *All revenues or other moneys raised or received for the purpose of government; and*
- b) *Any moneys or funds held, whether temporarily or otherwise, by any officer in his official capacity, either alone or jointly with any other person, whether or not that person is an officer*

The Act provides:

*Section 7: There shall be one revenue fund which shall be called the Consolidated Fund*

*Section 8: Subject to the Constitution and except as otherwise provided for in this Act, all revenues and other moneys raised or received for the purpose of the Government not being revenue or other moneys which are payable by or into some other fund established for a specific purpose, shall be paid into and form part of the Consolidated Fund*

The rule of law in Dominica provide for due consideration and parliamentary approval of revenue collection and expenditure authorization with open and full disclosure to the public on whose behalf the public moneys are collected and disbursed.

These revenues raised from the Citizenship by Investment Program of the state of Dominica for Housing for the state of Dominica, are public funds and properly belong in the treasury (consolidated fund) of the state of Dominica. There is no law requiring such revenues to be paid into “some other fund established for a specific purpose”. Accordingly, the exception provided at section 76 of the Constitution and Section 8 of the Finance (Administration) Act, does not apply. The CBI “Housing” funds belong to the people of Dominica and must be received into and disbursed from the Consolidated Fund.

We believe that the CBI revenues placed in the public purse for the financial year 2018/2019 may be as much as one billion dollars less than that the amount actually collected. And the Prime Minister agrees:

*“Every one of these houses that we are building under the CBI program belongs to the state 100%. So, this is state asset. So otherwise if we did not have the Housing or **if we did not go with the Housing Program in the way that we went**, all of those revenues would go to the state and therefore it would form part of the Estimates or the Public Sector Investment Program... Had we included this in the Estimates the Budget would not have been one billion dollars, it would be about 2-point-2 billion dollars”.*

2.2 billion – 1.0 billion = 1.2 billion. That’s the Prime Minister’s estimate of the revenue shortfall into the Consolidated Fund for the financial year 2018/2019. To that \$1.2 billion from 2018/2019 we now add the \$426 million similarly kept out of the consolidated fund for 2019/2020. The total amount of passport revenues unaccounted for in the last two financial years is \$1.6 billion.

One year ago the following information was requested from the government on public funds from the CBI program for each of the three financial years ending June 30th, 2019:

1. The number of citizenships approved broken down by Economic Development Fund, Real Estate, Housing and any other citizenship access options.
2. The amount of money paid for the approved citizenships broken down by Economic Development Fund, Real Estate, Housing and any other citizenship access options.
3. Receipts, disbursements and year end balances for all special funds, trust funds, escrow accounts and other funds/accounts operating with money derived from and/or connected to the Citizenship by Investment program.

One year later... 12 months, 52 weeks... there has been no response.

**Housing Dominica, Unconstitutional Diversion of Public Funds.** The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has created (with questionable legal authority so to do) a “Housing Dominica” department in the Citizenship By Investment Unit as a front for MMCE which has been carte blanche to

develop 12 health centers and finance them with CBI Housing revenues that remain under his private control.

In this initiative in which MMCE, without competitive bid or public tender, has the exclusive privilege to exclude Dominican builders from the construction of any of the Health Centers, we are told that the partners of Housing Dominica are:

Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica

Citizenship by Investment Unit

Montreal Management Consultants Est. Ltd.

NH International Caribbean Limited

China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation

These health centers are not included in the Public Sector Investment Projects approved by Parliament for this fiscal year 2020/2021 or for the previous fiscal year 2019/2020 but four of them are complete and construction is progressing on the others under a funding arrangement that is a stranger to the Consolidated Fund and repugnant to the Constitutional rule of law.

The purpose of adding health centers and other public infrastructure projects to MMCE's housing portfolio, without public tender, is to convey the impression that the more than one billion dollars from the CBI housing option over the past two years which is illegally and unconstitutionally under the private control of the Prime Minister is being spent on public interest projects.

The Prime Minister's deliberate departure from the requirements of section 76 of the Constitution and Section 8 of the Finance (Administration) Act is an unlawful imposition on executive authority and a usurpation of parliamentary oversight responsibility that deprives the people of Dominica of mandatory constitutional provisions for the control and safeguard of public money.



The arrangement between the Prime Minister and the CEO of MMCE made without due parliamentary consideration and approval, as required by both the Constitution and the Finance (Administration) Act 1994, is unconstitutional, illegal, totally out of order and completely null and void. Let it therefore be known that the improper exercise of executive powers or the abuse of executive authority cannot and will not be allowed supersede the clear provisions of the constitution of the commonwealth of Dominica - our supreme law.

President of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) Mr. Justice Adrian Saunders has already made it crystal clear:

*“Caribbean courts, as part of their general function of judicial review, have a constitutional obligation to strike down, administrative or executive action that exceeds jurisdiction or undermines the authority of the legislature”.*

We will therefore seek a ruling from the court that this privatization of public money by the Prime Minister is unlawful and in flagrant breach of the Constitution; it must come to an end immediately; and all public funds under the private control of the Prime Minister must be placed forthwith in the Consolidated Fund.

**The Unaccounted Billions – A Summary:**

CBI revenues missing from 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 – 1.626 billion

Transfers to Airport Development A/C from May 2017 – 0.526 billion

June 2017 CBI A/C balance discrepancy - 0.1 billion

Unaccounted Venezuela debt forgiveness – 0.270

The total is \$2.522 billion. \$2,500 million

What really is the purpose of a national budget approval exercise in Parliament, where such a significant amount of money belonging to the people remains outside of the people’s consolidated fund and beyond the reach of parliamentary oversight? Which small island economy can survive the diversion of this much public money into private control?

## **THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICIAL RESIDENCE**

On or about June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the Cabinet of Dominica met and authorized the rental of a property from Mercury Properties Development Ltd, for the accommodation of the Prime Minister. The amount authorized is EC\$32,000.00 per month; \$384,000 per year. This amount is not included in the 2020/2021 expenditure estimates now before the House for approval... at least not under the Head D30 Office of the Prime Minister, Programme Code D30 M100 M17 – Prime Minister's Official Residence. We find under that head in this budget year an amount of \$387,597 to cover wages, supplies and materials, operating and maintenance services, professional and consultancy services, insurance, sundry expenses and other machinery and equipment. This puts the annual cost the state is required to pay for the Morne Daniel property at \$771,598 or \$64,300 per month.

It is now settled law in the region that a decision of Cabinet under certain circumstances is subject to judicial review. The parliamentary opposition believes Cabinet's exercise of its "power" to rent a palatial property for the Prime Minister that will cost the state over three quarters of a million dollars per year, is reviewable on at least three grounds:

- a) Illegality
- b) Irrationality; and
- c) Procedural Impropriety

### **ILLEGALITY**

The Constitution provides at section 65 that a Minister or Parliamentary Secretary shall not enter upon the duties of his office unless he has taken and subscribed the oath of allegiance, the oath of office and the oath of secrecy. The Cabinet of Ministers is therefore sworn to honor, uphold and preserve the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Dominica and to

faithfully execute the duties of Ministerial office without fear or favor, affection or ill-will. The wasteful, extravagant spending of \$32,000.00 monthly to rent a residence for the Prime Minister represents an illegal exercise of administrative discretion by Cabinet that confers “favor” on the Head of Cabinet and subjects to “ill-will” the suffering people of Dominica who are saddled with the burden of this outrageous and completely unjustified expenditure.

The Constitution provides at section 77 for Parliamentary approval of all expenditure from the public purse. At the time of the Cabinet decision to rent the Morne Daniel residence for the Prime Minister at \$32,000.00 monthly there was no request for Parliamentary approval and therefore no Parliamentary approval for this particular charge on the public funds.

The Finance Administration Act and the Procurement Act provide regulations against wasteful, uneconomical spending in the procurement of public services. This means in effect that the rule of law demands adherence to the command of Parliament that spending of public funds must reflect value for money.

### **IRRATIONALITY**

We believe Cabinet’s decision to rent the palatial property at Morne Daniel “so outrageous in its defiance of logic or of accepted moral standards that no sensible person who had applied its mind to the question to be decided could have arrived at it”

The decision is irrational for a number of reasons:

- 1) The availability of state-owned residence at Morne Bruce occupied by the current Head of Cabinet from the time he became Prime Minister in 2004 to a few years ago when he relocated to a residence in Morne Daniel at the expense of the state to facilitate repair/renovation or reconstruction of the Morne Bruce residence;
- 2) Under the watch of the Head of Cabinet as Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the Morne Bruce residence dedicated to housing the Prime Minister was deliberately kept in a state of

disrepair as evidenced by the fact that there has been no request for Parliamentary approval for funds to repair/renovate or reconstruct it, notwithstanding the hundreds of millions of dollars from CBI revenues spent on public housing in recent years;

- 3) The privately owned Morne Daniel property where the Prime Minister resided at the expense of the State after moving from Morne Bruce, was damaged by Hurricane Maria and the Prime Minister has since resided at the State House where public funds were expended to fit part of the facility to the needs of his family;
- 4) There has been no Cabinet representation to Parliament on the condition of the Morne Bruce residence or the time frame in which repairs/renovation or reconstruction would be completed to allow the Prime Minister to resume residence there;
- 5) The fact that the decision to rent the “Morne Daniel Palace” was done in blatant violation of the procurement processes that govern state expenditure;
- 6) The cynical attempt to keep the Cabinet decision secret;
- 7) The depressed economic conditions in Dominica evidenced by the following:
  - a) A minimum wage of EC\$4.05 per hour or EC\$702.00 per month and an average monthly income in Dominica of less than \$2,000.00;
  - b) The fact that the annual income for over 1,500 public servants is less than \$32,000 per year;
  - c) The fact that the monthly rent authorized is more than three times the Prime Minister’s monthly salary;
  - d) The fact that by law, the monthly housing allowance for the President not living in state owned residence is \$3,000;

e) The timing of the decision, when, in the face of a pandemic that has decimated Dominica's economy, and when the government has been unable to provide poverty-stricken citizens with a modest stimulus package, the Cabinet's decision is not only irrational but also unconscionable;

8) While the state may have an obligation to provide reasonable accommodation for the Prime Minister, it does not have an obligation to provide extravagant and luxurious accommodation to the Prime Minister that exceeds all standards of decency and reasonableness

### **PROCEDURAL IMPROPRIETY**

Based on the generally accepted rules of Cabinet conduct and procedure, this Cabinet decision was made in bad faith to extravagantly benefit the Head of Cabinet at the expense of the suffering people of Dominica.

Instead of providing leadership on the most economical solution to the resolve the Cabinet created issue of housing for the Prime Minister, the Head of Cabinet who was able to influence Cabinet to rent a palatial residence for him at a cost to the state of \$32,000.00 monthly, overturned two Cabinet decisions to build a suitable residence for the Prime Minister with available state resources.

This was disclosed by Housing Minister Reginald Austrie on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020:

*"It's the Prime Minister's fault why today we are having that debate, because in the last Cabinet, the Cabinet sat and took a decision to build a house for the Prime Minister of the country... and the prime minister in his good wisdom said to the Cabinet that he was not going to undertake that project to build a house for the Prime Minister because there were too many Dominicans still recovering from (Tropical Storm) Erika and (Hurricane) Maria... He said no he was*

*not going to do it... The Prime Minister travelled out of state I was chairing the cabinet meeting... the Prime Minister had rescinded the first cabinet decision. In his absence we took a decision to that bring that back in Cabinet and to take another Cabinet decision and to instruct the committee to go ahead with the designs and plans for a residence for the Prime Minister. When Skerrit came back, Skerrit overturned that cabinet decision that we had taken in his absence”.*

The Nation also heard from National Security Minister Rayburn Blackmore:

*”There were three Cabinet decisions taken prior to Hurricane Maria. There was a Cabinet subcommittee and a technical subcommittee to look into the possibility of constructing an official residence for the occupier of that office (of Prime Minister) whoever that person might be. Then came Hurricane Maria and at a time when we actually had to provide shelter for mostly every Dominican the prime Minister felt we should discontinue that process which we did... and what is happening now is to provide an interim accommodation for the occupier of the office pending the construction of an official residence... and I can say to you that the work has begun because the design has been formulated to commence with the actual construction of proper accommodation for the occupier of the office of Prime Minister... and let me say to you the Prime Minister came back to have this decision rescinded and cabinet has a responsibility also to ensure that the occupier of the office is secured”.*

There is no evidence of any Cabinet paper outlining the rationale for the choice of the palatial property at Morne Daniel and the steps taken to secure economy and ensure a Cabinet decision in compliance with anti-money laundering and counter terrorism regulations.

The residence in Morne Daniel is in the name of Mercury Properties Development Ltd whose sole director is Anthony Haiden of Montreal Management Company with whom the Head of Cabinet is associated in the unlawful privatization of over one billion dollars from Dominica’s

Citizenship by Investment (CBI) revenues for the financial year 2018/2019.

There is no evidence that Cabinet concerned itself with the lack of transparency and accountability in the utilization of these illegally privatized public revenues, the source of funding for the Morne Daniel residence and founded allegations that the Head of Cabinet has an ownership interest in it. Indeed, by aiding and abetting the unconstitutional privatization of public revenues, Cabinet failed to honor, uphold and preserve the Constitution of Dominica and to faithfully execute the duties of Ministerial office without fear or favor, affection or ill-will.

The Morne Daniel residence is adjacent to a property described by the Head of Cabinet over the years as his farm which his wife's parents transferred to her in March of 2020 at an undervalue thereby causing the public revenues to be deprived of over 70 thousand EC dollars.

Members of Cabinet who contested the December 2019 general election as candidates of the Dominica Labour Party are all familiar with Anthony Haiden as a major provider of campaign finance and candidate benefits from the revenues of Dominica's CBI Program.

At the time of the Cabinet Decision, members of Cabinet knew or ought to have known about the sweetheart relationship between the Head of Cabinet and Anthony Haiden which allowed the sole director of Mercury Properties Development Ltd to use hundreds of millions of dollars from Dominica's CBI "Housing Option" revenues with no accountability to the public.

The Cabinet of ministers knew or ought to have known that there was no co-incidence in Haiden's purchase of land adjacent to the farm of the Head of Cabinet in 2018 to build the palatial residence. It was planned.

The Prime Minister says he will be the first to admit that "\$32,000 in any currency is a lot of money", but he is concerned that people want him to "live in a banana shed". In other words, in Dominica at this time, if the

dwelling house is not a palatial mansion rented for \$32,000 per month then it is a banana shed.

## **BUDGET STATEMENT REVIEW**

The government over the past twenty years has advocated a socialist agenda which has paralyzed the private sector. From initiatives circumventing domestic sales and vacating much needed import duties on the port - a policy it has been quietly reversing since Covid 19, to outright calling for the boycott on private tax paying, job creating private sector entities.

In the economic depression of the Covid 19 Era, the government pretends it now needs the private sector which, pays taxes, feeds us, provide utilities and other critical services, by masquerading an economic stimulus plan that is lackluster as best. That was further cemented in an anemic budget devoid of any major macro-economic impact for the budget year. All we heard was how hard things are and how much we should be grateful for the little that is being done. Even the main highlight of a 30M facility for micro and mid-size business could only muster a 4M contribution in this budget year. This micro amount does not even meet the threshold of Mid-size and turns out to be more of a jester rather than economic stimulation. The incompetence of the policy came glaring through as the Minister of finance sort to introduce this measure to this House in a national budget but still has to meet with potential participants as to just under what terms he will allow the micro 4M to them. Clearly, this was a rushed measure to put some color into an otherwise pale budget.

The critical private sector, and by extension the national economy, requires urgently to replace the FDI flows necessary to provide the multiplier effect in the economy so that people can pay for goods and services. At present, the government national infrastructure development plan, ongoing by the way, is absent from the national estimates as it is absent from the real economy. No bid contracts have been doled out to



foreign companies that largely import their high value labor and from all indications are paid from outside to outside the formal national economy. This has stifled the multiplier effect expected and promised by the Minister of Finance.

The domestic banking sector has played its part with rescheduling loans and cautiously lending it these uncertain times. However, the Government has failed to provide the needed measures and stimulus needed to keep the economy growing. Although the Minister seeks to tout in his budget that these projects are somehow by the government making, we are yet to discuss how the Gov, controls these projects, pays for these projects, and how these projects will bolster the local economy.

What the private sector needs now is direct meaningful injection of low interest stimulus loans in a quantum that provides the support that the economy needs. Introducing stimulus on a prescriptive dose basis only prolongs the ailment of a sick and dying economy. What we need is to resuscitate this economy by returning to the plan outlined by the opposition. We gave the Government the blue print to rescue this country in this critical time by using the people's passport money for the interest of the people.

But alas, that is another economy undeserving of the people who's birth right has been huckstered away at bargain prices in far away places around the world.

In the meantime, the Private sector is having the cut wages of the people they cannot afford to send home and continue operating and that is on top of the folks that have already been sent home on a race to bottom with shrinking sales. The national import statistics for the 2020 year should tell the tale as we are months away from shortages of critical items. It isn't the lack of availability it is the lack of domestic economic activity that is fueling this massive decline. The cost of fuel was a noted relief although that has not yet translated into lower power costs to consumers. Moratorium periods are set to expire in August and September yet businesses and individuals have no idea how they will

meet these commitments when they become due and payable again. They were designed to coincide with reopening, however, with the collapse of LIAT, and the Covid 19 virus running rampant in the USA, our biggest tourism market, the prospects for the second half of 2020 for Dominica appears bleak at best.

We expected to hear a robust and bold plan for the national economy against this backdrop but instead we were witness to the same anemia in fiscal policy that has championed this country to last place in the Caribbean.

The self-serving reductions in property taxes mentioned in this budget caters to outside parties who are buying property here. We the locals want to earn income. The lawyers and the state need that income from the largesse of passport holders now purchasing property. Who are you working for Mr. Prime Minister? Because you are supposed to be working for the interest of the people of the country. No Prime Minister of good conscience can present such a budget devoid of detailed plans and measures to save this country at this time. This is your Job Sir, that's your Mandate Sir, we are waiting to see you do your job Sir. This budget is a collection of papers not worth the ink on it.

We put forward a stimulus plan that would keep the engine of the economy working until the end of 2020. It required investment from funds which this government said it had and controls but alas that was ridiculed because those funds are for the private personal economy run by the labor party. The real economy they have responsibility for must remain mendicant while their economy must proceed unhindered with the people's money. I have news for them today, this is one land and one people, and no government can support only its supporters. We either get serious or we carry on to our collective peril.

We need the borders open. But we need protocols that are people centered and user friendly. Where does one get a test, are there enough tests, how does one pay for a test at the place of the test? What is the reliability of results of the tests? Is the Government lab sufficient to

handle the public health challenges plus covid tests for visitor arrivals and departures? What is the national stock of PCR tests? What is Dominica's position on air access at this time? What's up with Dominica's strategic interest and shareholding in LIAT? What protocols are in place for the ferry services at the Roseau Bayfront? If people must pay for quarantine if they test positive, what are the plans for the upkeep and maintenance of the facilities in Portsmouth? What are those costs and is there a protocol for payment upfront? Will the cost for those who cannot pay revert to the state and if so what are the budget appropriations for the maintenance of that arrangement?

What is the government's job plan, what incentives are there for the private sector to rehire laid off workers? Will the large employers be granted concessions to put people back to work at a living wage? Those questions need to be answered in the most important budget of our time.

## **THE VISION OF HOPE**

The economic decline and uncertainty in the world today scripted by the covid 19 pandemic is yet another opportunity to press the reset button on our sacred national endeavor to earn a worthwhile place in the international trade of goods and services

Lets bring all hands on deck... especially the youth and our brothers and sisters in the diaspora

Dominica must tap into bigger markets, and shift towards online marketing as well as delivery of goods and services. The era of willful ignorance of science and technology, and contentment with leadership malpractice and mediocrity, must end urgently. Dominica is looking at a massive collapse in revenues in the next fiscal year. Time is of the essence. Billions of people all over the world are facing exactly the same challenge and are rushing into these open niches. The pandemic has made a lot of physical delivery of services problematic, and has democratized the world by putting everyone online for many types of

services. This damages tourism badly, but opens up many other opportunities.

Let us Monetize the Diaspora as a market for current Dominican agriculture, other products, and services.

Agriculture, including cannabis which is rapidly being legalized across the USA in and many other rich countries. Young people want to make money. Agriculture needs the energizing impact of science and technology to make the God given backbone of our economy cool and youth friendly

Agriculture will secure our health and wellness by making us self-sufficient in natural food and drink and providing plant-based solutions for our medical needs. By sharing these blessings with a world in need, we will grow our economy and generate wealth like we have never seen before.

Ideally, with 20,000 acres of our fertile land growing a well-planned, market driven mix of bananas, plantains, coconuts, root tubers, breadfruit, avocados, coffee, cocoa, cashews, ginger, vanilla, herbs, spices, cannabis and nature island flowers we set the stage to earn hundreds of millions of dollars annually from the export of these commodities and the health and wellness products that can be manufactured from them. Thousands of new sustainable jobs will be created and equitable value-chain participation for all stake holders in the industries developed around our gift of nature island plants will ensure fair shares of the benefits of wealth creation for all.

In this basket of high performers in the global trade of agricultural products, Cannabis, because of its versatility in providing medicinal, food, clothing and shelter solutions offers the greatest growth prospects for our Nature Island economy

There is therefore an urgent need for Dominica to humanize, legalize and industrialize cannabis in the interest of national health, wellness, and resilient economic development. Full legalization for personal, sacramental, medicinal and industrial use of Cannabis

Our wholistic approach to building a viable cannabis industry will protect traditional stakeholders and ensure no interest group is left behind in sharing the health, wellness and economic development benefits.

A share of the global legal cannabis market, estimated at \$15 billion US, can deliver the lift we desperately need for the rural economy and strong livelihood restoration. As such, our Agenda for Change will have the legalization of cannabis for personal, sacramental, medicinal, and industrial use, with strict regulations to protect our children as a pillar to revive the vital agricultural sector in Dominica and as a fundamental part of the overall strategy for economic resilience.

Additionally, there are lucrative opportunities for the export of nature island branded fruit juices, preserves, sweets, spices, essential oils, chocolate, patriotic goods such as t-shirts and other objects which printed with Dominican flags and nature island scenes.

We need to convert willing members of the Diaspora into marketing representatives of Dominican goods and services all over the world. This is potentially a very large sales force which can be compensated by commissions and even by equity ownership in the products they want to represent.

In terms of employment and earning income, services such as tech support, online education, tutoring, exam preparation, telehealth and other skill-based services can be provided online. The global private tutoring market is at least US \$100 billion. A substantial percentage of this is ESL (English as a Second Language).

We need a strategic focus on building Coding and software engineering capability.

Let's embrace hardware engineering consulting for construction of projects around the world.

Let's incentivize long-term hosting for Diaspora partners who wish to do business from Dominica.

Integrate the Diaspora into the Dominican economy for production of goods and services.

Fostering closer links to the Diaspora means that Dominican entrepreneurs living overseas become much more aware of the Dominican business and labour pool and can leverage this for business activities such as coding, website development and maintenance, and other services.

Let's leverage our advantages

Dominicans are fluent English speakers; many are also quite competent in Creole as well as French. A significant minority can also speak and understand basic Spanish.

We are positioned in the same time zone as a large population stretching from Eastern Canada (including French-speaking Quebec), the Eastern USA, and much of Latin America.

Our Low cost of living, means Dominicans can live relatively comfortably while undercutting those who have to pay higher costs to survive in other richer countries.

**Key Steps:**

Leverage social media to market Dominican goods and services to Dominicans globally.

Expand simple marketing into networks of representatives of Dominican goods and services.

Foster the growth of enterprises which have a footprint inside and outside of Dominica.

Undertake reforms in education that will restructure the primary and secondary curriculum to a greater focus on science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM), and greater planning in post-secondary training consistent with the skill sets required by economic development.

## **CONCLUSION**

The last 15 years of lost progress through the folly of governance systematically destroying independence and dedicated to uniting people with hate, have reversed the clock on our civility.

Let us become the free, independent, united, peaceful, harmonious, self-sustaining nature island people that we truly are. Let us embrace the need for a national development philosophy that is in harmony with our true Nature Island character and identity and gives meaning and purpose to the agenda for change that will make Dominica the best place to live, the best place to work and the best place to enjoy life.

Covid19, a virus in the Kingdom of our father who art in Heaven, came down to enforce his will on earth as it is in heaven. It stopped the world and led us back to the silence of soul... reflection, introspection for forward action based on the principles of good Christian living

And so today we pray not for the Lord to answer our prayers but for the strength and courage to pray His answers into our reality.

It was Martin Carter who wrote:

“Dew is awake... morning is soon... mankind is risen, flowers will bloom”.

May the ancestors be pleased.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.