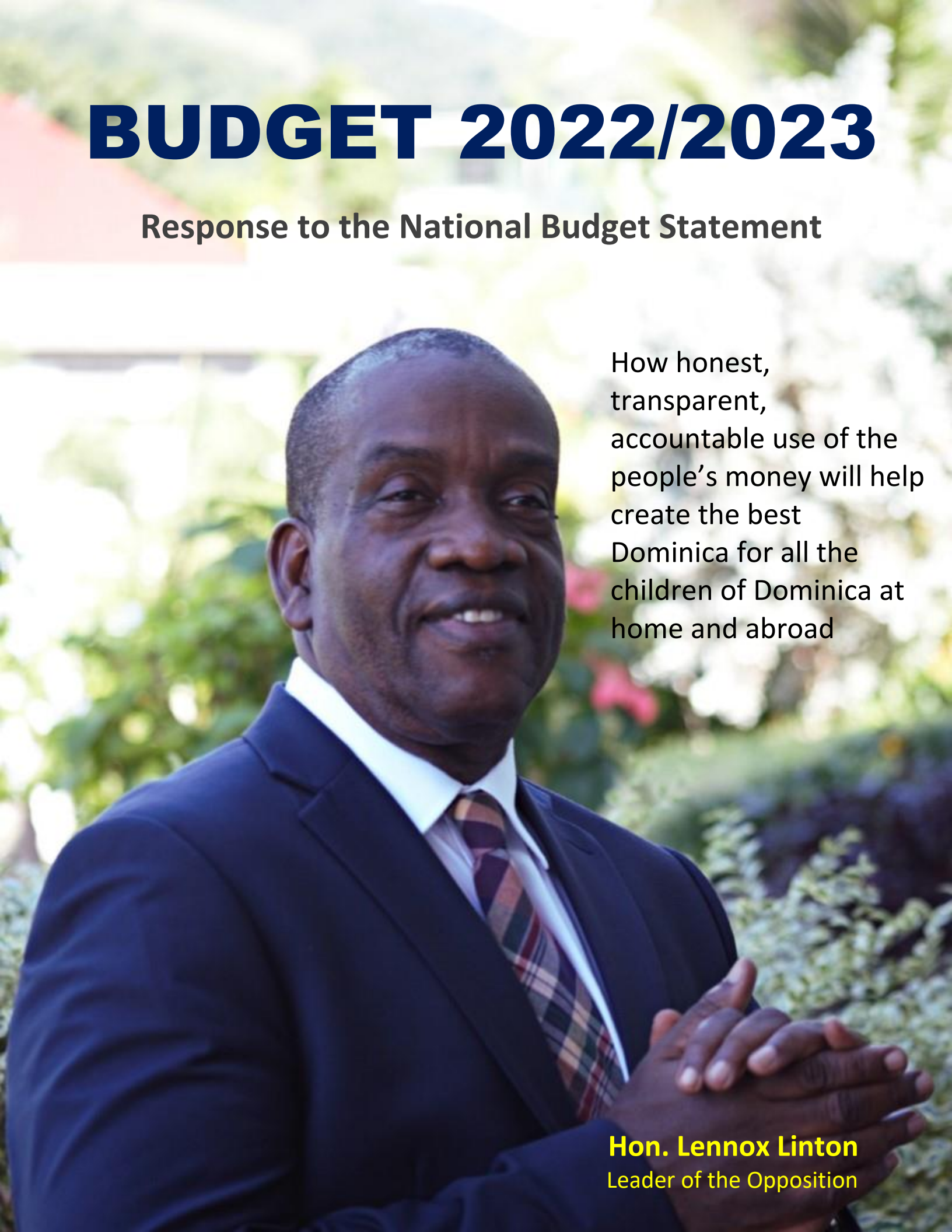


BUDGET 2022/2023

Response to the National Budget Statement

A portrait of Hon. Lennox Linton, a Black man with short hair, wearing a dark blue suit, white shirt, and a patterned tie. He is smiling slightly and has his hands clasped in front of him. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage and white flowers.

How honest,
transparent,
accountable use of the
people's money will help
create the best
Dominica for all the
children of Dominica at
home and abroad

Hon. Lennox Linton
Leader of the Opposition

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Speaker,

The 2022 National Budget, Government`s income and expense statement for the financial year July 1st, 2022 to June 30th, 2023, as expected, details how the government will raise its funds and where and how the funds will be used.

Through the approval of Parliament, the budget will provide Government with the money it needs to deliver its policies and run vital services in areas such as Health, Education, Economic Development, Housing, Livelihood Sustainability, Environment Protection and Public Infrastructure. The budget impacts the economy at large and the everyday lives of all Dominicans. In our Parliamentary Democracy it is a critical instrument of social justice.

And so, Mr. Speaker, as Leader of the Opposition, I embrace the privilege granted by this honorable House to question the estimates and to ask the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and other government ministers to justify the proposed revenue raising measures, expenditures and financial policies.

Our oversight responsibility for public finances in this honorable House constrains us to be concerned with whether or not the collection, control and expenditure of public funds are in compliance with legislative authorizations. We must also concern ourselves with the adequacy and effectiveness of control systems that protect the State from loss, waste,

misappropriation of funds and instances where such loss, waste or misappropriation have occurred or seem likely to occur.

THE INJUSTICE OF BUDGET DEBATE 2021

This important public interest responsibility often feels like an occupational hazard in this environment where not even the freedom of speech immunity, a benchmark of good parliamentary practice around the world, is allowed to enable opposition parliamentarians to carry out constitutional functions effectively, free from interference or impediment...

We learn as well from the benchmarks of properly functioning democratic legislatures that Parliament shall have a reasonable period of time in which to adequately scrutinize and debate the proposed national budget.

The time provided for the parliamentary opposition to prepare to adequately scrutinize and debate the proposed national budget, is once again this year woefully inadequate.

I received the draft estimates for 2022/2023 – a 460-page document - at 10:25 pm on Tuesday 19th July, 2022. The budget statement was delivered on July 26th...

Last year, the Speaker of the House championed a move from the other side that deprived the Leader of the Opposition of the privilege of responding to the 2021 Budget Statement of the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance in accordance with settled practice spanning more than forty years.

And the Speaker was extremely proud and pleased with himself to do that because, in his mind, the absence of the Leader of the Opposition from the House during the presentation of the 2021 budget statement was a breach of privilege deserving of draconian punishment.

For the record of this honorable house, the Leader of the Opposition did not breach any privilege during the presentation and debate of the 2021 budget and the punitive action by the other side was abusive and unjust.

We learn from the publication, Erskine May, commonly referred to as 'the Bible of parliamentary procedure' that Parliamentary privilege is the sum of certain rights enjoyed by the House collectively and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions.

According to the Bible of Parliamentary procedure, when any of these rights and immunities is disregarded or attacked, the offence is called a breach of privilege and is punishable by Parliament. The House also has the right to punish contempts. These are actions which, while not necessarily breaches of any specific privilege, obstruct or impede it in the performance of its functions, or are offences against its authority or dignity.

In general, the House exercises its jurisdiction to punish in any event as sparingly as possible and only when satisfied that to do so is essential in order to provide reasonable protection for the House, its members or its officers from such improper obstruction of their respective functions.

No right enjoyed by the House collectively and/or by members of the house individually to allow for effective discharge of their functions was disregarded or attacked by the Opposition Leader's absence from the

chamber of the House during the presentation of the 2021 Budget Statement by the Minister of Finance.

The Opposition Leader's absence from the chamber of the House during the presentation of the 2021 Budget Statement by the Minister of Finance, did not obstruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions.

The Opposition Leader's absence from the chamber of the House during the presentation of the 2021 budget statement by the Minister of Finance did not offend the authority or dignity of the House.

The Opposition Leader's absence from the chamber of the House during the presentation of the 2021/2022 Budget Statement by the Minister of Finance was not a breach of privilege. It was not a contempt of the House.

There was no improper obstruction or threat of obstruction likely to cause substantial interference with the performance of the House and its members. Accordingly, there was no need to invoke the penal jurisdiction of the House against a member whose conduct was unjustly impugned simply for being absent from the House during the presentation of the 2021 Budget Statement.

Using misunderstanding of parliamentary privilege as a weapon of oppression against the parliamentary opposition is not justice and has no place in parliamentary conduct and procedure. In the immortal words of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar:

“O Judgment thou art fled to brutish beasts and men have lost their reason”.

Such partisan pettiness and vindictiveness undermine the collective responsibility shared by members of this parliament for comprehensive scrutiny of government's administration of taxpayers' funds.

So it is that I came here today hoping and praying that good judgment and justice will not flee from the 2022 budget debate in Parliament... and that balance, harmony and reciprocity will not elude us to the ends of justice

OVERSIGHT OF PUBLIC FINANCES

Mr. Speaker, I note that the reports of the Director of Audit for the fiscal years June 30th, 2020 and June 30th, 2021 have been presented to this sitting of Parliament. This significant reduction of the bag log in the presentation of this important annual report represents a remarkable achievement by the Office of Director of Audit. It will greatly facilitate the exercise of responsible government in the control of the public purse.

Parliament has given the Public Accounts Committee the responsibility to hold Government accountable for the management of the public purse; a task which must be accomplished if the parliamentary system is to be meaningful and effective.

Unfortunately, the responsibility given to the Public Accounts Committee carries no enabling authority to control the outcome of the accountability process.

During the third session of this tenth Parliament, following its examination reports of the Director of Audit on the public accounts for the fiscal years

ending June 30th, 2018 and June 30th, 2019, the Public Accounts Committee requested a hearing with the Financial Secretary.

The request clearly outlined six areas for review pertaining to the accounting responsibility of the Financial Secretary in the management of public finances.

At the hearing on April 27th, 2022, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) did not receive satisfactory responses to queries on the collection and spending of public funds for which the Financial Secretary is legally responsible and accountable to the PAC.

The PAC therefore requested, by letter of May 5th, 2022, a written response from the Financial Secretary no later than May 12th, 2022 on the matters which, despite adequate notice, the Financial Secretary was not prepared to address at the April 27th, 2022 hearing:

1. Page 34 of the 2019 report of the Director of Audit, Note 6, Bank Balance – Current account. “As at June 30th, 2019, the aggregate overdraft limit was exceeded by \$151,257,984.00”. This means in effect Government borrowed money from the National Bank without legislative authority. How did this happen?
2. Page 36 of the 2019 report of the Director of Audit, Note 8, Loans Repayable to the Government of Dominica. The update of outstanding amounts due and payable presented to the PAC on April 27th, 2022 indicates that H. H. V. Whitchurch has paid off the outstanding amount in its name of \$500,000. With respect to the Jungle Bay Resort debt of \$6,123,257 you stated it was no longer

outstanding but you were not clear as to how and/or why the debt was removed from the list of loans repayable to the Government of Dominica. The Financial Secretary committed to provide the Committee with a proper explanation of the status of the Jungle Bay Resort Debt of \$6,123,257

3. Page 50 of the 2019 report, item 3.23. What were the reasons for, and specific amounts of, the contingency fund advance warrants for 1) the National Employment Programme; and 2) the Rapid Response programme?

4. Page 25 of the 2019 report. Abstract Account – Revenue and Expenditure for Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2019. Actual Economic Citizenship revenue stated under Head 65 is \$224,333,596 compared to the estimate of \$406,640,526.

How was the CBI revenue amount verified?

The PAC raised with the Financial Secretary at the hearing, the fact that according to revenues of \$2,299,679 from Certificates of Naturalization under the CBI program for 2018/2019, the number of persons who received CBI passports for the year was 3,386. This means that on average, Dominica collected \$66,258 per CBI passport for which the market price is \$271,690.

The Financial Secretary, the State's chief Accounting Officer, fully aware that the office is answerable to the Public Accounts Committee, has refused to respond.

The Finance (Administration) Act section 6(3):

“An accounting officer shall be answerable to the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Assembly for the efficient management of and accounting for public funds entrusted to him/her as accounting officer”.

This matter of the Financial Secretary breaching a legal obligation to be answerable to the Public Accounts Committee raises the critical question whether true accountability can exist in the absence of powers of sanction or the ability to exact redress.

What does the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament do when accounting officers, for reasons best known to themselves, ignore, avoid or just flat out refuse to respond to legitimate questions about the discharge of their functions in the administration of public funds?

Does the Chairman have to pay lawyers from his pocket to move the court to secure compliance with lawful public finance oversight authority and in the process face the Attorney General, his army of attorneys and outside Senior Counsel using the public funds of the State to defend unlawful conduct against the interest of the State?

How exactly, will Parliament resolve this critical issue especially bearing in mind that the large majority of the members of parliament - 77 percent – are members of the Cabinet of Ministers engaged in direct day to day

working relationships with the accounting officers whose allegiance to ministers may be more important to them than obeying the rule of law?

Excellence in government... competence in the performance of the duties of government depends on the integrity and the willingness and ability of individuals in key public service positions to obey the rule of law.

In the absence of such capacity, capability and commitment, the system of public service delivery of the fruits of good, just, righteous, development of the people, for the people is subverted and broken making it impossible to root out the illegalities and irregularities that trigger destruction.

Our nature isle of beauty... our nature isle of splendor is blessed to be a better country than that.

BUDGET 2022 AND PRIORITIES FOR CHANGE

That is why I fully expected that after 21 years of budgets that missed the mark of building the best Dominica for all the children of Dominica that this year's budget would be grounded in the realities of today's need for change.

Electoral Reform: We need Change for example in the electoral process which the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) believes is tainted

“There remain areas of grave concern about how the process of these (2019) elections was conducted. Future elections in Dominica ought not to proceed with these or similar taints”.

Parliament, the highest decision-making body in the State, simply cannot ignore the advice of our highest Court, that the country's electoral process must be fixed and purged of all taints before the next general election.

Because this is precisely what the nation needs to ensure free and fair elections with integrity that secures the legitimacy of government of the people, by the people for the people as the backbone of our democracy.

So let us be sure that the one million dollars estimated for electoral reform in this year's budget is adequate to meet expenses to be incurred in:

- Ensuring equal access opportunities, adequate facilities and competent registering officers for voter registration all over the country
- Cleaning the voters list through total re-registration
- Issuing ID cards for voting
- Establishing equal access to state owned and other media for all political parties
- Regulating the financing of election campaigns
- Strict enforcement of provisions in our election laws against bribery, treating and other election offenses

We must also provide in this year's budget 200 thousand dollars for the investigation recommended by the CCJ into a judicial decision to set aside an election petition questioning the list used for the 2019 election after the judge declared the use of the list as a patent noncompliance with section 17 of the Registration of Electors Act.

Search & Rescue: This budget, in light of our failure to find Kernisha Etienne who disappeared on June 7th, 2022, must address the need for change in the search and rescue resources of Dominica. We must approve a minimum of 250 thousand dollars for search and rescue drones and canine units.

Protection of Children - This budget needs to provide 400 thousand dollars for the establishment of a family court and strict enforcement of the provisions of the sexual offenses act especially with respect to the protection, safety, security and welfare of our children.

Police Inquiry - This budget needs to provide 450 thousand dollars for a full-scale investigation into the Commonwealth of Dominica Police Force given allegations of misconduct as follows:

- Collusion in the kidnap, torture, forced transfer and unlawful detention of Indian diamond trader and Antigua and Barbuda economic citizen Mehul Choksi;
- Conflicting reports from the leadership of the Police force about the timeline of the fatal June 18th, 2022 engagement with kidnap suspect Kian Alexander; the involvement of police officers in the circumstances leading up to his death; and the conduct of police officers leading up to the autopsy.

Peace Plan - The 2022/2023 budget must provide \$1,000,000 for the development and implementation of a peace plan to address rising crime and violence claiming lives of young men in particular seemingly at war with each other; and the national safety, security and social stability issues arising from this deeply troubling situation.

National Security Investigation – The 2022/2023 budget must provide \$300,000 to deal with what the Chief of Police has described as threats to national security and others have referred to as racketeering – organized crime – in the ministry of national security

UNLAWFUL PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC MONEY

The United Workers party brings a renewed commitment to the processes, systems, parameters and design responsibilities of national development.

We will innovate, create and deliver solutions around a whole range of national development issues. For more than two decades, this National Budgets of this administration have focused on designing and upgrading tools that build dependency, deepen poverty and dumb down the native population to secure longevity in political office.

Citizens of Dominica, the urgent priority of now is to diligently question the sources of our national development problems and design policies and programs for human development results.

Let us dig up our history especially our history of the past 20 years and face up to the painful legacies of those two decades that loom large as the big stone in the road, the gwo woshe a chimen la.

In this budget cycle the Cabinet of Ministers is seeking to give legitimacy to a Budget Plan which excludes a large amount of state revenues, derived from the sale of passports.

They are once again trying to normalize the unconstitutional existence of two treasuries... one de jure, one de facto... two sources of national income spending, one of which - the one with a significantly larger share of national income - is entirely outside of the state machinery for the management of public finances

With all the authority vested in this Parliament as the highest decision-making body in this parliamentary democracy, it has no say in the collection

and spending of passport money privatized into the control of foreign friends of the administration basking in the glory of exchanging our citizenship for cash in international markets.

This clear and present danger confronts us with a serious existentialist threat to our system of democratic governance and the sustainability of our economy. We cannot run this country successfully with more national income under private control than we have in the consolidated fund under the watch of the state machinery for the management of public finances.

Let us obey the constitutional rule of law and have all of Dominica's income in a single consolidated fund where it is collected and from where it is spent for the peoples' business through the formal budget cycle subject to parliamentary oversight.

The nation recalls that in the Dominica Official Gazette of Thursday March 14th, 2019, pages 87 to 121, there was report from the Financial Secretary listing "Successful applicants under the citizenship by investment program", all 3,961 of them, for the period August 2018 to December 2018 – five of the first six months in the financial year 2018/2019.

That disclosure raised red flags about the apparent shortfalls CBI revenues reported for 2018/2019. There has been no such disclosure in the Gazette since. Why? The finance minister promised answers to the 1.2-billion-dollar discrepancy in the 2018/2019 CBI revenue numbers. While we wait for answers that, according to the Prime Minister, will put the Leader of the Opposition to shame, much more is coming to light about Dominica's passport revenues that do not come into the treasury of Dominica.

	CoN\$	CITIZENS	227.6K per
2019/20 A	5,790,270	8,525	1,940,016,697
2018/19 A	2,299,679	3,386	770,502,180
2017/18 A	5,369,730	7,906	1,799,115,733
2016/17 A	2,701,480	3,977	905,124,684
	16,161,159	23,794	5,414,759,294
Received			1,213,248,791
Balance			4,201,510,503

We now know that 23,794 Dominica citizenships were sold during the four-year period commencing July 1st, 2016 and ending June 30th, 2020 at an average price of \$227,572.78 for total revenue of \$5,414,759,294. Five billion, four hundred and fourteen million, seven hundred and fifty-nine thousand, two hundred and ninety-four dollars. In short, \$5.4 billion.

From this amount only \$1.2 billion came into Dominica’s consolidated fund. The balance of \$4.2 billion (approximately \$60,000 for each of 70,000 Dominicans) is under the private custody and control of foreign friends of the administration.

With this 4.2 billion in the consolidated fund of Dominica we can dramatically alter the state of our economic affairs:

- We can build the international airport 1.0 billion
- We can pay down our public debt 1.0 billion
- We can provide cost of living relief 0.2 billion
- We can energize the economic engines 0.5 billion
- We can provide a disaster reserve fund 0.5 billion
- We can create a sovereign wealth fund 1.0 billion

REVENUE/EXPENDITURE ESTIMATES

A Case of Unauthorized Spending - Mr. Speaker, I said in this Parliament during the budget debate of July 2020 that on or about June 9th, 2020, the Cabinet of Dominica met and agreed to the rental of a palatial mansion at Morne Daniel from Mercury Properties Development Ltd, for the accommodation of the Prime Minister. The amount agreed was EC\$32,000.00 per month; \$384,000 per year.

Just trying to be helpful in ensuring that things are done right, I drew parliament's attention to the fact that this amount was not included in the 2020/2021 expenditure estimates before the House for spending approval. Under Head D30 Office of the Prime Minister – Prime Minister's Official Residence there was 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 put the annual cost the state is required to pay for the Morne Daniel property at \$771,598 or \$64,300 per month. But no request was made for parliamentary approval to spend 32 thousand dollars per month on the rental of a residence for the Prime Minister.

Indeed, in that year, there was no line-item Rental of Assets in the 2020/2021 expenditure estimates for the Prime Minister's office. That line item surfaced for the first time in the 2021/2022 estimates where a request was made for approval of 384,000 dollars for Rental of Assets understood to mean the Morne Daniel residence. The 2021/2022 estimates confirmed there was no authorized budget for Rental of Assets namely the Prime Minister's Residence in 2020/2021 and therefore no lawful authority to spend and public money for that purpose.

On November 29th, 2021, the House approved supplementary appropriations for the fiscal year 2020/2021. There was no supplementary appropriation for the Prime Minister's Office in respect of the rental of the More Daniel residence or at all.

Lo and behold, the 2022/2023 expenditure estimates now state that there was authorization for and spending of 224 thousand dollars on rental of assets, meaning the Morne Daniel residence. The record is clear, that Parliament was not asked to and therefore never approved any spending of public money to rent the Morne Daniel palatial mansion for the Prime Minister in 2020/2021.

Payment of public moneys in excess of amounts authorized by Parliament is a violation of section 45 (b) of the Finance (Administration) Act punishable by a surcharge of 10 percent of the annual income of the responsible public officer.

How can a whole Cabinet of 18 ministers agree on spending 32 thousand a month to rent a residence for the head of Cabinet and fail or refuse or just couldn't care to get the required approval of Parliament for the very first year of the lease? What message does that send to public officers required to obey the rule of law in their various roles and responsibilities in the administration of public finances?

We don't expect that anyone will be surcharged according to the provisions of law. But we do expect that before the end of this sitting there will be a supplementary appropriation to cover the unauthorized spending of 224 thousand dollars of public money on the Morne Daniel palatial residence of

the Prime Minister in 2020/2021 albeit 13 months after the close of the financial year.

Against the background of failures like these, the boasts of expertise in handling public finances to the satisfaction of the multi-lateral aid institutions around the world, disappear in painful mockeries of truth. We need to get it right... we need to do things right... and on this side, we are just trying to be helpful, committed as we are to the ideal of making this parliament the shining example of integrity in public duty especially in the stewardship of public finances.

PUBLIC DEBT

At June 30th, 2022 Dominica's total public debt was \$1,556,382,494 as stated at page 2 of the 2022/2023 estimates. One billion, five hundred and fifty-six million, three hundred and eighty-two thousand, four hundred and ninety-four dollars.

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) the total value of goods and services in the economy of Dominica reported (at market prices) in the 2022/2023 estimates is \$1,473,170,000. One billion, four hundred and seventy-three million, one hundred and seventy thousand dollars.

This means Dominica's debt to GDP ratio is 106 percent.

Whenever we review economic performance of this government over the past two decades, there are tall tales and allegations comparing the debt to GDP ratios under the UWP and DLP administrations.

So before any more of those erroneous tales from the other side, lets set the record straight from the country data files of the IMF:

DOMINICA DEBT TO GDP %

1995 - 2020

	UWP		DLP	
	1995	57.4	2000	68.9
	1996	53.7	2001	98.5
	1997	47.7	2002	97.9
	1998	56.3	2003	94.9
	1999	61.8	2004	86.2
AV	55.4		2005	82.0
			2006	77.4
			2007	71.8
			2008	64.4
			2009	62.5
			2010	66.8
			2011	69.7
			2012	73.1
			2013	73.9
			2014	72.1
			2015	68.9
			2016	75.3
			2017	80.2
			2018	84.6
			2019	94.7
			2020	108.7
			2021	106.0
			AV	80.8

Source: IMF.org/en/countries/DMA#Countrydata

Revenue Proposals - I turn now to the 2022/2023 estimates – proposed expenditure of 1,216,395,499 dollars to be met by revenue of 1,133,514,938 dollars which will leave government with 82,880,561 dollars less income than it needs for its expenses.

How realistic are these proposals presented for the approval of Parliament?

While the main assumptions behind the revenue estimates in particular are unknown, the mathematical impossibilities presented by some projections provoke distrust.

According to the IMF Article 4 report issued in February 2022, GDP is contracted by 11 percent in 2020... “The output decline, driven by a sharp reduction in tourism and related sectors, was contained by strong growth in the construction sector stemming from the large public investment program through 2020-21, financed by **exceptionally high revenue from the Citizenship by Investment (CBI) program.**

“Despite record CBI revenue, the sharp decline in tax revenue and increase in health spending and social transfers led to large fiscal deficits in 2020 and 2021 and caused public debt to peak at an estimated 106 percent of GDP in 2020. The current account deficit estimate remained high at around 30 percent of GDP in 2020-21, owing to the loss of tourism exports and an increase in imports related to higher public investment and commodity prices—despite a decline in private demand for imports.

The highlight of “exceptionally high... record CBI revenue” of over 400 million in 2020/2021 by the IMF was instructive, given the average CBI revenues of 303.3 million per year reported for July 2016 to July 2020.

CoN, Citizenships & CBI Revenues

	CoN Rev	Citizens	CBI Rev	Per Citizen	PC US\$
2022/23 E	210,791	310	492,154,103	1,585,852	583,699
2021/22 P	193,754	285	452,690,895	1,586,955	584,105
2020/21 A	360,796	531	447,968,115	843,333	310,403
	554,550	816	900,659,010	1,103,147	406,031
2019/20 A	5,790,270	8,525	182,355,035	21,391	7,873
2018/19 A	2,299,679	3,386	224,333,596	66,258	24,387
2017/18 A	5,369,730	7,906	315,404,263	39,896	14,684
2016/17 A	2,701,480	3,977	491,155,897	123,490	45,452
	16,161,159	23,794	1,213,248,791	50,991	18,768
2016-2020	4,040,290	5,948	303,312,198	62,759	23,099
2020/2021	360,796	531	447,968,115	843,333	310,403
	3,679,494	5,417	(144,655,917)	(780,574)	(287,303)
2016/20 A	4,040,290	5,948	303,312,198	62,759	23,099
2021/22 P	193,754	285	452,690,895	1,586,955	584,105
	3,846,536	5,663	(149,378,697)	(1,524,197)	(561,006)
2016/20 A	4,040,290	5,948	303,312,198	62,759	23,099
2022/23 E	210,791	310	492,154,103	1,585,852	583,699
	3,829,499	5,638	(188,841,905)	(1,523,093)	(560,600)

CBI REVENUE ESTIMATE RISK		
Recurrent Revenue	896,236,889	
Capital Revenue	237,278,049	
Total Revenue		1,133,514,938
Recurrent Expenditure	649,958,514	
Capital Expenditure	566,436,985	
Total Expenditure		1,216,395,499
Financing Gap		(82,880,561)
Rec. Rev includes CBI\$		
310 citizens @ 1,585,852	492,154,103	
corrected @ 298,723.15	92,604,130	
Rev Shortfall	399,549,973	
Revised Rec Rev	496,686,916	
Capital Revenue	237,278,049	
Revised Total Revenue		733,964,965
Revised Financing Gap		(482,430,534)
<u>NOTES:</u>		
CAPITAL REV - Loans: 77.1, Grants: 155.2, Local Capital Rev: 5.1		
Maximum CBI\$ per citizen: 109,950 USD		
<i>EDF contribution 100,000.00</i>		
<i>application fee 1,000.00</i>		
<i>due diligence fee 7,500.00</i>		
<i>Cert of Naturalization 250.00</i>		
<i>Exp. PP issue 1,200.00</i>		

PSIP 2021/2022 BUDGET VS ACTUAL				
	2021/22B	2021/22A		
Office of President	1,072,004	312,323	759,681	29%
Audit Dept	12,868	12,846	22	100%
National Security	31,046,721	7,296,460	23,750,261	24%
Elections (ER)	300,000	-	300,000	0%
Trade, Comm., Ent	4,405,159	4,282,989	122,170	97%
Office of PM	87,000,000	70,861,502	16,138,498	81%
Finance	32,923,676	7,735,800	25,187,876	23%
Blue Green Econ Agri	31,931,677	31,343,834	587,843	98%
Education	13,617,992	7,025,925	6,592,067	52%
Housing	57,095,438	71,164,563	(14,069,125)	125%
Health	32,006,944	33,469,477	(1,462,533)	105%
Environment	41,860,538	42,706,630	(846,092)	102%
Tourism Int'l Transp.	5,961,816	2,446,352	3,515,464	41%
Sports, Cult. Comm Dev	7,328,932	4,125,488	3,203,444	56%
Planning, Econ Affairs	8,414,396	9,570,090	(1,155,694)	114%
Est. Personnel, Training	831,228	119,287	711,941	14%
Public Works	74,330,364	33,900,838	40,429,526	46%
Youth Dev & Emp	3,745,902	2,972,313	773,589	79%
Cabinet Office	4,266,000	2,316,000	1,950,000	54%
Ecclesiastic Affairs	644,910	265,921	378,989	41%
	438,796,565	331,928,638	106,867,927	76%

The public sector investment programme - the capital expenditure budget - for this financial year is 566.4 million, an increase of more than 127.6 million or 29% over the 438.8 million approved for 2021/2022.

Last year, the actual PSIP spend was 331.9 million, 106.9 million or 24% less than the budgeted amount. Some over achieved; some underachieved.

The ministry of Tourism and International transport is responsible for one of the most important growth engines of the economy. Of the 6 million dollars weaved into the 2021/2022 budget to build the income earning capacity of the tourism industry, the Ministry only spent 2.4 million or 41 percent. The allocation this year is 15.3 million. Don't know whether the minister is the one responsible for the cable car project which the prime minister say will cost 148.5 million. But I am sure the Minister will contact us about the 3 lakes project which is where the cable car idea came from.

PSIP - HOUSING				
Land Settlement and Development	25.0	16.1	8.9	64%
Housing renovation and Sanitization	3.5	3.4	0.1	97%
National Resettlement Program	4.0	2.7	1.3	68%
Various Hsng Estates – Infrastr Dev	2.0	0.8	1.2	40%
Dominica Housing Recovery Program	6.0	33.7	-27.7	562%
Rehabilitation Post Hurricane Maria	4.6	3.8	0.8	83%
Sustainable Housing - 1,000 Homes	2.0	0.7	1.3	35%
Modern Resilient Hsng Development	10.0	10.0	0.0	100%
	57.1	71.2	-14.1	125%

The public sector investment project Sustainable Housing – 1,000 homes, emerged in the wake of Hurricane Maria in 2017. It carried a total cost of \$49,849,719 in the 2020/2021 estimates. \$19,025,683 was spent in 2018/2019, \$8,775,465 in 2019/2020, \$3,714,739 in 2020/2021 and \$706,575 in 2021/2022 – a total of \$32,222,462 spent as of June 30th, 2022. But just when we were thinking that we paid 65 percent of the cost and therefore had a legitimate expectation that 650 of the 1,000 homes would have been completed and delivered, the total cost in these 2022/2023 estimates takes a 26 percent jump to \$62,940,434. What exactly is the status of this project? What is the reason for the cost increase on a five-year-old contract? How many of the 1,000 homes have been built? Where are these completed homes? When will the project be completed?

We have a largely partisan housing program that is deliberately isolating productive young people from family farms in rural areas and bunching them up in apartment complexes. Think now of what we are sowing with this housing revolution and what we will reap from it.

REALITY CHECK. WITHER THE ENGINE OF GROWTH?

Mr. Speaker,

CHALLENGE & OPPORTUNITY

Responsible, caring government in Dominica at this time, must of necessity mean moving citizens from welfare to work through a large increase in employment opportunities. Revenues from passport sales must be channeled toward small and medium scale businesses and farm-

households, that have not shared proportionately in the sovereign wealth, that has been diverted from mainstream national income.

The 2022/2023 budget must address current practical challenges being faced by this country.

This is the silly season of self-praise, boasts and tall stories about prudent management of financial resources. It's a time of expected claims from the other side about building on a mercilessly trampled past, about solidifying a present imprisoned behind the bars of victimization and securing a future trapped in unending nightmares.

The presenter of the 2022 Budget is obviously not aware of it and therefore needs to look into it... But these are times of despair, where agriculture has been brought to its knees; where tourism is virtually non-existent; where agro-processing has been bludgeoned to death; where small businesses are being strangled, where the hopes and aspirations of Dominicans, particularly those who stand up to defend their country are being sacrificed on an altar of greed.

And it is easy in these times of despair, to forget the Dominica which existed at the turn of the millennium. We were a nation shining bright, filled with opportunities, filled with nation building projects and filled with confidence in our future as an independent nation.

Even today, looking back at those glory days, I am in awe of the stupendous success of the UWP administration in handling the economy and providing hope, help and happiness to the Dominican people.

Now Dominica's business landscape resembles a wasteland gutted by a kakistocracy;

Who would have thought that this island of promise and possibility; this oasis of opportunity would be reduced to an island which is being stalked and shadowed by those who don't give a hoot about Dominican's welfare, wellness and wellbeing?

The Private Sector in Dominica has been in very serious decline since 2015. In 2015, the economy was hit with the exogenous shock of Tropical Storm Erica which devastated inland infrastructure and accelerated the destruction of the village economies. Government started to replace the critical infrastructure, and latched on to the vote capture political model that replaced the once vibrant village economy with social safety net programs engineered to build dependency by broadening and deepening poverty. In 2017, the country was devastated by Hurricane Maria. Critical infrastructure as well as 100% of homes were either destroyed or received substantial damage.

The Government embarked on its largest public sector investment program to rebuild, critical infrastructure and housing. This program of spending should have created a short-term boost in economic activity; however, it was highly partisan, there were no public tendering processes, and most if not all of the projects went to foreign owned companies in special no bid arrangements. Further, only a relatively small fraction the labor, which averages at about 40% of the cost of construction of these projects along with very small raw material purchases, went through citizens of Dominica into the domestic economy. Outsiders were handed the lion share of the hundreds of millions of dollars spent on Dominica's Public Sector Investment Projects annually for the benefit of their economies.

All these projects were duty free projects, starving government off its own revenues. Interestingly, these projects were all CBI funded projects through a CBI agent arrangement. Therefore, the government funded a project from passport revenues, using an agent who made money from the passport revenues and then got a deal from the government to do the project, tax free. At the end of the day, the country received the infrastructure and the VAT levied on the few local importers and/or contractors. These projects were never intended to have the necessary multiplier effect in the economy that is generally expected and achieved around world. So, although there are buildings and bridges, there was, by design, no real economic impact from this huge expenditure of public money.

Then Covid hit! March 2020, the world woke up the harsh realization we were in a Global Pandemic. The knee jerk response was to shut down the world, save lives as best as possible. The economic impact was sudden and will be long lasting. The results of this guava season are that our domestic economy, already severely battered, came to a screeching painful halt. Further challenges came in 2022 with the War in Ukraine, which exasperated the supply chain challenges brought on by the Pandemic lockdowns and hikes in the price of petroleum which is priced into almost every product and service. The result is global inflation, and as a largely import country, we import galloping inflation wholesale into an already weak and failing economy.

Currently, we are seeing an unprecedented closure of small and medium size entities as the government has been unwilling and unable to meet the domestic challenges head on. It continues to move forward steadfastly on

a public sector investment program that was never designed to be the real foundation of economic activity. The administration been unwilling and unable to provide qualitative easing policies outside of extending its social safety net programs in a highly partisan manner even though the intention seems to be to have the entire country, with the exception of the privileged few friends and supporters on welfare and unable to work. Economic activity must be created through the private sector, paid gratuitous lip service as the engine of growth by this administration for the past 22 years. Indeed, the policies that the Government has maintained to keep the private sector and the population under manners have only drawn out the bitter suffering towards the same death. People are bawling.

1. The Policy of importing goods at little to no duties and costs.

The Barrel Business. Instead of economic policy action to ensure people are earning enough money to feed themselves government moved to help people to feed themselves through imports from family and friends overseas. On its face, that's great... that's noble... until you recognize the potential negative impact on the State's traditional revenue streams in order to facilitate a vote catching march to dependency and away from self-reliance.

The system was originally opened to anything that was contained in the incoming barrel. The administration has since pulled back on that in 2022 and has directed customs to clamp down on the barrel business with more thorough analysis and imposition of taxes. And that, because some unemployed, struggling recipients of barrels, who were trying to help themselves in these harsh economic times, put all

sorts of items into their barrels then went on the side of the road to retail them in direct competition to established businesses who had to pay duty, vat, income taxes and employees.

Consequently, sales migrated from the established private sector to a special little tax-free retail sector spawned by government's failure to grow the economy and create sustainable employment. The effect was contraction in key segments of the established tax-paying private sector because the players could not compete. They simply were being punished for establishing correctly and operating within the rules and the very custodian of those rules, the government, was the architect of their demise.

Goods sold in smaller quantities in established businesses because the price was higher. As a result, imports decreased and now there are widespread shortages of basic items everywhere. This is because there are just somethings that cannot be imported in a barrel and there isn't any liquidity or sales to make the bulk purchases.

So, its not working. It is not working for the established private. And it is not working for the dynamic Dominica private sector model either. Everybody is under pressure and government is happy to straddle the fence and preside over their demise. More business and economic failures = less sustainable employment = more poverty = more dependency = more begging government to survive = more partisan government handouts = more votes to buy.

2. No Leadership in the Financial Sector after Maria and Covid:

The financial sector was left to its own devices after both of those exogenous shocks. After Maria, the largest insurance company left many Dominicans in the wind. Not one public statement, not one investigation, no hope or redress in a regulated space where the Government had to have known that the insurer would fail or at the very least was operating at higher risk than regulations permitted.

Further, banks and credit unions had no common policy on how they approached their lending portfolio after such a massive shock. They simply contracted lending and starved recovery. The latter was further exacerbated by covid where everyone got a few months off on mortgage payments but there was no real strategy of assessing the critical sectors affected by covid lockdowns to really estimate and plan for the expected credit losses. The financial institutions simply went back to steady state after lockdowns ended and pretended like it never happened and expected everyone to pay their loans in the same way.

But the world changed. Everything changed. Even today, banks and credit unions are still in the wind trying to fight over a larger share of a shrinking pie. The effect of that course of action is that non-performing loans are at an all-time high as persons economic circumstances are materially different from when the loans were granted. Financial institutions have become collection agencies, so they are not pressed to change the fundamentals of the loan to meet this new dispensation, because they want to show the income from

these overpriced loans.

The knock-on effect is that lending is restricted, which cripples economic growth; the income Banks are claiming isn't collectible in the short term because people aren't able to afford it and as persons see their liability rise or unable to move materially even with effort to service, confidence in the space dwindles. Planned expansions are put on hold, hiring halts, plans and programs stall and that further depresses the macro-economic growth recovery. People are bawling.

- 3. Inflation:** Inflation cannot be left to its own devices even in a small economy like Dominica. We are largely an import country which means that we import the worlds inflation in goods through the increased price of products and the increased price of transportation.

To compound this problem, the price of petroleum is at stratospheric levels and that is priced into every good and service. This is largely outside of the control of a small island government even with its best efforts. However, pretending that it doesn't exist, or it does not have an effect isn't helping either. Government takes 18 cents on every dollar of petrol sold at its regulated price. It allows a 4 cents on the petrol dollar margin to both the wholesaler and the retailer. In other words, the government makes 10 cents more from every petrol dollar spent by the consumer than the wholesalers and retailers combined.

Yet, it recklessly and punitively forces the same wholesalers and retailers to finance a makeshift petroleum subsidy to reduce its

regulated price of fuel by 60 cents per gallon. In such a crisis, a subsidy must of necessity be a subsidy. The government cannot play big, bad bully and impose a subsidy on fuel that it doesn't pay for. It is that plain and that simple. The country's inflationary pressures are compounded by this short sightedness and manipulation because the whole cannot survive on the sacrifice of a few. People are bawling.

4. Oppressive Practices by State Agencies: In the void of economic and financial leadership, state entities like the Inland Revenue, Customs and Social Security have lost their purpose. They have bent under the weight and pressure of not collecting enough revenue and have resorted to unjustly and forcibly taking money from the very people they are employed to serve.

Currently, the Customs valuation unit is conducting audits from years ago on goods imported, duty paid, priced and sold and they are telling the private sector somehow the rates used and accepted were incorrect and are seeking to retroactively penalize business with these manipulated liabilities. Goods don't come off the port unless it is cleared by customs, so how do goods supposedly incorrectly cleared by customs become the fault and liability of the importer when the customs function is to ensure that never happened in the first place? People are bawling.

Inland Revenue has been notorious for manufacturing liabilities on taxpayers from technicalities in the law. They will disallow a bill because it is not in the name of the taxpayer but accept the income

that this expense created in contravention of section 39 that clearly states as the main test that any expense incurred in the creation of the assessable income is allowable as a deduction. Therefore, the private sector is incurring and paying costs to create accessible income and having those costs disallowed arbitrarily to meet some income quota of the government. It has become so fanatical now that these liabilities are impossible to collect because they are not real.

When we compute the supposed unpaid tax liability in this country it assumes the impossible situation that the private sector is earning taxable profits well in excess of the entire national budget. As such, the tax authorities' figures have relegated to a plug in the national budget with unprovable supporting assessments that cannot pass the muster of any tax court or tribunal. When taxpayers insist, they should go to court or tribunal the IRD concedes its errors just before the final deadline and recalculates the liability. This isn't tax administration, it's a state sponsored shakedown of the business community. People are bawling.

The Social Security contribution burden increases every year on a shrinking workforce and employer base. Most contributions are late or significantly behind because the cost of the contribution in a shrinking economy becomes simply another tax. Now they have begun to deny benefits to balance their cash flows. They tell employees they cannot pay benefits because their employers are behind on contributions.

The DSS is a fund, with statutory powers to deal with employers separate from employees on the contribution and benefit side. If benefits are withheld because contributions are so low then the fund is broken and probably the reason why DSS appears to be struggling publish annual performance reports.

The Government is the biggest employer and by extension the largest benefit claim pool. However, the private sector, while being denied access to the fund, has no idea the extent of the Government liability to the fund, the borrowing the government as taken from the fund because nothing has been published. But the narrative is that it is the fledging private sector somehow that has the weakness in the fund and their employees are denied access.

This is compounded by fact that the town of Roseau is being taken over by Chinese businesses who are not required to be as diligent as local business concerns in collecting or paying over any taxes or social security. There cannot be a double standard between locals and foreign concerns seeking to do business in this country. Rules and laws should apply to all equally.

In the business environment of Dynamic Dominica, it is now cheaper to close your business and rent to the Chinese then it is to carry on because they have competitive advantages that are not available to locals. Added to that, government routinely turns a blind eye to their tax avoidance practices while local businesses are hounded and harassed by the authorities to correct the worsening tax revenue

shortfalls of economic decline. People are bawling.

5. Cost of Electricity: Does anybody know how the fuel surcharge is calculated? At current levels it accounts for 50% of the electricity bill before VAT. How can the fuel cost that is built in the kilowatt rate be so excessive that it becomes the highest figure on the bill?

Finally, after all these months of hardship under high electricity bills, the now I see the light budget announces a removal of VAT on the surcharge from August 1st, 2022.

Why was there VAT on the surcharge? If the surcharge is due to the cost of fuel which is a zero-rated item, why were we paying VAT on the fuel surcharge on our Domlec Bill? And if the fuel surcharge isn't fuel, then, why is it called a fuel surcharge and then what is it??

Monthly electricity bills of three to four hundred dollars at the beginning of the year have now climbed past eight hundred dollars. The state owns the Company now and government runs things. The removal of VAT on the fuel surcharge should be retroactive to January 1st, 2022. Let government refund DOMLEC so consumers can get a credit on their electricity bills to year end. People are bawling.

It is evident that the compounding effect of a liquid but panicked financial sector, short sighted fiscal policy, oppressive government agencies and unequal treatment in the private sector has stalled the economic engine.

The exogenous shocks have simply brought this malignancy into sharper focus. The government is handicapped to change or alter course, because its financial architecture is built on a platform devoid of truth and laden with questionable economic development practices thoroughly unfit for the purpose of securing the best Dominica for all the children of Dominica.

There is only so much CBI can do in is convoluted, foreign controlled system that was instituted for the benefit of a few. Imagine, the exclusive marketer picked up 182.7 million dollars for CBI marketing in 2020 and 2021 – 22.5 million dollars more than government's 2021 wage bill of 160.2 million. Now our de facto treasury is out of the hands of the state at the mercy of mechanisms designed for the benefit of outsiders.

And so, the economy shrinks. Businesses continue to struggle to pay their bills, profitable growth is an increasingly elusive dream and unemployment continues to rise. We are well ahead in the race to be the first official welfare state in the Caribbean where we all line up at the national stadium for milk and bread from the Comrade leader. The containers of food are already coming in for the government. Meat at the abattoir is already being bought out by the government. And there is talk of nationalizing the assets of foreign companies that are not on board the welfare state agenda. The best and brightest have left or are leaving. Those that remain must pledge love and loyalty to the King so they can eat. All is not well and wealth is becoming increasingly uncommon in the Commonwealth! People are bawling.

But fear not. Dominica will rise again. I pledge to thee, citizens of Dominica, that my life's work, whether in here or somewhere out there will be the resurrection of the Dominica we all love and cherish.

SO HELP ME GOD!!!!

THE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

The long awaited, ancient promise of an international airport by the same government that voted 19 years ago in this parliament against a bipartisan approach to developing this critical piece of the economic infrastructure was the hot ticket item in last year's budget and features prominently again in this year.

The international airport, rises from the graveyard of empty promises and vote catching deception to become what the prime minister describes as "a major game changer for Dominica" that Dominica has been cruelly denied of for 22 years.

At the time of presenting its international airport plans to the public, there was no purpose and needs assessment as would be expected upfront in an economic feasibility study including cost benefit analysis, risk assessment and travel demand forecasts; no site selection survey; no environment impact analysis and assessment; no geotechnical analysis; no airport design and master plan. These are basic best practice requirements of international airport development.

The soil stability, method of design, construction of features and structures below the present ground level that are needed to ensure a stable and feasible runway design to support the construction activities are still unknown. We understand there are serious concerns at new site compared to the previous site where all these facts were investigated prior to arriving at a decision on location.

The total cost of the scheme in development up to June 30th, 2025 is 554.9 million. 76.5 million is already spent; 65 million will be spent in this budget year; 200.5 million in 2023/2024 and 212.8 million in 2024/2025.

We have no idea how much more will be spent before completion. At the contract and/or agreement signing on June 9th, 2021, the Prime Minister said that the international airport will cost “just over a billion dollars” and will be completed by 2025. In his 2022 budget statement he says it will be completed and commissioned by November 2026. What do we have for the 76.5 million spent so far?

- 24 million to 130 property owners;
and presumably the remaining 52.5 million has been spent on:
- Airport soils laboratory.
- Environmental and social impact assessment
- Project Office in construction.
- Geotechnical studies ongoing.
- Project masterplan in progress

So, with geotechnical studies on going and the master plan in progress there can be no airport design. But the Prime Minister says there was “a very rigorous tender process” in which China Railway No. 5 Engineering Group Co. (CR5) was selected as the main contractor for the construction of the International Airport.

What was the basis for the rigorous tender? Who conducted the tender? Government? Or the airport developer who is the beneficiary of a no bid contract?

We are told that development of this Airport will increase opportunities for contractors, construction workers, engineers, plumbers, electricians, and other service providers. But the main contractor is a Chinese firm. Does the contract with the Chinese firm compel it to employ Dominicans first instead of bringing in hundreds of Chinese construction workers, engineers, plumbers, electricians and other service providers?

To be clear, China is not funding the Dominica international airport. Dominica is paying money from the sale of its citizenship to a Chinese company to build the airport. Putting Dominica first means employing Dominicans first and foremost with Dominica's money to work on the construction of Dominica's international airport.

The international airport development program of the United Workers Party – 1995 to 1999

When the UWP took office in 1995, the growth engines of tourism, agriculture, manufacturing and agro-industries, in particular, and the importance of air access to economic development were foremost on the national leadership and management agenda

Within two years of assuming office Cabinet resolved that improved air access was indispensable to the sustainable economic development of Dominica and put in motion appropriate measures to alleviate the problem. The UWP contracted Planning and Stanley Engineering Associates of Trinidad and Tobago to advise on the options for Air Access Improvement:

A. The New Airport was estimated to cost \$80 million US\$ comprising \$10M in private financing, \$40M in international financing and \$30M in international grants

B. The New Airport would be located approximately 1, 700 meters northwest of the existing Melville Hall Airport

C. The runway would be 3,200 meters long by 45 meters wide to serve primary critical aircraft (B767)

By the time the UWP administration left office in January 2000, it had secured the following commitments towards construction of the International Airport:

- Thirteen Million Euro (13 m) grant funding from the European Union
- Twenty-five Million Us Dollars (25 m) in grant and soft loan funding from the government of Taiwan
- In kind contribution towards earth works (a major cost component of the project) from the governments of Cuba and Venezuela.

The UWP adhered to the Best Practice approach to construction of this critical piece of the national economic infrastructure and Planning and Stanley delivered the “Airport Master Plan and Feasibility Report to Government for implementation of the New International airport.

All this was done openly, transparently and faithfully in the public interest of positioning the economy to facilitate maximum development benefits for the people of Dominica – 23 years ago.

This administration took Office in 2000 on a promise that it would build an international airport. Yet, instead of improving on what it inherited, the DLP

government set aside all the preparatory work for the development of an international airport done under the Edison James administration claiming that Dominica could not afford an international airport.

The international airport development program of the Dominica Labour Party – 2000 to 2021

Through advances in aviation technology over the past 20 years the modern aircraft choices of major international airlines are operating on 7,000 ft runways. There are possibilities for a viable Dominica based international airline service using the Airbus 220-100 model that can fly from a 6k foot runway at Melville Hall to North America, Europe and Africa. Yet the 2021 plan of this administration is for a 10,000 ft runway which is significantly and unnecessarily more expensive.

The key figure in the funding scheme for the international airport, is Anthony Haiden of Montreal Management Company into whose control the administration has placed hundreds of millions of Dominica's passport dollars being held unconstitutionally outside of the consolidated fund. He will frontload money for airport construction and then refund himself from passport sales. This arrangement is deemed necessary even though Dominica has more than enough passport money to build an international airport at a cost just north of EC\$1.0 billion.

So, did he frontload the 76.5 million dollars spent on the international airport over the past few years? Wouldn't this be a loan? How come it is showing up as money from central Government revenue? What is the payback arrangement?

Anthony Haiden rents a Mercury Property house at Morne Daniel to Government as the official residence of the Prime Minister for 32 thousand dollars monthly.

Anthony Haiden has carte blanche to build houses, apartment complexes, community centers, hospitals and health centers with Dominica’s passport money on no bid contracts with Government which allow him to sub contract the construction work to foreign companies and cancel local contractors at his fancy and whim.

Haiden’s Housing Dominica operates out of the Prime Minister’s Office separate and apart from the Ministry of Housing with passport funds held overseas

How is Dominica doing with these projects? Do we even know anything apart from the fact that they are being done? Are we paying market prices? Are we getting value for money?

PROJECT (cost in EC millions)	Market	2020/21	Diff
Modern Resilient Housing	50.0	88.1	38.1
Modern Resilient Health Centers	14.4	32.4	18.0
Modern Resilient Comm Centers	10.0	17.1	7.1
Marigot Hospital	32.5	52.8	20.3
	106.9	190.4	83.5

Anthony Haiden signed a contract with government for the development of the international airport. The project was not tendered and no competitive bids were considered contrary to the provisions of the Finance

Administration Act and the Procurement Act against wasteful, uneconomical spending in the procurement of public services.

This means in effect, arrangements for the largest public infrastructure project in the history of Dominica that are in disobedience to the rule of law demand and the command of Parliament that spending of public funds must reflect value for money.

The international airport for Dominica must be built in accordance with international best practice with funds already received from the sale of Dominican passports being held unlawfully under private control in overseas account. Any agreement for these or other CBI funds to be “front-loaded” for international airport construction and then refunded to the front-loader, is null, void and of no effect.

THE MARIGOT CONSTITUENCY

Marigot is thankful for:

- the Hospital,
- the health centre
- the renovations in progress on the fisheries complex
- the refurbishment of the Wills Stratmore Stevens school

More than 8 years later, we are still waiting for the opening of Hospital which this administration shutdown for termite infestation in 2014. I am happy that I advocated relentlessly for construction of the hospital using our own CBI funds instead of waiting indefinitely on a contribution of 5 million US dollars from Mexico. The design and build work of the St Lucian firm

Rayneau started in January 2020 and was completed 18 months later. The new, much improved facility has been standing for more than a year, but it has not been opened to serve the health care needs of the North East Health District.

In September 2017, Hurricane Maria damaged 499 houses and destroyed 240 houses in Marigot and Concord. Currently, over 100 persons in the Marigot Constituency are in need of Housing assistance. Some need new houses, some need roof repairs, some need repairs to segments of their affected houses, some need to strengthen their structures to hurricane resistant standards. Some of these Maria victims have received minimal or no help during the Government Housing assistance program post Maria.

This is not because we do not have money. Dominica has enough money from the sale of Dominican citizenship to meet all the housing assistance needs of all the victims of Hurricane Maria including the victims from Marigot

We need rehabilitation of Village and Feeder Roads:

1. Cregg/Valley Road/Melville Hall link road
2. Sunly Road
3. Coffee Road
4. Morne George/Rosehill Road
5. Tan-Tan/North End/ Pagua link Road
6. Baron /Rosehill Road
7. Access Road to Long Bay
8. Over gutter Road drainage
9. Windy Lodge Road

10. Crapaud Hall/Myshall Road
11. Six acres/Melville Hall link Road
12. Dam bridge reconstruction completion/River wall construction
13. Retaining wall to prevent public road failure in front of the property of Ellsworth Prevost - the facility which processes and exports the most agricultural products in Dominica
14. Sam's Gutter/Will Valley access road
15. Fine grass/Bull Hole/School Road link
16. North End Hamlet Road and drainage construction

We have been asking for the funds of the state to be budgeted and spent on these road infrastructure needs for the better part of the last two decades. In 2021/2022, parliament approved spending of 74.3 million dollars for the ministry of public works – the ministry responsible for building and maintenance of roads. Only 33.9 million or 46 percent of the approved budget was spent. 40.4 million or 54 percent of the approved public works budget was not spent in 2021/2022, but there was still no money for the critical road infrastructure needs of the Marigot constituency.

The wave overtopping at Melville Hall causing sea water causing damage to the vehicles of the people of Wesley and Marigot in particular is a problem that emerged more than 10 years ago with the upgrade of the Melville Airport. Year after year since, millions were budgeted for correction but never spent, and so the problem persists.

In the 2021/2022 budget estimates the total cost of the Wave Overtopping Mitigation Measures was 19.7 million. 200 thousand would be spent in 2021/2022 and the remainder – 19.5 million - would be spent to complete the project in this year 2022/2023. According to the 2022/2023 budget

estimates the project to correct the wave overtopping problem at Melville Hall has been suspended. Just like that. No more budgeted spending to correct the problem. But the story cannot and will not end there...

The constituency needs:

1. The fisheries complex operating as an official port of entry
2. Equipment and proper local staffing at the new state of the art Hospital to serve the North East
3. A health center in the hamlet of Concord
4. Development of the Concord Community Centre, Hard-court and Playing field
5. A proper and adequate water system to serve the present and future needs of the Concord Community
6. Upgrades of the Londonderry and Lio Park playing fields and Weirs Hard court
7. Proper libraries at all school facilities
8. Completion of the North Eastern Education Complex
9. Affordable housing programs to facilitate village expansion
10. Completion of the official allocation of land at Melville Hall to interested persons for whom the land was reserved by the housing division years ago and discontinuation of all politically motivated intervening arrangements compromising their ability to build
11. A young farmers development program to facilitate continuity in our vital agriculture sector
12. Gov't assistance with the expansion and development of food reception depots for the processing of agro exports

The \$83.2 million in excess of market prices that government has been asked to pay for 4 construction projects in 2020/2021 is more than enough to fund all of these pressing needs for one of the most productive communities in the Commonwealth of Dominica.

THE DOMINICAN DREAM

As we budget to spend on national development, think of our ancestors – the maroons who fought relentlessly against slavery, so that we could be free; the Kalinago, whose religion and language gifted us lessons of nature island life that we are still unwilling to learn. Think of Rastafari and the nature island living experience we continue to take for granted.

Think of our common aspiration not to strive to simply survive, but to thrive, to prosper rejoicing in the human development discipline of all living for each and each living for all

Think of the powerful lessons we learn from the wisdom of the ages:

“Nothing in Nature lives for itself

The rivers don’t drink their own water,

Clouds do not swallow their own rain

Trees don’t eat their own fruits,

The sun does not shine for itself,

And flowers do not spread their fragrance for themselves.

Living for others is a rule of nature.

Life is good when you're happy,

But it is much better when others are happy because of you".

The Dominican Dream, which we have never written down or even spoken about specifically, is that collection of nature island blessings which is so special to us that on one hand we do not want to leave it; and on the other hand, we yearn to come back to it whenever circumstances force us to leave it.

We all dream of Dominica First... we all dream of Dominica for all of Dominica's children at home and abroad. The dream is:

To be a free, healthy, happy person enjoying peace, growth and prosperity in the best place to live, the best place to work and the best place to enjoy life.

Think of where we would be today if over the past twenty years we had budgeted and spent the nations resources on a genuine nature island development program for the realization of that dream

Instead, we have been locked into an inefficient and fossil fuel dependent infrastructure and unattractive, unhealthy, unsustainable lifestyles that have left our youth disengaged and indifferent

We need national recognition and acceptance of the simple truth that we are citizens of a country born to shine as the Nature Island of the World – the isle of beauty, the isle of splendor...

We the people of this Nature Island live in the unity of diversity that defines nature. The dream is to thrive as free people on equality and justice according to the rules of divine order. But it is not our reality. The dream is

to govern and sustain ourselves in peaceful co-existence living in harmony with nature. But it is not our reality. Yet, the way God planned it, the way he wants it to be is for us to be nature island people – God fearing, strong, healthy and as resilient as the natural environment.

Let us leave behind the dream killers... the political, religious and other divisions we have created for ourselves, and discipline ourselves to become the free, united, peaceful, harmonious, self-sustaining people that we truly are.

The national development efforts of the past two decades years have not worked because they have moved the narrative on economic advancement further and further away from the worthwhile dream of a national development philosophy that is in harmony with our true Nature Island character and identity.

In accepting ourselves as Nature Island people, we accept that human life is sacred, that all human beings are divine and deserve to be treated equally. We accept that nothing in nature lives for itself and living for others is a rule of nature. We must all come up together. We accept the responsibility to take care of ourselves as much as possible in the quest for lives of peace, freedom and human dignity. We accept the challenge of living in harmony with the natural environment...

Let us truly appreciate the abundant blessings of Land, Water and Plants and their importance in feeding us, clothing us, sheltering us and funding our participation in global affairs and our integration with the family of mankind by helping others to meet these basic human needs in life supporting ways.

On the Nature Island our plants on the land provide food and drink as well as materials for clothing and shelter. The myriad shades of green, the flowers of beauty model sustainability and decorate our lives. What happened to the eco villages and cities in which we should be living? We breathe clean air; we drink clean water; We eat natural food. On the nature island our food and drink should be our medicine and our medicine should be our nature island food and drink. Our herbs must heal the nation. Our herbs must heal the world. Therefore, no plant or herb will be illegal in the nature island of the World.

The Nature Island Development philosophy offers the lovers of nature around the world a brand in the advancement of civilization that they can identify with and support to succeed especially in recognition of the fact that the true Nature Island of the world will automatically become, the first climate resilient country in the world. This will be nature's safe haven of peace and tranquility in a troubled world that most human beings on planet earth would want to visit.

As I have said before in this honorable House, it is a very serious offense against humanity for the isle of beauty, the isle of splendor; the nature island of the world; the nation with the most generous blessings of green per capita on God's earth to have so many of its precious children frustrated, sick, unemployed and condemned to hopeless dependency in lives of everlasting poverty.

SO let us ensure that our agriculture secures 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.

Let us set the stage to earn hundreds of millions of dollars annually from the export of our agricultural products and the health and wellness solutions 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.

Let us budget and spend our resources on earning ourselves a worthwhile place in the international trade of goods and services by taking advantage of expanding opportunities in the green economy, the blue economy and the orange economy.

Let us budget and spend our resources to make Dominican lives really matter in Dominica in a system of governance that allows citizens, especially our youth to work, create and grow enterprise and participate meaningfully in nature island building.

Let us budget and spend our resources to create a success story of nature island citizen engagement and participation that brings government, people, businesses, civil society groups and neighborhoods in a collective effort to make Dominica the real, authentic, Nature Island of the World in the next 20 years

Let us budget and spend our resources on developing a meritocracy in which those most suitable for leadership will accept the sacred responsibility to lead and manage on behalf of the rest of us.

In the immortal dream of our national anthem, we call the sons and daughters of this gem beyond compare to embrace this vision of hope that invites us to toil with hearts and hands and voices... to prosper and sound the call “in which everyone rejoices All for each and each for all...”

YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND PARTNERSHIP

Modern technology has exposed the shaky nation building foundation that has left our youth insecure, marginalized and unconnected to a system unable to deliver solutions to their real-life challenges.

In effect, we are really reaping what we have sown in our progressive departure through the years from meaningful youth participation and partnership in nation building and wealth creation.

We need a movement to meet young people where they are—in schools, sporting and entertainment events, clubs and community centers, on the block, in church, in hospitals... meet them physically, academically, socially, and emotionally—to help them build the relationships, skills, competencies, and confidence they need to succeed in life.

This means developing supportive learning, sporting, recreational settings that nurture the strengths and interests of the youth and enable them to thrive while building relationships and bonding with peers and adults.

Youth are learning all the time. In and out of school, in families, in neighborhoods, in communities... we must align our youth development resources to a strategy for giving them the broad range of skill sets, knowledge, and competencies needed to become lifelong learners,

successful business leaders, high performance professionals, productive workers, world class artistes, sports men and women and engaged citizens.

Let us fix our focus on the settings and services that facilitate young people to grow while exploring interests and dealing with issues that reflect their passions, concerns and dreams of success.

Let us provide a solid platform for successful youth participation in the partnership to build, maintain and continuously improve the best Dominica for all Dominicans at home and abroad

In this regard, let us establish in this budget year a Youth Entrepreneurship Investment Bank to help grow youth-based wealth in our nature island family.

This new financial institution, to be capitalized with 100 million dollars from the citizenship revenues of Dominica will create the much-needed ecosystem of support around businesses of young people in agriculture, light manufacturing, tourism, IT and financial services, renewable energy, sports and the creative industries

It will prioritize funding for youth business projects alongside technical assistance to ensure success in providing quality goods and services, quality jobs for young people and sustainable wealth creation for the youth.

CONCLUSION

With all the hardships endured by the people of Dominica battling red hot rising prices and frozen wages and salaries in a time of record-breaking

passport revenues, the government's relief measures make a mockery of the struggle to survive:

1. Removal of VAT on the fuel surcharge
2. Reduction in license fees for commercial vehicles only

Nothing, absolutely nothing to help with the rapidly rising cost of food, clothing, shelter and other basic necessities... not a salary increase... not a cash grant, not a cost of living allowance... nothing! But somewhere I heard, that some ministers received an extra month's salary at the end of June. If loving poor people to be poor was a Cabinet of Ministers, this would be it!!!

The people of this blessed nature island need a fresh start and real change. We have the money. We earned it from the huge sacrifice of selling our citizenship in the global market. Let us put the billions of the people being held unlawfully outside of our control into our treasury where it will be used by government of the people for the benefit of all the people

Our shared commitment to secure the Best Dominica for ALL Dominicans constrains us starting in this budget year:

- to bring an immediate end to the practice of using the resources of Dominica to benefit outside interests with multimillion-dollar contracts for work Dominicans are ready, willing and able to do.
- to create a new sustainable Nature Island Economy with agriculture, tourism, renewable energy, ICT, the cultural industries and a water industry as major pillars

- to must grow the economy by 7% per year, a create 12,000 new jobs by 2025,
- to reduce the cost and maximize the ease of investing and doing business in Dominica
- to restore livelihoods and bring back regular income to families in the farming communities of Dominica
- to enact Legislation and Regulations to Legalize, Grow, Process and Export Cannabis, and cannabis-based health and wellness products
- to provide agricultural inputs and farm labour financial assistance grants to farmers to boost output of a range of high value products for export
- to purchase at least two refrigerated vessels to transport Nature Island branded primary and processed agricultural products in the Caribbean
- to provide low interest loans, financial grants and appropriate fiscal incentives to deserving tourist service providers and manufacturers for refinancing, refurbishment and expansion of their establishments
- to expand and modernize our ports of entry
- to open the Delice/Petite Savanne road and complete the Roseau Road Reinstatement Project... Overall, we must and upgrade our road network and bridges to the highest standards of resilience to natural disasters,
- to fully reinstate, restructure and operationalize the Public Works Corporation

- to eliminate Dominica's dependency on fossil fuels and reduce the cost of energy by at least 30% within five years
- to ensure there is fairness, equity, proper accountability, and no political interference in government's housing assistance programme
- to provide duty free importation of all building materials for an initial period of three years
- to Introduce Development of Nature Island People education and training programs for schools and work places across Dominica
- to facilitate the critical role of women in creating and nurturing a balanced, harmonious, thriving nation...
- to secure our children from neglect and abuse and ground them in the discipline of successful global citizenship
- to upgrade the salaries of all public officers to make them competitive with the salaries paid to public officers in other OECS countries.
- to Build a national work ethic in which public officers are committed to serving the state instead of being forced to enslave themselves to the will of Government Ministers
- to criminalize discrimination and victimization against citizens seeking assistance from the public purse to which they are entitled for human development needs

We call on our nature island people to continue to put the country first, irrespective of partisan allegiance. Let us not place party before people and country. Let us unite over this common desire for the best Dominica for all of the sons and daughters of Dominica.

I say in closing, especially to the young men of Dominica, no misunderstanding, no difference of opinion, no argument, no material possession is worth the sacred life of a fellow human being... think it over, talk it over... let us turn to each other, not on each other... let us live for each other, not against each other... let us do unto others as we would have them do unto us... let us sow the love we want to reap

As we seek to protect the lives of our young people, always knowing that "Prevention is Better than Cure", let's all drive and ride with care, with caution... and let us be courteous, kind and understanding to other road users during the upcoming August Monday Holiday Weekend 2022:

1. Ensure that your Insurance and Licenses are up to date
2. Don't drive or ride at excessive speeds... nothing risky, take it easy
3. Whether you are a driver or passenger wear your seat belt
4. Whether you are a bike rider or passenger wear your protective helmet
5. Don't drive or ride under the influence of alcohol or drugs
6. Don't text and drive or ride
7. If you are partying as a group, please assign a Designated Driver who will remain sober at all times
8. If you feel drowsy while driving or riding stop and take a rest

Nothing we do in the enjoyment of our lovely Dominica, is worth getting hurt over. Stay safe, stay blessed.

May the ancestors be pleased.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker