

MINISTER'S ADDRESS TO THE NATION

DRUG AWARENESS MONTH 2013

Fellow Dominicans, Drug Awareness Month has been observed for over a decade now. The National Drug Abuse Prevention Unit continues to mark the observance in January of every year at the national level.

Due to growing concerns over the increased cases of Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases, the spate of violence especially against our women, wanton idleness and the resultant ills in our society like negative groups such as gangs that threaten productivity and tranquility in the nature isle, most of which are closely linked to drug and alcohol use, we are continuing to use last year's theme; **My community, My Choice; NO DRUGS!!!**

A community is acceptably defined as being made up groups of families. It means therefore that the community's dynamics is a replica of the family dynamics of that society. The pronoun "my" denotes possession and carries the idea that community life ought to be a shared

responsibility. We are all encouraged to take possession of our communities. That ownership must be demonstrated through every member of society making a collective effort at engendering a loving and peaceful community.

Regrettably, there seems to be a growing problem of drug and alcohol abuse that gnaws away at the very fabric of our society, one that leaves many individual lives and family units devastated. The indiscriminate use and sale of alcohol and other drugs to minors must become a thing of the past as this undermines the rule of law of this land and places our children in harm's way. We must never forget that it is also an offence to sell alcohol to a man or woman who appears to be already intoxicated.

We have inserted in our national anthem these words, "all for each and each for all" that we are a people who bear each other's burdens. It seems to suggest that when one member of our society is affected other members feel that pain. If we are the close knit society that we claim to be, here's a call to hold each other accountable in doing the right and being firm and without fear in our resolve to so do. One of the sure

ways to ensure posterity in this land in preserving generations is to build a healthy nation, one community at a time. It is well established drug abuse is counterproductive and poses a serious diversion to the resources and energy required for nation building.

Our dear parents, you are constantly made aware of the need to perform this God given duty with the highest level of dedication and commitment. I beckon you to play a supportive role in the life of all the children in your care and those of the community with whom you have influence. Be mindful that this task demands that you set good examples as you are heroes to many. Let it be that the example you set today will be an example that you would be proud that the nation's youth replicate. Avoid performing actions and taking decisions that impact negatively on your children's capacity to make wise choices, the product of a sound mind.

As Minister with responsibility for the health of the nation, I declare substance abuse a PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERN, one that must be treated by all and sundry within the Dominican society. We are also

constantly reminded of the threat to national security that the drug abusing lifestyle is, it also has a debilitating effect on our tourism.

I call upon our schools, churches, private and public sector organizations, non-Governmental organizations, and Community Based organizations to join ranks with the National Drug Abuse Prevention Unit to help in efforts at drug demand reduction.

A recent Prison Study conducted by the OAS/CICAD “Exploring the relationship between Drugs and Crime concludes that inmates reported marijuana use as early as age fourteen, that alcohol played a significant role in physical assault and cocaine and crack were associated more with stealing and robbery”. Drug abuse affects one’s ability to think rationally and to function effectively as it diminishes the capacity for sound judgment.

As I declare the month long observation open, I embrace this opportunity to invite all of us to fully engage with and participate in the

activities that the Ministry of Health has set aside to commemorate Drug Awareness Month 2013.

Please look forward to the department's signature events like;

- Church Service in Paix Bouche
- Market to Market walk-A-Thon (Roseau to Mahaut)
- 5th annual Candle Light Vigil in Coulibistrie
- Drug exhibitions
- District school rallies in Calibishie, Pte. Michel, Laplaine and Salisbury

Let's all make it part of our personal and collective agenda to say NO to drugs at home, school and in the wider society. I wish us all a Happy New Year and a successful month of activities and a Drug free 2013!