



ADDRESS

BY

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PRIME MINISTER OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA

**ON THE OCCASION OF
THE 46TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE**

“Peyi Nou, Kado Nou”

Theme: ‘*Dominica Rises*’

Sunday, 3rd November 2024
Windsor Park Sports Stadium
5:00 p.m.



Fellow Dominicans, both here on our beloved soil and across the world, today we gather as one people, connected by the rivers, valleys, hills and mountains which shape our land and resonate within our very souls.

I stand before you today, encouraged by the message in this song—that no matter how high the oceans rise or how fierce the thunder roars, we will rise above it all, because our Almighty God is with us.

As we observe the 46th anniversary of our independence, we stand as proud sons and daughters of the true **Nature Isle**. From the lush green of our forests to the crystal-clear waters that kiss our shores, Dominica is a treasure—a **gift** that we must protect and cherish for generations to come; a **gift** for which we give thanks to the Almighty.

Today, we honour the past, the sacrifices of those who came before us, the leaders who fought for our right to self-determination, and the visionaries who laid the foundation upon which we stand. We owe them our gratitude, and today, we carry their legacy forward, just as **Dominica Rises** with every step we take.

On the accomplishments of our **former leaders**, who built the framework of this nation, to the modern icons like **Thea Lafond-Gadson**, whose Olympic gold brought joy to the heart of every Dominican, we stand tall.

This day is not just about remembrance; it is also about looking to the future. And so, I ask of you: What does **Independence** mean for Dominica in **2024**? What does it mean for us today, in a world that is rapidly changing and where the challenges of the past seem so different to those we now face?

Today, yes, we are the products of our independence—but we are also the **architects of its future. Dominica Rises**, not merely as a reflection of what we have already achieved, but as a commitment to what we will build together.

Forty-six years ago, on the **3rd of November 1978**, Dominica proudly raised its flag as a sovereign nation. We were a people ready to hold our heads high, ready to face the world as an independent nation, full of hope and ambition.

In **1978**, we were determined to define our identity, to stand alongside other nations as equals, and to claim our rightful place in the global community. But today, in **2024**, our challenges have evolved. The world has changed, and so must we. Independence today is far more than sovereignty over our land—it is about the sovereignty of our **ideas**, our **innovations**, and our **resilience**.

As we sail through the waters of time, **Dominica Rises** like a vessel, strong and determined, navigating toward a future of prosperity. We must remain relevant in an ever-evolving world. Nations around the globe are redefining their place—technology is transforming industries, climate change is reshaping economies, and new opportunities arise for those who are prepared. We, too, must rise to the occasion, adapt, and lead with bold vision.

We are **grounded by our roots**, but it is our **ambition** that propels us forward. Just as a skilled captain adjusts the sails to catch the wind, Dominica must continually adapt to chart its course, mindful of where we have come from, but focused on where we are going. **Independence** in **2024** is about being forward-thinking, about embracing progress while holding firm to our values. In doing so, **Dominica Rises**, not just for us, but for future generations.

Who among us can forget the pride that filled our hearts just a few months ago, when two of our own sons, **Alick Athanaze** and **Kavem Hodge**, stood shoulder to shoulder, representing the West Indies against England? These two young Dominicans brought heat to the field and warmth to the hearts of an entire region. Their partnership, as they faced some of the best bowlers in the world, was a moment of **national pride**, capped off by Kavem's maiden test century.

And then, we have the shining example of **Thea Lafond-Gadson**. A world-class athlete and a true embodiment of what it means to be Dominican. Thea's journey to Olympic gold did not come easy—it was paved with sacrifice, with determination, and with an unbreakable spirit. In her triumph, we saw the power of perseverance, the strength of will, and the boundless potential of every single Dominican.

When Thea stood on that podium, gold medal draped around her neck, it wasn't just her victory—it was ours. It was a victory for every Dominican child who dreams of greatness, a victory for every family who knows the value of hard work, and a victory for this nation. She reminded us all that, no matter the odds, **Dominica Rises**.

Just last month, a young farmer, Kevorn Vidal from Salisbury was honoured as the CARICOM Youth Farmer of the Year; and beekeeper Nathaniel Lovell's *La Vie Miel Honey* received the Best International Honey award at the 2024 UK National Honey Show.

Their remarkable achievements underscore the value of hard work and innovation in agriculture and affirms our commitment to investing in youth participation in the sector.

There was excitement among our people when two Dominican bouyon artistes, Mr. Ridge and Asa Bantan, won awards at the Caribbean Music Awards in August, elevating bouyon music to the international stage and inspiring fans and fellow musicians alike.

The truth is... whether it is in athletics, in education, music, or in industry, **we produce excellence**. And as long as we continue to invest in our people, to give them the tools to succeed, **Dominica will continue to rise**, taking its rightful place among the great nations of our region and the world.

But as we all know, the seas are not always calm. There are moments when the waters turn choppy, when dark clouds gather

overhead, and the journey becomes uncertain. The global challenges we face—climate change, economic instability, global pandemics and geopolitical conflicts—test our resolve as a nation. But like a sturdy vessel, **Dominica Rises** stronger with every storm we weather.

We are known as the **Nature Isle**, a land of beauty and peace, but let no one mistake our calm for weakness. When external shocks strike, we do not falter. We adapt. We rise. We prove to the world that Dominica is not just a peaceful isle, but a resilient one.

We **anticipate** challenges, we **plan** and we **prepare** for the future with **bold initiatives** that put Dominica at the forefront of global discussions. Our commitment to **renewable energy**, particularly our **geothermal project**, positions us not just as a leader in the Caribbean, but as a model for the world, ensuring energy security and building a sustainable future for our people.

Over the past year, we have seen a suite of **new initiatives** come to life, and many more are on the horizon. From the **International Airport** to the **Cabrits Marina**, from our housing interventions to our education grants, we are laying the foundation for a future where **no one is left behind**. You have heard those words before, but let me assure you: **Dominica Rises**, and we will rise together.

Our commitment is to all Dominicans, especially to our most vulnerable. They are at the heart of our efforts, because we believe that a nation is measured by how it cares for its people. Our public officers, police officers, business community, you are not forgotten. As we continue to grow, we remain focused on ensuring that **every Dominican** has the opportunity to thrive.

Our resilience, however, is not the product of the government alone. It is the result of the **shared will** of the people of Dominica. Each of us—from the farmers in the fields to our small and large entrepreneurs, teachers, doctors, nurses, students - can play a role in steering this vessel toward prosperity. Our strength lies in our **unity**, in our collective determination to see this island prosper.

Fellow citizens, part of our commitment to nation- building must be a renewal of pride in our national symbols-the Coat of Arms, National Anthem, National Pledge, the National Prayer and our National Flag. These symbols represent our sovereignty and deserve deeper reverence as we work to preserve our national identity.

I wish to highlight, for example, that the National Flag is currently flown from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. on state buildings. Moving forward, the Flag of the Commonwealth of Dominica will be proudly displayed around the clock, 24/7, on all state buildings.

Additionally, beginning January 1, 2025, the national flag shall be displayed on all public buildings, including schools, hospitals and health centers, as a symbol of our nationhood, of pride, and of gratitude to those who fought for our independence.

We also appeal to the private sector businesses and institutions to adopt the practice. This will foster a deeper understanding, particularly among our youth, of the significance of our independence and the privilege of being Dominican.

My dear people of Dominica, I speak to you not just as your Prime Minister, but as a leader for **all Dominicans**. From **Capuchin** to **Scottshead**, from **Marigot to Mahaut**, from **Calibishie** to **La Plaine**, we are one people, united by our shared love for this land. Our mission is clear: to build a Dominica that works for everyone, not just a few.

Today, we will honour those who have made their mark on the landscape of Dominica. People who have heeded the call to serve and who have put country first. We salute them. May their service inspire all of us as we unite and focus on the task of nation building.

This year, we also show appreciation in a tangible way to the governments and peoples of the United Kingdom and Canada for their assistance in the formation and financing of the Climate Resilience Execution Agency for Dominica (CREAD).

We are eternally grateful to them and to the other nations, organizations and partners in development, which have stood with Dominica and helped us along our journey.

My dear Dominicans, as we forge ahead, let us redefine what **independence** means for Dominica in **2024**. Yes, it will always be a celebration of our past, but it must now also become a call to action for our future. Independence today means being **confident** in our abilities, **bold** in our decisions, and **wise** in our leadership.

Independence also means taking responsibility for our own destiny. It means leading with purpose, with vision, and with a commitment to the well-being of every citizen. Our task is great, but together, we will accomplish it. As your Prime Minister, I am committed to steering this vessel, ensuring that Dominica continues to **rise, soar and prosper**.

So, my fellow Dominicans, as we celebrate this Independence Day, I issue a challenge to each and every one of us, including myself. Let us **commit** to a new understanding of independence. Let us not celebrate it once a year but live it every day. Let us steer this vessel with confidence, knowing that no matter the storm, **Dominica Rises**. With God's grace, let us sail forward, together, toward a future of **prosperity**, of **peace** and of **pride**.

Happy Independence Day, Dominica. May God bless us all.