

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Dominica Freedom Party Challenges Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit's Health Care Claims with the Facts

Roseau, Dominica – The Dominica Freedom Party (DFP) challenges recent statements by Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit that Dominica's health care system is the best it has ever been. Drawing on the achievements of the 1980s under Prime Minister Dame Mary Eugenia Charles, the DFP highlights a period when Dominica's health care was recognized as a model of excellence across the Caribbean.

During the 1980s, the DFP revolutionized Dominica's health care system by implementing a decentralized, community-focused model that prioritized equity and access. This transformation led to measurable improvements in health outcomes, making Dominica's health indicators among the best in the region. During this period, Dominica also provided essentially free universal health care, a benefit that has since been dismantled. Today's price hikes and inflation mean an ever-larger portion of citizens' income is consumed by health care services. Yet, the government has failed to replicate the affordability of the earlier period through a universal national health care insurance scheme, leaving many without access to affordable care.

Achievements That Speak for Themselves

The DFP's record is based on measurable progress:

1. **Decentralized Health Care Access:** Seven health districts ensured rural communities had access to health facilities staffed by trained professionals.
2. **Unprecedented Immunization Rates:** Nearly 100% immunization coverage eradicated preventable childhood illnesses like measles and polio.
3. **Drastic Reduction in Infant Mortality:** Infant mortality rates fell by over 50%, thanks to maternal and child health initiatives and robust family planning programs.
4. **Eradication of Malaria:** Targeted campaigns eliminated malaria, positioning Dominica as a regional leader in disease control.
5. **Increased Life Expectancy:** Life expectancy rose significantly due to the DFP's focus on prevention and accessibility.
6. **Global Recognition:** Partnerships with PAHO and WHO brought funding and technical expertise, elevating Dominica's health care system.

Reversing Trends in Infant Mortality

In stark contrast, recent decades have seen a troubling reversal. While the DFP achieved a dramatic decline in infant mortality—from 45.6 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1970 to 15.1 by the late 1980s—this progress has been undone. Since 2000, infant mortality has steadily risen, reaching 30.8 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2022.

Rising infant mortality is a key indicator of systemic failures in health care, socioeconomic conditions, and public health infrastructure. This trend reflects a breakdown in the primary health care system established in the 1980s and rebukes the current administration’s claims of progress.

Transparent, Data-Driven Governance

When lives are at stake, measurable outcomes provided to the public are essential. The DFP insists that the government provide clear, measurable health care data to support its claims. Progress must be grounded in reality, not political posturing.

The Freedom Party’s Commitment

The DFP’s transformative policies in the 1980s remain a benchmark for effective governance. We remain committed to sustainable, equity-driven health care policies that address current challenges and prioritize the well-being of all Dominicans. Roosevelt Skerrit’s claims about today’s health care being “the best we ever had” must be viewed with derision against this historic record.

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