



Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica

MESSAGE BY

HONOURABLE ROOSEVELT SKERRIT

PRIME MINISTER OF

THE COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA

On the occasion of the

37th Anniversary of Independence

Monday, November 3, 2015

Fellow Dominicans, residents, friends and visitors

The celebration of the thirty-seventh anniversary of our Independence is one that will remain firmly etched in the collective memory of our nation for a very long time.

Those among you who are visitors to our beautiful country, or nationals who normally return at this time of the year to join in the festivities and to reconnect with family and friends, will have found that although the atmosphere is still a festive one, there runs in the conversations and behaviour of practically all of us, a deep and consistent concern of how we are going to rebuild Dominica.

The trail of destruction and loss of lives left behind in the wake of the Tropical Storm Erika which battered our country on August 27, and which has been described as the worst in living memory, triggered a shifting of the gear in our plans to celebrate Independence 2015.

From listening to Dominicans from every walk of life, I have every reason to believe that you agree it was necessary to scale down the customary packed programme of activities that was planned. The need to respond to the pain and suffering of those who had suffered irreparable loss in Petite Savanne, Good Hope, Colihaut, Coulibistrie, Bath Estate and the wider Dominica assumed a higher level of priority than the many cultural events and competitions that are a normal feature of Independence.

I hasten to add however, that our decision this year should by no means trivialise the importance of the many cultural events and the usual fanfare which usually surround our independence celebrations.

In fact, through these very celebrations, Petite Savanne, over the years, has emerged as a vibrant community in the forefront of the cultural competitions that make us unique in the Eastern Caribbean. One gentleman, who perished in the mudslides triggered by Erika, was a prominent leader and organiser in the cultural movement of the village. Our decision to scale down therefore, simply means that at age thirty-seven we are responsible enough to prioritise and make pragmatic decisions when it is needed.

All members of the cultural group of the area lost relatives to the effects of the storm. They still grieve, and it is appropriate that the nation grieves with them.

As a responsible people, we were also obligated to redirect resource on immediately trying to reconnect our physically disconnected communities and to deal with the immense devastation and damage left behind in communities like Colihaut and Coulibistrie due to overflowing and raging rivers.

This spectre of destruction was visible in virtually every corner of Dominica, and the evidence is still there for all to see.

My friends, we have been left with no choice but to embrace the theme Rebuilding Dominica Together for this year's Independence celebrations.

I can say to you that the entire Cabinet and the Public Service spend every day completely immersed in this theme as together, we do the necessary work and try to identify sources for financing the massive rebuilding effort needed to put us back on the track for economic growth and prosperity.

We are not daunted by this challenge and I am confident that you too, stand ready and willing to play your part in this call to nation rebuilding. I remain encouraged and fuelled by your prayers and support.

When all is said and done, we are Dominicans; we are a spirited people, always ready to praise our God in good times and in bad times, filled with the zest for living a full life, never allowing adversity to dampen our spirits and ever welcoming to the stranger and visitor despite our circumstances.

This year, let the outbursts of joy and cultural extravaganza be celebrations of the lives of those Erika took away from us, thanksgiving for the overwhelming support of friends and partners far and wide, and hopeful expectations of a better, more resilient Dominica which we will rebuild together.

On behalf of my entire family, myself, and the Cabinet of Ministers I wish you a happy Independence 2015.

May God bless our beloved Dominica.