

# *Turning Things Around in Dominica*

by

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In this essay, I take a look at three areas where, with the commitment of resources and focus, we can by utilizing resources already existing within Dominica we can in a reasonably short space of time turn things around.

## **Development of the Tourism Sector**

Dominica possesses a unique combination of resources that would allow it to become a leading destination in the rapidly expanding eco-tourism market. These include unparalleled natural beauty such as waterfalls, mountains, lakes, trails, birds, volcanoes, rivers, sea, beaches, hot water, coupled with friendliest most welcoming people in the world.

In addition, potential exists for the related development of health tourism including spas, mud baths, surgery recuperation centers etc. Sports tourism through the hosting of nature type events and endurance races also holds much potential. Bird watching, scuba diving, hiking are all activities that can be expanded.

Development of this sector should be centered on the further development of small eco- lounges and hotels that can be managed by either individuals or partnerships. Linkages to the agriculture sector and cultural centers should be critical to this effort. Development of community tourism with private homes been used as bed and breakfast facilities, and community involvement will allow rural communities to benefit equally from this type of effort.

The burning question becomes how the development of this sector should be pursued. I would suggest the following:

- A recognition by policy makers that this sector provides the best opportunity for a quick turnaround in Dominica's fortunes ;
- A reorganization of the tourism division to focus marketing efforts on the eco-tourism centers such as Germany and the rest of Europe with the provision of additional financial resources to engage in a vigorous marketing campaign;
- Encouraging Diaspora and other foreign investment in the development of accommodation services;
- Training of tour operators, guides and other stakeholders on the way forward for the industry ;
- Development of access into Dominica including night landing facilities at Melville hall airport and the exploiting of ferry traffic between Dominica and the neighboring French Islands.

## **Revising Agriculture Policy**

The agriculture sector still holds tremendous potential for Dominica's development. Rather than concentrating on a single cash crop, several crops could be developed simultaneously. For instance, the growing of cocoa can be combined with coffee cultivation. World cocoa prices have never been higher. There is sufficient land and excellent climatic conditions for both.

Fruits, vegetables and flowers can grow with equal ease and can fetch equally good prices. Investments can be sought for agro-processing to complement the raw variety. There is constant demand for prawns worldwide. Fresh or water prawn farming can be initiated at relatively low initial costs.

In the final analysis, Dominica has the land, perfect climatic conditions, and the ability to grow a wide and varied range of crops. What is needed is the commitment to utilize these God-given resources to our greater good. Making agriculture policy a priority coupled with land management issues will go a long way in rejuvenating the rural areas of Dominica and giving a much-needed impetus to the economy.

## **Sustainable Energy Development**

Dominica possesses the following in striking abundance: sun, wind, and geothermal resources. These resources if properly utilized to generate energy can significantly reduce our dependence on petrol imports. The tremendous benefits to be gained from these energy uses cannot be overstated.

To begin, it will lead to a large reduction in imported fuel resulting in foreign exchange savings. Electricity costs will be significantly reduced providing much needed relief to businesses and individual households. This will also encourage foreign investment in technology and manufacturing. Cheap energy is perhaps the best catalyst for stimulating productive activity, something that Dominica can with at this point.

Development of geothermal energy production in Dominica can also earn foreign exchange given a ready demand for such energy from the neighboring Islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe.

I will continue to argue as I have done in the past that Dominica has at its disposal all the resources that are needed to spur economic growth. We have been guilty of seriously mismanaging these resources. With clear and studied political direction, and an encouraging of the tremendous human resource, there is no doubt that Dominica can move beyond its current malaise to a position of sustained economic growth, wealth and prosperity for its people.

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