

Submission to the Integrated Development Plan Committee & Statement in Support of an Economic Recovery Plan.

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Introduction:

As a neo-colony, Dominica's current productive capacity has minimal relationship to our comparative advantages in a relatively pristine environment, the latest technology and a strategic objective of maximum economic independence or autonomy. That we should extricate ourselves from the role of too much dependence on banana plantation for some multinational, and instead engage in value-added agro-industry, has always been the aim of the founders of the Dominica Academy of Arts and Sciences, Rosie Douglas Foundation and other similar Diaspora organizations. To that end, the following course has been embarked upon and the suggestions made for inclusion in the Integrated Development Plan, as well as provide some specific proposals for economic recovery in light of the current economic crisis gripping the country.

Mission Statement:

People will work hard and sacrifice, if they are led with passion and vision toward a noble cause which enhances their quality of life. It means that we have to abide by a mission which seeks thus:

A country based on social justice, where we maximize our intellectual resources, and Diaspora and other networks, to build sustainable, eco-friendly, technology and tourism that earns us income and promotes economic autonomy.

Attitude:

At home and abroad, Dominicans must undergo an attitude change. We must seriously address the issue at schools, church, the media and other channels. A dark and dour cloud prevails upon too many Dominicans who will shy away from sacrificing for their country, while ceaselessly lambasting its shortcomings and that of its people. That dourness, perpetuated by the naysayers, accentuates the negative, with scant regard, for our: native intelligence, relative social peace, decent health indices, and the promise of a, by and large, pristine country that is well watered.

Every Dominican and friend of Dominica is indispensable; so we have to engage a wise combination of inclusion and conflict resolution, which bind the country, not further divide it. The exclusionary and confrontational style will not work here. It has seldom worked. Where we seek to maximize the contributions of all Dominicans our very personalities must rise above the angry, bitter and pessimistic. A calculated optimism must preside, which stresses **INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY, CONTRIBUTION TO THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CAUSE AND A SPIRIT OF “CAN DO!”**

Means to that End:

That the DAAS unites our human resource potential, at home and abroad, as a self-reliant incubator for transformation of our society from a plantation economy, where despair and pessimism reign. The DAAS achieves the Mission outlined above via its Directory of Dominican and Friends of Dominica professionals, entrepreneurs and development activists who are engaged in:

1. **Light Industry & Agro Industry:** The DAAS supports light/Agro industry as an immediate alternative to the current state of raw material export. Where we can add value to sea moss, as with our local partner Benjo Seamoss, or improve the packaging and marketing of essential oils, we can bring immediate relief to Dominican farmers. Nature Island Gourmet, owned by Diaspora Dominicans, now successfully markets six (6) products from bananas and mangoes, which sell well in high-end gourmet shops in North America. Potentially, once production is shifted to Dominica, a higher per pound price could be paid for our banana. Why do we not have a banana drink for export? The only reason is we have not approached the issue with a passion, which unites the chemical engineer, marketer, and farmer into one dynamic team, which aims for product/price/market result within a time certain. If every light/agro industry prospect in Dominica is dealt with an almost military precision and economy of language we can succeed, as have some countries with less natural resources than we have.
2. **Aviation Development:** Trade and access to the island by travelers who seek to enjoy our natural bounty, are prerequisites to the promotion of the island's immediate need for foreign exchange income. Such income can be harnessed by a dynamic effort to unite our pilots and air travel entrepreneurs in an Air Dominica or similar entity. Such an entity will provide reliable and affordable commuter service to hubs in Puerto Rico, the French Departments and regional international airports, to maximize travel to Dominica. The same entity would promote the shipment of Dominican agricultural products to islands lacking in such agricultural capacity. We are supporting Captain Tonge and Persad in that drive and ask that the

government, private sector and civil society organizations do the same, so that we develop home capacity and competence in that area. Both gentlemen have identified the Marigot Secondary School as the focus for Basic Aviation Science Course that they would teach to promote careers in that area

3. **Marine Transport:** The DAAS/RDF and affiliates will strive to support Dominican shippers, like PEC| Shipping, by linking them to potential customers and brokers in the Diaspora.
4. **Energy:** Affordable energy is key to industrial development and innovations in education. The DAAS will allow innovative Dominican companies like Dominica Sustainable Energy Corporation to harvest the talent pool in its Directory to the provision of cost effective options in the area of Geothermal, Wind, Solar, Bio Gas and mini-hydro energy systems.
5. **Homeward Bound:** The DAAS offers respectful partnership with the National Bank, The Government of Dominica (GoD) and the private sector in, and out of, the island to attract Dominicans overseas to build and set up businesses. A proper package of tax, property, high yielding bank funds, must be designed to lure our human resources homeward. The income and intellectual ferment created will spur economic growth that handsomely rewards the investment in Homeward Bound. For those unable to make the immediate transition, DAAS/RDF proposes that an annual National Development and Technology Fair be held at or about the same time as the Creole Festival, so that the daytime hours are taken up with a productive event which spotlights and allows information exchange and deal making for our businesses, projects and personalities engaged in Development and Technological innovation. **The objective is to make Dominica a world-class incubator, for sustainable development technology.**
6. **Dominica Cadet Corp:** Without a disciplined youth with a solid grounding in a National Patriotic Education all our work is pointless. Conscious of that, the DAAS/RDF gives maximum support to the revival of the Dominica Cadet Corp and urge that the IDP gives that program maximum spotlight. The energy unleashed by a conscious and competent youth population inhibits crimes, sexual deviance and sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS, militates against the growth of gangs and narco-trafficking, and promotes social peace. Civil Society is further boosted by the VOLUNTEERISM, which is so lacking in our communities at home and abroad. The DAAS/RDF has been and is committed to the material and technical support of the Corp, in particular regard to information technology and enterprise development.

Certain, that Service to Others is a badge of our Judeo-Christian heritage- and the rent we pay for our place on earth, the DAAS/RDF wishes to redouble the call that we support the young patriots now gathering around the Dominica Cadet Corp and other similar youth organizations. Every successful country in the history of modern civilization has used the time-tested principles of military organization and discipline to build a leadership element in its population. We ensure the success of our nation building quest by pursuing the Cadet Corp concepts, of discipline, planning and sacrifice for good of community and country, with vigor.

7. **Small Business Administration:** The DAAS/RDF respectfully suggests that the GoD, makes all reasonable efforts to institute a Small Business Administration. The SBA would promote the development of small businesses by: Co-sponsoring the National Development and Technology Fairs, providing technical assistance for business plan writing, providing seed funding for the businesses, provide loan guarantees up to a certain cap, monitor the businesses for a minimum of three (3) years to provide support in management and marketing. The DAAS seeks partnership with the GoD to that end, but will act where no response is forthcoming.

THE DAAS/RDF SUGGESTS/PROPOSES THE FOLLOWING:

8. **Civil Service Exam:** There are many good Civil Servants who try hard to build and maintain our country under tough conditions. They must be applauded. However, the Civil Service sometimes lacks quality amongst its complement. One way to separate the competent from the incompetent is via: A National Civil Service Exam. The Exam should be instituted to ensure that the GoD is supported by a staff that is cost/benefit savvy, has an attitude of prompt customer service, is willing to sacrifice for the country and is competent. The spirit of innovation and willingness to seek out new ways to save money or earn income for the GoD's annual operating budget should be key to selecting personnel. Dominica needs a lean and adept Civil Service of patriots who place their country over partisanship and who, in their use of government resources, set a model example. The Exam should be preceded by a preparatory Course. Grades would be a composite of: (1) A written exam on English, History, Geography, Civics, Practical Math and a Statement of Purpose Essay-30%; (2) Involvement in certified voluntary efforts in the community 15% (3) Character references/history of community development work 10 % (4) Qualification-diplomas, degrees etc. 25%. (5) Work History or aptitude test 20%.
9. **Vote for Dominicans Overseas:** Upon registration and payment of \$100 EC, Dominicans overseas should be allowed to vote in general and special elections. Every Dominican overseas community should be allowed to vote and elect a representative to the parliament. The MP could be resident or

non-resident. He or she could attend parliament by video conferencing, if non-resident. The overseas constituent would have to be a Dominican citizen by birth, or have at least one parent who is Dominican, and have visited Dominica once during the five year period prior to the election or have been an active member of a registered Dominican Diaspora organization. That requirement is to ensure we make the right to vote dependent on a demonstrated civic responsibility. The US, England and the USVI would each have 2 seats; Dominicans in the French and Dutch Departments 1 seat; and Dominican elsewhere 1 seat for a total of eight seats. We are confident that by respecting the citizenship rights of overseas Dominican we: (1) Maintain their involvement with the country of their birth, (2) Maintain a link with Dominica over generations; (3) Generate income and marketing opportunities for the country over time; and (4) Show respect for the disenfranchised Dominicans whose remittances have staved off economic collapse.

10. National Development Reps: Dominica has no diplomatic corp to speak of. Yet, there are many Dominicans who work the world over in foreign governments, industry, and NGO's, The National Development Representative (NDR) is a Dominican citizen who is appointed to seek out financing, technology and other know-how which can assist the country's national development priorities. He/she has no legal authority to bind the GoD via contract. The role is really that of facilitator and the point of contact on the international scene. The NDR would facilitate the identification of a particular project and see it through. Compensation would be based on successful completion of the task so identified and would be commensurate with expenses engage and 2% of net value of the project, where such is feasible. Willingness to embrace as many Dominicans in the Diaspora under a program which is codified, with clear guidelines and ethical rules will diminish the current system of sometimes rash decision which places government officials in peril and sullies the country's reputation. The GoD would issue Request for Proposals from suitable qualified persons, who would have to tender their credentials and be registered. Such a program would not eliminate the professional or part-time broker. However, by transparency it would encourage more Dominicans to become prospectors for their country and the opportunity to broaden the base for the tender goods and services. In that fashion, we can enlist many thousands of Dominicans in a systematic focus on development of their country and remove responsibility for such uplift from the purview of some "foreign investor" where it is now almost wholly placed.

11. **National Agricultural Center:** The DAAS/RDF will support a National Agricultural Center to: Train students and farmers in state of the art agricultural science; propagate new varieties of plants and livestock; Introduce labor saving technology; promote *best practice* application of agro-chemicals in a way which preserves our environment; promote organic farming where feasible; instruct in product preparation and packaging; teach farm management and marketing; promote forestry management. We believe that it is only by making farming technology-friendly we can marry our country's high literacy rate with the pressing need to increase the number of young Dominicans who can support themselves and their families by agro-business. That the average age of a Dominican farmer is sixty (60) means no systematic effort to teach agricultural science to the young, on a practical level, exists. Such agro-businesses which will be spawned by the NAC, once engaged in production for national consumption and the markets in the USVI, BVI and Eastern Caribbean/Barbados/Brooklyn etc. can provide a much needed boost to our economy as soon as we can get production up for yams, avocado, citrus, pumpkins etc. Aside from the DAAS, there are friendly countries which can assist us in setting up the NAC immediately. Taiwan comes to mind.

Please consider these submissions for inclusion in the IDP. GoD policy makers, take note that we are working already on some of these initiatives and that we ask that recognition be given to, and functional cooperation pursued, with the DAAS/RDF and our partners at home and the Diaspora.

Thank you.

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