

The following is a statement from Hon. Roosevelt Skerrit, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica

Once again, forces are at work to besmirch and undermine the good name of Dominica, in the eyes of the region and the world. Pictures not only tell a thousand words, they also tell the story that is narrated.

The sight of hundreds of persons outside the office of the Prime Minister, seeking an audience with the Prime Minister to discuss matters of personal, community and national interest, can be seen from different perspectives.

I take strong objection and serious offense to the interpretation of this as Dominicans being hungry and desperate for food and coming to the office of the Prime Minister for a pittance. Nothing could be further from the truth and I unreservedly apologize to all those who were defamed and insulted by the portrayal of them as such.

The facts are that ever since my becoming Prime Minister of Dominica, more than 15 Years ago, I have instituted an open door policy, in which citizens and residents can come see me and speak directly with me about matters of interest to them.

There is no restriction on subject matter. My philosophy is simple... the same way that foreigners can hop on a plane and come to Dominica and request an audience with the Prime Minister, any Dominican from any walk of life, can call and come see the Prime Minister.

That is what my leadership as Prime Minister is all about. I find time for investors, I find time for business people, and I make time for the ordinary people of Dominica to come see me and discuss issues of interest and concern to them. I have no apologies for this and I shall continue to employ an open door policy, as long as I am Head of Government of this country.

However, the scene outside the Office of the Prime Minister today, Wednesday January 9th, was particularly unfortunate and unsightly. I would assume that following the holiday season, it can easily be explained that many persons wanted to meet with the Prime Minister and they all came on the day that they know his doors are thrown wide open.

I do not blame them for coming. Indeed, I am sorry that many did not get to see me today, but, I have instructed that each be contacted and a specific date and time given for them to come, so we can meet.

I take strong objection to the notion that people come to their Prime Minister to beg. That is wrong. It is offensive and degrading!

I do not know how and why some in our midst get such great pleasure from degrading their fellow man. But I can say, with all truthfulness and in all honesty, that the majority of persons coming to see me, are not coming about any personal material need.

Our discussions range from employment opportunity to the status of their own hurricane recovery efforts, to securing scholarships and opportunities at home and abroad for their children. Many also come with ideas on how the process of governance can be improved in their communities and the country. So for it to be suggested by those opposed to this government that hundreds of persons came to Roseau today in search of food and because, as they said in social media, 'that the people of Dominica are suffering', is false, offensive and downright insulting to the people of this country. That is simply not true!

Indeed, many who come to see me, often bring produce from their farms and from their own cottage industries as gifts to my staff and I. It is really unfortunate how in this country we have allowed partisan politics to remove our brotherly and sisterly love for each other.\

I will not shy away from seeing and hearing my people, because as leader of the country, I need to know what is affecting citizens. I need to know what policies

are working and those that can be improved. I need to know which services are in high demand and which are under-subscribed. I have time for the people of Dominica and they are welcomed to come see me at my office!

However, after the massive turnout today, I have asked that a structured appointment system be put in place, effective next week, so persons can be given a specific date and time at which to come meet their Prime Minister.

I have also asked that upgrade community based Social Enhancement Programs, so that not everyone in search of social relief or assistance, would see the need to come to Roseau to discuss such with the Prime Minister.

Notwithstanding the great strides we have made in our hurricane recovery efforts, there are still persons out there hurting. These one on one sessions, help me to appreciate the need for us to enhance and expedite the delivery of services to our people.

I apologize to those who did not get to see me today, but I want for you to be assured that you will be contacted, with a view to being formally re-invited to the Financial Centre for a personal appointment with your leader.

To those who take pleasure in circulating and espousing negative vibes and images of Dominica, I say shame on you! I shudder at the thought of Dominica being saddled with a leader, who is unwilling to meet with ordinary people.

Another viewpoint in this scenario could be that no where in the world, is there a leader more accessible to his people than in Dominica. And no where else in the world, can a person walk up to the office of their leader and request and be granted an audience to see their leader. But of course, that perspective would not serve the interest or the agenda of those who wish to paint an ugly picture of Dominica.

What I wish to assure citizens, however, is that we shall structure appointments better and there shall be a more orderly flow of traffic into the office of Prime Minister as of next week.

But under no circumstances, shall the doors of this Prime Minister be ever closed to the ordinary citizens of Dominica. That's the solemn pledge i make to the people of Dominica!

I thank you