



# HEEDING THE CALL FOR REAL CHANGE



## **ADDRESS TO THE NATION**

February 21, 2019

*Hon. Lennox Linton*

**Parliamentary Opposition Leader**

My Nature Island Brothers and Sisters:

I address you today on the rising demand for change of government with the assurance that your United Workers Party Team Dominica is ready to end the governance of hopelessness and the politics of division and under-performance which has gripped our isle of beauty under the DLP administration over the past two decades.

We remain fully committed to ensuring sustainable, harmonized growth and development in which every Dominican has an opportunity to have an education; proper health care; a job; an affordable home; a reasonable standard of living and quality of life, in a peaceful and secure social and natural environment.

We stand to serve on our values:

- ✓ Innovative Leadership
- ✓ Caring
- ✓ Honesty
- ✓ Integrity

- ✓ Accountability
- ✓ Pursuit of Excellence
- ✓ Continuous Improvement
- ✓ Teamwork

We ask our nature island people to hold us accountable for adherence to these values in our stewardship of the affairs of state.

In December of 2018, the ruling Dominica Labour Party headlined the final year of its parliamentary term with parliamentary approval for a bill that effectively represents a vote of no confidence in its ability to manage the affairs of state. And so, quite fittingly, the campaign for the next general election began with a Dominica Labour Party endorsement of the vote of no confidence in its Cabinet of Ministers properly documented in the Climate Resilience Act 2018.

In February of 2019, two months later, the Dominica Labour Party, serving its 20<sup>th</sup> year in government, boldly proclaimed that Dominica needs change.

Several opinion polls in recent years, reveal that Dominicans have been expressing an overwhelming and collective desire for a change of government. One independent survey in May 2018, indicated that 82% of the respondents favored a change of government at the next general elections.

So Roosevelt Skerit knows what time it is... **IT IS TIME FOR CHANGE!** Leadership is everything... and when the leader has led the country into the misfortunes of leadership failures that justify the need for change, then the leader must change... In other words, as Dominicans have been insisting for the past two years: **SKERRIT MUST GO!**

But, of course, Skerit does not want to go. He must go on. So, he discards 62% of the DLP candidates from the 2014 election and rejects 50% of his Cabinet as unsuitable to run for public office this time around. Skerit's claim is that nothing is wrong with any of these rejected members of his leadership support team... all of them were

performing marvelously well... the failed leader just needed to change some faces so that he can make a case for himself as the change the country needs from the results of his dismal performance as the head of government in the last 15 years.

The farmers, the fishermen, the nurses, the teachers, the police officers, the public officers, the doctors, the lawyers, the business men and women, the shop keepers, the disappearing middle class, the clerks, the carpenters, the masons, the electricians, the plumbers, the rich, the poor, the unemployed, the youth, the elderly, the leaders of church... the nature island people of Dominica from all walks of life, know and understand that in the last 20 years we have lost our way. They want CHANGE... Not fake Change. Real Change!

- **Real Change** to allow us to thrive as free people on equality and justice according to the rules of divine order; and govern and sustain ourselves in peaceful co-existence living in harmony with nature
- **Real Change** from galloping unemployment, grinding poverty, disappearance of the middle class, the lowest wages in the English-speaking Caribbean, rising crime and degradation of social services
- **Real Change** to move our country from Welfare to Work
- **Real Change** from the smallest and weakest economy in the independent states of the English-speaking Caribbean
- **Real Change** from losing over half of our agricultural output in the last fifteen years
- **Real Change to** ensure that our agriculture secures our health and wellness by making us self-sufficient in natural food and drink and providing plant-based solutions for our medical needs
- **Real Change** from Government that presided over a decline in cruise and stay-over arrivals and woeful underperformance of the tourism sector
- **Real Change** from a Government cannot facilitate a reduction of energy costs so as to achieve a reduction of electricity tariffs

and thereby secure an increase in the competitiveness and viability of businesses operations

- **Real Change** from Government that cannot facilitate the private sector as the main engine of economic growth; cannot enhance the climate for doing business; and cannot create jobs
- **Real Change** from government that cannot account for over 270 million dollars donated by Venezuela to assist Dominica with reconstruction after Hurricane Maria
- **Real Change** from a government that gave diplomatic passports and diplomatic immunity to international crooks and criminals in flagrant violation of international conventions
- **Real Change** from a government that plays politics and insists on buying votes with post disaster relief and reconstruction assistance
- **Real Change** from unfair elections, from theft of elections... because bribery, treating and cheating in elections is anti-nature and therefore has no part in the governance of the nature island of nature island people, by nature island people for nature island people
- **Real Change** to revive our leadership passion for advancing education and health care
- **Real Change** to leverage the abundant blessings of Land, Water and Plants to feed us, clothe us, shelter us and fund our participation in global affairs and our integration with the family of mankind
- **Real Change** to make us strong – Nature Island Strong – continuously improving our resilient nature island society, dutifully building a sustainable nature island economy and generating wealth like we have never seen before, for the benefit of all nature island people

The people have had enough of a failed leader who lies and deceives as his standard operating procedure; who refuses to

collaborate and tolerate; and who has dedicated himself to the futility of uniting people with hate

The Prime Minister knows for example, that it was members of his party in Marigot who launched a campaign against his chosen candidate for the Marigot constituency prior to his announcement on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019. He knows it had absolutely nothing to do with the United Workers Party. He also knows that the controversial voice note had nothing to do with the United Workers Party either. Yet, he maliciously puts the blame on us for the unfortunate situation that affected Anika Charles and her family over the past week.

The young lady is my family. We empathize with her, we stand with her. We condemn the attacks on her which only surfaced because she answered the call to public service. We are very disappointed with the speed with which she was thrown under the bus by the Labour Party at the same time that the Labour Party leader was pledging to stand by another female labour party candidate about whom certain allegations and suggestions of unsuitability were also making the rounds.

The discrimination in a matter involving someone from Marigot is glaring... and we cannot but take note. This not good for Dominica. Marigot lives matter too. Change is a must... it is not an option!

The people want real change to caring, competent leadership that uses government for the advancement of people and not for the personal enrichment of ministers. The tired Prime Minister wants a change of faces among his election candidates and ministers of government.

But the people are not going down that road. The people know what is good for them; the people know what will work for them. Real Change. Nothing more, nothing less. The people have said so in no uncertain terms that it is the tired Prime Minister who is standing in their way and they will take care of that at the next general elections when they vote in a United Workers Party Team Dominica Government.

The failed leader and his foreign experts believe that they can continue to trick and deceive their way around everything in Dominica, even the peoples' desire for progress. But there will be no fake fix capable of interfering with the call for a change from Skerrit's failed Venezuela governance model to the visionary, caring competent governance of the United Workers Party Team Dominica. He who is tired, deserves and must seek rest.

To resist change by trying to reengineer or redefine the definition of real change that the Dominicans are demanding at this time is to blatantly disrespect will, power and authority of the people. In deed the power in people is definitively asserting itself over the people in power and the failed regime is crumbling.

And as it crumbles, the UWP Team Dominica stands as the only party ready and able to lead the change that Dominica needs after the colossal governance failures of the tired leader and his followers that reduced Dominica to the indignities of poverty, joblessness and dependency over the past two decades.

Dominica deserves better. The people of this blessed nature island need a fresh start and real change. There is no question in their minds that the United Workers Party is the change.

This is why we stand equipped and ready with our Vision 2020 initiative to receive the people's mandate to lead and manage their affairs in government.

- **We will** reduce the size of Cabinet by at least forty percent
- **We will** pursue the appropriate constitutional amendments and enact legislation to limit the time in office for any Prime Minister to 2 five-year terms and to establish a fixed date for general elections every five years.
- **We will** create a new sustainable Nature Island Economy with agriculture, tourism, renewable energy, ICT, the cultural industries and a water industry as major pillars

- **We will** grow the economy by 7% per year, create 12,000 new jobs by 2025, and increase the minimum wage and old age pensions by no less than 50%
- **We will** restore livelihoods and bring back regular income to families in the farming communities of Dominica. THIS MEANS:
- **We will** enact Legislation and Regulations to Legalize, Grow, Process and Export Cannabis, and cannabis-based health and wellness products
- **We will** provide agricultural inputs and farm labour financial assistance grants to farmers to boost output of a range of high value products for export
- **We will** purchase at least two refrigerated vessels to transport Nature Island branded primary and processed agricultural products in the Caribbean
- **We will** provide low interest loans, financial grants and appropriate fiscal incentives to deserving tourist service providers and manufactures for refinancing, refurbishment and expansion of their establishments
- **We will** construct an eco-friendly, state-of-the-art, international airport,
- **We will** expand and modernize our sea ports,
- **We will** open the Delice/Petite Savanne road and complete the Roseau Road Reinstatement Project... Overall, we will and upgrade our road network and bridges to the highest standards of resilience to natural disasters,
- **We will** fully reinstate, restructure and operationalize the Public Works Corporation
- **We will** ensure there is fairness, equity, proper accountability, and no political interference in government's housing assistance programme
- **We will** broaden government's home assistance programme to include a one-time financial grant to deserving single parent tenants who suffered loss of house contents during passage of Hurricane Maria
- **We will** allow duty free entry of essential building materials for one year in the first instance

- **We will** expand the port-folio of the Minister of Kalinago Affairs, and amend the Carib Act to meet the needs of our Kalinago brothers and sisters.
- **We will** restore primary health care systems and upgrade tertiary care
- The State **will** pay the tuition fees of all the sons and daughters of Dominica attending the Dominica State College

We call on our nature island people to continue to put the country first, irrespective of partisan allegiance. Let us not place party before people and country. Let us unite over this common desire for change, knowing that those whose failure and destruction we seek to change from cannot present us with the change which we need.

Only the tired Prime Minister and the Barbadian advisors who collaborated with him to move Ross University Medical School from Dominica to Barbados would have the audacity to suggest to the Christian people of good conscience in Dominica that Dominica needs a change from a failed, tired leader to the same failed, tired leader.

The real change the people deserve and demand calls the UWP Team Dominica to duty, and we will serve Dominica – not ourselves.

The people also demand reform of our electoral system to ensure free and fair elections with integrity that grounds our democracy in the sacredness of government of the people by the people for the people. The Bishop of Roseau (the Head of the Catholic Church) and other leaders of Church in Dominica have spoken. The people want their voice in elections to be the voice of their God – clear, honest, righteous and just. The people are firmly opposed to Electoral Deform in the interest of government of One Man, by One Man for One Man and his chosen few.

I call on the government of Dominica, to provide the necessary financial resources for the electoral reform program which the Electoral Commission appears to have placed on hold.



I call on the independent Electoral Commission, pursuant to its responsibility for free and fair elections as assigned by the Constitution (our supreme law) to ensure completion of program before the next general election,

Today, we heed the people's call for Real Change... and we renew the vision in our social contract with our nature island people to make Dominica the best place to live, the best place to work and the best place to enjoy life.