

**ADDRESS BY HONOURABLE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY ON  
THE OBSERVANCE OF "IMMUNIZATION WEEK, APRIL 24-29, 2006"**

IN KEEPING WITH THE MINISTERS' OF HEALTH RESOLUTION AT THE PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION, (PAHO) MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 2003, THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY JOINS THE REST OF THE WESTERN WORLD IN CELEBRATING VACCINATION WEEK APRIL 24-29, 2006.

THE THEME FOR THIS YEAR IS "VACCINATION AN ACT OF LOVE - LOVE THEM, IMMUNIZE THEM", THE SAME AS LAST YEAR'S.

VACCINES HAVE BEEN PROVEN TO BE THE KEY FACTOR IN PREVENTING CHILDHOOD DISEASES SUCH AS MEASLES, MUMP, RUBELLA, DIPHTHERIA PERTUSIS (WHOOPIING COUGH) TUBERCULOSIS POLIO ETC.

PRESENTLY, THE NATIONAL IMMUNIZATION PROGRAMME CATERS FOR CHILDREN UP TO TWELVE (12) YEARS AND PREGNANT AND POST NATAL MOTHERS. THE PROGRAMME OFFERS VACCINES AGAINST EIGHT (8) DIFFERENT DISEASES.

THE IMMUNIZATION COVERAGE IN DOMINICA HAS BEEN CONSISTENT AT AN AVERAGE OF 99% OVER THE PAST YEARS. MY MINISTRY IS VERY SATISFIED WITH THE SUCCESS OF THIS PRIORITY PROGRAMME, AND WISHES TO EXPRESS SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL THE HEALTH WORKERS INVOLVED IN ENSURING THAT THE IMMUNIZATION GOALS OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH ARE REALISED.

OUR SUCCESSES IN TERMS OF PREVENTABLE INFECTIOUS DISEASES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- NO CASE OF DIPHTHERIA HAS BEEN REPORTED SINCE 1983.
- NO CASE OF WHOOPING COUGH IN THE LAST DECADE.
- NO CONFIRMED MEASLES FROM 1991, OVER ONE DECADE AGO.
- ONLY ONE CASE OF TETANUS IN THE LAST FIVE (5) YEARS.
- DOMINICA WAS DECLARED POLIO FREE WITH THE REST OF THE REGION IN 1996.
- NO CONFIRMED CASE OF RUBELLA FROM MID-1990s.

WE ARE MINDFUL THAT IN SPITE OF THE HIGH LEVELS OF SUCCESS THAT HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED, THERE REMAINS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT PARTICULARLY IN THE AREAS OF QUALITY OF SERVICES AND PUBLIC EDUCATION. IT CANNOT BE OVEREMPHASIZED THAT THERE CAN BE NO ROOM FOR COMPLACENCY. WE MUST CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN THE IMMUNIZATION COVERAGE IN ORDER TO PREVENT OUR NATION FROM EXPERIENCING THE RE-EMERGENCE OF VACCINE- PREVENTABLE DISEASES SUCH AS WHOOPING COUGH AND MUMPS WHICH ARE CURRENTLY RE-EMERGING IN SOME COUNTRIES.

THIS YEAR, THE CAMPAIGN FOCUSES ON IMPROVING THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE PUBLIC, INCLUDING SECONDARY AND TERTIARY SCHOOL STUDENTS. GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO ENSURING THAT EVERY CHILD IS AGED- APPROPRIATELY IMMUNIZED.

WITHIN THE NEXT COUPLE WEEKS, THE MINISTRY WILL INTRODUCE A NEW VACCINE

CALLED PENTA VALENT WHICH PROTECTS AGAINST (1) HEPATITIS B AND (2) HAEMOPHILUS INFLUENZA TYPE B (HIB).

OUR STRATEGIES NEED TO BE STRENGTHENED BY:

- PROVIDING ACCURATE AND UPDATED INFORMATION ON THE EXPANDED IMMUNIZATION PROGRAMME.
- FOLLOWING UP ON DROP-OUTS AND MISSED APPOINTMENTS
- INCREASING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION
- PROVIDING UPGRADED/NEW VACCINES AS NECESSARY

I URGE ALL DOMINICANS TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH IN ALL OF THE PLANNED ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THIS WEEK.

REMEMBER THAT IMMUNIZATION SAVES LIVES.

MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL.

THANK YOU.