



## **Inaugural Speech**

**by**

**His Excellency Eliud Thaddeus Williams, DAH, FCMI**

**President of the Commonwealth of Dominica**

**17 September 2012**

As we approach the 34<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our independence, I am proud to look out across our beautiful country and see just how far we have come in so little time. So many of us have worked long and hard to develop this country that we can all be proud of what we have built. In little more than one generation, we have built roads and bridges. We have built businesses and industries. We have built communities and churches. We have built alliances at home and abroad. We have built a nation!

I look at all we have done together, and I know that through God's Grace, all things are possible!

It has been my honour to devote my working life to the service of our nation. And it is my singular privilege to be called to the service of our country and its people as President of the Commonwealth of Dominica.

My fellow citizens of Dominica, despite all we have done, there is so much work left to be done. It is work that is best done together, in the spirit of unity and service to each other and the

nation, by setting aside narrow and partisan interests and working in the best interests of our country.

My fellow Dominicans, today, I make a commitment to safeguard the laws and governance system of our country... And I ask for a commitment from you as well: To continue to build upon the work we have done. Work with your communities. Work with your representatives in Parliament. Work to build a better Dominica.

As we continue on our path of development, we will have the opportunity to make many choices. Never let us forget, that with each of those opportunities come responsibilities, responsibilities to ourselves, and to each other. We must come to understand ourselves. To know where we are strong and where we are weak. And we must use what we learn, to determine where we can make the greatest contribution to improve ourselves and our communities and to achieve true excellence as a nation.

Recently, there has been far too much misinformation about the appointment and powers of the President. Therefore, I propose to share with you some facts on the role of The President, His Constitutional Functions and his Relationship to the Citizenry.

I stand before you today, because President Nicholas Liverpool has resigned and, in keeping with Chapter 2 of the Constitution, Parliament has elected me to serve the remainder of his term. Dr. Liverpool has served the interests of Dominica faithfully for many years and I wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

*Excellency, you lived so that when your children think of fairness, caring, humility and integrity they will think of you. As you retire in the comfort of the mountainous foothills somewhere in our beautiful country, you can do so with the satisfaction that you have made your contribution towards advancing our Caribbean Civilization and we will be all the richer for it!*

Although some have casually suggested that there should be a delay in appointing a successor, the Constitution does not provide that the State could be left Headless for any such period.

Before I go on, let me make clear... that under our system of government, there are things the President can do and things that he cannot. We must remember that in our system of governance, the Prime Minister sets the policy and agenda of his government.

It is my hope that through a better understanding of the role of the Presidency, we will all be able to rise to the responsible and dignified service of our country and each other.

There are many things that the President must do only on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition and there are things that the President may do alone, on his own authority.

For example, many important government positions can only be filled upon an appointment by the President. This includes the Director of Public Prosecutions, Director of Audit, Permanent Secretaries and members of the Boundaries Commission and the Electoral Commission.

Some of the most noticeable duties of the President are to call Parliament into session, to pause a session temporarily and to dissolve Parliament entirely, resulting in an election.

The President must also appoint the Prime Minister. And the power to appoint is not just important when forming a new government after an election. Sadly, during times of crisis or sorrow, including the untimely deaths of two of our nation's leaders, my predecessors have had to exercise their duty to appoint the new Prime Minister and ensure that our nation had continuity of leadership through difficult times.

As a loyal Dominican, I believe that the importance of continuity of governance is why a prompt and orderly succession of the Presidency is the right decision for our country.

My loyalty to Dominica; My constant desire to act in the best interest of our people; those are the reasons I stand before you today, to continue my journey of service to our country and to encourage each and every one of you to look within yourselves and embark or to continue on your own journey of service.

My journey began many years ago in St. Joseph. And I must also thank Salisbury - the birth place of my mother - for so graciously claiming me as yours. There are so many people who have been a tremendous source of support - in so many ways - on my own journey of self-discovery, self-improvement, and national service.

Today, I am your President and tomorrow I shall enter upon the discharge of those functions. I begin with the satisfaction that the overwhelming majority have given me their blessings and have expressed their wishes for a successful tenure. My family and I are also greatly encouraged by the fact that even those who felt constrained to endorse my nomination have publicly and privately acknowledged the qualities and talents that they feel I bring to the job. For this I thank everyone.

I also say Thank You:

- To our Lord who gave us life and continues to bless me and my family.
- Special thanks to our outgoing President, His Excellency Dr. Liverpool and Mrs. Liverpool
- To the Hon. Roosevelt Skerrit, our Prime Minister for his confidence and my nomination,
- To the Cabinet of Ministers, former President Vernon Shaw and Mrs. Shaw.
- To my dear wife, Cornelia who has always been there providing support even in difficult times. My Dear, you will always hold a most special place in my heart and it is my greatest honour to be your husband.

- To my siblings Stuart, Ilma, Vera and their spouses.
- To my sons Sekani and Kondwani, young professionals, and my grandchildren who are a tremendous blessing.
- To the Henry family at home and abroad; including Valda, and Catherine and her husband, Jean Claude, who travelled from the United States of America.
- Thanks also to Everton who travelled from Florida especially to be here.
- To Embert and Pearl who are here from ECTEL in St. Lucia.
- To Dwight Horsford from Grenada and Rose Ann from Barbados, you too are special.
- In Dominica, to Earl Charles, who has been a dear friend from age 11.
- To former members of the YCW Movement and Jaycees International
- To Walter Desabaye, a wonderful person and friend of 30 years, I say thanks.
- To former members of the Council of Ministers of ECTEL, in particular Ministers Felix Finisterre of Saint Lucia, Gregory Bowen of Grenada and our own Reginald Austrie; former chairpersons of the Board, Embert Charles, Clifford Parillon, Michael Pierre and Jason Hamilton for their guidance and expressions of support and appreciation throughout my tenure as Managing Director.
- To our dearly departed Dame Mary Eugenia Charles for unwavering confidence in my abilities and the many opportunities accorded me to grow.
- To past colleagues in the Public Service, particularly members of the Committee of Permanent Secretaries and other Heads of Division.
- To Clarence Christian, Berel Pendenque, Curtis Jolly and other very close friends, kindly accept my appreciation.
- To all other friends who are located throughout Dominica, the OECS and the wider Caribbean, I say a heartfelt thank you.

I can only pray that as others embark on their own journeys of self-improvement and national service, that they receive even a fraction of the support and fellowship that has helped me to grow and earn the support and confidence of so many of my fellow citizens.

I Thank You All. God Bless You. God Bless the Commonwealth of Dominica.