



ADDRESS

BY

**HONOURABLE ROOSEVELT SKERRIT
PRIME MINISTER OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE
47TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE
THEME: '47 YEARS OF PROGRESS AND PURPOSE'**

Monday, 3rd November 2025
Windsor Park Sports Stadium
5:00 p.m.

My Fellow Dominicans,

Two score and seven years ago, on November 3rd, 1978, our beloved Dominica stepped boldly onto the world stage as an independent nation. On that day, we raised the national flag with pride and hope - believing that this "Isle to All so Sweet and fair" could chart its own destiny.

Today, we gather under the radiant light of our nation's 47th anniversary of independence. This is a celebration of 47 years of pride, perseverance and purpose; 47 years of a people who, though small in number, have never been small in spirit.

Dominica has walked a path marked not by ease, but by courage. We have faced the tempests of nature, countless macroeconomic shocks and the complex demands of a changing world.

Yet, through it all, we have never lost sight of who we are - a people rooted in faith, community and love for country. We have continued to pursue a better Dominica for our children, for our communities and for generations yet to come.

As we celebrate this year's independence under the theme "*47 Years of Progress and Purpose*", we are reminded of how far we have come and the sacred duty we hold to continue building a resilient, prosperous and inclusive Dominica.

As we reflect on our journey of strength and renewal, our hearts turn to our Caribbean neighbours who now face difficult days. I take a moment to express solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Jamaica, Cuba and Haiti in the aftermath of Hurricane Melissa.

We share in their pain and we understand, perhaps more than most, the devastation such disasters can bring to families, communities and livelihoods. Our thoughts and prayers are with all who have suffered loss.

We are also mindful of our Dominican nationals and students residing in those countries, and we continue to monitor their well-being closely. The Government of Dominica has established a hotline for Dominican students in Jamaica and Cuba to reach out for assistance or to report any challenges they may be facing.

Dominica will provide tangible support in the coming days and weeks to assist recovery efforts in the affected countries and to ensure that our citizens abroad receive the care and guidance they need.

In moments like these, we are reminded that we are one Caribbean family, bound by history, shared struggle and an unshakeable spirit of resilience. Together, we shall rise.

Fellow Dominicans, there are moments, especially on Independence, when we must pause to celebrate the grace of the Almighty and our numerous achievements as a government and people.

We thank God for the many blessings He continues to pour upon this nation. Throughout our history, Dominica has never lacked food to sustain us, clean air to breathe and pure water to drink.

Each day, by His grace, we find the strength and the means to build, to serve and to provide for our people. It is through His continued favour that our government is able to advance the work of development and to secure a better future for all.

Every government since 1978 has played its part in building the drivers of successful nationhood and shaping the Dominica we know today.

Our journey began under the leadership of Patrick Roland John and the Dominica Labour Party, who led us to the historic moment of independence on November 3rd, 1978.

It was a bold and visionary act- the moment when we took control of our destiny and declared that the people of Dominica would govern themselves.

But as every young nation learns, independence brings challenges. Those early years were marked by struggle, governance failures and political turmoil. Yet they laid the foundation for the free and democratic Dominica we cherish today.

During the first year of our independence journey, an interim administration led by Oliver Seraphin and the Committee for National Salvation emerged to restore order, rebuild after the devastation of Hurricane David, and prepare our country for fresh elections. Their efforts gave Dominica a second chance -the opportunity to rebuild with hope and determination.

In 1980, the people turned to Dame Mary Eugenia Charles and the Dominica Freedom Party, who gave Dominica what it needed most at that time- stability, discipline and integrity in public life.

Her leadership restored confidence in government, earned Dominica international respect and introduced economic citizenship as a vehicle for private foreign investment.

Under her stewardship, we became known as a country governed by law, order, and principle - a nation that could stand tall among its Caribbean brothers and sisters.

That was the stabilizing phase of our independence - when we learned that self-governance must rest on sound institutions, discipline and accountability.

In 1995, the United Workers Party, led by Edison James, brought a new spirit of ambition. The UWP government sought to deepen our economic independence and push Dominica forward at a faster pace.

The Economic Citizenship Programme was re-engineered to operate as a fund for overall national development, which laid the foundation for it to become the key engine in our mobilization of development capital and economic resilience.

From the year 2000, under the leadership of Rosie Douglas, Pierre Charles, and myself, the Dominica Labour Party has carried the torch of independence into a new era - the era of transformation and resilience.

We have worked to modernize our economy, rebuild our infrastructure, empower our youth and ensure that every Dominican, in every community, feels the progress of an independent nation.

My friends, as we look back over forty-seven years, we see that every administration – Labour, Freedom, Workers and Labour - has contributed to the great project of building this nation.

Each built upon the work of the other in the areas of strong and accountable governance; economic self-reliance; education; health and wellness; cultural self-assurance; and social cohesion, thereby carrying forward the dream of a proud, self-sufficient Dominica.

Our task now is to protect that progress and continue to build with purpose, a nation where opportunity belongs to everyone, no matter their colour, their creed, their community or political persuasion.

Across Dominica today, progress is visible from the north to the south, from the coast to the mountains, our landscape tells a story of renewal and change.

The International Airport Project, one of the most transformative undertakings in our nation's history, is advancing rapidly. Every week brings new milestones. Runway works are progressing, landside facilities are taking shape, and hundreds of Dominicans are employed on this national project.

For decades, we dreamed of direct international access. Today, that dream is becoming a reality: a gateway which will connect Dominica directly to the world, open new opportunities for trade, tourism and investment and redefine how the world reaches our shores.

Our road network has been the backbone of national development. We have built, resurfaced and modernized roads in every constituency, linking communities more safely and efficiently.

From the Layou Valley Road, the Nicholas J.O Liverpool Highway, the new East Coast Road through the Kalinago Territory, the E.O. LeBlanc Highway and now the Loubiere to Grand Bay Road; Dominica's road infrastructure tells the story of a nation on the rise.

The Roseau Enhancement Project, which will modernize and beautify our capital city Roseau, is set to commence in earnest in 2026.

Our Cabrits Marina Project is another symbol of modern progress. Once completed, it will position Dominica as a leading hub for yachting and marine tourism in the Eastern Caribbean: an entirely new industry which will create jobs, stimulate small businesses and enhance our international appeal.

Few countries of our size have taken on the global energy transition with the level of commitment that Dominica has. The Geothermal Power Plant in Laudat is nearing completion, representing our bold step toward energy independence and sustainability.

Once operational this plant will provide clean, reliable and affordable electricity to thousands of homes and businesses. It will reduce our carbon footprint and make Dominica one of the greenest nations on earth.

Tourism continues to be a cornerstone of our economic growth, and the signs are very promising. Most recently, the launch of new air service agreements with international partners, including Qatar, and the start of regional flights by Contour Airlines have strengthened Dominica's accessibility.

Our collaboration with Barbados on multi-destination tourism means access to new markets and broader global visibility.

Our hotel sector continues to expand. New properties like the Ocean Oasis Hotel, Jungle Bay and the Secret Bay expansion are world class facilities and a sure sign of investor confidence in Dominica's stability and future.

The Cable Car Project, set for completion by year's end, is another exciting new chapter in Dominica's tourism story. Blending innovation with sustainability, it will offer visitors a unique and comfortable way to experience the breathtaking beauty of the Boiling Lake and the surrounding landscape.

This project has created hundreds of jobs for skilled local workers and, when completed, will further energize economic activity in the Roseau Valley, particularly in hospitality, food and beverage and transportation.

Visitor arrivals are increasing steadily and with that growth, more Dominicans are finding meaningful employment and business opportunities across the tourism value chain. Our focus is on redefining the industry through community tourism, so that even more of our people can share in its benefits.

Agriculture has always been at the heart of our identity, and today it is regaining its rightful place in our economic transformation. Our farmers are producing more and earning more. Through targeted interventions such as farm access roads, irrigation systems and the introduction of climate-smart technologies, the Government has reignited confidence in agriculture.

We have strengthened the agro-processing sector and provided equipment and greenhouses to dozens of farmers and processors. Export volumes are rising, and new markets in the region and beyond are opening up, driven by strategic investments in the Dominica Export Import Agency (DEXIA) to strengthen export capacity and provide greater support to our farmers.

We are diversifying crops, promoting youth participation, building stronger linkages between agriculture and tourism and positioning the sector as an engine of growth and rural empowerment.

In the Blue Economy, Dominica took a bold step last month in global conservation and environmental stewardship by establishing the world's first-ever Sperm Whale Reserve, an initiative which underscores our nation's commitment to protecting these majestic creatures and safeguarding our natural heritage.

Fellow Dominicans, the progress we celebrate today is backed by sound economic management, strategic investments and international confidence.

We have bounced back from devastation after devastation and emerged as a global example of resilience, a nation that has turned tragedy into transformation. From the ruins of storms and hurricanes, we rebuilt homes, hospitals, schools and livelihoods with a clear vision of becoming the world's first climate-resilient nation.

Just last week, Dominica reached another major milestone on our journey toward full climate resilience with the signing of an agreement with the Green Climate Fund for the Dominica Community Resilience Enhancement Project (DOMCREP), an investment valued at EC\$70.2M.

This project will focus on eight communities and bring targeted resilience investments to strengthen agriculture, retrofit public buildings and emergency shelters, install early-warning systems and build institutional capacity for disaster preparedness and climate resilience.

Indeed, my friends, Dominica is progressing with purpose!

Our Citizenship by Investment (CBI) Programme has grown exponentially under this administration and continues to provide the funding for many of the climate-resilient projects which are reshaping our nation.

The programme enables us to invest boldly in infrastructure, provide direct support to our people and to the private sector, assist our students pursuing higher education and finance economic diversification, all without placing an unsustainable debt burden on future generations.

It is a model of how a small island developing state can leverage creativity and good governance to build resilience and strengthen communities.

The recently established Eastern Caribbean Citizenship by Investment Regulatory Authority (ECCIRA), signed by OECS member states with CBI programmes and passed by our Parliament, ensures that the programme remains transparent, credible and globally compliant.

Ladies and gentlemen, on 1st October 2025, the Caribbean achieved an historic milestone with the implementation of free movement of nationals of Dominica, Barbados, Belize and St. Vincent and the Grenadines within these countries.

For Dominica to be one of the four pioneering countries in this journey is a profound honour. Full free movement means hope, an expanded citizenry and increased opportunities for all our people.

This is why your government stood at the forefront; we raised our hand to be counted among the first because we believe in the promise of a truly united, integrated Caribbean.

When the story of this moment is told to future generations, they will remember that Dominica was one of the four pillars that helped transform our region.

That is something to be proud of. I want every Dominican to feel proud of this achievement. I am proud of that accomplishment, and I am proud of Dominica. **This, brothers and sisters, is progress; the kind of progress that strengthens not only our nation, but our region.**

My Friends, Dominica's development has always been about **people**. Every policy, every programme, every investment is guided by the simple but powerful principle that progress must improve the lives of our citizens, empower our communities and create opportunities for every Dominican to thrive. And in every village, in every family, the benefits of our progress are being felt.

The Housing Revolution remains one of the most ambitious and transformative programmes in our nation's history. Thousands of resilient homes have been built for Dominicans. These homes are safe, beautiful and built to last.

We are providing families with the stability they need to live with confidence and dignity. We are relocating vulnerable communities to safer ground and with the Opportunity Knocks 2% Housing Programme, we are enabling working families to own their homes at affordable rates.

Through the National Employment Programme, Public Assistance, Non-Contributory Pension and the Yes We Care Programme, we continue to uphold our duty to the most vulnerable among us. These are not handouts; they are investments in dignity, compassion, love and social cohesion.

We have built and equipped new health and wellness centres in every district, improved diagnostic services at the Dominica China Friendship Hospital and introduced new technologies in telemedicine and patient care.

We are also strengthening human resource capacity at the Hospital to enhance leadership, improve clinical management and ensure the highest standards of patient care.

Salary increases and new appointments for public officers, including teachers, nurses and police officers, speak to our deep gratitude for their dedicated service and our commitment to their wellbeing.

Salary increases and adjustments, which are presently being implemented, form part of our continued efforts to reward hard work and strengthen the public service.

We are moving decisively toward another increase in the national minimum wage, following the last adjustment in 2021, so that every worker in Dominica receives fair compensation for their labour. This initiative is an expression of our belief in equity, in the dignity of our people and in shared prosperity.

A report from the advisory committee has been reviewed by Cabinet, and following further consultations with stakeholders, a new minimum wage will be implemented by December 1st, 2025, just in time for Christmas.

Fellow Dominicans, the youth of Dominica are our greatest asset, and education remains the bridge between today's progress and tomorrow's prosperity.

We are upgrading the Goodwill Secondary School into a TVET Centre of Excellence, and constructing five new primary schools across the island, one of which, in Thibaud, will serve as a Centre of Excellence for Special Education.

Through education reform, we are aligning the curriculum with real-world skills, civics education, visual and performing arts, entrepreneurship and digital literacy - so that every Dominican child can compete confidently in the global economy.

Scholarships and skills training continue to create pathways for success; while the Dominica Youth Business Trust helps young entrepreneurs turn their ideas into enterprises.

Education has truly transformed Dominica and is one of the surest signs of our national progress. From early childhood to tertiary level, our children have full access to learning opportunities that were once out of reach for many. More Dominicans than ever before are earning advanced qualifications at universities at home, in the region and around the world.

This steady increase in knowledge and skills has strengthened every sector of our society, from public service and healthcare to business and technology. It is a powerful revolution, driven by deliberate government policy; and is proof that our sustained

investment in education is building the very foundation for Dominica's future.

To our young people: your government continues to believe in you. The opportunities before you are greater than those of any generation before. Take advantage of them. Use them. Build upon that foundation which has been laid for you.

Building on this foundation of progress, I am pleased to share that Clear Harbor is once again expanding its operations in Dominica with the addition of another new client, its second in just a few months.

This development comes at a time when the company, like many others, has faced its share of challenges, making this renewal and growth all the more meaningful. It speaks to Clear Harbor's enduring confidence in our economy and in the skill and professionalism of our Dominican people.

We have been advised that this expansion will generate 300 job opportunities for our young people. I extend heartfelt thanks to Clear Harbor for its continued partnership and for believing in Dominica's potential and promise.

As we celebrate, we also honour the spirit of who we are. We are Dominicans - creative and deeply rooted in our culture. Our World Creole Music Festival, now 25 years strong, continues to highlight our vibrant culture, blending traditional rhythms with international appeal.

This year's Festival was a resounding success, reaffirming Dominica's reputation as the Creole Capital of the World. For three unforgettable nights, our stage came alive with the rhythms of Bouyon, Cadence-lypso, Reggae, Zouk, Compa and Soca, showcasing the extraordinary talent of our local and regional artistes.

The festival brought an undeniable boost to our economy, with all hotels filled, small businesses benefitting and the world once again turning its attention to Dominica. During the festival Dominica witnessed a 48% increase in visitor arrivals over last year.

Our Ti Vilaj Kweyol this year was the most successful ever with the largest number of small businesses, vendors and patrons.

Our Independence season, with its Creole wear, cuisine, dance and language, remains a joyful declaration of identity and pride. We honour our ancestors who tilled the soil, built our communities and passed down the values of faith, hard work and unity.

Their sacrifices remind us that Independence is a duty. A duty to preserve, protect and promote the enduring spirit of Dominica.

My dear brothers and sisters,

As we look toward our 50th Independence Anniversary, just three short years away, our mission is clear: to build on this extraordinary progress and accelerate the transformation of Dominica into a more dynamic, inclusive and sustainable nation.

The roads we pave, the schools we build, the homes we construct, the power we generate - all of these are laying the groundwork for a Dominica where every citizen can live with dignity, security and pride.

But this journey cannot be led by government alone. It requires each of us to embrace our role in nation building, whether we are teachers, farmers, entrepreneurs, students or public officers.

The opportunities are here. The international airport will bring new business. The geothermal plant will lower energy costs. The marina will open new streams of tourism. The digital economy will expand jobs and innovation.

We must be ready to seize these opportunities, to prepare ourselves, to train our youth, to innovate and to believe in our collective power to shape the future.

We must continue to care for each other, lend a hand to our neighbours, be polite and courteous to family, friends and visitors, keep our environment clean and green, put aside our differences and work hard to build this country.

On this Independence Day, I express my gratitude to all who have contributed to our nation's progress: to our public and police officers for their dedication to service; to our healthcare workers for their care and compassion; to our farmers and fishers for feeding the nation; to our teachers for always showing up for our children; to the NEP interns and the workers at the Solid Waste Corporation, who help keep our environment clean and beautiful; to the Yes We Care Caregivers for their care of our elderly; to our private sector for investing in Dominica's potential; and to our international partners, whose steadfast friendship and collaboration assist in advancing Dominica's development journey.

To our diasporans whose love and loyalty never fade, let it be known that we appreciate your visits and investments in Dominica. Our hope is that all of you will come back home permanently.

I also thank the many non-Dominicans who have embraced our country and chosen to make Dominica their home. Several families have made the deliberate decision to relocate and settle here, contributing to our communities and national life.

We welcome and appreciate you, and we encourage you to share your experiences, to invite others to visit, to invest, and perhaps, like you, to make this beautiful country your home.

This year, we also honour two of Dominica's most dedicated sons, the late Prime Ministers Roosevelt Bernard "Rosie" Douglas and Pierre Charles, who will this evening be posthumously awarded the Dominica Award of Honour, our nation's highest recognition of service.

Both men devoted their lives to the advancement of Dominica and the upliftment of its people. Rosie Douglas was a visionary leader who believed deeply in social justice and Caribbean unity.

Pierre Charles served with quiet strength and humility, guiding the nation through difficult times with integrity and courage. Their leadership laid important foundations for the progress we celebrate today and this government is building on the work they started.

As we pay tribute to their legacy, let us vow to emulate their example of selfless service and love for country. May their memories remind us that nation-building is a collective duty and that each generation must add its own chapter to the story of Dominica's progress, with the same determination and devotion which guided Rosie Douglas and Pierre Charles.

The time has come to honour our heroes in a more structured manner. Later this month, the government shall appoint a national committee to advise on the establishment of a Heroes Park and a legal framework to recognize and honour our national heroes in a special and distinct manner.

I extend heartfelt congratulations to all who are receiving Meritorious Service Awards today. Your dedication and sacrifice have strengthened our nation and we thank you for your invaluable service and contribution to national progress.

Fellow Dominicans, as we celebrate today, let us do so with the conviction that Dominica's best days are ahead. We have proven that no storm can break our spirit, no obstacle can halt our progress, and no challenge can defeat our resolve.

Let this Independence Day be a renewal of faith in ourselves and in each other. Let us move forward as one people, purposefully driven by the ideals which inspired our founders: faith, unity, hard work and love for country.

As we look back over these past forty-seven years, one truth shines above all: Dominica has remained a stable democracy.

Through every election, every debate and every storm, our people have upheld the principle that power belongs to the people.

We have had our differences, yes, but our democracy has never wavered. Each administration, regardless of political colour, has contributed to the great project of Dominican nationhood.

And that, my friends, is the true meaning of independence: not only the right to govern ourselves, but the maturity to sustain our democracy and strengthen our unity as one people under one flag.

Let us continue to write the developing success story of our independence journey together, for, as long as we believe in ourselves, there is no limit to what this small nation can achieve.

Happy 47th Anniversary of Independence, Dominica!

May God bless you and may God continue to bless our beloved country.