



## The local government system in Dominica

Local government information correct as of 2009



### Key facts

**POPULATION (Census 2001)<sup>1</sup>:** 69,625

**AREA<sup>2</sup>:** 751 sq km

**CAPITAL:** Roseau

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTION TO GDP<sup>3</sup>:** 0.2%

**CURRENCY:** Eastern Caribbean dollar (XCD)

**HEAD OF STATE:** President Dr Nicholas Liverpool

**HEAD OF GOVERNMENT:**

Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit

**FORM OF GOVERNMENT:** parliamentary democracy

**PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM:** unicameral

**STATE STRUCTURE:** unitary

**LANGUAGES:** English (official)

**NATIONAL ELECTIONS:** last: 2009; turnout: -

next: 2014

**LOCAL ELECTIONS:** No information has been provided for this edition.

### SUMMARY

Dominica is a democratic republic with two spheres of government: national and local. There is no provision for local government in the constitution and the main governing laws are the Town Council Act 1937, the Village Council Act 1954, the Carib Council Act 1978, the City Council Act 1984 and the Urban Council Act 1992. The Ministry of Community Development, Gender Affairs and Information is responsible for overseeing all local government, which comprises one city, one town and one urban council, 37 village councils and the Carib Council. Councils are empowered to levy house and land taxes and borrow a limited amount of money, while the

central government's contribution includes revenue-matching grant and a standard grant. The main service for which local government is responsible, and which constitutes the major part of local government spending, is road maintenance.

#### 1. CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Dominica is a democratic republic with a unicameral parliament known as the House of Assembly. The head of state is the non-executive president who is appointed by parliament after nomination by the prime minister in consultation with the leader of the opposition for a maximum of two five-year terms. The House of Assembly has 30 members and one ex-officio member, all

of whom serve for a five-year term. Twenty-one members (representatives) are directly elected by universal adult suffrage to single-member constituencies. Nine further members known as senators are appointed by the president; five on the advice of the prime minister and four on the advice of the leader of the opposition. The president appoints the prime minister, who is usually the leader of the majority party and, on the advice of the prime minister, appoints other ministers to the cabinet.

#### 2. LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

##### 2.1 Constitutional provisions:

There is no provision for local government in the constitution.

## 2.2 Main legislative texts:

- Town Council Act 1937
- Village Council Act 1954
- Carib Council Act 1978
- City Council Act 1984
- Canefield Urban Council Act 1984
- Urban Council Act 1992

## 3. STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### 3.1 Local government within the state:

Local government is uniform across the country. There are seven districts containing a network of town, village and urban councils.

### 3.2 Ministerial oversight:

The Ministry of Community Development, Gender Affairs and Information is responsible for overseeing any local government legislation.

### 3.3 Council types:

The largest town council is Roseau, the capital, with a population of 16,038. The second city, which also has a town council, is Portsmouth, with 3,625 inhabitants. The one urban council – Canefield – covers an area with a population of 2,186. Village councils are the smallest. The largest village is Marigot with a population of 2,663. The average population covered by a village council is 1,307. One-fifth of the population lives in urban areas.

**3.3.1 Roseau City Council:** The council is elected for a term of three years with a membership of eight: three nominated members and five directly elected by residents. Its chairman is designated mayor of Roseau. The council is empowered to regulate activities in the town by making by-laws and enforcing them within the municipal area. Although the council has increased in size and the municipality has expanded, its function has been affected by the establishment of central government utility service statutory bodies. As a result, many of the services once provided by the council are now mandated to national specialised agencies.

**3.3.2 Portsmouth Town Council:** This council also has a three-year term of office and a membership of eight; five elected and three nominated members. The chairman also assumes the title of mayor.

**3.3.3 Canefield Urban Council** consists of eight members: five elected by the residents and three nominated by the minister with responsibility for local government. Members serve for a period of three years. The council is empowered to pass by-laws similar in scope to those of Roseau

**Table 1.** Distribution of councils and population (Census 2000)

Region	No. of assemblies				Population (Census 2000)
	City	Town	Urban	Village	
St George	1	-	-	n/a	19,825
St John	-	1	-	n/a	5,327
St Peter	-	-	-	n/a	1,452
St Joseph	-	-	-	n/a	5,765
St Paul	-	-	1	n/a	8,397
St Luke	-	-	-	n/a	1,571
St Mark	-	-	-	n/a	1,907
St Patrick	-	-	-	n/a	8,383
St David*	-	-	-	n/a +CC*	6,758
St Andrew	-	-	-	n/a	10,240
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>37+CC*</b>	<b>69,625</b>

\* plus Carib community Source: Central Statistical Office<sup>1</sup>

(3.3.1) and Portsmouth (3.3.2) councils for the good government and improvement of the area.

**3.3.4 Village councils** also have eight members, five elected and three nominated. Each council is elected for a term of three years and is authorised to make by-laws to govern affairs in its village district. The ability to enforce many of these laws is affected, however (like that of other councils), by the centralisation of many services.

**3.3.5 Carib Council:** The Carib Council governs the Carib territory, an area in the island's east set aside for the indigenous Carib people, with a population of around 2,500. In most respects the Carib Council has powers similar to those of Roseau and Portsmouth councils. However, except in cases when insufficient persons are elected, no provisions are made for nominated members on the council. Additionally, the Carib Council functions as the official representative of the Carib people and its members serve for five years. The day-to-day affairs of the territory have become part of its responsibility, as well as the administration of the unique Carib communal land system.

## 4. ELECTIONS

### 4.1 Recent local elections:

No information provided for this edition.

### 4.2 Voting system:

Elections to city, town, urban and village councils are held every three years. The Carib Council is elected every five years. Each urban and village council has five elected members and three non-elected members, the latter appointed by the minister with responsibility for local government from nominations put forward by the elected members.

### 4.3 Elected representatives:

Leaders of urban and village councils are called chairpersons. The serving members of the council elect mayors and chairpersons indirectly. Leaders of the two towns, Roseau and Portsmouth, are called mayors. These two councils comprise eight elected members and five members appointed by the minister. In the case of the Carib Council, the people elect a chief who becomes the chairperson of the Carib Council, serving a five-year term. Village councils, which cover a relatively small population and have limited powers, make all decisions through the whole council and have no sub-committee system.

### 4.4 Women's representation:

In 2009, women made up 50% of councillors in town councils, 40% in village councils, 30% in urban councils and 12.5% in the Carib Council.

## 5. SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

No information has been provided for this section of this edition.

## 6. ORGANISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### 6.1 National local government association:

The Dominica Association of Local Authorities (DALA) represents local government in Dominica. All authorities and district associations are members, though membership is voluntary. Some of the seven districts have their own organisations, called district council associations, to bring together local authorities in their area.

### 6.2 Other local government associations:

The National Local Authorities' Clerks' Association was inaugurated in 2003. This body represents the interests of clerks.



**Table 2.** Aggregate revenue and expenditure for local government (2003/2004)

Revenue ECD\$m		Expenditure ECD\$m	
Government transfers	1.2	Elected representatives	1.05
Local property tax	0.8	Staff	1.4
		Road maintenance	4.2
		Social security	0.35
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>

Source: Ministry of Community Development, Gender Affairs and Information<sup>4</sup>

## 7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

The local government commissioner is invited to attend meetings of DALA. Individual authorities, district associations and DALA all make delegations to the Ministry of Community Development, Gender Affairs and Information to discuss and lobby on particular issues. The local government commissioner is responsible for the promotion of intergovernmental relations.

## 8. MONITORING SYSTEMS

Councils are audited by the district development officer and the National Audit Department. Citizens also have redress to the Minister for Community Development, Gender Affairs and Information or the local government commissioner.

## 9. FINANCE, STAFFING AND RESOURCES

In certain circumstances town and urban councils may set deficit budgets.

### 9.1 Locally raised revenue:

The councils are empowered to levy house and land taxes and borrow a limited amount of money.

### 9.2 Transfers:

The government's contribution to local government spending comes in the form of a revenue-matching grant and a standard grant, including grants for specific activities such as road maintenance, office running costs and the remuneration of councillors.

### 9.3 Local authority staff:

The Public Service Commission recruits local government staff centrally. It also has powers to discipline and dismiss staff. Occasionally central government staff are seconded to local authorities – usually these are specialist staff. Each authority must have a village clerk; in the case of Roseau a city clerk. This person is the head of the paid service. Most councils are quite small and usually have only two members of staff. Roseau has a finance director and four wardens who are responsible for the four wards in the city, in addition to the city clerk.

## 10. DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY RESPONSIBILITY

All local authorities are charged with the good governance of their communities. The main service for which local government is responsible, and which constitutes the major part of local government spending, is road maintenance. However, councils also have some responsibilities for parks and open spaces, sports and leisure, and cemeteries and crematoria. The main role for local authorities at present is an enabling one, acting as a champion of local causes for their areas. However, there is pressure to expand their functions to give them a greater role in service delivery. The urban councils' tasks include, for example, contributing to educational and charitable ventures; acquiring land or buildings for public use; establishing and regulating markets; altering or extending the waterworks; and providing and maintaining parks, gardens and other places of recreation.

## References and useful websites

1. Central Statistical Office [www.one.gov.do/Census2001](http://www.one.gov.do/Census2001)  
[www.unisi.it/ricerca/dip/dmq/working%20paper/DMQ\\_WP\\_65.pdf](http://www.unisi.it/ricerca/dip/dmq/working%20paper/DMQ_WP_65.pdf)
2. UN statistics  
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2008/Table03.pdf>
3. IMF statistics [www.imf.org/external/data.htm](http://www.imf.org/external/data.htm)
4. Ministry of Community Development, Gender Affairs and Information  
[www.dominica.gov.dm/cms/index.php?q=no de/19](http://www.dominica.gov.dm/cms/index.php?q=no de/19)
5. Government of Dominica  
[www.dominica.gov.dm](http://www.dominica.gov.dm)
6. Government of Dominica: Local Government System  
[www.dominica.gov.dm/cms/index.php?q=no de/107#villagecouncils](http://www.dominica.gov.dm/cms/index.php?q=no de/107#villagecouncils)
7. UNDP Human Development Report 2010  
[www.hdr.undp.org](http://www.hdr.undp.org)
8. Dominica Association of Local Authorities  
[www.nsadm.org/about/dominica-nsa-panel-members/dominica-association-of-local-authorities-dala](http://www.nsadm.org/about/dominica-nsa-panel-members/dominica-association-of-local-authorities-dala)



Annex A. Summary of service provision in different spheres of government

Service	Delivering authority		Remarks
	Central	Local Government	
<b>GENERAL ADMINISTRATION</b>			
Police	■		
Fire Protection	■		
Civil protection	■		
Criminal justice	■		
Civil status register	■		
Statistical office	■		
Electoral register	■	■	
<b>EDUCATION</b>			
Pre-school			
Primary	■	■	
Secondary	■		
Vocational and technical	■	■	
Higher education	■		
Adult education	■	■	
Other	■	■	
<b>SOCIAL WELFARE</b>			
Kindergarten and nursery	■		
Family welfare services	■	■	
Welfare homes	■	■	
Social security	■		
<b>PUBLIC HEALTH</b>			
Primary care	■	■	
Hospitals	■		
Health Protection	■		
<b>HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING</b>			
Housing	■	■	
Town planning	■	■	
Regional planning	■	■	
<b>TRANSPORT</b>			
Roads	■	■	
Transport	■	■	
Urban roads	■	■	
Urban rail			
Ports	■		
Airports	■		
<b>ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SANITATION</b>			
Water and sanitation		■	
Refuse collection and disposal	■	■	
Cemeteries and crematoria	■	■	
Slaughterhouses	■	■	
Environmental protection	■		
Consumer protection	■		
<b>CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORTS</b>			
Theatre and concerts		■	
Museums and libraries	■		
Parks and open spaces	■	■	
Sports and leisure	■	■	
Religious facilities			
<b>UTILITIES</b>			
Gas services	■		
District heating			
Water supply			
Electricity	■		
<b>ECONOMIC</b>			
Agriculture, forests and fisheries	■		
Economic promotion	■		
Trade and industry	■		
Tourism	■		

■ = discretionary service by the local authority