

Ground Rules for Important Discussion and Process in Building a Seamless Dominica

By Dr. Peter K.B. St. Jean

“Sometimes, it is very important that we get so honest with each other that it hurts. Said otherwise, sometimes, we cannot be honest enough with each other, until it hurts. This is going to be inevitable in our process”. (Dr. Peter St. Jean)

In the interest of arriving at our goals, at the risk of appearing too forward, please allow me to suggest (if not set) some ground rules for the benefit of all of us, as we move forward with this very important discussion, and process:

1. PLEASE SPEAK YOUR MIND,

- a. **Freely**; without too much concern about how well polished you seem, how much sense you are making, or fear of being negatively judged for expressing yourself).
- b. **Honestly**: with true regards to your feelings – happy, saddened, disappointed, ambivalent, etc. – not exaggerated one way or the other [negatively or positively] because of the way that you feel at the moment).
- c. **Truthfully**: with making reference to factual and not fictitious events, and
- d. **Clearly**: staying focused on the subject at hand (not mixing apples with oranges) , with a logical flow of relevant events (such as not mixing the order of things – but keeping them chronological – what happened first, second, third, etc.

2. PLEASE GIVE THE UTMOST RESPECT AND COURTESY TO THOSE WHO ARE “SPEAKING” OR “HAVE SPOKEN.” SHE OR HE WILL HAVE TAKEN THEIR TIME TO ENLIGHTEN US ABOUT WHAT IS ON THEIR MIND, WITH THE BELIEF THAT THE INFORMATION IS TO BE USED FOR OUR HOLISTIC GOOD, RATHER THAN BEING A CAUSE FOR PERSONAL ATTACKS, ACCUSATIONS, OR OTHER UNDESIRABLE REACTIONS. PLEASE ACCOMPLISH THIS BY DOING THE FOLLOWING:

a. Listen attentively:

- i. Take the time to understand what the person is saying by giving their statement undivided attention – that is to say, by not focusing too much on the answer that you are preparing in your mind to rebut their point.
- ii. Forget about your rebuttal for now, and just listen.
- iii. Simply try to see it from their point of view as they are saying it freely, honestly, truthfully, and clearly.

- iv. If you are taking notes to prepare questions while “listening” please let the questions be to seek clarification, not to refute or rebut what is being said.
- v. Just listen for now.

b. Do not be defensive:

- i. Take the time to read the person’s comments with care and without any baggage (drama “rolled over” from a previous conflict, debate, or the like).
- ii. Do not think that this is their way of launching a personal attack on you or people like you.
- iii. Do not feel too guilty if you are in the crosshairs of the criticisms or the like that the person is outlining. Be thankful that someone is calling you out in it, if indeed it seems relevant to you in a negative way.
- iv. Take the high ground and focus on the big picture – a minor sacrifice to the goal of building a Seamless Dominica.

c. Do no belittle anyone:

- i. Do not go out of your way to include issues that are not directly related to the issue as a way of getting a person to feel bad or upset – getting back at them or the like.
- ii. Do not use putdown language such as “you are a type of person” “that is the type of person you have always been” and so on.

d. Do not get personal:

- i. Stay attentive to the issue at hand and focus on presenting the facts as you truthfully know them to be. If you have to criticize someone, speak directly about their behavior in reference, not about their personality, their family members, friends, children, financial status, gender, sexuality, weight, height, educational level, perceived intelligence, residential status, or the like.
- ii. Stay focused on the issue, not the person.
- iii. When it is difficult to separate the person from the issue, use a disclaimer such as, “what I am about to say is not so much about you, but more about what you do;..... or something like that.

3. STAY FOCUSED ON THE BIG PICTURE

That you are making a contribution to help us get a few steps closer to building a Seamless Dominica.