

Official Report

***PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST
SESSION (2015-2018) OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE
CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE
PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN***

107TH Sitting

Tuesday, 11TH December, 2018

Assembly convened at 10.12 a.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

ANNOUNCEMENT

Leave to Members

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, leave has been granted to the Hon. Winston Felix from 11th December to 13th December, 2018 and granted also to the Hon. Dr. Bheri Ramsaran from 11th December to 14th December, 2018.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS

MOTION

BUDGET SPEECH 2019 – MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2019

WHEREAS the Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana requires that Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for any financial year should be laid before the National Assembly;

AND WHEREAS the Constitution also provides that when the Estimates of Expenditure have been approved by the Assembly an Appropriation Bill shall be introduced in the Assembly providing for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet that expenditure;

AND WHEREAS the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the financial year 2019 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2018-11-26

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2019, of a total sum of two hundred and seventy seven billion, four hundred and thirty one million, nine hundred and sixty eight thousand dollars (\$277,431,968,000), excluding twenty three billion, two hundred and eighty seven million, and forty three thousand dollars (\$23,287,043,000) which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the undermentioned schedule, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to further provision in respect of finance.
[Minister of Finance]

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply

Agency: 21 Ministry of Agriculture (10.16 a.m.)

Current Expenditure

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration – \$868,060,000

Mr. Seeraj: Good morning to you and Colleagues. Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: This Agency was cited by the Auditor General for taking some steps but not moving fast enough to address this matter of contracted employees. We have a total of 213 employees but out of this

amount there are 146 contracted employees. Could the Hon. Minister give us an indication if he has a schedule in mind to reduce the number of contracted employees?

Minister of Agriculture [Mr. Holder]: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: For 2018 there were 166 employees at 1st January, 2018. We estimated that there will be 146 employees for 1st January, 2019. The changes between the two was caused by contracts for 15 Bonded Scholars and one vehicle driver which came to an end as set out below; two Agriculture Feed Assistants, three Veterinary Officers, three Extension Officers, a few [*inaudible*] Assistants, one Agronomist, one Plant Protection Officer, two Livestock Extension Assistants, one Vehicle Driver, one Health and Fruit Specialist whose contract ended and awaiting renewal of the said contract.

Mr. Seeraj: My question has to do with whether the Minister has a schedule in place. I did not ask for how many persons or who are contracted workers. This matter is engaging the attention of the Auditor General. I am just wondering if the Minister has in mind a schedule to reduce the number of contracted employees?

Mr. Holder: The answer will necessarily have to be, yes, because you heard from what I said before that there are a number of contract officers who came in probably from the University of Guyana having been trained into the Ministry. They would be placed on contract for three years. At the end of that time they are then absorbed into the fixed pensionable establishment. It is a process that will continue every year. Hopefully, there will be some sort of minimisation of the contract officers.

Mr. Seeraj: I should thank the Hon. Minister for his response, but it is contradictory in a sense that the Minister is informing this House that this will continue, when it was a stated position by the Government that the issue of contracted employees would brought to an end. Now, we are hearing about this other matter.

I do not think we would get anyway further with that. Could the Minister indicate to us the categories that will attract the most contracted employees?

Mr. Chairman: Is that the question?

Mr. Seeraj: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Holder: The categories will essentially be largely qualified agricultural professionals. Essentially what should be enforced, and we are getting there, is that the Ministry of Agriculture will inform the Ministry of the Presidency, Department of Public Service of its future needs over the next three to five years. The Ministry of the Presidency, Department of Public Service will then make available necessary scholarships to these people to be trained. Having been trained, they would then come into the Ministry on a contractual agreement, then at the end of the contract period they are absorbed into the system.

The system will continue until such time as the Ministry perceives it has its full complement of people. Naturally, a full complement will change slightly from year to year, people will retire, or migrate. The numbers will be coming much smaller as time proceeds. At this point in time this is what is happening. I trust that clarifies the situation.

Mr. Seeraj: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: I noticed an increase over \$5 million. One would have expected that given the Government's trust towards a Green State Development Strategy we would see a reduction in electricity charges. Could the Minister inform this House, what is the case here with the increase in electricity charges of about 25% and why is it moving by this large amount? Is the Ministry of Agriculture not part of the Green State Development Strategy?

Mr. Holder: I am advised that the increase is as a result of the Guyana Power and Light Incorporated (GPL) claiming that the arrears payment is owed, and reconciliation is ongoing. This is probably a one-off situation in terms of arrears payment.

Mr. Seeraj: Line item 6281 – Security Services: Again, there is a huge increase which is above the 7% that was granted on the high end of the scale of increases that the Minister of Finance announced. Could the Minister explain why is there this large increase in the cost for security services? Could he provide the name of the supplier of security services to this particular agency?

Mr. Holder: This was sent out to public tender and this was as a result of the tender process. It covers the charges for RK Security service, the Commissioner of Police, and MMC Security Service were all procured by public tender. The increases were due to competitive pricing from one year to the other.

Mr. Seeraj: Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: There is another huge increase here. We are moving from \$2,300,000 million to \$10,800,000 million. Could the Minister inform us what are the activities that will engage this huge increase?

Mr. Holder: I am advised that this increase was due to correcting the classification, which was previously expended under other line items. It caters for the Ministry's participation in national events such as the Green State Development Strategy, Republic Day celebrations, Independence Day, Agriculture Month activities, and other regional agricultural and commercial exhibitions.

Mr. Seeraj: What caught my attention there was the Green State Development Strategy. Could the Minister explain further, how would the moneys be spent in relation to this Green State Development Strategy? What sort of activities is he talking about?

Mr. Holder: There was an activity at the Providence, Guyana National Stadium, this year. I think we were all aware of it and I believe the Opposition did visit the tents. I gather that this would be occurring every year. It is part of the Green State Development Strategy exhibitions that we would be participating in.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6281 – Security Services: I noticed in 2018 you budgeted \$27,320,000 and you revised to \$18,480,000. Then you are budgeting now in 2019 for \$28,822,000. Could the Minister explain this to us?

Mr. Holder: I am advised that some Officers did not take up their security service which they are entitled to during the course of the year, which is why there is a discrepancy.

10.27 a.m.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, is the Minister telling us that some of these venues were not secured during the year 2018? What is he doing about it now?

Mr. Holder: Is he talking between the years 2018 and 2019? If that is the case, we are budgeting at everyone who will accept the security arrangement. We cannot not budget for that. We cannot assume that the discrepancies occurring this year will be carried on indefinitely. If I understand his question, because I am not quite clear he got over to me or I am getting over to him. Is it clear?

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, I am clear. In 2018, the Ministry of Agriculture budgeted for security services - \$27,320,000. Now the revised sum is \$18,480,000. I am asking, why this is?

Secondly, the budget for 2019 is \$28,822,000. Something is not smelling good.

Mr. Holder: I will repeat again. Some people who were entitled to security services during 2018 did not accept it. In 2019 we are budgeting for it, because we have to cater for it. This is because the new people might accept it. To carry over a situation that is peculiar would be wrong in terms of budgeting purposes.

Me. Neendkumar: Could the Hon. Minister layover to this House the list of all the venues that are entitled and the persons who are entitled to security. This is to let us know what it is and that we could double check it.

Mr. Holder: I certainly will, Sir.

Mr. Dharamlall: Good morning everyone. Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Hon. Minister, I noticed for this year there has been no support given to Guyana Sugar Corporation Inc (GuySuCo). I am wondering, and would asking, what impact has the losses 7000 jobs has on the Guyana's economy and within the communities that are affected by the job losses?

Mr. Holder: This situation here is a straight reprogramming, from what I am advised to programme: 212. It has nothing to do with job losses.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, in 2018 under programme: 211, GuySuCo received over \$10 billion. In this year the company is not receiving anything, whether it is in this programme or in the agricultural development support services programme. I am asking for the purposes of line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisation: what impact does the 7,000 jobs that was lost, as a result of the closure of some estates, have on the economy?

Secondly, what impact it has on local communities surrounding the sugar estates that are closed?

Mr. Holder: Frankly speaking, Mr. Chairman, I am not sure how relevant that is to the line item.

Certainly, in terms of explaining impacts on economy and so on, I believe that is outside of my pay grade. There are those who are higher and better qualified to answer that. This is a lot of reprogramming and \$10 billion was not spent on GuySuCo last year. There are other agencies that got part of the \$10 billion.

As a matter of a fact, let us put something off of the table. The Guyana Sugar Corporation does not appear in this Budget at all. The Guyana Sugar Corporation financing is being handled otherwise. Really and truly from the point of view of what we are supposed to do for this week, questions of GuySuCo really cannot appear because there is line item relevant to GuySuCo. I hope that answers the question.

Mr. Dharamlall: Follow-up: This is to what the Minister just said. The Minister said the \$10 plus billion allocated to this year to GuySuCo, which is in 2018, was not all spent on GuySuCo. If I heard that correctly or words to that effect, then, could the Hon. Minister please share how was the \$10 plus billion was disaggregated in 2018?

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, perhaps if the Hon. Member will turn to page 431, it is explained quite clearly there what part of that amount went to GuySuCo, what part went to National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA), to the Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA) and other agencies.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Dharamlall, if you hear the voice of the Speaker then you must immediately desist from doing whatever it is you are doing. There is no race here; there is no race at all. If a Member rises, I recognise the Member, and I will give him the floor. That must not change. Please, proceed.

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you, Sir. Mr. Chairman, the Minister said that GuySuCo received \$10,682,000,000. There is a disaggregation of this line item amongst the agencies. The Minister said a few moments ago that the moneys given to GuySuCo were not spent alone by GuySuCo. I am asking the Minister, the \$10,682,000,000 that was given to GuySuCo, I would like a disaggregation of the \$10,682,000,000 noting that the Minister said all of it was not spent by GuySuCo.

Mr. Holder: I thank the Hon. Member for his astute observation. In the budgeting for this year, 2019, GuySuCo was allocated \$6.3 billion. However, there is the question of severance. Supplementary allocation for GuySuCo was requested \$1.9 billion extra apparent from \$6.3 to pay 50% severance plus. On 11th November another \$2.4 billion was requested; remaining 50%. The total supplementary allocation for GuySuCo was \$4.3 billion, which when added to the \$6.3 billion will give you the \$10 billion.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, just a follow-up to my Colleague's question. Line item 6281 – Security Services: The Minister said last year that a number of Officers did not take up their security which was the reason that only \$18,480,000 was expended. However, he has budgeted this year \$28,822,000. When you are budgeting you must have an indication that these people will take up their security. Did the Hon. Minister receive indication from these officers that they will take up security this year?

Mr. Holder: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Mustapha: Line item 6242 - Maintenance of Buildings: Last year the Hon. Minister budgeted \$14 million for maintenance buildings and this year the figure has increased by \$200,000. Could the Hon. Minister explain are those the same buildings that would be maintain this year or new buildings?

Mr. Holder: I am advised that the Ministry of Agriculture will carry out the further repairs to the National Drainage and Authority Building - \$7 million, routine maintenance - \$3.2 million, the main building in the company; the roof -\$3 million and the Food Safety and Authority building or the one earmarked for it, if and when it comes into being - \$1 million.

Mr. Mustapha: I was just asking the Minister if those were the same buildings that were maintained when he budgeted for last year.

Mr. Holder: No, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chand: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: The number of contracted employees in 2018 was 166, the number contracted employees for next year, 2019, will be 146. I think it is a drop by 12%. However, Comrade Chairman, the employment bill for 2018 is \$436,733,000, in 2019 it would be \$413,111,000. The question is, why is the drop so minuscule in the wage bill for

next year? When you look at the number of employees that would not be there, it will be as much as 20 employees. Could the Minister explain why the wage bill was not reduced taking into account this number? I know there would be an increase in salaries, but if we could get some detailed explanation, I would be grateful.

Mr. Holder: To answer his question, as I said initially, the figures before you are the figures at the beginning of the year. You have at the beginning of 2018 166 contracted employees and at the beginning of 2019 146 contracted employees.

We estimated that during the course of the year, however, there might be about 50 new scholars coming from the Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA), University of Guyana (UG) and so on. They will not come in on 1st January. Obviously, they will graduate in June or July then they will come on stream in September and October. Basically, it is a buzzing estimate by the Ministry of Agriculture in terms of what will happen. To ensure that there are funds available to pay these people when they come on board. I hope that satisfies the Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: There will be two other questions after Mr. Komal Chand's question.

Mr. Chand: The Minister said he is catering for people who are to join the Ministry coming from the University of Guyana and elsewhere. Could the Minister give us an approximate number?

Mr. Holder: I am advised it is approximately 50. That is the approximate number of people we have to look at. For him to give me a detail breakdown of how many from GSA, UG, Carnegie School of Home Economics or whatever, it would be difficult at this point and time.

10. 42 p.m.

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration -\$868,060,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration – \$1,077,653,000

Mr. Seeraj: Project code 1302300 - Drainage and Irrigation - Pumps: 2017 - 0, 2018 - \$100 million. We have moved from \$100 million to \$669,379,000. I noticed in the Capital project profile

that is listed among the areas to be serviced under this head, the following areas, Church Street, Sussex Street, Ruimveldt. Those places are in Georgetown and normally the Georgetown Mayor and City Council (M&CC) would have assumed responsibility for drainage. Could the Hon. Minister of Agriculture state to this House whether the Ministry of Agriculture was approached by the Georgetown Mayor and City Council to provide support in these areas?

Mr. Holder: During the course of this year Cabinet deliberated and the entire drainage and irrigation situation in Guyana. Cabinet instructed that a subcommittee of three Ministers Chaired by the Minister of Agriculture, including the Minister of Public Infrastructure, and the Minister of Communities to get together to recommend the best way to handle the drainage on coastal of Guyana. Cabinet approved the recommendations of the Committee, which personally gave the responsibility of drainage and irrigation of not only the declared, but the undeclared drainage and irrigation areas to National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) and also for the primary drainage in the Georgetown area. This means that from 1st January, if the budget is approved, the NDIA will be possible for all of the main canals, the outfall channels are cleaned by the kokers and when the pumps come in from India there will be four mobile pumps that will be allocated to Georgetown. The internal wall drainage will be the responsibility of the Georgetown Mayor and City Council Certainly, the prime drainage will be NDIA's responsibility and you should see a tremendous improvement in the drainage of Georgetown and hopefully the entire coastal area commencing in 2019.

Mr. Seeraj: Sir, could you please indicate to us what will be the cost for this intervention for Church Street, Sussex street and Ruimveldt of this allocation of this \$669,379,000?

Mr. Holder: The overall cost will be US\$3,600,000 which would include the pumps and the work has to be done. I can give him a very detailed breakdown if he wishes. We did not walk with the entire breakdown that we recently put for the Cabinet and also what is included in the Budget.

Mr. Seeraj: Minister, I did not hear you clearly. How much were you saying, approximately? I will appreciate the laying over of the detailed breakdown but ball park figure.

Mr. Holder: The total for all of the pumps remains as US\$3,600,000, that is nine plus the four. Four is for Georgetown and nine is for the rest of country. That should be detailed here.

Mr. Seeraj: Minister, I was informed that the National Drainage and Irrigation authority will be withdrawing support to various organisations and intuitions in some areas. I received this report from Region 6 that no longer would support will be given to Water Users Association and some other Bodies there that provides drainage and irrigation services. Could you confirm whether this is so or whether the Ministry will continue to provide support in these areas?

Mr. Holder: I am totally unaware of any change in the existing arrangements which will continue into next year.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I have a follow-up question to my Colleague. The Minister just said that he does not know of any changes, but then he mentioned that the NDIA would be taking over the entire system of the drainage and irrigation in the country and on the coast, which includes secondary canals in various agricultural areas. Could the Hon. Minister say what mechanism will be put in place so that those persons who lives in the various areas across the country and who are employed in doing work in these canals, how would they be given work to maintain these canals across the country through the NDIA; since the NDIA is centrally in Georgetown and these workers used to be employed by the regions and also the Water Users Association? There are hundreds of workers as those across the country.

Mr. Holder: The two questions were not link. I think Mr. Seeraj was specific to Water Users and Mr. Mustapha's was a more generalised question. I think that both were answered in parts, but I can assure the Hon. Member that whatever is in place, NDIA is not going into any place to destroy what is working. If something is working, do not fix it. The responsibility that would be NDIA's to ensure that it works better. Certainly, there is not going to be any attempt to destroy what is perhaps in Mr. Mustapha's opinion "working well".

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, what I am about to find out, would these works be tendered out by the region and Water Users Association or by an NDIA? This is because, now, it is almost at the end of the year and before the small contractors are considered, they have to be prequalify. I know for a fact that a number of these organisations, the Regional Democratic Council (RDC), the Water Users Association are now prequalifying contractors. Would that process continue at the regional level or would that come to the NDIA centrally to award these contracts to these small workers? As I said, there are thousands of those workers across our country.

Mr. Holder: Contract decisions under the new system will be responsible of the NDIA. I can give the Hon. Members assurance that NDIA is not in the business of dismissing anyone or removing jobs from anyone. As I said that when things are working, do not fit it. This is our approach.

Mr. Mustapha: Could the Minister tell me if these contracts would be awarded by the Regional Water Users Association or at the central level? That is what I am interested in. Where would these contracts be awarded? Is it at the NDIA level or at the Regional or Water Users level?

Mr. Holder: The Water Users Association across the country have their arrangement and they will continue. There will be no change in that. I am not sure what the Hon. Member is worried about.

Mr. Neendkumar: In the legend it states:

“a. Fixed drainage pumps for areas such as Hampton Court, Devonshire Castle, Den Amstel, Hope, Nooten Zuil, Mora Point and Rose Hall.”

I would like to know specifically the amount that will be there for these areas. How much will be there for these areas and how much will be there for the mobile drainage pumps for Church Street, Sussex Street and Ruimveldt South outfall channels. This is so that we can follow up.

Mr. Holder: We are requiring nine fixed and three more pumps along with spares to be placed at locations including Hampton Court which will get two, Devonshire Castle which will get two, Den Amstel will get one, Hope will get one, Nooten Zuil will get one, Mora Point will get one and Rose Hall will also get one. The mobile pumps will be allocated to the Georgetown area.

Mr. Seeraj: Project code 2100700- Flood Risk Management Project: There is an allocation here of \$320,000,000. Listed in the capital project profile is “the Design and construction of pump station at Liliendaal”. Could the Hon. Minister please inform us what will be the cost for this particular part of this project itself, the design and construction of a pump station at Liliendaal?

Mr. Holder: I am advised that the design of the Liliendaal Park is ongoing. Is that what you want to know? I can give you a break down for the rest.

Mr. Seeraj: Sir, it is stated clearly here at project profile page 70, “design and construction of pump station at Liliendaal” and there is an allocation of \$320,000,000 under this particular head.

Project code 2100700 - Flood Risk Management Project: Is the Minister saying that there will be no construction of a pump station at Liliendaal? If there is going to be a design and construction of a pump station at Liliendaal, how much of this amount will be spent on this particular project?

Mr. Holder: It is difficult to tell at this time because the project entails 1. rehabilitation of sections of the East Demerara Water Conservancy embankment, 2. hydrology and hydraulic modelling of the East Demerara Water Conservancy, 3. design and construction of pump stations at Liliendaal, 4. procurement of earth-moving equipment. This could be found in REF. 70 in Volume 3. Does this answer the question?

10.57 a.m.

Mr. Seeraj: Hon. Minister, I was reading from Volume 3 and that is why I asked a specific question that there is an allocation of \$320 million to do all the things that you mentioned. I am just trying to find out, since the Liliendaal Pump Station comes under the Mayor and City Council, how much of this \$320 million is allocated for this particular project, based on your budget?

Mr. Holder: Since I gather this is part of a new loan, the \$320 million is allocated otherwise. If the Hon. Member wishes, I can give a breakdown of how the \$320 is directly allocated. Would he wish the breakdown?

Mr. Seeraj: Through you, Sir. I will appreciate being provided with the list of the breakdown. But I will make another attempt. Is the Minister saying there is no allocation for the breakdown, for the description of the project at No. 3, as stated at project profile 70 of Volume 3?

Mr. Holder: Fifteen million dollars is allocated to commence the design.

Mr. Seeraj: Comrade Chairman, I heard the Minister saying that \$15 million has been allocated for the design. So, there will be no construction of a pump station at Liliendaal in 2019. Is that correct, Minister?

Mr. Holder: The answer is no – no construction.

Mr. Seeraj: Again, I will just like to bring to your attention that, as is stated in the document, it is provided for “design and construction of pump station”.

I will move on to project code 2407100, Land and Water Transport. An amount of \$17,069,000 is being budgeted for a vehicle. It states here, “purchase of vehicle”. This number is telling me that it might be vehicles. Could the Minister inform us of what kind of vehicle he is contemplating to purchase and where will this vehicle be assigned?

Mr. Holder: I am pleased to answer the question that Mr. Seeraj has posed. This vehicle is for the Minister of Agriculture. The vehicle that he is driving, PPP 3011, was purchased as a recondition vehicle in 2008; so it is well over 10 years. It is becoming an embarrassment to the Minister. He is having difficulties: breaking down in back-dams and parts have been falling off when coming from places in Lethem. I had to be pulled on Mandela Avenue. I think it is reasonable that, among the Ministers who need to have a good four-wheeled vehicle in this Government, it is the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Ali: I would like to draw the Minister’s attention to Volume 3, the profile for the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority, reference 75 – the total project cost. First of all, I would like to ask the Hon. Minister whether this project will come to an end. And what is the total sum that will be expended at the end of the project?

Mr. Holder: We anticipate that the project will come to an end during the course of next year, but there will be some funds that might have to rollover under retention.

Mr. Ali: Thank you very much, Minister. However, if that is the case, your total project cost is \$6,288,263,000. The amount that you will spend this year is \$2,085,931,000. Your pre-2017 cost, your 2017 cost and your 2018 cost added to your budget for 2019 will be more than your total project cost in the profile. Could you say how you accounted for that overrun?

Mr. Holder: I am advised that when it becomes necessary there is a request for a rollover. But that is not the case right now.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, it is not an issue of rollover. We understand that it is a multiyear project. The issue here is when you add up your pre-2019 cost and the 2019 budget, it is more than your total project cost. So, you have a project overrun that is not reflected in the budget. How have you dealt with this overrun?

Mr. Holder: I think that a request to finance the difference will have to be made to the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Ali: Hon. Minister, these are resources budgeted under your Ministry. These are costs that you signed off on. It is very clear here; the numbers are all here under your Ministry. The pre-2019 expenditure and the 2019 expenditure. There is a difference with that and the total project cost. How do you account for that difference?

Mr. Holder: I think that either the Hon. Member or I am confusing ourselves. A quick bit of mathematics – mental arithmetic – will show that pre-2017 there was \$1,314,073,000; in 2017, \$1,260,000,000; and in 2018, \$1,628,259,000. That gives me a total of \$4,202,332,000, which, when I add it to \$2,085,931,000, gives me \$6,288,263,000. So, personally, I do not see the overrun. But I bow to someone with a Master of Business Administration (MBA), I do not have that.

Mr. Seeraj: I would like to take the Minister to project code 4404000, Reverse Linkage Programme, Rice Improvement: There is an amount of \$30 million. The project profile, reference 73, states “two high yielding varieties and one aromatic variety” were supposed to be sourced from Malaysia. Could the Hon. Minister give us an indication of what he means by “high yielding”? What is it in terms of the actual yield potential of these varieties that he is talking about?

Mr. Holder: I am not sure of how much details he wants from me. I know that there is a reverse linkage project with the Malaysians, so that we can share our experience and our knowledge. I am sure that the Malaysians will be happy, as pointed out by Mr. Seeraj in his Budget Presentation, that on average, our yields might be higher than theirs. So, I am sure, in terms of reverse linkage, they can learn something from us.

On the other hand, is the question of variety exchange. And I am sure that they are happy to look at our ‘GRDB 15’, and they have their varieties that they want to introduce from Malaysia. They are also more advanced, being a much larger rice producer. They are capable of providing capacity building within the sector to ensure improved knowledge and development of various varieties, that is \$5 million for Region 4.

There will be the establishment of a united seed production system, so that we can have adequate seed production to ensure a sustainable rice sector to supply both international and local markets

– that is \$8 million. Then there is the development of a rice variety chain to enhance value products. That is something we need so that we can use our rice and have more by-products from our rice processing. That is another \$8 million.

And, of course, there is capacity building in certified seed production and weeding methodology and protocol, with a view to improve production; and that is \$9 million. That is basically how the funds are to be established, and we think that apart from the funds, there is the question of shared knowledge between the two countries.

Mr. Ali: Having established that we have a multiyear contract here – I am on the same profile, reference 75 - these are ongoing projects which will come to an end in 2019. Could the Hon. Minister say what percentage of the contract sum is set aside for retention payment?

Mr. Holder: It is 5%.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister, in disaggregating, say to us what sum is set aside in this allocation for retention payment?

Mr. Holder: It is 5%.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister say – and there is a serious relevance of this question – what is the sum set aside, not the percentage, for retention payment?

Mr. Holder: It depends on whether a job is completed, it is 5%. If it is not, I am not sure what... I think that the Hon. Member, having discovered that our addition works out, is trying to justify. I should be able to work out 5% as well as he can work out 5%.

Mr. Ali: On the description of the project, it states here very clearly that one of the items that will be financed is the payment of retention. Could the Hon. Minister say what sum is assigned to complete this activity in the profile that is described as payment of retention? What sum of money is set aside?

11.12 a.m.

Mr. Holder: We do not have it here. It would refer to different years, Mr. Chairman. I will lay it over when I get the information and make it available to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Ali: This expenditure is catered for here in the 2019 provision. The total project cost is \$6,288,263,000. Five percent of that should be around \$314 million. Could the Hon. Minister confirm whether the \$314,000,000 in the 2019 budgetary allocation is set aside for retention?

Mr. Holder: We are dealing with a series of projects. Some are finished and therefore retention is not relevant; some are in train and these might have retentions. We will have to give him the details; I said I will lay it over. It is a complicated computation and I do not want to be... I know the Ministers will like to speak to the television sets out there, but this Minister would not be drawn into that. I will give him the details that he requires. It will be laid over and he will get it in a timely manner.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister, in laying over the details, provide with those documents all the contracts, the dates they were signed, the amount of every contract, the retention amounts, the bid bond to ensure that it covers the period, the certificate of completion for the projects that are completed and the dates the retentions were paid on those projects?

Mr. Holder: That is noted.

Mr. Seeraj: I would like to take the Minister to project code 4404000, Reverse Linkage Programme - Rice Improvement. If he is not in possession of the information now, we would appreciate it being laid over. It is stated here in the profile, "high yielding variety." "High," means different things to different people; it is relative. Hence, I was trying to find out from the Minister what is his meaning of, "high." I would appreciate if we could be provided with that information, if not now, later.

Secondly, it is also stated here that there would be the development of a rice value chain. Could the Hon. Minister of Agriculture inform us how much will be set aside for this activity and what is envisaged under it?

Mr. Holder: When I read it out, I mentioned that \$8 million will be set aside for that aspect, the rice value chain. It enhances value-added products.

Mr. Dharamlall: In 2018, you had budgeted \$40 million for project code 4404000, Reverse Linkage Programme - Rice Improvement Programme. I noticed that you have not spent a cent in 2018 of the sum that was budgeted. Could I ask why nothing was done on this activity in 2018?

Mr. Holder: The project was signed in the last quarter of this year by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB).

Mr. Chand: Project code 1301900 - Mangrove Management: Provision for mangrove restoration. In the profile he referred to groynes at Richmond, Paradise and Triumph. Could the Minister say whether there is any other place in the country that needs restoration work, or is it only these three places that are mentioned here?

Mr. Holder: I am sure that certainly there are many other places that will need work, but we are working within the confines of our budget. Hopefully, as time goes by, we will be able to look at Essequibo, Devonshire Castle, and other areas. It is a work in progress. This does not solve all the problems with the mangroves. It is an ongoing Mangrove Restoration Project. I hope that helps the Hon. Member.

Mr. Chand: Could you advise us of two or three other critical areas that ought to receive attention?

Mr. Holder: No, those are the ones that are critical at this point in time. We are dealing with a climate change environment and things could change within the next six months to a year. So, it is an ongoing process.

Mr. Seeraj: Project code 4404100 - Technical Assistance - Support to Agriculture Sector: It is stated here that we are in the process of doing integrated crop modelling of six priority crops. Could the Hon. Minister inform this House of what those crops are?

Mr. Holder: The crops for integrated crop modelling are six priority crops. They are: pineapples, mangoes, coconuts, watermelons, plantains and pepper.

Programme 211- Ministry Administration - \$1,077,653,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 212 - Agriculture Development and Support Services - \$ 8,085,978,000

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister say to us what sum will be utilised for?

Mr. Holder: I will be pleased to, Mr. Chairman. The Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA) would receive \$700,000,000; the Guyana Marketing Corporation (GMC), \$212,014,000; the Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA), \$410,000,000; the Guyana Society for the Prevention Of Cruelty to Animals (GSPCA), \$600,000; Hope Coconut Estate, \$6,000,000; the Mahaica/Mahaicony/Abary Agriculture Development Authority (MMA\ADA), \$220,000,000; the National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI), \$1,037,364,000; the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA), \$5,500,000,000. That is a total of \$8,085,978,000.

Mr. Seeraj: I notice here it states the National Agricultural Research Institute and in other sections of the Budget I see the National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute. I am wondering if the Minister could inform me if these are the same or whether they are different agencies. That is all, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Holder: Hon. Member, you could rest assured that it is one agency; it is the same. It is a typographical error. It is the National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute.

Mr. Dharamlall: Line item 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Regarding the subvention to the MMA/ADA, Hon. Minister, under recurrent revenue of the MMA/ADA, I noticed that there is a 242% increase since 2017. It moved from \$23,475,000 to an expected \$80,177,000 in 2019. Hon. Minister, could you please state whether that is as a result of the movement of the rates from \$3,500 per acre to \$15,000? What effect did this increase have on rice production in Region 5?

Under Other Goods and Services Purchased, in 2017 it was \$22,585,000 and in 2019 it is expected to be \$55,484,000; it is a 147% increase. Could you please indicate Hon. Minister, what has caused this exorbitant increase?

Mr. Holder: Basically, we are talking about \$220 million allocation against \$170 million. It is a \$52 million increase between the two years. The increase is due to the continuous demarcation of boundaries and surveys, maintenance of drainage systems and payments of wages and salaries. That is where the increase comes. There is no connection here with the rates and the Drainage and Irrigation (D&I) charges. I am not sure how that comes in.

Programme: 212 - Agriculture Development and Support Services - \$8,085,978,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

11.27 a.m.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 212 – Agriculture Development and Support Services - \$3,423,146,000

Mr. Seeraj: Project code 1301600 - National Drainage and Irrigation Authority: Sir, I suspect that under this particular head, as is stated here, there will be the completion, construction and rehabilitation of drainage and irrigation structures. The Minister might have in his possession a list of structures and canals to be done. Would the Hon. Minister of Agriculture be so kind as to lay over to this House the list of areas where works will be carried out?

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, it is a rather long list, so I would be pleased to lay it over to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Seeraj: Similarly, Sir, under project code 1301900 – Mangrove Management: Again, could the Minister be so kind as to inform us, as on page 76 there are some areas identified, if these areas are the only areas where activities will take place as it relates to mangrove restoration?

Mr. Holder: During the course the course of next year, yes. There will be the construction of the geo-textile tube groynes at Richmond and Paradise, that is for \$45 million; the construction of the rubber groyne at Beterverwagting/Triumph is \$53,000,000; provision for monitoring and data collection \$750,000; and the procurement of furniture for the Mangrove Awareness Centre at Victoria, \$750,000, with a total of \$100 million.

Mr. Seeraj: Thank you Cde. Chairman and Minister. Project code 1302400 - Mahaica/Mahaicony/Abary: This is for the D'Edward sluice in Region 5. Could the Hon. Minister inform us if there is a completion date for his particular project?

Mr. Holder: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to inform the Hon. Member that the completion date would be the 3rd November, 2019.

Mr. Seeraj: Sir, moving on to Project code 1405500, Rural Agricultural Infrastructure Development, it is stated here in the project profile that there will be “provision for dairy farm and processing facility at President’s College”. Could the Hon. Minister inform us how much money is allocated for this particular area?

Mr. Holder: The amount budgeted for that activity is \$85 million.

Mr. Seeraj: “Provision of planting materials to selected farming groups in project area.” Sir, could the Hon. Minister of Agriculture inform us how many groups were selected to benefit from this allocation, how much is the allocation and how many persons belong to the different groups that were selected?

Mr. Holder: There are basically four project areas and I have all the details here, but if the Hon. Member could tell me exactly what he wants, I could give him full details. Extension of training by GLDA and NAREI staff would be \$4 million; the conduction of soil testing within the four project areas, \$4,300,000; the farmers’ training in housing feeding systems, recordkeeping, health, bio-management, project development and cost of production (duck, pig, sheep, goat, dairy, beef, cattle) by the Guyana Livestock Authority, 8 million.

There is a view for farmers’ training in good agricultural practices, crop cultivation, soil and water management, small scale agro-processing, and the establishment of demonstration plots by NAREI, \$8 million. The MOU for farmers’ training in agro-processing practices, products, regulations and marketing by the GMC, \$2,600,000; the establishment of coconut plots in the four areas and supply and delivery of 13,000 plants from the Hope State, \$10,500,000; supply and delivery of breeding stock cattle, swine, duck, poultry , *et cetera*, \$6,000,000, supply and delivery of planting materials, \$8,000,000; supply and delivery of small farming equipment -pipes, implements *et cetera*, \$5,000,000; training of co-operatives in management operations *et cetera*, \$1,500,000; establishment of demonstration plots in the four areas of one acre each, \$8,000,000; exchange visits to other projects, \$3,000,000; supply and delivery of four small boats and engines, \$8,000,000; and support from monitoring and evaluation, streaming computers *et cetera*, \$3,000,000; a total \$80,000,000.

Mr. Seeraj: Cde. Chairman, I had asked about the groups and how many people are in these groups? The Minister indicated that four groups were established. But my question continues as to

how many members comprise these four groups in the four different areas. As a follow-up, could the Minister inform us how these members were selected to form part of the four groups that he mentioned to benefit from the provision of planting materials?

Mr. Holder: The average is of 75 farmers to benefit from each group. It is four groups with 300 farmers benefitting, and on the question of selection, it is done within the groups. So, it is not something imposed on them.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, project code 2803000, Hinterland Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture Development Project: The legend states that there will be the establishment of an investment fund for entrepreneurial agriculturally based ventures in Regions 1 and 9. I would like to ask the Hon. Minister whether the operational modalities of the investment fund have been worked out already, and how much is set aside to be placed in this fund? In the modalities of the fund, would it be providing grants, would it be a revolving fund, or would it be high interest rate commercial-types of loans? I would be grateful for your answer.

Mr. Holder: The modalities have been worked out. It is an Institute of Private Enterprise Development (IPED) project and it is now starting disbursements. The fund will be a revolving fund and the amount would be of \$200 million.

Mr. Seeraj: Project code 1701500 – Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA): An amount of \$63,000,000 to do a number of things. The allocation provided for in 2018 is \$110 million, and the latest revised estimate of \$99 million will be spent. Could the Minister inform the House why this particular project underspent, and could he indicate at the same time how many vehicles he intends to purchase under the allocation provided for in 2019?

Mr. Holder: There are two vehicles, a heavy duty 4x4 pickup, with a fifth wheel link for Mon Repos and a heavy duty 4x4 with a fifth wheel link for Ebini in Region 10. There is a cattle trailer for Ebini in Region 10.

There is a total-mix ration feeder, which is a green approach, to ensure that the proper livestock feed is mixed with crop waste to enhance better growth by reducing post-harvest losses. There are the bio-digesters - again, a part of the green strategy. Bio-digesters are needed to generate power

from livestock manure but at the same time producing digested materials that are good for soil immobilisation. Those are for both Mon Repos and Ebini.

There is a 75 kilowatts biogas generator for Ebini; the construction of the generator hut; and a drone with high-tech accessories for mapping, analysing livestock activities especially in vulnerable flooding areas along the coast, and it is also excellent for traceability and counting livestock using a census and demarking the farm during farm certification. Generally, that is how the funds will be allocated and expended under this heading.

Mr. Dharamlall: Project code 2802900 – Sustainable Agriculture Development Project: Hon. Minister, there is supposed to be the construction of a state of the art abattoir at Onverwagt. I know this Government does not have a good record of management of things. So, I would like to ask the Minister what is envisaged in terms of the management plan of the state of the art abattoir at Onverwagt?

Mr. Holder: It is to be handled by a public/private partnership arrangement. In short, the management will be contracted out to someone whom it has already been discussed with, and who is very knowledgeable in cutting of beef and supplying proper markets.

Mr. Chairman: Two other questions.

Mr. Seeraj: Could the Hon. Minister inform this House what process was used to identify this person or company to manage this abattoir? It seems to be a done deal based on what the Minister just said.

Mr. Holder: This country is self-sufficient in beef. However, there is importation of a small amount of beef for selected areas like some of the main hotels. For example, Marriot wants a special type and cuts of beefs, and I believe some of our gold mining entities like Aurora Mining Company gets its beef from Rosignol Butchery and so on.

11.42 a.m.

We have the capabilities of supplying all of that. This is where the abattoir comes in. We need to have a proper abattoir, we need to have it managed by people of that ilk so that they would no longer have to bring in the specially cuts for these small amounts of imports. We have to do it

locally and, of course, slowly improve the question of supply and utilisation of beef, nationally. This is what is going on.

Mr. Seeraj: My question was specific. The Hon. Minister informed us that someone or a company has been identified to manage that abattoir in response to a question posed by my Hon. Colleague, Mr. Dharamlall. Three hundred million dollars has been allocated under this particular line item. Could the Minister inform us about the process which was used to identify the person or the company to manage the abattoir that will be built by Government?

Mr. Holder: I tried to explain that this is what will be used. No selection has been done. The abattoir will not be completely finished in 2019. It will be completed in 2020 so there is time. We are looking to get the kind of person... It is now a work in progress so that we could find three or four people who might be involved in this sort of thing nationally, to discuss with them and see if they are willing to take on something like this. And we will put it to tender because you will not get what you want. It is not something of moment, and we are not allocating this money to manage it tomorrow. It is the following year. During the course of that year, we will fine tune the system because we want the best possible management for it and the best possible output and value for the money spent.

Mr. Seeraj: My understanding was that this abattoir would have been finished in 2019. However, could the Minister inform us what will be total cost to construct the abattoir and how much of the \$300 million allocated in 2019 will go towards the partial completion of this abattoir in 2019?

Mr. Holder: The cost is about US\$2.5 million. It is an Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) funded project. The fund allocation: design and review fee - \$75 million, construction of meat processing centre in Region 5 - \$95 million, Training of the Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA) staff - \$55 million and strengthening of Producers' Association to enhance management - \$3 million. That, basically, covers what we are looking at apart from the construction cost.

Mr. Seeraj: Am I to understand that the total cost for the construction of this abattoir is in the sum of US\$2.5 million? If my understanding is correct, could the Minister tell us how much of this \$300 million has been allocated for works to be completed in 2019?

Mr. Holder: The answer to that question is \$95 million.

Mr. Dharamlall: Project code 2803000 – Hinterland Sustainable Agriculture Development Project: Your legend states that infrastructure to promote community resilience is one of the areas that you will focus on in 2019. I would like to ask you what is envisaged in terms of the infrastructure to promote community resilience in Regions 1 and 9 or whether it is across the country. Is it possible for you to point out locations?

Mr. Holder: The entire process revolves around two regions; Regions 1 and 9. I can elaborate further...

Mr. Dharamlall: In terms of community resilience; the infrastructure, what do you envisage those to be?

Mr. Holder: The base is still being developed. Would it be helpful to the Hon. Member if I give him what is intended?

Mr. Dharamlall: The Hon. Minister could lay it over to us.

Mr. Holder: It is rather lengthy and very detailed. You would find it very interesting, so we will lay it over to the Hon. Member as wishes.

Mr. Chand: Project code 1405500 – Rural Agricultural Infrastructure Development: The sum of \$350 million is to be spent next in 2019. The profile itemised five areas where the monies would be spent. One of them is the commencement of unformed development at Mocha, Triumph, Buxton and Ithaca. Could the Minister advise us about the nature of the proposed farming for each of the areas and could he layover to us the sum that would be spent under each head?

Mr. Holder: The project revolves around non-traditional crops. In short, it does not involve rice nor sugar. Do you want me to lay over the rest of the information to you? I have it all here and I could lay it over if you wish. I will lay it over.

Ms. Teixeira: Just one question. Project code 2803000 – Hinterland Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture Development Fund: I noticed, in Budget 2018, \$140 million was allocated for this head but only \$58,817,000 was spent. Could the Hon. Minister explain why were the funds

allocated to this project not spent in 2018 and whether the funds were returned to the Consolidated Fund?

Mr. Holder: This entire project is being funded by the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD). The business plan and negotiations with IFAD were late on both sides. It was only in the last quarter of this year that the process really got going. The project got going in the last quarter of this year because of the business plan acceptance and so on by IFAD. That is basically the reason for its tardiness. I do not think I have any funds to return to the Consolidated Fund.

Programme: 212 – Agriculture Development and Support Services - \$3,423,146,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Current Expenditure

Programme: 213 – Fisheries - \$182,192,000

Mr. Seeraj: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: The other head provided for an increase, but I notice the amounts stated remains the same. Could the Hon. Minister inform us whether he is budgeting for any increase in cost here?

Mr. Holder: We have no reason to believe that the Guyana Power and Light (GPL) Inc. would be increasing electricity rates so the activities will continue just the same.

Mr. Chand: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: The number of persons employed this year amounted to 11 and next year it will be six, a decrease by 46%. Budgeted income for this year is \$8,870,000 and next year it would be \$8.7 million. There is a big drop in the work force but is a mere drop in the allocation for income. Would the Minister provide the designations and salaries of the five persons who would remain on the job?

Mr. Holder: As I mentioned, the figures here relate to the beginning of the year so there were 11 individuals at the beginning of 2018 and there would be six individuals at the beginning of 2019. During the course of 2018, six employees were transferred to the Pensionable Establishment – two Fisheries Officers, two Turtle Explorer Device Inspectors, one Fisheries Field Assistant and that

makes the difference. During the course of next year, we expect to increase the number of people we have. I am not quite sure what the question is. Is it about increase or reduction?

Mr. Chand: I wonder if I heard the Minister correctly. I asked, specifically, for the five that will remain, their designations and their salaries for next year. If he does not have it now, can he lay it over?

Mr. Holder: The five remaining are a Turtle Explorer Device Inspector with a salary of \$101,889, Administrative Assistant with a salary of \$108,048, a Cleaner with a salary of \$60,000, a Fisheries Inspector with a salary of \$108,048 and a Fisheries Field Assistant with a salary of \$68,496.

11.57 a.m.

Mr. Chand: Cde. Chairman, certainly, the sum, if you put them together, would not workout at \$1.3 million per person per annum, and, therefore, I would like the Hon. Minister to layover the numbers that he called and the designations because I would get back to this later on at another occasion. I am figuring out that the pay per person per a year is the average of \$1.3 million.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, do you wish to answer the Hon. Member.

Mr. Holder: There is no response to that because I believe that, if the figures I give are multiplied by 12 and added up, you would get the figures that we give before, so I am not sure what is the problem.

Mr. Chand: Mr. Chairman, could the Minister layover the figures.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Hon. Minister the request is that you layover the information.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6322 – Subsidies and Contributions to Intl. Organisations – the sum of \$14,787,000 is being budgeted for the Caribbean Regional Fishery Mechanism, could the Hon. Minister advise if we are invoking any support from this organisation to help us have the ban lifted on catfish or, what we call, Gillbacker for Guyana because this is a major revenue earning area of fisheries for our country? Could the Caribbean Regional Fishery Mechanism, to which we are contributing quite a sizable amount of money annually, be used to help us remove the ban from the catfish or Gillbacker as it is known here?

Mr. Holder: Yes, it could be used to assist us in getting the ban lifted.

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Minister what mechanism we are using to try to lift the ban on the Catfish/Gillbacker coming out of Guyana? It happened about six months ago or longer. It is about US\$20 million were involved.

Mr. Holder: We are trying to fix the regulations as I am advised. The United States of America (USA) has placed a kind of ban on catfish going into the US that does not adhere to certain principles. They authorities of the USA are saying that catfish that goes in there must be caught live and transported to a processing plant live and then processed to be sent to the USA. Now, we cannot do that. Our fishes are caught in the ocean and it is immediately degutted and put it on ice and brought in, so they cannot be carried live to a processing plant. But, the USA does not want to hamper countries like ours, it, apparently, was trying to protect its internal industry and to keep all the Cambodian and Vietnamese and the larger producers. The USA has been working with us to see how it could do something so that we could continue to do what could be done to make this work.

The extent of these negotiations it is not something that the Ministry of Agriculture really is involve in because this falls under the Ministry of Public Health Food and Drug Administration, Veterinary and Public Health. So, I am caught in a funny situation in trying to update the Hon. Member of where things are at, since I am not directly *au fait* with where things are at. The Ministry of Public Health would be better equipped to respond on this matter.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you Hon. Minister. It is unfortunate because we are losing millions of US dollars because of the ban, but is the Hon. Minister working on drafting new regulations to bring us into greater compliance with the requirement of the USA?

Mr. Holder: I know that I have been personally working with the outgoing Ambassador for the USA in terms of seeing what accommodations could be made, and I think that we have been getting somewhere because, as I said, the USA's sympathy is with us. The problem is not with us. We are concerned because the fishery industry brings into Guyana about US\$70 to US\$80 million a year. Our lost from the catfish ban is US\$1.2 million, so it is a sizable amount and we would like to get it back. We are trying to see what best we could do with it. We cannot catch Hassar out in the ocean and bring it in live to a processing plant, that is not how our artisanal fishery operates,

so it is a work in progress. I cannot give the Hon. Member where we are because it is a Ministry of Public Health situation more than the Ministry of Agriculture.

Ms. Teixeira: Could I go to a different item now, line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships), \$7 million has been budgeted. Hon. Minister, based on some of the experiences of fishermen this year with the pirates and so on, what assistance is being given under this head under training to assist the fisher folks of Guyana to be better equipped to handle some the challenges they face out in the sea in terms of equipment or in training and emergencies, or assisting them with fish catching, which I do not know anything about? I am just asking, what kind of training and help are we giving the fisher folks of Guyana who go out there to face the seas under amazing challenges?

Mr. Holder: In terms of anti-piracy training, it does not quite fall under our remit. I am sure that the Minister of Public Security has been looking at that, even though piracy has been reduced, if not non-existence, at this point in time. That does not say that it might not rear its ugly head again. But generally, on line item 6302, training, it is being conducted for new staff in the Ministry, and revision for assisting staff, to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to better serve the sector and to achieve stated strategic goals, especially in the hinterland, and to implement the Arapaima Management Project. As you could see a lot of our training, recently, has been about aquaculture rather than offshore fisheries.

For sport fishing, there is a development of activities in Regions 1,7,8,9 and 10. Training and Fishery Co-op Management Committees would include the overall functioning. So, we have had training for aquaculture production in management in Region 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9 and 10, aquaponics in secondary schools in Regions 3,4,5 and 6, staff training in Brazil in Arapaima and Tambiki management and cage culture. Cage culture is more the offshore cage agreements, which are becoming very prevalent, internationally, in the ocean. There is about \$2.5 million there.

There is species identification collection, there is the update on the fishery database, there is a lot of staff training in regions, genders in the fishery sector, Artisanal and Sea bob Observer Programme, training the fishers to fill that [*inaudible*] – \$4.6 million; management of fishery co-op, Management training, best practices for small cottage industries, joint monitoring, control and surveillance for fishery staff and refresher training for 30 staff, excluding Device Inspectors, is

another \$3 million. So, in a nutshell, that is the picture of training that we plan to undertake in the coming year.

Mr. Chairman: This is the final question. Mr. Dharamlall you have the floor.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, on line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships), as well, just a little off, but I would like to find out from you in terms of the capacity of the department of fisheries. Are there reconcilable or irreconcilable challenges between the fishery sector and the drilling of oil? How would you treat with whether there are, especially, irreconcilable differences?

Mr. Holder: We, at present, only have one company doing deep sea fishing. The requirement of oil is just that a certain space around the oil well is reserved for security purposes. So, we do not see it as posing a threat, a challenge or a difficulty at this point in time. We are not sure how it would develop as 24 or 40 wells coming into being, but certainly, as it is now, there are no threats, there is no requirement. It is just that kind of zoning and I think we could live quite happy together.

Programme: 213 – Fisheries – \$182,192,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 214 – Fisheries – \$ 63,160,000

Mr. Seeraj: Project code 1201100 – Aquaculture Development: Sir, it is stated here in the project profile that, of the amount allocated –\$63.1 million, some amount of money would be going toward final payment for the boat. Could the Hon. Minister of Agriculture tell what is the total cost for this boat and how much of this \$63.1 million is going towards the final payment for this boat?

Mr. Holder: The total cost for the boat would be \$114,455,467. I think the initial payment would be done this year and when the boat is acquired, the final payment would be done next year. The contract is about to be awarded because, as we know, it has to pass through all of the tender processes. So, it is just for the contract to be awarded, the initial and final payment to be made.

Mr. Seeraj: Just for clarification, it is stated here that this would be the final payment for the boat that cost a \$114 million, I am asking of the Hon. Minister how much was paid already and how much of this \$63.1 million is going towards the final payment for the boat?

Mr. Holder: The initial payment has not yet been made. It has to come out from National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) because we know who has been awarded the contract. The sum of \$60 million is to be paid next. If you subtract \$60 million from a \$114 million that would be the initial payment that would have to be done soon as it comes out of NPTAB, which should be before the end of the year. The contract is awarded, the funds are paid over, and the boat comes next.

12.12 p.m.

Mr. Seeraj: Is the Minister saying that this award was not made as yet or that the award was made and no payments made? I am seeking a clarification, Sir.

Mr. Holder: I said the award and the first payment should be made before the end of the year. The other payment will be made when the boat comes next year. We know who it has been awarded to, we have seen that it went out to tender, we have seen what boats were available, we looked at what is best, a decision was made by the evaluators, and the what was recommended by NPTAB, which is now going through a process. Once that is done, the cheque would be paid over and then they would work on the boat to bring it next year.

Mr. Dharamlall: Project code 1201100 – Aquaculture Development: Hon. Minister, aquaculture was seen as one of the pillars of the “Jagdeo Initiative” in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). I would like to ask you, Hon. Minister, what is the current state-of-play of aquaculture in Guyana in terms of its competitiveness, in terms of investment, and in terms of production, because I do not get “the vibe” in terms of aquaculture in Guyana over the last few years?

Mr. Holder: I am not sure what project code he is referring to, but I think what he is asking for was more part of the general debate last week, when I gave the figures on the productivity of the aquaculture sector and the fisheries sector in general. The information is there, so I am not sure.

Mr. Dharamlall: Just for clarification, project code 1201100, Aquaculture Development, there is a capital expenditure on aquaculture development. I am saying that one of the pillars of the “Jagdeo Initiative” was aquaculture. I am asking the Hon. Minister, what is the current state-of-play of aquaculture in Guyana in terms of its competitiveness, viability, and in terms of investment? Have investments grown or have they investments reduced, because over the last few years aquaculture

has not been on the front burner in terms of non-traditional transformation of the economy of our country?

Mr. Holder: If he could point to the project code, which I think is what we are discussing now... but to relieve him of some of...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, did you have a project code?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Then could you repeat the project code for the Hon. Member?

Mr. Dharamlall: In the capital budget, project code 1201100, Aquaculture Development.

Mr. Holder: I am looking at all of the books, including Volume 3, and I am trying to find where the “Jagdeo Initiative” and things of that nature are but I cannot locate it.

What I can say is this, to ease the burden on the Hon. Member, \$63,160,000 is allocated to the sector in the capital budget. The boat that we discussed is \$60 million, incubators are \$1.4 million and is necessary for the breeding programme for Tambiki and Tilapia. These are aquaculture and they are all internal. Incubation of eggs require the incubators, which will improve hatchability. So, we are putting money for that. Security cameras are for better security of our operations to clear the Satyadeow Sawh Aquaculture Station. There are fish feeders for to ensure that fishes are fed frequently at the aquaculture station. There is the filtration system to be improved. Funds are being put to aquaculture and development, but, in terms of the wider debate, I am sure that I can debate with the individual when we leave here. I will give him a copy of my presentation to the National Assembly because he might have missed it.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Seeraj, yours is the last question.

Mr. Seeraj: There is only project code, 1201100, Aquaculture Development. This is a relatively small capital project here, \$63,160,00, relative to Dietary of \$5.8 billion, and travelling of \$2.4 billion in the budget. Can the Hon. Minister inform us as to where we are in terms of the process of acquiring this boat? Today is already 11th December and we have not made any payments. I do not know where this project is as it relates to the awarding of the contract and how it was awarded. I do not know if the Minister can inform us about that.

Can the Hon. Minister inform us, given the importance of this sector, whether the Ministry had requested, of the Ministry of Finance, more funds than that which was allocated under this particular project code?

Mr. Holder: We are awaiting the award, that is where we are. What more can I say?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Seeraj, do you have a follow-up on the Minister's statement? Then I will allow that, please go ahead.

Mr. Seeraj: Minister, can you tell us when the acquisition of this boat was awarded and when the tenders were received, as a follow-up? There seem to be some difficulties with the awarding of this particular contract.

Mr. Holder: I will get all of the details required and supply them to the Hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Ms. Teixeira?

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Sir. The same project code ...

Mr. Chairman: I was not giving you the floor.

Ms. Teixeira: Oh, sorry. I thought you were.

Mr. Chairman: No. I did indicate that that was the last question which Mr. Seeraj asked.

Ms. Teixeira: I did not hear that. I retract.

Programme: 213 – Fisheries - \$63,160,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, there is one other programme to consider before we take the suspension for lunch.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services - \$566,151,000

Mr. Ali: Under Staffing Details, could the Hon. Minister say whether the substantive Head of the Hydrometeorological Department has been appointed?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Ali, is there a line item? It is always helpful if we can mention the line item.

Mr. Ali: Yes, Sir. Line item 6112 - Senior Technical: Can the Hon. Minister say whether the substantive Head of the Hydrometeorological Department has been appointed? I know that there is a talented young pool there, so I just wanted to verify whether the Head has been appointed.

Mr. Holder: The current Head has apparently resigned or is abroad doing her studies. The process or appointing a replacement is on the way, and I think is being handled by the Department of Public Service. It is in process, as far as I am aware.

Mr. Ali: Line item 6112 – Senior Technical: The Minister said that there is a process on the way, but can the Hon. Minister say whether there is an acting Head, and whether that acting Head possesses the necessary qualifications and is capable of being substantively appointed as the Head of the Hydrometeorological Office?

Mr. Holder: The acting Head is extremely well qualified. In fact, he has been doing the job for the last four or five years while the other head was studying abroad for her Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). So, I really see no difficulty in the Department of Public Service doing what it has to do. It is a straightforward process to me.

Mr. Ali: It is for this very reason that I have asked the question. There is this acting Head performing the duty for four years ...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Ali, let us ask the question, because we are getting very close to identifying officers in the public service. You do not have to do that to make the question. Just ask the question, please.

Mr. Ali: What is the *humbug* of the Ministry from appointing this Head, who has been acting in the position for four years?

Mr. Holder: Hon. Minister, there is a Head in place, who is abroad studying, occupying that position. You cannot replace that person until that person abroad resigns or returns. Recently, that Head has resigned, so the situation of putting someone in her place has started. There is no one long story about it. You cannot replace someone or a fill a position which is already occupied.

Mr. Ali: Can the Hon. Minister give us a timeframe when the position will be substantively filled?

Mr. Holder: I am sure the Hon. Member could raise that matter with the Head of the Public Service Department. This Ministry does not appoint. It is outside of my authority.

Mr. Ali: I am not in Government. Can I follow the request of the Hon. Minister and ask the Department of Public Service to say then?

Mr. Chairman: That sounds like special pleading. I do not think we should do that here.

Mr. Ali: I am just following the lead from the Hon. Minister, Mr. Chairman. The Hon. Minister suggested this, and I am just a humble servant who loves to follow the direction he is granted.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Ali, the Chairman does not wish to get into this, but it seems to me that you were treading pretty close. We should spare the House of special pleadings. If you have another question to ask, please go ahead and do it.

[*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Ali, the Chairman will wait on you. Thank you.

Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services - \$566,151,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

12.27 p.m.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services - \$50,890,000

Mr. Seeraj: Project code 2100100 – Hydrometeorology: The sum of \$50,890,000 is the provision of living quarters, vehicle, equipment and upgrading of satellite system. Could the Hon. Minister of Agriculture inform us of this amount, how much has been identified to purchase a vehicle? I suspect it is one vehicle.

With regard to the provision of a vehicle, could the Hon. Minister inform us how much of this amount has been allocated for this vehicle?

Mr. Chairman: Would I be rightly saying that you have posed two questions to the Minister?

Mr. Seeraj: No, Sir. I was looking at the wrong page under the Capital Project Profile.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Holder: There is one new vehicle for the hydrometeorology service in Georgetown at a cost of \$14 million.

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Member advise what is the cost of construction of the living quarters at the Annai Meteorological Observatory? What is the timeframe for it? Will the Ministry be using the Village Council to have a contract so that the building could be built, which would create jobs for people in that village/area?

Mr. Holder: The living quarters at Annai will be \$12 million and having had approval we will then go out to tender and our policy is to have awards for people within the region. That is our normal system and I am sure that will be applied here.

Ms. Teixeira: The clarification is that generally when you talk about contractors in the region and I am specifically talking about the Amerindian Village Council which heads the area of Annai, whether the council would be given first dibs in terms of a contract because that is what is in the Budget. It states about the increase of the ceiling for the Amerindian Village Councils to be able to bid for projects within regions and within their communities. I am going back to the budget document to ask specifically, would this be applied in relation to Annai's living quarters?

Mr. Holder: I can give the Hon. Member the assurance that it is a \$12 million project and it will certainly go to the individuals in the Amerindian communities around. I really cannot say that the bare contractors in Lethem driving 93 miles up and down for a \$12 million project. Our policy is to give smaller contractors within the regions and the areas of operation. I think the Hon. Member can rest assure that her wishes will be carried out.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister say under equipment, REF: 21, in Volume 3, are we proactively looking here at acquiring equipment to give us early warnings in case of a tsunami and so on given the changing conditions that we are living in?

Mr. Chairman: I will leave the question. There is no reference to the number, but the Minister follows your question.

Mr. Holder: We are part of the hemispheric and regional early warning arrangements. As a matter of fact, in 2014, a Satellite Receiving System was required for the hydrometeorological service. This system is used to receive meteorological data and satellite images directly from the satellite. Towards the end of 2017, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration upgraded the meteorological satellite data in which images were received. We now have to upgrade our situation and it is going to cost about \$21 million to do so and this is all of it.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister say whether any resources have been set aside here in reference 86 for the implementation of the recommendations at the World Water Forum in Brasília, that I know his Office and the Parliament Office attended together and signed on to?

Mr. Holder: We are taking steps to align ourselves with decisions taken. There is no cost attached to it in the Budget.

Mr. Seeraj: The Minister informed us that \$14 million has been put aside under this line item for the vehicle. Could the Minister inform us what type of vehicle he has in mind to purchase?

Mr. Holder: It is one of those off-road land cruiser 4x4 type vehicle, because basically the vehicle is being used to monitor 200 stations across Guyana. It will be going into the boondocks, highways and byways. It has to be a very solid vehicle.

Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services - \$50,890,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we will now take the suspension and we will return at 1.20 p.m.

Assembly resumed

Sitting suspended at 12.37 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 1.45 p.m.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

Agency 25: Ministry of Business (1.47 p.m.)

Current Expenditure

Programme: 251 – Policy Development and Administration – \$284,729,000

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Could you explain the increase of contracted employees from 26 to 16 and secondly regarding the staffing details, the decrease from 57 to 55 employees?

Minister of Business [Mr. Gaskin]: The sum of the decrease of the amount contracted employees were due to employees moving to the fixed pensionable establishment. The overall decrease was due to persons retiring or leaving the job.

Mr. Hamilton: Follow-up: Could you indicate how many contracted employees moved to the fix pensionable establishment?

Mr. Gaskin: Four employees would have transitioned from contract employees to the fixed pensionable establishment.

Mr. Hamilton: Could you indicate which line item between line items 6111 and 6115 where the four employees placed?

Mr. Gaskin: The movement would have been to line item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support.

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6112 – Senior Technical: Could you also indicate to us what would have been the duties of the four additional staff members at the Ministry?

Mr. Gaskin: One is a Special Project Officer, the other one is a Business Liaison Officer and three are Economists.

Programme: 251 – Policy Development and Administration - \$284,729,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

1.51 p.m.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 251 – Policy Development and Administration - \$112,500,000

Mr. Hamilton: Project code 1214700 – Buildings: Could you indicate if the provision sought is for one building or more than one buildings?

Mr. Gaskin: The provision sought for 2019 is for two buildings.

Mr. Hamilton: Could you indicate the cost for the rehabilitation individually of the two buildings you spoke about?

Mr. Gaskin: The rehabilitation and extension of our headquarter building, the contracted sum for that was \$87,550,000 and the other building, which is a new building, we have an estimate of \$201 million. We do not have the engineer's design as yet; that is at best an estimate.

Mr. Hamilton: Follow-up: You indicated that the contract sum for the headquarters is \$87 million. Could you confirm that the \$40,934,000 to be expended in 2018 is part of that \$87 million to rehabilitate the headquarters and extend?

Mr. Gaskin: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Hamilton: Follow-up: Therefore, for the new building that we are talking about from the \$97 million about is \$50 million of that sum to be expended on the new building that you are considering erecting?

Mr. Gaskin: Yes, Sir.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 1214700: Minister, I noticed that in 2018 \$87,500,000 was allocated under this heading, but, only \$40,934,000 was spent. Could you advise why was there an under performance under this allocation?

Mr. Gaskin: Yes. The work was not proceeded as anticipated. I could only venture or guess as to why. It would appear as if the relationship between the contractor and the design and supervise consultant degenerated to a point where they are no longer getting along. They seem to have had a falling-out. I am not sure how one falls out of a professional relationship, but that seems to be what happened. I cannot explain it, but it is hampering the progress of the work much to our frustration.

Mr. Hamilton: Minister, could I query? Was this project to rehabilitate and extend your headquarters a multi-year project or not?

Mr. Gaskin: It was expected to be completed before the end of this year, 2018.

Mr. Hamilton: Follow-up: This project was to be completed in 2018. We are about to complete the year 2018 and project is not completed. You have outlined without prompting, that there is a delay by the contractor for whatever reason. Has the Ministry put in place the necessary procedures to take action against the contractor and supervisor who, as you have said for whatever reason, they are unable to complete the project for the stipulated time based on the contract?

Mr. Gaskin: Yes, Sir. We are seeking advice from both National Procurement & Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) and the Ministry of Finance on what is the most practical way forward.

Mr. Hamilton: Could you indicate to us that all the necessary bonds for the contract are in effect as we speak?

Mr. Gaskin: They are currently in effect until the end of this year.

Mr. Hamilton: Follow-up: The \$40,934,000 that was expended, could you advise us whether the contractor is in receipt of the \$40,934,000? If not, what are the sums that were made available up to this period to the contractor? In your estimation, how far in percentage terms is this project at the moment?

Mr. Gaskin: Just bear with me, Mr. Chairman. I am trying to get a precise figure.

Mr. Chairman: Very well, Minister.

Mr. Gaskin: The sum of about \$6 million was actually paid as consultancy fees. Out of this \$40,934,000, approximately \$34 million would have been paid to the contractor.

Mr. Hamilton: Follow-up: I am going now to the consultant. The \$6 million paid to the consultant, is it the total of his contract or part of the contract sum? You did not answer one of the question, which is, what percentage of the work, as we speak, has been completed?

Mr. Gaskin: The contracted sum for the consultants was \$6,300,000. The percentage of works completed I would like to request that we lay that over, because I cannot tell you exactly what percentage of the work has been completed so far.

Mr. Hamilton: Finally, the \$87,000,000 project for that building is the construction itself is \$81 million and the consultancy fee is \$6,300,000 million. Is that the case or the building to construct is \$87,000,000? Whilst I take my seat, I would advise that in the Officers you are seeking advice from I would hope that you also consider the Attorney General Chambers to deal with the contractors.

Mr. Gaskin: The construction of the building is \$87 million, and the consultancy fees is in addition to the \$87 million.

Mr. Hamilton: Minister, help me out here. When we started off, I got the impression based on what you said that we had a contract for \$87 million, but at the time there were no consideration in our conversation about a consultant. The project, you said, is \$87 plus \$6 million which is \$93 million. When we started we were discussing the \$87 million. Could you point me as regard to budgeted sum for 2018 to the sum budgeted to pay the consultant?

2.06 p.m.

Mr. Gaskin: One has to consider that out of the contracted sum for the building, there would have been a retention amount that would have been paid in 2019. This amount that is seen here of \$87,550,000 was budgeted for the payments due in 2018 for both the contractor and the consultant.

Mr. Hamilton: We are now discussing a project that did not commence, based on what the Minister just said. This project did not commence in 2018 as I thought. This project commenced in 2017 and some moneys were already paid over to both consultants and contractor in 2017 of the \$24,400,000.

Mr. Gaskin: The Hon. Member is correct. The first payment to the consultant as well as the mobilisation payment to the contractor were made at the end of 2017.

Programme: 251 Policy Development and Administration - 112,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 252 –Business Development, Support and Promotion - \$741,113,000

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: In the era of bringing an end to contracted employees I noted that you had increased from four to nine. Could you indicate the skillset of the five persons? Could you indicate what the salary ranges are?

Mr. Gaskin: The skillset and salary of the five additional contracted workers are as follow: one Head of Scrap Metal Unit - \$350,000 per month, one Legal Officer - \$270,000 per month, one Senior Scrap Metal Officer - \$254,281 per month, one Chief Scrap Metal Inspector - \$195,614 per month, and one Scrap Metal Officer - \$140,000 per month.

Mr. Hamilton: Minister, could you indicate to us whether the five staff that you named, would they will be paid from the general fund of the Ministry or from the Scrap Metal Fund, as I understand that they have, which is outside of the budgetary allocation for the Ministry?

Mr. Gaskin: These staff members will be paid from the Ministry of Business's appropriation for programme: 252 under line item 6116- Contracted Employees.

Mr. Hamilton: Could you confirm or indicate to us, what is the present state of plea regarding the Scrap Metal Unit as you indicated? Secondly, the exportation of scrap metal. Thirdly, the proceeds coming from this activity, how would it be treated within the Ministry?

Mr. Gaskin: 'State of plea' is a very broad term, I am not sure that I can satisfy the Hon. Member's question. In terms of exporting, currently scrap metal is being exported. The members of staff are currently employed, and they are dedicated specifically for regulating and handling aspects of the scrap metal trade.

In terms of the proceeds of what the Hon. Member refers to as the scrap metal fund, those moneys will be remitted to the Consolidated Fund at the end of every year. We do anticipate bringing legislation to this House sometime next year to have the unit established under an Act. When that time comes perhaps the funds might be handled differently. As of now, money are transferred to the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contribution to Local Organisations: The budgeted sum for 2018 and revised 2018 is \$545,332,000. I noted that in 2019, you are requesting \$605 million. Could you indicate what is responsible for the increase?

Mr. Gaskin: The various agencies funded under that line item are the Guyana National Bureau of Standards, Guyana Office for Investment (Go-Invest), and the Small Business Bureau. Each of the three agencies had their budgets increased this year. I can perhaps provide a breakdown so that the Hon. Member can see for himself which of the agencies have had the biggest increase. The Guyana National Bureau of Standards budget increased from \$182 million in 2018 to \$213 million on 2019. The budget for Go-Invest increased from \$216 million in 2018 to \$222 million in 2019. The Small Business Bureau's budget increased from \$146 million in 2018 to \$170 million in 2019.

Mr. Hamilton: Correct me if I am wrong. Firstly, when you did the calculation the \$605 million requested does not cover the three entities. Could you indicate the other agencies that are to receive subvention and how much?

Mr. Gaskin: Perhaps, the Hon. Gentleman would like to check back his arithmetic. I calculated \$213 million plus \$222 million plus \$170 million and when I add them up I am getting \$605 million.

Mr. Hamilton: I do not want to query with the Minister about that, but I am sure that it is not \$605 million when the three numbers are added. I am sure about it. Two plus two is four and seven it is equal to eleven. You would not have a five at the end, you would have one. Let me find out, regarding the \$170 million for the Small Business Bureau, does that cater for salaries for the staff and loans or the loans to be granted by the Small Business Bureau outside of this \$170 million? If that is the case where can that be located in your Budget request?

Mr. Gaskin: Once again, I am adding up these numbers for the second time and I will repeat \$213 million, plus \$222 million, plus \$170 million, is equal to \$605 million. I do not know if someone in this House has a calculator that can spare us all this agony. If the Hon. Member is insisting that it does not add up and to me it is adding up.

To answer the question posed by the Hon. Gentleman whether or not this sum of \$170 million allocated in 2019 includes loans or grants, \$10 million of that amount is allocated to grants under the Small Business Bureau with the Green Innovation Fund.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6321 - Subsidies and Contribution to Local Organisations: Minister, the agencies that are described here and the allocations for 2019, Guyana National Bureau of

Standards, Guyana Office for Investments and Guyana Small Business Council and Bureau, are the Boards in place for these three statutory bodies? And if they are not, could you explain why? If they are, could you advise when will they expire?

2.21 p.m.

Mr. Gaskin: All of the boards or councils are in place for each of these three entities. The Board of the Guyana Office for Investment (GO-Invest) comes to an end at the end of 2019. The Council of the Guyana National Bureau of Standards also expires at the end of 2019. And the life of the Small Business Council comes to an end sometime in the middle of next year, around June or July of 2019.

Mr. Hamilton: Minister, you indicated that from the \$170 million, \$10 million goes to grants, and that means \$160 million goes to issues that have to do with staffing – paying salaries, wages and whatever. The question you did not answer for me is on the Small Business Bureau. And correct me if I am wrong. Does it also give loans, or does it only give grants or loans and grants? If the Small Business Bureau gives loans and grants to small businesses, could you indicate to me where the other funding can be located in the budget for the loans? It is because you said that the \$10 million is for grants and that means that the \$160 million is for staffing.

Mr. Gaskin: Just to start with the conclusion of the honourable Gentleman. The budget request is for \$170 million and I did say that \$10 million of that is for a grant programme. But that does not mean that the remaining \$160 million is for staffing. I think that that conclusion is flawed. The loans that the honourable Gentleman is inquiring about, there was a grant loan and training scheme known as the Micro and Small Enterprise Development (MSED) programme, which came to an end in October of this year – at least the first phase of that programme came to an end. Under that programme, US\$5 million fund was used for the disbursement of grants. It was used to fund training and administrative aspects of the programme. It was also used for a loan guarantee and an interest subsidy scheme. So, the loans were actually issued by the banks and the funds were used to guarantee the loans – a collateral guarantee - as an interest subsidy. I do not know if that answers the question put by the Hon. Member.

Mr. Hamilton: Could you indicate what has happened to the loan programme? Because I want to believe that the loan guarantee period would not have been for six months or 12 months. I am sure

that there are persons whose loans were guaranteed who are still paying to the bank. The question is, what is the status of that programme/project at the moment? How many beneficiaries? What are the loan sums still outstanding from the beneficiaries? And do you plan to continue that effort, and, if so, do you plan to continue it the way it was structured under the US\$5 million programme?

The other issue is, you indicated that I went ahead of myself and said that the \$160 million would be used only on staff. Could you indicate the other activities, categorise them and indicate the sums to be utilised on the activities and the staffing, from the \$160 million?

Mr. Gaskin: I can provide a report to this House. I can circulate it, within 24 hours, with the complete amount of how many loans were disbursed. Mr. Chairman, we can give the exact figures if you bear with me for two minutes.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the Minister will be back with us shortly.

Mr. Gaskin: While they are getting the actual figures for me, I will answer the last two questions. Do we plan to continue this programme? Yes, we do. We have requested phase two of the programme. That is subject to a review of the first phase of the programme. In the interim, we do have funding in our capital budget, which we will come to shortly, to continue the programme, more or less in the same form - grants, interest subsidies and training to small businesses.

The final question was what are the other activities that make up the \$170 million, and those are as follows: total employment cost, \$37,741,662; materials, equipment and supplies, \$4,921,878; fuel and lubricants, \$1,134,861; rental and maintenance of building, \$14,972,392; transport, travel and postage, \$7,920,000; utility charges, \$11,104,000; other goods and services purchased, including security services, \$17,961,069; equipment maintenance, \$772,000; cleaning and extermination services, \$180,000; other goods and services purchased, \$4,199,337; other operating expenses such as in-school entrepreneurship programmes, \$5 million; another programme similar to that for tertiary institutions, \$1,500,000; a green-tech innovation fund, \$10 million; sponsorship of various activities, \$5 million; work on the small business reform agenda, \$1,500,000; small business award ceremony, \$2 million; stipends for members of the council, \$1,116,000; funding for health desks, \$7,200,000; the 20% procurement programme, \$800,000; and grants, \$10 million. Also, there is the education subventions and training, \$18,644,000.

Unfortunately, the figures are not yet at hand, so we will have to submit and circulate them to the House.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Minister, thank you very much for indicating that you will make those documents available in 24 hours. You indicated that part of the sum is \$800,000, to deal with the 20% procurement for small businesses. Could you advise us on how you plan to utilise that, in what form, to put in place the new act that the Minister is to amend?

Mr. Gaskin: The \$800,000 is not the entire amount that is going to be spent on the small business procurement programme; it is just the amount that is going to be spent under that particular heading. That is going to be used for public awareness, to advertise the programme and to advertise for businesses to register under the programme.

Mr. Hamilton: Minister, you indicated that the \$800,000 is not the only amount to be utilised on the 20% procurement programme. Could you advise us on what the total sum is to be utilised on that specific project or programme in 2019?

Mr. Gaskin: That amount is subsumed under many of these headings including employment cost *et cetera*. I can tell you, specifically, that under training, the amount for education subvention and training is \$18,644,000; \$3 million of that is going to be allocated to training for the small business procurement programme. But, in many of the other headings, you will find that parts of the small business procurement programme or activities related to that programme are funded.

Mr. Gaskin: May I be allowed to circulate the information that I said I would? I think it would be easier for us all since there would be less paper wasted.

2.36 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Please, proceed Minister.

Mr. Gaskin: The Hon. Member, asked how many loans were disbursed under the MSED programme; the disbursement started in 2014, and as I said, it came to an end in October of this year. During that period, 222 loans were disbursed for the sum of US\$3,680,700 and 559 grants were issued for the sum of \$171 million.

Programme: 252 - Business Development, Support and Promotion - \$741,113,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 252 - Business Development, Support and Promotion - \$ 1,014,475,000

Mr. Hamilton: Project code 4403100 - National Quality Infrastructure: Minister, if you look at 2018, \$2 million was budgeted. You have indicated that the latest estimate of expenditure that you have is \$182,070,000. Could you indicate if by the end of the year the \$200 million would be utilised? The other question is on the International Development Bank's (IDB's) loan, "Provision for export diversification interventions." Could you advise us whether the \$300 million is the total of the loan in question? Is our local contribution the sum of \$60 million?

Mr. Gaskin: The \$300 million referred to by the Hon. Member, is not the total of the loan. The loan amount for this project is approximately US\$9 million. The question on the amount spent by the end of this year... This is a loan, and, the way the project is structured, moneys are transferred to the account. There is an account set up to administer the loan fund. This \$182,070,000, is what is expected to be transferred by the end of this year. The actual amount spent as of now, or to be spent by the end of this year, is closer to \$90 million. The last question was on the amount of local funding and that amount is \$60 million.

Mr. Hamilton: Minister, you indicated that the \$182,070,000 we are looking at is what was transferred to the special account, and the last estimate that you have is about \$90 million expenditure. Could you advise us if the \$182,070,000 that was transferred would be utilised by the end of the year, if not, how much do you project would be utilised? The other issue is, could you identify for us what services or benefits might not be given to citizens because of the failure of utilising \$92 million of the \$182,070,000 that was transferred?

Mr. Gaskin: This is a multi-year project and it is scheduled to be concluded by the 31st December, 2022. The last time I checked, we were still on schedule to conclude within that timeframe. So, in terms of not having spent moneys that were allocated for this year and benefits lost to the people of this country, no benefits were lost because we are still on track to conclude the project within its specified timeframe. The amount likely to be spent by the end of this year, as I have said, is

about \$90 million. That was the last estimate which I received. I am not sure if there was another question between the mini-presentation. I think that I have answered two questions; if there is another question please remind me.

Mr. Hamilton: Minister, the project as conceptualised, could you indicate to us what is the intent and likely outputs by the time it concludes in 2022?

Mr. Gaskin: I covered this extensively in my Budget presentation. I am not sure whether...

Mr. Hamilton: I am dealing with the Estimates of Expenditures.

Mr. Gaskin: Yes, but you are asking me to repeat information provided in an earlier presentation.

Mr. Hamilton: Yes.

Mr. Gaskin: This is leading me to believe that the honourable Gentleman was not paying attention. There are three components to the project; one is institutional strengthening and strengthening of the National Network of Laboratories. The second component is the construction of a modern laboratory for the Guyana Nation Bureau of Standards (GNBS). The third component of the project is the development of a National Export Promotion Strategy and a National Investment Strategy. There are some additional improvements to the investment framework of the Guyana Office for Investment. The idea behind the project is to diversify Guyana's exports by strengthening or enhancing our ability to do testing, provide certification, and improve the overall capacity of all the local laboratories through accreditation *et cetera*. That is coupled, as I mentioned earlier, with an investment and export strategy. We are creating capacity when it comes to testing and certifying exports; we are coupling that with an export strategy and we are also creating an investment strategy that will complement the export strategy. That is the intention of the project.

Mr. Hamilton: Minister, could I ask if you have a concept document on the project which you could lay over to the National Assembly? Secondly, do you have strategy papers based on all the strategies that you outlined which you could lay over to the National Assembly?

Mr. Gaskin: Yes, I can certainly share a concept document with this National Assembly. I thank the Hon. Member for his interest, though I am not sure what he means by strategy papers.

Currently, the consultancies for the National Investment Strategy and National Export Strategies are still being... They were advertised, and I believe procurement of those consultancies are still taking place. I am not sure whether it has concluded yet. *[Interruption]* It is now being finalised. Perhaps I can share with the Hon. Member the terms of reference (TOR) for those consultancies, if that will assist him in understanding the intention of the consultancies and what the deliverables are. I will share those two documents.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 4503300 - Industrial Development: Minister, the 2018 allocation was \$350 million, however, according to the books we have in front of us, \$542,949,000 was spent. Could you say how did the additional moneys come to this allocation when there was no supplementary provision sought in the House? Could you please advise us how you were able to go \$192,949,000 over the allocation for Industrial Development in 2018? That is the first part.

Mr. Gaskin: I am happy to remind the Hon. Member that a supplementary provision was brought to this House. The Member did question me on the Supplementary Provision. That Supplementary Provision was for \$192,000,000, and it was approved by this House less than six weeks ago.

Ms. Teixeira: Having reminded me, could you say how you have spent that large quantity of money in such a short period of time? As you said, you came for a supplementary provision, and according to the Estimates of the Public Sector for the year 2019, this money has been expended. Could you say what this money has been spent on in such a short time? It was a supplementary provision that only came a short while ago.

Mr. Gaskin: When the Supplementary Provision was brought here on 30th October, we went through what was expected to be funded by the sums that were approved. That money was to have been expended as follows: construction works in...

2.51 p.m.

Ms. Teixeira: I am not asking a theoretical question. According to the books we have in front of us the money was expended. My question is how?

Mr. Gaskin: Mr. Chairman, I am still on the floor. I have not completed my response. And I am being interrupted by the Hon. Member before I can respond.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, you have asked a question, just let the question be answered.

Mr. Gaskin: First of all, the question is based on a flawed premise. The flawed premise is that the sum indicated in the Estimates here, has been spent. [Ms. Teixeira: That is what the

Minister said.] No. The Hon. Minister Jordan went to great pains yesterday morning to inform this House that the revised budget or latest estimate as it states here... It actually states in this capital budget, "latest estimate." It represents the latest estimate of how much was to be spent by the end of the year. It is an estimate and that is a key word in this whole issue. So, the latest estimate which would have been submitted sometime in October was that we would have spent \$542 million but we had only requested \$350 million which had been approved. So, we asked for a supplementary of a \$192 million and I am now about to share with the Hon. Member what that money was requested for. I can report on how it was spent so far and maybe provide a further 'latest estimate' as to how much might be spent before the end of this year.

So, Mr. Chairman, if you will allow me, I will go through the items for which this money was requested. It had to do with the construction of the Lethem Industrial Estate in two lots, one for \$50,934,000 and the other lot was for \$30,402,000. There were some additional works that were undertaken which were expected to cost approximately \$35 million. Then there was payment for the Lethem incubator which was another \$32 million; payment for the Belvedere incubator which was another \$28 million; and then there were some consultancy fees with respect to the Lethem Industrial Estate for a total of approximately \$15 million.

Now, of those moneys, what has been spent so far is \$24 million out of the \$50 million requested for Lot 1 of the Lethem Industrial Estate. It is not expected that any more will be spent because there are some defects that have not yet been rectified. And we are not expecting an invoice to be submitted and paid, even if it is rectified before the end of the year. Out of the other lot, \$36 million has been spent.

Additionally, for the Belvedere incubator the entire amount of \$28 million that we budgeted for has been expended - for the consultancy at Lethem \$1,900,000 has been spent and an additional \$11 million is likely to be paid before the end of this year. I am told there is another \$39 million that is expected to be spent before the end of this year.

But to answer the question or to get to the crux of the matter there will be a short fall of about... I am told the amount is around \$80 million that would not be spent before the end of this year.

Mr. Chairman: After Ms. Teixeira two more questions.

Ms. Teixeira: On the same head, the budgeted amount was \$350 million, and you came for a supplementary of \$192 million. You have accounted for approximately \$120 million of the supplementary that you came for. Therefore, our math is similar, about \$80 million you are returning. But you have not advised on the usage of the \$350 million which was originally allocated for your Ministry under this head. What of the \$350 million was or was not used that caused a request for additional funds, a supplementary of \$192 million. So, I am asking how much of the original sum of \$350 million was spent, because you came for a supplementary of \$192 million to bring it to a total of \$542 million. You just accounted that you expended or expect to expend approximately a \$120 million and have a balance of \$80 million that would be unspent. I am saying that that covers the \$192 million that you came for as supplementary. Could you go back to the original allocation for your Ministry of \$350 million and say how much of that was spent for 2018?

Mr. Gaskin: Mr. Chairman, that entire amount was spent which is why we came for a supplementary. Originally, our request to the Ministry of Finance was for somewhere around \$600 million and at the time it was felt that we might not be able to spend that amount so \$350 million was allocated and we spent that money. That is why we came for a supplementary. I am now reporting of that supplementary approximately \$80 million may not be spent and that is the latest estimate.

Ms. Teixeira: I am asking how the \$350 million was spent. Under the budget estimates we can ask about expenditures. So, I am asking, of the \$350 million originally allocated to your Ministry under Industrial Development, how was it spent? I am not doubting you that it was not spent or was spent. I am asking you how it was spent.

Mr. Gaskin: Mr. Chairman, it was spent on two contracts for the Lethem Industrial Estate as well as two other contracts for the incubators at Lethem Industrial Estate and the Belvedere Industrial Estate, respectively, as well as consultancy fees for the design and supervision of all of those contracts. If the Hon. Member, wishes the exact amount expended on each of those contracts, the

sums can be provided. But those contracts would have been signed in 2016; they are multiyear contracts. I would have to get a very precise question if the Hon. Member wants to know exactly how much was spent on each of those contracts for the year 2018. We will make a note of that and provide that specific information to the Hon. Member. But I need to hear from the Hon. Member what precisely she wants.

Ms. Teixeira: I would like to see the expenditure of the Industrial Development for the year 2018, and if there is a variation of contracts, which it looks like, I would like to be able to review that. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: One question remains.

Mr. Hamilton: Minister, could you indicate to us when both the Lethem and Belvedere Industrial Estates project will be concluded and when would both of the industrial estates likely to be operational with the incubators and all the other paraphernalia?

Mr. Gaskin: As I indicated in my budget presentation we expect to start receiving applications for the plots on both of the estates by January, 2019, by which time we should have a prospectus prepared with investor guidelines *et cetera*. The actual works on both the incubators and the physical works to the industrial estates should be concluded before the middle of next year. Therefore, we anticipate we could start... We will start the processing of applications, as I said, January or February of next year, and we look forward to granting the first leases by the middle of next year.

Programme: 252 - Business Development Support and Promotion - \$1,014,475 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 253 – Consumer Protection - \$100,657,000

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Mr. Chairman, under line item 6284 - Other: There is a sum of \$4 million allocated here. Could the Hon. Minister say what are the items listed under this line item?

Mr. Gaskin: One of the items is for the creation of an application to do consumer surveys and to raise consumer awareness. It also caters for short message service (SMS) consumer messaging tips along with radio and television programmes. That is what that sum is for.

3.06 p.m.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Mr. Chairman, line item 6291 – National and Other Events: A sum of \$2.4 million has been budgeted, could the Hon. Minister say what are the national and other events that would be catered for under this line item?

Mr. Gaskin: This caters for the participation in World Consumer Rights day and various expositions what are attended by the Department of Consumer Protection as well as student awareness campaign to raise consumer rights and issues among students.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Line item 6302 - Training including scholarships: There is a sum of \$100 million allocated to this area. Could the Hon. Minister say what scholarships would be granted and who would be the beneficiaries?

Mr. Gaskin: I wish it was \$100 million but it is only \$100,000. This is for the training of staff in data analysis, fundamentals of communication and supervisory management and that is to improve efficiency in job performance.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Line item 6321: Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: There is an allocated sum here of \$80.5 million and when you look at the break down in the details it states that \$80 million is for contributions to the Competition and Consumers Affairs Commission while \$500,000 is allocated to the Guyana Consumers Association. Could the Hon. Minister say what is this Commission all about and who are the persons that make up the Commission?

Mr. Gaskin: The Competition and Consumers Affairs Commission is a statutory body that implements our Competition and Fair-Trading Act as well as our Consumers Affairs Act. Basically, the Commission is involved in two general areas of work: competition and consumers affairs.

The Commission has its office in the Sophia Exhibition Centre and it has a staff complement of 15 persons. It is overseen by four Commissioners which is equivalent to an Oversight Board. I am

not sure what further information I could provide but if the Hon. Member has specific questions I would be happy to answer them.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Could the Hon. Minister say when was this Commission constituted?

Mr. Gaskin: The Commission was constituted in 2012.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: As I said earlier, out of this amount, there is a \$500,000 which is allocated to the Guyana Consumers Association. Could the Hon. Minister say if there is a need for national awareness and the importance of consumer protection in the Oil and Gas Sector as it relates to consumers protection?

Mr. Gaskin: I would venture the answer “yes” to both questions.

Mr. Hamilton: Follow up on line item 6321: Hon. Minister, could you indicate to us whether the tenure of the Commissioners is for a specific period or for life?

Mr. Gaskin: They are appointed for one year like most Boards. However, they can be appointed for two years, but certainly not for life.

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Minister, you indicated earlier to my Colleague that the four Commissioners, and correct me if I am wrong, are the same persons who were Commissioners from 2012?

Mr. Gaskin: No, Mr. Chairman.

Programme: 253 – Consumer Protection - \$100,657,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 253 – Consumer Protection - \$5,500,000

Programme: 253 – Consumer Protection - \$5,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 254 – Tourism Development and Promotion - \$395,136,000

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Line item 6291 – National and Other Event: There is a sum of \$35,350,000 budgeted, could the Hon. Minister say what are the events and the sums allocated to each event?

Mr. Gaskin: Bird in Tourism - \$1 million; Sports Fishing - \$1 million; Cultural Heritage Tourism - \$3 million; Regional Tourism Development Strategy to support Tourism Flagship Projects in all 10 regions - \$10 million; Sports Tourism - \$4 million; Mashramani Celebrations - \$1 million; Easter Celebrations - \$500,000; Phagwah Celebrations - \$500,000; Bartica Easter Regatta - \$650,000; Rupununi Rodeo - \$650,000; Wedding Destination Tourism - \$500,000; Independence Celebrations - \$700,000; Arrival Day - \$300,000; Linden Town Week and Exposition - \$500,000; Caribbean Premiere League Cricket - \$1 million; Bartica Summer Regatta - \$250,000; Wakenaam Night - \$250,000; Moruka Exposition - \$250,000; Emancipation Day Celebrations - \$500,000; Jamzone Summer Break - \$500,000; Caribbean and International Motor Racing Championship - \$1 million; King's Duck Curry Competition - \$500,000; Merai's Yachting Rally - \$200,000; Lake Mainstay summer Regatta - \$300,000; Rupununi Music and Arts Festival - \$300,000; Diwali Celebrations - \$200,000; Tourism Awareness Month - \$5 million; Youman Nabi - \$200,000; Annual Christmas Tree Light Up - \$500,000; and Department Christmas Treat (hosting of appreciation lunch) - \$100,000.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: The Hon. Minister, in giving the details of the events and the sums allocated, stated that there was an allocation of \$4 million for Sports Tourism, could the Hon. Minister say what Sports Tourism will entail?

Mr. Gaskin: It is to support various types of sports tourism activities and not for one particular occasion. There are various sports activities whether it is football, swimming, Inter-Guiana Games or whatever would bring people to this country that are supported by the Department of Tourism.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: The Hon. Minister mentioned various types of sports. My follow-up question is: how does Guyana stand to benefit, revenue wise, as it relates to these various types of sports? Who will be the tourists and the places that we are seeking to attract?

Mr. Gaskin: If we only look back a few weeks, we would realise that during the recently concluded Women's T-20 World Cup Cricket Tournament, all of our hotels were full. Sports tourism is very real and it does benefit our economy. We cannot deny it and we need to increase public awareness. This is what this Budget is intended to do; it is to host workshops also on various

activities designed to promote the awareness that Sports Tourism is real and tangible and needs to be supported.

Mr. Hamilton: I noted that you budgeted \$284 million for 2018 and the revised figure is saying that you would expend that, I suppose. Could you indicate to us why the increase and say what organisations would benefit and the sum to be given to each of them?

Commented [LJ1]:

Mr. Gaskin: This entire amount is going towards the annual subvention for the Guyana Tourism Authority. The increase has to do with the hiring of a new Director, increase in salaries across the boards as well as some addition activities in the area of product development.

3.21 p.m.

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6322 – Subsidies and Contributions to Intl. Organisations: Could you advise why the increase from \$17 million to \$21 million?

Mr. Gaskin: This amount represents the annual fees paid to the Caribbean Tourism Organisation. The annual fees are actually based on the volume of visitor's arrivals. So as visitor's arrival increase, the fee tends to increase.

Programme: 254 – Tourism Development and Promotion – \$395,136,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 254 – Tourism Development and Promotion - \$3,550,000

Programme: 254 – Tourism Development and Promotion – \$3,550,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates. (3.24 p.m.)

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I thank you for your assistance in this matter. We would allow for a few minutes for a change over and then we would consider Agency 26: Ministry of Natural Resources.

The Hon. Member, Ms. Simona Broomes, would you be treating with agency 26 – the Ministry of Natural Resources?

Minister within the Ministry of Natural Resources [Ms. Charles-Broomes]: Yes, Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Agency 26: Ministry of Natural Resources (3.26 p.m.)

Current Expenditure

Programme: 261 – Policy Development and Administration – \$ 346,751,000

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Lumumba, you wished the floor, you have it sir.

Mr. Lumumba: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: In 2018, \$147,677,000 was set aside for the Ministry. I notice for 2019, there has been a reduction and it is now \$122,126,000, could the dear Hon. Ministry explain to me what is the reason behind the reduction?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: It is, as of the result, that students and scholarships which were under the Ministry are now seconded to various agencies, for example, the Forestry Commission and the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC), so that is why there is a decrease there. Thank you.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I noticed in 2018, 36 persons are employed and in 2019, you are only catering for 23; could the Hon. Minister tell us why we have this drop of about 40%?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: It is the same question that I just answered. This caters for the students who came back from scholarship to the Ministry of Natural Resources and are now placed at the various agencies which fall under the Ministry.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, do you have another question?

Mr. Neendkumar: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Please proceed.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6115 – Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled: In 2018, there were four persons and in 2019, there would eight persons. Then I noticed that, in 2018, \$2,582,000 was

budgeted \$4,759,000 was spent. Could the Hon. Minister tell me why the extra money was spent and from where was it obtained?

Mr. Chairman: Did you mention the line item?

Mr. Neendkumar: *Yea yea yea.*

Mr. Chairman: No, Hon. Member.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6115 – Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, It is not *yea yea yea*. I know with music that would be fine, but we are in Parliament.

Mr. Neendkumar: Okay, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Charles-Broomes: The students from the Public Service College are now employed, so they are being paid through the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Mr. Neendkumar: Could the Hon. Minister tell us the designations of these four extra persons and the salary that they would be getting?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: The salary is \$65,000. This information is here and could be provided to the House.

Mr. Dharamlall: Line item 6322 – Subsidies and Contributions to Intl. Organisations: I am aware that this allotment goes to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). I would like to ask the Hon. Minister a few questions on the EITI. Firstly, is the Guyana chapter of EITI, a Government led or driven or is it an independent non-governmental organization (NGO) type organisation? I have some follow-up questions, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Charles-Broomes: Hon. Member, the EITI is Government – NGO - private sector and it is being driven by the Government.

Mr. Dharamlall: The Guyana EITI was supposed to provide some management of our natural resources in the extractive sector specifically, and the reconciliation report that has to be provided [*inaudible*] ...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you should move to the question rather rapidly.

Mr. Dharamlall: The Guyana EITI, through the coordinator, published, on the 1st August, 2018, that it was awaiting the no-objection of Cabinet on the procurement of some United Kingdom (UK) firm, Moore and Stephens, to conduct the reconciliation report for Guyana which has to be submitted in April of next year. My question to you Hon. Minister, is whether the Government of Guyana paying for the reconciliation report to be done through this multi-stakeholder's group called Guyana EITI and is Cabinet still involved, since the Coordinator said it was awaiting the no-objection from the Cabinet? Is Cabinet still involved in the procurement of goods and services? I would quote for you if you want, Mr. Chairman, the...

Ms. Charles-Broomes: No. The Cabinet had just given its no-objection to the consultant and this project is ongoing. We just hired a consultant and the report is due and it would be in for next year.

Mr. Dharamlall: As a follow-up, Hon. Minister, what is the cost of the contract to the UK firm – Moore and Stephens – to conduct the reconciliation report?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: It is an 18 months consultancy and the sum is \$28,942,830.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings: There is a new budgetary allocation of \$20,160,000, could the Hon. Minister tell us what building is being rented, what is the rate of rental, where is the building located and what activity is being accommodated in the building?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: The building is at Lot 55 Main Street and sum is \$7,980 per a month.

Mr. Nandlall: Is it in United State (US) dollars?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: Yes, it is US dollars. The advertisement was in the newspapers. Hon. Member, through the Chair, we were occupying the building at the GGMC and now the EITI is there and parts of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Mr. Lumumba: Line item 6284 – Other: I notice that \$55 million has been set aside for “Others”, could the Hon. Minister please tell me what items are listed under “Other”?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: Could you please give me the line item again?

Mr. Lumumba: It is line item 6284, sorry.

Ms. Charles-Broomes: Under this line item we cater for security guards paid to GEB Security Service, equipment, cleaning of the compound...Cevon's Waste Management, Rentokil, and other charges here such as advertisement, design and printing, printing of badges, *et cetera*. Hon. Member, I do have it here all written and broken down. If you so wish I can also give it to you.

3.36 p.m.

Mr. Lumumba: Could the Hon. Minister provide the same items and the list of costs for 2018 also?

Mr. Chairman: Do you wish the Minister to provide those?

Mr. Lumumba: May the Minister answer?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: Your question is noted, and I will provide, as far as I can, the information for 2018. But, definitely, for 2019, it is in full and, of course, you will get same.

Mr. Nandlall: If I may briefly return to line item 6241, I did not clearly get from the Minister what activities are being accommodated in the building, so I am asking that question again.

And, then I want to move to line item 6281, Security Services. The allocation has moved from \$13 million to \$19 million for 2019. I would like an explanation from the Minister as to what may have accounted for this sizable increase in budgetary allocation, the building or buildings or properties that are being secured, and the contractor that is providing the security services.

Ms. Charles-Broomes: Hon. Member, at the Main Street building, there are persons from the Compliance Division, there is the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and there are also some projects that fall under the Ministry. So, that building will be fully utilised by the Ministry of Natural Resources to provide services to all Guyanese.

For the security service, the reason being is because the building was located in the compound of GGMC and, of course, GGMC used to pay for that security service. As of 2019, the Ministry of Natural Resources has to pay for that security service, so that is the reason for that inflation.

Mr. Nandlall: That additional sum of \$7 million is for that Main Street property, which is part of the answer. The other part of the question relates to the name of the service provider.

Ms. Charles-Broomes: The name of the security company, as I said, is the GEB Security Services Inc.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence: In 2018, \$4 million was budgeted and it was revised in 2018 to \$5 million. I notice, in 2019, that you are budgeting for \$10 million, could you advise this House about the reasons for the increase doubling the 2018 amount in 2019? Could you explain that to the House?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: In 2019, and I did mention, also, in the presentation, that there will be increased monitoring since we will be looking at the environment and the phasing out of mercury, *et cetera*. I think we all would appreciate that the cost to get into these locations are expensive, and so that is the reason for the increase in 2019.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Under line item 6265, Other Transport, Travel and Postage, I noticed that there is an increase in the 2019 allocation. Could the Minister tell us, of the \$7,300,000, what portion is for local travel?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: All of it is for local travel. It is just \$1 million increase, Hon. Member. I did give a similar explanation. This is because of inflation in different things, but all is for local travel.

Mr. Lumumba: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): Could the Minister give a short outline or description of who will be trained, what the purpose is, and how it is advertised?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: This training is a training of syndicates workshop. It is more policy administration driven, and so we intend to have a lot of training as it relates to mercury and what are the different uses, workshops, and things like that. That is to cover the cost.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Lumumba, do you have a follow-up question?

Mr. Lumumba: Yes, Mr. Chairman. The issuing of scholarships, can you tell me about that?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: That is done through the public services guidelines that the issuing of scholarships are facilitated.

Mr. Lumumba: Does the Ministry pay for it or does the Department of Public Service?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: If the Department of Public Service has a scholarship and recommends some funding from the Ministry of Natural Resources. Sure. But, all scholarships are dealt with through the Department of Public Service.

Mr. Lumumba: The item here lists scholarships, so I am assuming that if a scholarship comes under the GGMC, the GGMC will pay. What I am trying to understand is whether you advertise or whether they are open scholarships or whether they are just for staff.

Ms. Charles-Broomes: I did not mention the GGMC; the GGMC is separate. We might have here for staff, through the Department of Public Service. That department advertise and then we can give support in that regard.

Mr. Lumumba: A follow-up question: Do you provide training for non-syndicate miners, like small miners? If so, could you say what kind of training do you provide?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: There is a possibility there. We will know, as the need arises, what the different level of training is. It is definitely not only for syndicates, but if there is someone from the Guyana Gold and Diamond Miners Association (GGDMA) or the Guyana Women Miners Association, definitely it is something that we will look at.

Mr. Dharamlall: Going back to line item 6284, Other. In 2017 it was \$3,849,000, and in 2019 it is budgeted at \$55,000,000. Going back to an earlier presentation of hers, security a part of this \$55 million, as well as some print and non-print, for example badges. I am asking the Minister whether this is an anomaly or whether this is a slush fund of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Ms. Charles-Broomes: Hon. Member, no it is not a slush fund. I did mention that we have a full breakdown here: administrator for the EITI at \$5 million; the hosting of events, and so on. There is a whole break down here and I can assure you, Hon. Member, that it is not a slush fund.

Mr. Dharamlall: The Ministry is already spending \$19,952,000 on security. I am asking the Hon. Minister whether it is an anomaly that security is also paid for in this \$55 million and under Print and Non-Print Materials, there is already have \$5,250,000. Are badges also an anomaly under Other, because both are not supposed to be there?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: There is no security paid for under the line item that was mentioned. If I mentioned that security was paid for then it ought to have been an error. Sorry, there is no security service that is paid for from under here. I apologise. I have the document here that I can layover.

Programme: 261 – Policy Development and Administration - \$346,751,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 261- Policy Development and Administration - \$437,000,000

Mr. Dharamlall: Under the Forest Carbon Partnership Project, project code 3402600, there is a budget of \$400 million in 2019 called “specific,” meaning foreign. A part of the description of what has to happen in 2019 includes:

“Design and implementation of pilot projects in areas including agriculture, forestry, mining and infrastructure ...”

Have you, Hon. Minister, yet determined the geographic locations of these pilot projects? What are the criteria that would have been used to select these areas and what allocations have been made to the different areas of the pilot project?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: This is a foreign-funded project. This programme, the Forest Carbon Partnership Project, has a board with a steering committee and with the National Tosaos Council (NTC) and so on. At this time, they will meet and decide, and then target the strategic areas where they will be working on in this year.

Mr. Lumumba: Project code 3402600: The budgeted item was \$120 million, and \$253 million was spent in 2018. We would like to know the reasons for this increase and who gave the authorisation, since it was an International Development Bank (IDB) project.

Ms. Charles-Broomes: Hon. Member, this supplementary was sought just a few weeks ago in this House and all reasons were given. Again, if you would so like to have this information, it is here and I can definitely give to you.

Mr. Lumumba: The request for 2019 is \$400 million. Could the Minister please outline why this vast increase, and could she itemise the specifics of the project that accumulated to \$400 million? If she does not have the information now, we can get it tomorrow, but if you have it now, you can tell us about it.

3.51 p.m.

Ms. Charles-Broomes: I do have the information here and I can give it to you. I should mention also that the supplementary was sought, because this project performed well, and also this project is coming to an end, December of next year.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Project code 4404500 – Forest Inventory Study: I heard the Minister said, just now, that the Forest Carbon Partnership Project performed well and that is the reason for the \$400 million. I noticed that the project code which I just outlined, relates to forest inventory study. In 2018, \$50 million was budgeted and there is a revised sum of \$50 million. I suspected that that project also was successful. Could the Minister now tell us what additional work or what percentage of this study is completed?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: This is a multiyear project. This money is under Capital Expenditure and the \$35 million we are seeking to have here now is to procure an, All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV), a Geographic Information System (GIS) software, a desktop computer, and a motor vehicle.

Mr. Dharamlall: Project code 3402600 – Forest Carbon Partnership Project: Guyana's readiness preparation proposal. I think we have embarked on this process since 2008, and a readiness fund and a carbon fund were part of our outcomes. Hon. Minister, could I ask you, what is the current status of both the readiness fund and the carbon fund?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: The Forestry Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) has made an application with the Guyana Forestry Commission to the World Bank for funding for the continuation of the project.

Mr. Dharamlall: Have we made application, Hon. Minister? Just for clarification, were we not supposed to set up a readiness fund and a carbon fund? What is the current status in terms of resources or in terms of us garnering resources for these mechanisms?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: That was being done, Hon. Member. You rightfully said that you knew all about that project and it was not successful. Currently, the Ministry of Natural Resources has taken it over along with the Guyana Forestry Commission and we are looking to get this funding from the World Bank. We are hoping that it will be very successful. If you so wish Hon. Member Dharamlall, I will keep you abreast and inform you so that maybe we can all partner on this project in ensuring that it is very successful this time.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I am still interested in the question that I asked at project code 440500, Forestry Inventory Study. What percentage of the forest inventory study was completed? Would the targets be met by of 2020 when the study is supposed to be finished?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: One hundred percent was completed which represents 30% of the project.

Mr. Dharamlall: Project code 3402600 – Forest Carbon Partnership Project, a clarification from the Hon. Minister. The Minister said the project has failed. I do not know which project the Minister referred to and that the Ministry is now engaged in. Which project is the Hon. Minister speaking about?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, could you shed further light on the question that Mr. Dharamlall asked?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: If the word “failed”, well then, I would say it was not successful and I would provide you with all the necessary information as it relates to this project.

Mr. Nandlall: Project code 4404500 – Forestry Inventory Study: We have here an allocation of \$35 million and the Legend reads:

“Provision for forestry inventory study.”

I heard the Hon. Minister explaining to us that they are buying an ATV and a motor vehicle under this provision. Might I ask for a breakdown of how much of this money is actually going to do the Forestry Inventory Study and how much is going to be spent on acquiring assets, vehicles and is it proper under this Legend to buy vehicles? It states clearly:

“Provision for forestry inventory study”

Ms. Charles-Broomes: This is Current and Capital Expenditure. What I am dealing here with is Capital Expenditure and when we move to Programme 2 under Current Expenditure more of this information will be provided. I do have a list of the vehicles that I said will be bought with the sum of \$35 million which I can give to you and these are a double cap pickup, an ATV, a desktop computer, and a Geographic Information System (GIS) software.

Mr. Nandlall: Is the Minister telling us then that the Legend which we are examining here is highly inaccurate? Is it that the \$35 million would not be largely spent on Forestry Inventory Study, but possibly land transportation and other things? Could you confirm that? I would like the list and how much money will actually be spent, if any money at all, on forest inventory study?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: This money will be spent to buy these vehicles to support the same study. Under Current Expenditure, in Programme 2, you will hear more about the details of the study, but that equipment is for the same study because in order to execute this study, you would have to go in the fields, you would have to get the GIS software and the ATVs. This study, Hon. Member, is not a study that will be done in Georgetown. It is a study that involves field activities, so we have to complement them.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Nandlall, do you have a question?

Mr. Nandlall: No, Sir.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Could the Hon. Minister explain to this House a little more about the Forestry Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPS)? Could the Hon. Minister say what are the agencies or who is working with this project? What place or what activity has been funded this project?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, is there a line item that you would like to make reference to? It would be helpful.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Yes, Sir. It is project code 3402600 – Forest Carbon Partnership Project.

Ms. Charles-Broomes: The Hon. Member knows of this Programme because the Member attended a workshop at Le Meridian Pegasus Hotel. I have all of the information here to give to you Hon. Member where the National Toshao Council (NTC) strengthening of capacity for the

Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) Project. All of the information is here, and I will be happy to answer the Hon. Member and give her the information.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we do not have to shout across to one another. It is question time. People can ask questions. Any Member can ask a question. We can do that. Just ask a question. Rise and indicate that you want to have a question and ask it.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Sir, I asked a question and I am quite sure a number of persons do not understand all about the FCPF. I would like the Hon. Minister to say what are some of the programmes and projects that are ongoing under the FCPF project. I would just like the Hon. Minister to know that that project was before 2016, so please answer the question. What are the programmes and projects that are taking place presently under the FCPF?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: That is why I mentioned that the Hon. Member knows the project. Hon. Member, this is to support the establishment of the functioning of the REDD Secretariat, provide institutional strengthening and capacity building for the National REDD + Working Group (NRWG) inclusive of the National Toshao Council (NTC) and the Indigenous Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), to develop communication and outreach materials, and to conduct national consultation and outreach activities *et cetera*. So, Hon. Member, this is what the project entails. It goes on. I do have it here and I would give it to you, so you can have all the breakdowns just in case.

Programme: 261 – Policy Development and Administration - \$437,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Lumumba, you are standing, and I am not even finished setting out the question. I shall recognise and ask you to speak first. Hon. Member. Please resume your seat.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 262 – Natural Resources Management - \$526,520,000

4.06 p.m.

Mr. Lumumba: Thank you, Sir. To the Hon. Minister, I have noticed line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: In 2018 - 31 contracted employees, in 2019 - 49 contracted employees. You have lost a sizable section of your Ministry to the Department of Energy, yet, your contracted employees have increased from 31 to 49. Could you please explain?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: Hon. Member Lumumba, you are right, the Department of Energy is not under this programme. In this programme we talk natural resources and the increase of staff is because of the Core of Wardens. All of the Core of Warden employees are contracted workers. There is a fullness and the salary scale here. The Director who has the highest salary is \$447,000. The second highest salary is \$312,148. A complete list is here, and this is for the Core of Warden.

Mr. Lumumba: We would appreciate if the Minister could distribute that list to us.

Ms. Charles-Broomes: Definitely, Hon. Member, I will hand it over to you.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6284 – Other: We have here a budgetary allocation of \$82 million for 2018 and that jumps to \$251,100,000 in 2019. Firstly, might I ask the Minister for an explanation as to, what is this budgetary allocation about? It is under the rubric of other; it is absolutely vague. Then, Sir, I will take some other questions.

Ms. Charles-Broomes: This is the phase two - \$244 million which is for the forest inventory. We have the Mining Regulation - \$2 million, consultancy - \$1,100,000, and advertisement - \$2 million.

Mr. Nandlall: The Minister mentioned an item for which there was a substantial budgetary allocation in this breakdown. Could you repeat that Minister? I did not get the first item that you said?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: The second phase of that forest inventory is \$244 million. This inventory is at a phase where we are going into actual implementation of this phase two.

Mr. Nandlall: How much is that did you say?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: It is \$244 million.

Mr. Nandlall: Could you give us a breakdown of what that implementation entails? How \$244 million will actually be spent? We need some clarity. It is a huge bulk of money and we are being

given a very generic explanation that does not assist me in understanding how this money is being channelled out. If you could assist me, I would be most grateful.

Ms. Charles-Broomes: The explanation is through Guyana Forestry Commission, we would be looking at zoning of the forest. Meaning that the Guyana Forestry Commission will be going to look at all the types of species that we have, where they are, even with the wildlife, and how do we zone them. It is an extensive project, very robust, but it is about tagging and labelling.

It is just as I mentioned in my Budget presentation about mapping of the forest to determine exactly which species are where and the quantity and things of that sort. The full proposal of how it would be done and all of that, all the communities that it would be taking place in, could be handed over, through you, Mr. Chairman, for the Hon. Member.

I think, Hon. Member the information is useful, and I thank you for the question because it is a big project and I would love to have all of us on the same page with it in terms of transparency. Definitely we could give you all the information and the breakdown for that project.

Mr. Nandlall: I would be most grateful.

Mr. Dharamlall: Line item 6284 – Other: In the capital profile of the inventory it states in terms of capital spending it is \$624 million. Are you saying that in addition to the \$624 million we have an additional under current for \$244 million for the forest inventory study?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: Last year it was \$50 million and this year it is \$35 million for the capital, in which I give the breakdown. This is the current expenditure which we are talking about the implementation of the programme. It is the same information that I will layover to the house so that you could get it too, Hon. Member.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, just for clarification purposes, in the capital profile of the forest inventory study, it says that the total project cost is \$624 million. I am asking the Hon. Minister, is the additional sums on current expenditure are an addition to the \$624 million, or is it a part of the \$624 million? This is capital expenditure, so it cannot be a part. It has to be \$624 million plus the current expenditure.

Ms. Charles-Broomes: The current expenditure is current expenditure, and capital expenditure is capital expenditure. I do not understand how we are putting capital expenditure with the current expenditure. I do not know if I am clear, but I did also mention that this project is something that will be running up to 2022.

Mr. Dharamlall: It does not matter.

Ms. Charles-Broomes: I am speaking about what is before me, Hon. Member. I will provide you with the information, Hon. Member.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6284, - Other: Could the Hon. Minister tell this House, what is the total of the forest inventory study, for both current expenditure and capital expenditure in the multi-year project? What is the estimated sum? Secondly, who is undertaking the study? Thirdly, what process was used to engage who is undertaking the study?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: The Ministry of Natural Resources with the Guyana Forestry Commission will be managing this programme. It received the blessings of the Cabinet and the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board.

You asked the other part of the question as to how much money it will entail in all, which will be US\$4 million estimated at this stage. Hon. Member, you would appreciate that we are going through it by phases. As we get there more information will be provided.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister answer the part of the question of, who is undertaking the study? Since the Hon. Member indicated that the Guyana Forestry Commission is a part of it, could the Minister indicate is there any funds from the extra budgetary agency, the Guyana Forestry Commission, has been engaged in financing this study?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: I think I missed the line item for the Hon. Member, if you could give me the line item. I did mention that it is the Ministry of Natural Resources through the Guyana Forestry Commission. I did also give the information that this is something that went through the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board process and it received also the blessings of the Cabinet.

Bishop Edghill: I have asked specifically for the Minister to tell the House, who is undertaking this study? The Minister said that this is being undertaken through the Guyana Forestry Commission. If this study is being undertaken through the Guyana Forestry Commission Sir, then this money should have gone as a Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisation. Under line item 6284 – Other, it has to be a consultancy or a project where persons are engaged and being paid. Could the Hon. Minister tell us, who is undertaking this study and specifically if the Guyana Forestry Commission is providing any counterpart financing for this study?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: This is something that was requested by the Guyana Manufacturing and Services Association (GMSA). I did mention that we went through the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board. It is a project.

The field works will be done by the Guyana Forestry Commission. Who is going to carry it out? It is the Guyana Forestry Commission. Did it go through the procurement procedure? Hon. Member, it went through the procurement procedure, it is a project, and it is driven because of the foresters.

This will enhance and allow us to support the foresters in the sector by having accurate information to provide at all level, be it foreign investors, local foresters, the Forest Association, it is something that will definitely benefit. Also, the information I would like to bring here, it will also provide information to the wildlife.

Bishop Edghill: We are not asking all of that. I asked a simple question.

Ms. Charles-Broomes: I am trying, through you Mr. Chairman, to provide as much information as possible to give all the clarity that is needed. Thank you.

Bishop Edghill: Follow-up: The Minister said that this study would be undertaken by the Guyana Forestry Commission. Could the Minister confirm that this sum of \$244 million would be transferred to the Guyana Forestry Commission for the undertaking of this study?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: I did mention that. The field work will be taken with the Ministry of Natural Resources, it will go out to tender, and we will be in collaboration. I said I have all the information here to provide, because I keep saying one thing over and over.

Mr. Lumumba: Mr. Chairman, the Minister is telling us *nancy* story. If 30% of the work has been done, there had to be a contractor. What the Hon. Member Bishop Edghill is asking the Member is, who are the contractors and how was the person awarded?

4.21 p.m.

They had to be contracted, because a jumbie could not have done this work. It had to be a contractor, who is the contractor and how was the contractor selected?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: I am happy that this is Government funding and I want to provide all of the information. However, as a Minister I am providing this information and I am not here to tell a *nancy* story. I am giving all of the information that is here. I said before that all of the information you so require under this project will be handed over to you. All of it. I have read out parts of it. I cannot answer all of the questions to how you might want to, but Hon. Member, I am answering your question. It is not a *nancy* story. I will give you all of it. That is all the Hon. Member is saying to you through Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6284 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister tell the House, who was the \$82 million in 2018 was paid to under the current expenditure of this project?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: I am dealing with the 2019, but Hon. Member, the information for 2018, I do not have it here. I can lay it over in the House.

Bishop Edghill: This is my final question. Could the Hon. Minister confirm that the Tender Board of the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board awarded the contract for the Forest Inventory Study to the Guyana Forestry Commission and agency that falls under the Ministry of Natural Resources?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: I was advised that this went thought the procurement procedure and received the blessings of the Cabinet. Thank you.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, you said that this went through the procurement process. The procurement process in addition to the inception for the conception will also include public advertisement. Are you saying that the Ministry of Natural Resources went to an opened public

advertisement and the Guyana Forestry Commission submitted a bid to conduct the Forest Inventory Study?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: Hon. Member, I am saying that the Ministry of Natural Resources through all the procurement measures procured the Guyana Forestry Commission and again, I thought this would have been a project that everyone would have been happy about. However, Hon. Dharamlall, I did mention before that I will provide all the information to this House through you Mr. Chairman as it relates to this programme.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I would like to direct your attention to Appendix T at page 629, Guyana Forestry Commission. I would like to indicate to you that nowhere in Appendix T for 2018 or 2019 with the sums referred to by the Minister included in these accounts or reflected for 2019, any sums. The \$244 million is reflected in any transfer or accounting in the Guyana Forestry Commission. Nowhere in Appendix T for 2018 or 2019 is there an allocation for the Guyana Forestry Commission to receive from Central Government, Ministry of Natural Resources \$244 million and \$82 million. Could the Minister explain how the Guyana Forestry Commission is executing a contract and how is the funding being provided?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: The Estimates that I have here before me, I am dealing with the \$244 million in which we are seeking to have. I have never mentioned about what was transferred and where it was transferred. This money falls under the line item in which we are looking to have this done in 2019. I will repeat myself again, all of the information to give clarity in whatever area will be provided. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: I will allow two more questions, then I am going to put the question. Hon. Member, you have one of the questions.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I referred to Appendix T. There are two ways in which a Statutory Body could receive funds from Central Government. It is by Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations or Capital Grants from Central Government. Under Subsidies and Contributions from Central Government 2018 - Nil and 2019 - Nil. Under Capital Grants from Central Government 2018 - Nil and 2019 - Nil. Could the Hon. Minister tell us, how did this transaction between an Agency that falls under the Ministry of Natural Resources will be concluded? How will the Guyana Forestry Commission receive this money to carry out this contract? Sir, the

Guyana Forestry Commission provided a Report to the National Assembly, which is what I just read from.

Ms. Charles-Broomes: Hon. Member, I thank you for all of the information that you have just provided. Again, as I said this information will be laid over. Thank you.

Mr. Dharamlall: Line item 6261- Local Travel and Subsistence: In 2017, you spent \$900,000 on Local Travel and Subsistence, in 2018 you spent \$2,500,000, in 2019 you are requesting \$10 million. My calculator tried to do the percentages and I ended up with an error. The increase is so much. Hon. Minister, I would like to ask you, what has caused this monumental increase in your movement over the course of one year?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: Yes. Indeed, Hon. Member, from \$2,500,000 to \$10 million. I did make mention that this year we will be having more robust inspection. We have the Core of Wardens will be out in the field. Though you Mr. Chairman, roughly a flight to Imbaimadai is \$700,000. We know how our Geographic's are in this country when it comes to the extractive industry. Some of these places you cannot get there only by plane. Through you Mr. Chairman, to get to some of these locations, in some cases, it is more expensive than even getting to Trinidad & Tobago or Barbados. Hon. Member, this increase is just the sum that we asked for to traverse, do more inspections, and to provide better service to the Minors in the fields.

Programme: 262 – Natural Resource Management- \$526,520,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 262 –Natural Resource Management - \$135,972,000

Mr. Neendkumar: Project code 1219400 - Buildings: I noticed that you have a sum here of \$100,277,000 for the construction of warden stations and boat house. Could the Minister give us some details about how it is going about, is it being tendered out for, and where would this boat house be built?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: Hon. Member, indeed it is to provide 12 rooms accommodation for the Core of Wardens in the boat house. One of the stations will be established at Omai area, which

will be able to service the Essequibo and the Potaro area, and one is at Bartica servicing the Mazaruni district four and six area, Upper Cuyuni. There are two stations are stationed there. The boat house will be stationed at Bartica. There is where they will have the boat and so forth because they will be traversing Bartica as the hub.

Mr. Neendkumar: Could the Hon. Minister tell us; how much money would be spent for the construction of the Warden Station at Bartica? How much would be spent for the boat house at Bartica?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: There is an engineer estimate that the boat house will be \$600,947,000, one of the warden stations for \$48 million, and the other for \$45,280,000. The difference is because of the location, the one at Omai as against the one in the middle of Cuyuni/Mazaruni area. Thank you.

Mr. Dharamlall: Project code 1219400 - Buildings: Could you please share with us the dimensions of the warden stations and what material they would be made out of?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: I am advised that the size is a prefab that they will be setting up including living and office space. The complete design as specific of the size can be laid over to you. I do not have the size here. I have all of the other information. We do have the drawing here, but you know that I am not the architect, so I am going to lay over that part of the information to you. Thank you.

Mr. Dharamlall: Project code 2406800 - Land Transport: Hon. Minister, how many vehicles are being procured and for which department?

Ms. Charles-Broomes: It is an eleven-seater vehicle and a pickup for the Core of Wardens.

Programme: 262 –Natural Resource Management- \$135,972,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates. [4.36 p.m.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we will now take the suspension to enable us to refresh ourselves.

Assembly resumed

Sitting suspended at 4.36 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 5.32 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, there is an announcement I wish to make. It concerns the progress of our work for the next two days. It has been agreed between representatives of both the Government and the Opposition that tomorrow Wednesday, 12th December, 2018 we will treat with Regions 1, 8, 9, 2 and 3 in that order. Hon. Members, it may be wise, if you wish or consider it so, to make a note of these changes; they will not be provided to you in any other way.

And on Thursday, 13th December, 2018 we will consider Regions 4, 5, 6, 7 and 10. This is only for the two days. Those changes have been agreed between the parties who normally agree to these changes. I thank you very much.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I hate to contradict, but I am afraid that I am not aware of this. I do not know, maybe someone else on the Opposition spoke with the Government, but this has not been discussed with me by the Government.

[Mr. Chairman in aside with the Clerk.]

Mr. Speaker: If these matters, which I have just announced, are not matters which find agreement among Members, let me, first of all, assure you, it is not a figment of my imagination nor the imagination of any other person who assists me in my work. I would say nothing more, except to say that I have announced it to you. And if per chance at the end of the day, or before that, these matters seem to be the ones to take place, in the ensuing two days, then they will be so. If not, we have before us a certain printed document and that can guide our work. Thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: I am not casting aspersions, whatsoever, on yourself or your staff. I am just saying that...

Mr. Speaker: There is no need to say that. Proceed with whatever you wish to say. But it could not be that.

Ms. Teixeira: I just want to say that I am not aware of this. If it is the view of the House that this is the way they wish to move, in this direction, I have no objections. But I just wanted to put on record that I am not aware that there has been any discussion with me, by anyone in the Government, on this issue. Sorry, about that.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member for her observations. We will proceed in the way in which we are going now.

Minister of Public Infrastructure [Mr. Patterson]: Just to inform you, I think that I would have sent you a note saying that there are two Ministers here and we will be addressing... I know that Minister Ferguson will be addressing 13 of the capital items. I think I have her notes that I would have sent to you.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, you were kind enough to send me a note. What I would suggest is that when these matters are being taken, it would be quite in order for it to be indicated to me whether you are taking the matter or the Minister in your Ministry.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you, Sir. I will be so guided.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply

Agency 32: Ministry of Public Infrastructure [5.33 p.m.]

Current Expenditure

Programme: 321 – Policy Development and Administration – \$4,534,559,000

Bishop Edghill: I would like to refer to line item 6231, Fuel and Lubricants and to ask a question on this. Maybe at the same time the Minister can answer on a number of other line items. Could the Minister indicate if the sums stated in the revised columns are sums already expended? If they are not expended, how could he be so precise that the exact \$10 million would be utilised? That would have recurred in a number of other line items that I do not wish to name at this time. So, he could probably explain the principle that was applied in arriving at these numbers.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is this to be taken by you?

Mr. Patterson: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Very good.

Mr. Patterson: Is it line item 6321?

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6231.

Mr. Patterson: Is it Fuel and Lubricants?

Bishop Edghill: Yes.

Mr. Patterson: Hon. Member, this is the sum to be expended this year. Is there another question? The increase is it?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I asked a specific question and I used line item 6231, Fuel and Lubricants; budgeted for 2018, \$10 million and the revised, \$10 million. The specific question I asked was, are these sums already expended or is this a forecast to the end of the year? If this is a forecast to the end of the year, like a number of other line items that would have had the exact figures – precise numbers – could the Minister tell this House what was the criteria used to arrive at the numbers?

Mr. Patterson: This is the sum to be expended to the end of the year, and under this programme, I have been advised this is the computation, the forecast by Ministry of Finance, and we will adhere to it. We will ensure that we spend exactly as is listed here.

Bishop Edghill: Under line item 6272, Electricity Charges, these are precise numbers. The Minister was budgeted \$48 million, the revised is \$48 million and the budget for next year is \$48 million. Electricity is by consumption. Could the Hon. Minister tell us the criteria used to arrive at these precise numbers?

Mr. Patterson: This is what we have estimated that we will spend at the end of the year.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: There is a subsidy of \$166,304,000 that is going to the Berbice Bridge Company Incorporated (BBCI). Could the Hon. Minister tell the House what the purpose of this subsidy is at this time? And I have a number of follow-up questions on the Berbice Bridge.

Mr. Patterson: In January, 2016, in accordance with a commitment that this Government made, we signed and entered into an agreement with the Berbice Bridge Company Inc. to provide a subsidy to the toll to the residents of Regions 6 and 5. This line item has been here since 2016. The subsidy will continue in 2019 to the exact sum that the Hon. Member mentioned. Thank you.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister tell this House who or what agency is currently managing the Berbice Bridge Company Inc. and the tolls collected from the Berbice Bridge, and which fund is the tolls deposited into?

5.48 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: The Berbice Bridge Company Inc. continues to manage the operations of the bridge. All tolls collected are deposited to whatever account that company so wishes. All the expenses and revenues collected by the Berbice Bridge Company Inc., continues to be collected by the company. The Government of Guyana collects no money from the Berbice Bridge Company Inc. at the moment.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister tell this House, based upon the request by the Berbice Bridge Company Inc. for an increase in tolls which was not granted, what is the estimated loss of revenues that will accrue to the Berbice Bridge Company Inc. now under the control of the Government? We are still under line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. I did indicate that under this line item I will be asking a number of questions.
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Patterson: This line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, deals with subsidised tolls and that is my remit to respond to. The question is not related to the line item in our Estimates of Expenditures.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, to say that I disagree with the Minister, the Berbice Bridge Company Inc. is making a call on the Budget, which is why the figures are here. We are talking about subsidised tolls. If the Government is subsidising tolls to a particular extent...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member ...

Bishop Edghill: Yes, I am asking the question, Sir. The Minister said it is not relevant, so I am establishing relevance.

Mr. Chairman: I will allow you for a while.

Bishop Edghill: The Berbice Bridge is currently, by an announcement made in this House by the Minister...

Mr. Chairman: Let me say this, I am willing to allow you to make a few remarks leading to a question. What I am not willing for you to do is to make a speech. You are going there, Hon. Member. I could see it and I am asking you to get close to the question and then to ask it.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you, Sir. In light of the statement made by this Minister in this National Assembly, as it relates to the Government's position on the Berbice Bridge, could the Hon. Minister tell this House who will be absorbing the debt that would accrue as a result of the action taken? That is under line item line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, is it line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations or line item 6221?

Bishop Edghill: It is line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Patterson: As I said, the line item is for the subsidised toll which is \$166,304,000. That is what my answer will be in relation to, what is in the Estimates of Expenditures.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, could the Hon. Minister indicate if the current level of subsidy, stated here as \$166,304,000, is adequate to deal with the circumstances as it relates to the Berbice Bridge at this time?

Mr. Patterson: There is an agreement with the Berbice Bridge Company Inc. for this level of subsidy; it is \$300 for cars and \$10% for all other vehicles. That equates to \$166,304,000 and that is what I am addressing to this National Assembly.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, Community Power, a sum of \$374,826,000 was budgeted and is in the Revised sum for 2018. The same is budgeted for 2019. Could the Hon. Minister tell this House if this is adequate for the supply of community power in Kwakwani, bearing in mind that there has been electricity rationing in the community?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, this is the sum that has been allocated and it has been adequate thus far; so, yes.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, could the Hon. Minister tell this House if, at this level of subsidy, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure is making arrangements to ensure that the citizens of Kwakwani return to 24 hours electricity in their community?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, this subsidy listed here caters for 24 hours electricity in Kwakwani.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I would like to follow up on the same line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, Community Power for Kwakwani. Could the Minister confirm to this House that the inability of the residents to receive 24 hours electricity had nothing to do with engine failure but the shortage of fuel? If this money is for the purchase of fuel, how would their sufferings be alleviated with this same level of contribution for 2019?

Mr. Patterson: This allocation is for 2019; it is not only for fuel but there are also other costs. The Kwakwani Utilities Incorporated (KUI), is in charge of not only electricity but water, sanitation and all the utilities in Kwakwani. This money here caters for that for 24 hours in 2019. It is adequate, Sir.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I would like to follow-up. Could the Hon. Minister tell the House from this allocation of \$\$374,826,000, how much is allocated for the purchase of fuel for power generation in Kwakwani?

Mr. Patterson: I will gladly provide it to the honourable Gentleman, in a short order. I will lay it over, Sir.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, Transport and Harbours Department, \$430 million was budgeted and spent in 2018, and \$44 million is budgeted for in 2019. Could the Hon. Minister tell this House, how many staff is currently employed at the Transport and Harbours Department, and has there been any move to downsize or right size at this Department?

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman for the question. It is 457 able-bodied seamen and women and other persons who give yeoman service. There are no plans for any downsizing of this agency. The Hon. Member could be reassured that the current complement of staff remains.

Bishop Edghill: On the same line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, Support for Port Kaituma Power & Light Company Incorporated, Mathews Ridge Power & Light Company Incorporated, Moruca Power & Light Company Incorporated, Mahdia Power & Light Company Incorporated and Mabaruma Power Company: Could the Hon. Minister tell us about the expansion of these communities, the growth in consumers and how these entities would continue to supply adequate electricity at the same amounts that are allocated from 2018 into 2019, with the exception of Mahdia Power & Light Company Inc. which has had a \$3 million increase?

Mr. Patterson: The subsidies for these entities are purely for fuel. Under Capital Expenditure, the Hon. Member can see where expansions and cost for expansion works will be addressed. This is for fuel subsidies to these entities.

Mr. Ali: Line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings: There is an allocation of \$ 199,769,000 and there was no allocation in 2018. Could the Hon. Minister say which buildings would be rented for this huge sum, how many buildings and what necessitated the rentals of them?

Mr. Patterson: This is one complex in Duke Street. It is the E. M. Grant International Business Centre. It is the building immediately south of the Embassy of the United States of America (USA). It is to house all the offices of the United Nations (UN). To give a complete answer, the United Nations entity in Guyana at the moment has six offices: The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). For all of these we are obligated to provide rentals. They have expanded and there has been a requirement and a wish for them to have one consolidated complex, so this rental is for them. The requirement, I think, is for over 200 persons combined. They are increasing; for every protocol we sign, every agreement and every mission, we have to add more space.

Mr. Ali: The average monthly cost that we are looking at here is \$16.7 million. Could the Hon. Minister say what was the total rental paid for all of these agencies prior to this arrangement? And how did you arrive at this building? Did you go to tender? When did you go to tender to arrive at this facility?

6.03 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, three out of four of the buildings that the United Nations (UN) agencies are in belongs to the Government. So, we do not pay rental for them. We pay rental for three buildings and that comes up in total to \$81 million at the end of the year. We made no changes because this is what was there prior our ascending to office. The process of selecting the house is done primarily by the UN agencies because they had several requirements including security, which was their prime requirement. They did a shortlist and obviously the Ministry did a structural assessment and things like that. So, the recommendations were made by the UN and we approved of it and it is now included here for the National Assembly's approval.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, the United Nations recommendation has nothing to do with affordability by a Government. We are talking about the difference in rental of almost \$11 million per month. They were using Government's buildings. How can the Minister justify the use of this additional resource when we had adequate facilities, owned by the Government? The Minister said that they had a shortlist, how did they arrive at the shortlist? Was there a public tender so that persons could have expressed interest? Once the public funds are utilised for any project it has to follow the established rules and guidelines which are in the Procurement Act. So, if the Minister had a shortlist, how did he arrive at the shortlist?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I never said the Minister had a shortlist, and so the Member is obviously misled. Sir, it is absolutely value for money. The UN agencies will be giving up six buildings, four of which are ours. Earlier on in the debate, the Members made mention of the rentals that we are doing, but we are moving from the rental of buildings and we are putting them in these four buildings. When computed, the savings would be more than enough to offset this. The space was not adequate since they are expanding. We would have been faced with the option of having to renting additional spaces which was ineffective and inefficient. So, this represents good value for money.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister has still not answered the question on what criteria was used in the selection of this building. It is a very simple question: What criteria was used in the selection of this building.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, security was the prime reason, cost as well as space and adequacy of size in one single location. It is now being called the 'UN' house.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, security and cost cannot be the criteria. The criteria have to be an established procedure that is in the Procurement Act. This is a procurement issue. One just cannot makeup some criteria, one has to follow the Procurement Act. Did the Minister follow the Procurement Act in procuring the rental of this building?

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Patterson: The answer as before is yes. The UN and Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Protocol and Consular Department went out; there were several candidates and we were asked to inspect. And then, of course, the UN security team arrived from New York, inspected and eliminated, and this was the successful building recommended to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is now in the House for passage.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister advise the House when was the contract entered into and what is the duration of the contract?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the contract has not been signed. Obviously, after the passage of this we will sign it. Hopefully, Sir, you will approve, and I could proceed onwards. Sir, just for the record, the 'E.M.' building stands for the 'Eddie Grant' building, which is right next door to the Embassy of the United States of America in Duke street. I do not know the lot number, but it is immediately south of that building.

Bishop Edghill: I would like to return to line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, the Guyana Energy Agency. Sir, the allocation to this agency has almost doubled. Could the Hon. Minister tell the House what is responsible for the almost 100% increase in allocations to the Guyana Energy Agency.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, we are doing the hinterland light-emitting diode (LED) lighting programme. We are going to change and install 4,300 energy-efficient LED lights to about 4,350 households and commercial businesses connected to the hinterland mini grids of Kwakwani, Lethem, Mabaruma, Port Kaituma, Mahdia and Matthews Ridge. There are 72 solar mini grids with storage to provide eight hours of renewable energy and \$30 million to procure services in areas of completion of environmental, social impact assessment and land survey for the advancement of feasibility study for hydropower and other renewable energy projects.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, under the same line item, I would like to have a look at Appendix 'T' on page 632 and under the rubric of what the Minister just indicated. I did not see any significant increases in terms of current expenditure but, yet, this is a current matter that we are dealing with. The employment cost remains relatively the same, it does not show any increase of staff to do the work that he has just spoken about. Could he give this House some further clarification of how this almost 100% increase would be reflected in the expenditure of this authority?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, this is a subvention to an agency. The employment and cost would be included and the additional funds being the subvention is what I just reported on. It is an increased subvention to the GEA.

Mr. Chairman: Three other questions.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6302 – Training (including scholarships): Could the Minister say if there is any Minister under this heading who is receiving training *via* scholarship? If so, for what training and at what cost? It was \$15 million and now it is \$11 million.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, no Minister. This training was primarily done for the Transport and Harbours Department, some of the 457 persons that the Hon. Member made mentioned of. The bulk of the money was for seafarers, mechanical engineers and 145 mariners. So there are no Ministers.

Programme: 321 – Policy Development and Administration - \$4,534,559 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 321 – Policy Development and Administration - \$5,619,800

Mr. Ali: Project code 1214800 – Government Buildings: There is an allocation of a \$110 million. This was followed by allocations of \$152 million in 2017, \$111 million in 2018, and a revised allocation of a \$131 million in 2018. Could the Hon. Minister say whether it is the same set of buildings we are talking about? Because there is a retention fee and so it has to refer to a project that is continuing.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, every year we do additional buildings. In 2018 we would have some retention and some new works in 2019.

Mr. Ali: So, what is the new work?

Mr. Patterson: The new works are: the rehabilitation of the goods wharf for \$20 million; rehabilitation of Echillibar fence and drainage, \$15 million; construction of document centre's fire escape, \$20 million; construction of shed to store bitumen, \$25 million; rehabilitation of living quarters at Parika \$20 million; and enclosure of the ground floor of the central workshop, administrative building for \$10 million.

Mr. Ali: The Hon. Minister mentioned the Echillibar and we know works are ongoing there over the last three years. Could the Hon. Minister say what is the total amount spent on those buildings to date?

6.18 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: I would like to layover that. Extensive works had to be done to Echilibar Villas after the condition in which we inherited it. I will layover exactly what has been done, including the works to the Villas that the former Member had.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister say whether all of the expenditure under this head were done through public tender?

Mr. Patterson: All were done through public tender. The works included, and I shall read them for you so you could make a note: repairs to the Works Service Group (WSG) Building, repairs to the Accounts building, repairs to the Old Bus College building, construction of storage bonds at Anna Regina, Paradise and Den Amstel, repairs to Transport and Harbours Sports Club on Thomas Lands, repairs to Central Mechanic Shop I and II, rehabilitation of DeWinkle Building, repairs to Echilibar Villas I, II and II and the installation of 120 KVA generator.

Bishop Edghill: Project code 2606800 – Power Utility Upgrade Programme: Three billion, six hundred million dollars is being sought in 2019, could the Hon. Minister confirm that this is for the Guyana Power and Light, Inc (GPL, Inc)? Secondly, could he tell this House who will be administering the procurement of the items to this expenditure?

Mr. Patterson: Yes, this has to do with the Guyana Power and Light, Inc. It is an Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) contract. The procurement is done by the project execution unit like all major funded projects. We have to get no-objection from both the IDB and the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) via public tender. The project execution unit will be the coordinating agency.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister confirm that, as part of the governance architecture of GPL, Inc, there should be a Board of Governors or there should be a Board in place? Could the Hon. Minister tell us the names of the Board of Directors and when they were appointed?

Mr. Patterson: We are dealing with a Capital project in this Budget. We will address matters in the Estimates.

Bishop Edghill: Could I ask the Hon. Minister, the expenditure incurred by GPL Inc, whether it is foreign funded or local funded, whether it must have the approval of governing Board?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, once again, I am addressing the figures that are contained in our Estimates of Expenditure.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister say whether, in the absence of this Board, he has exercised powers in relation to what the Board would have done?

Mr. Patterson: My response remains the same. It is the project executing unit that is the executing agency for the funds allocated in this Budget.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, after the next two questions, I will put the question.

Ms. Teixeira: To go back to the issue – is the Minister saying that the project executing unit (PEU) is making the decisions to do with policy and the loan? This is clearly a role of the Board. The question remains unanswered as to when will the Board be appointed? The PEU has no such power. It is only the Board, by law, that has such powers. When will the Board be put in place?

Mr. Patterson: My response remains the same. Would you like me to repeat, Sir? We are addressing the matters in the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Bishop Edghill, your question is the last. Please proceed.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister confirm with the House, under project code 2606800 – Power Utility Upgrade Programme, that the IDB and the European Union, in the allocation of this loan and, in some parts, grants, in that agreement it was for specific things as it relates to GPL Inc. with an understanding that the GPL Inc. is a body corporate that has a governing Board that sets policies and oversees the activities of the General Manager (GM) and all other entities falling under its control?

Mr. Patterson: I do not want to repeat myself, but I am forced to do so.

Programme: 321 – Policy Development and Administration - \$5,619,800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Current Expenditure

Programme: 322 – Public Works - \$4,082,471,000

Bishop Edghill: Under line item 6116, contracted Employees, could the Minister tell this House the designations and emoluments of the eight additional contracted employees?

Mr. Patterson: There are eight employees – four Civil Engineers, one Planning Officer, one Architect and two vehicle drivers. Unfortunately, my list does not have their emoluments. I will lay that over immediately upon receipt.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister say why would vehicle drivers be employed on a Contractual basis and not as part of the establishment in keeping with the Public Service Circular which outlined the policy of hiring?

Mr. Patterson: The unfortunate and sad answer to that is that for the sums being paid on the Fixed Establishment, we were unable to attract any Drivers. I just want to alert this House that these Drivers do not have the required experience to go off-road and things like that. Unfortunately, the salary scale was unattractive.

Bishop Edghill: I thank the Hon. Minister for that explanation. Could the Hon. Minister confirm to this House that Contract employment is being used as a way of attracting persons or compensating persons who would not work for the salaries that the Government is paying on the Fixed Establishment?

Mr. Patterson: We procured these four persons. Not all of them are males. They are four Engineers, a Transport Officer, Architect...

Bishop Edghill: We are talking about drivers.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, and two drivers under this line item.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate if his Ministry publicly advertised for these two drivers that were employed on the Contractual basis? Who did the recruitment, was it the Public Service Ministry or was it his Ministry directly?

Mr. Patterson: I could confirm that it was a public advertisement. The staff were interviewed as per normal. Obviously, we would have written to the Public Service Ministry for their employment.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads: There is an allocation of \$1,671,200, 000, could the Hon. Minister advise this House what sections of the Linden to Lethem road have been earmarked for some maintenance? The interior roads were dread in the last season and was a subject of debate in this House.

6.33 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, the answer is that we would have done work from Mabura to Lethem Region 9, for \$37 million in 2018, but you would know, also, that there is a maintenance contract entered into by the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) which I think we went over, in this House, a couple of months ago. There is maintenance contract ongoing for the maintenance for that stretch of road, from Linden all the way to Lethem, as well as the Ituni/Kwakwani trail and that maintenance contract would expire at the end of May. 2019. We did some work and, obviously, the major one was done under the GGMC.

Ms. Teixeira: It is a follow-up on that question, Mr. Minister, when we had the discussion on the interior roads it was not just Linden to Lethem, obviously, it was others going to the interior; mining, logging *et cetera*. One of the recommendations was that the maintenance be scheduled in such a way that it would not be interfered with by the rainy seasons and this is what happened last year. Has the Ministry take that advise in course and developed a maintenance schedule for the

interior roads, and I assume, included this... because \$37 million is nothing, really, for these roads that would allow, in the early part of the year, the maintenance work to be done in anticipation of the rains. Is there any consideration of the other from the support from this line item for the miners and loggers who use their vehicle in this area?

Mr. Patterson: I thank the Hon. Member for her question. Hon. Member, you are absolutely correct in your assessment. The Ministry has taken note, as I said, three months ago. There is an ongoing maintenance contract under the GGMC and that total amount, I think, was \$601 million.

Therefore, \$37 million was only a drop in the ocean. We have acknowledged the issue with the rain. What the Ministry would be doing, I think immediately, is going out to tender for stock piling of materials so that we would have materials in strategic locations where we would be able to, immediately, address any issues that would arise along the road, because we know that the issue comes up, primarily, during the wet season.

And, yes, on the other roads, I also acknowledge that we also have a different approach through the Ministry of Natural Resources. We are looking to enter into road uses agreement with, most likely, the forest producers so that they could assist on those roads as well. We are looking to collaborate with the gold miners on certain areas. We have acknowledged the issues madam and we are putting things in place to ensure that we do not have a repercussion in the 2019.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads, could the Hon. Minister tell this House if this include roads that were repaired and works done by the force account of his Ministry? Where does he acquire the asphalt for the construction of those roads and at what price?

Mr. Patterson: Some of these roads are done by our Special Projects Unit. Some were, obviously, sent out by public procurement depends on where. I have about six pages of roads, so unless you want a specific ...

Bishop Edghill: I did not ask you the names of the roads. I just asked a simple question.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, I am answering. I never interrupted you, so I hope you could extend the same courtesy to me.

At the beginning of the year we had applied to National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) and we were granted permission through NPTAB for us to procure for the Special Projects Unit, our asphalt from the Demerara Harbour Bridge Asphalt Plant. NPTAB would have given us the permission to go sole source from there.

Bishop Edghill: My question is unanswered, and what price?

Mr. Patterson: It is \$34,000 per tonne. May I say this, it is the lowest price on the market. We supply, I think the last time, about 60% to 70% of the asphalt in the country and the market is determined by the price of the asphalt at the Demerara Harbour Bridge Asphalt Plant.

Bishop Edghill: Under line item 6272, Electricity Charges, in 2018, \$443,792,000 is budgeted and the revised show that every cent would be spent. For 2019, it is \$409,572,000, could the Hon. Minister explain why the increase over 2017, which was \$423 million and why the decrease for 2019? Could the Minister say what happened in 2018?

Mr. Patterson: It is quite a simple answer, there is no devil in that. You would know, Sir, that, one, the Ministry has a very aggressive programme for new street lights and I could, probably, tell you that Number 19 Village was ever lit up and it is now lit up. We would have done those things in 2017/2018. Several areas and several places which never lights had before, now have lights. That would have accounted for the increased charges. Then, we did something else, for which the Hon. Member would have been pleased; we switch, and we are now putting in Light-Emitting Diode (LED) lights. It is very cheaper and that, of course, is cheaper to run. Even though we are putting in much more, we are using less electricity, so we are winning on both counts.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6251, could I return to the issue of maintenance of roads? Could I ask the Hon. Minister to state the value of the asphalt that was acquired from the Demerara Harbour Bridge Asphalt Plant and which account was used to deposit that revenue because you cannot mix paying for the asphalt from a government entity and putting it into same account, it has to go into a different account. So, what is the account that the expenditure on the asphalt deposited?

Mr. Patterson: I would have to layover the exact amount for the Hon. Member, but I would like to...

Mr. Nandlall: The account not the amount.

Mr. Patterson: The Hon. Member ask for the amount and I do not have that exact amount here. The Demerara Harbour Bridge is a Corporation, so it has its own accounts, but we would also layover and tell you the name of the account.

Programme: 322 – Public Works – \$4,082,471,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 322 – Public Works – \$17,823,889,000

Bishop Edghill: Project code 1101100 – Demerara Harbour Bridge: \$1 million, could the Hon. Minister tell us what this \$1 million would be use for?

Mr. Patterson: This is one of the questions that the Hon. Minister Annette Ferguson would respond to.

Minister within the Ministry of Public Infrastructure [Ms. Ferguson]: I wish to thank the Hon. Member for his question and to let this House know that the \$1 million allocated in Budget 2019 for the Demerara Harbour Bridge would go towards the procurement of wire ropes.

Bishop Edghill: Project code 1102100 – New Demerara River Crossing: A \$100 million be sought, could the Hon. Minister say if any amount from this sum would be used to refund the asphalt plant for the previous feasibility study that was done?

Mr. Patterson: On that one, I would response and the answer is no.

Mr. Ali: Project code 1101200 – New Demerara River Crossing: There is an allocation here of \$100 million for a feasibility study for a Demerara Harbour Bridge, could the Hon. Minister say what is the outcome of the previous feasibility that over \$200 million was spent on, has that been discarded?

Mr. Patterson: This allocation at project code 1101200, it is, according to the profile and my documents, for the provision of consultancy services. I see nothing about a feasibility study.

Mr. Ali: The Hon. Minister in his budget presentation refer to a new feasibility study that would be done in relation to the Demerara Harbour Bridge, could the Hon. Minister say whether the

consultancy to which he is referring has anything to do with this new Demerara Harbour Bridge, and would any expenditure be made on any service or services as it relates to the new Demerara Harbour Bridge?

Mr. Patterson: This \$100 million, under this project code, is for the provision of consultancy services. The Government of Guyana would be relaunching the expression of interest for the new Demerara River Crossing based on these requirements: A high-level bridge with a minimum of four lanes, navigational clearance with a minimum of 70 metres, reinforce concrete construction.

6.48 p.m.

This allocation is for the procurement of services for technical experts in engineering, financing, and environmental to review the proposal to maximise the benefits, and, also, to advise the Government on the way forward about the next steps of the public procurement process. For expertise, we will provide skill transfer by a local public procurement core team that will facilitate institutional capacity building.

The relaunching of the bids will be done with the assistance of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), which has an expert in public/private partnerships. The consultancy is when the bid is launched and there will be various aspects in it. So, we will be procuring the relevant consultants to ascertain and recommend which is the best bid for us to proceed forward.

Bishop Edghill: Project code 1101200: New Demerara River Crossing: Could the Hon. Minister give us a breakdown of how the \$100 million is proposed to be expended? Since he has indicated that, with the existence of the CDB, there is no counterpart or specific financing from an international agency in this consultancy, could he explain the partnership that the CDB has entered into with Government to conduct this consultancy? Thirdly, could he say if the previous feasibility study that was done would be a subject of desk review in this consultancy?

Mr. Patterson: The allocation is a block allocation for the retaining of consultancy services. The help desk of the CDB has offered, and we have accepted, the assistance in the public/private partnership arrangements. And, no, none of this is for any desk reviews, as the Hon. Member mentioned.

Ms. Teixeira: Under the same item, project code 1101200, the New Demerara River Crossing, Hon. Minister, you are talking about going for a second consultancy, another \$100 million. You are now talking about a fixed span, a different type of bridge from what was done in the earlier period with the Dutch company, which you know is the subject of a different matter before the Special Organised Crime Unit (SOCU). However, you have changed the design of the building, by your description. How can you now be trying to deal with partnerships *et cetera*, when you do not have a basic design and cost to do with the completely new bridge that you are talking about now? You are talking about a partnership agreement in which nobody ... everyone is going to be talking in the clouds because nobody has an idea of what the actual costs involved are. Your designs, right now, are words; they are words, sketches, and computer-driven drawings that we have seen on the internet.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Ms. Teixeira, what is the question?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I am asking the Minister, where does he have the costing and the design for the bridge which is in the budget document, spoken of by Minister Jordan, by himself, in his speech? Where is change of specification, from the first consultancy to what it is now, highlighted?

Mr. Patterson: The simple answer to that is that when you do a soil test, it tells you the bearing capacity of the soil. You can put up a logic or you can put a skyscraper or whatever it is, but the soil test remains the same. What you actually build on it is a subject of choice, funds and so forth. All of the base materials remain absolutely the same. The number of vessels to cross, the speed of the river and the depth of the corpiна remains the same. That base information is what drove the decision to go forward. As I said before, this will be done on a public/private partnership, and it is an open public/private partnership, so all interested consultants, contractors, *et cetera*, can tender for it.

Ms. Teixeira: We are not talking about the issue of soil. We are talking about the fundamental issue for developing countries are in terms of cost and what we can afford. You moved from one issue to another without advising the Guyanese people on this beautiful bridge that we would like to have, what it will cost if you do option 1, option 2 or option 3. It is not an issue of soil. I

understand about soil, but we are talking about building in a river. You are *pulling wool over the Guyanese people's eyes*.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, what is the question?

Ms. Teixeira: Where are the drawings and the costings for this bridge? Even if it is basic estimates, where is the cost? Are we talking about the taxpayers of this country paying \$10 billion or \$5 billion? What is going to be projected, even if it is initial, by the Government for the cost of this bridge? And, when we look for partners, what will we be looking for? You must have some idea when you go to negotiate. You cannot negotiate if you do not know what you are negotiating with and for.

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Ms. Teixeira, I think that ... Hon. Minister, answer the question.

Mr. Patterson: For the records, since the Hon. Member mentioned this, we went out for an initial expression and we received 11 or 12 bids.

Ms. Teixeira: *[Inaudible].*

Mr. Patterson: Hon. Member if you allow me to finish, I will try to address your question. Sir, the initial request was for a three-lane, fixed bridge with a movable side of 80 meters, and we received 12 proposals in 2017. The lowest for a three-lane, in 2017, bridge was \$109 million. At the time of tendering, all of the contractors were given the option to submit bids based on the same base information submitted for alternative designs and cost. We received alternative designs for a four-lane, high-level bridge. The maximum cost was US\$197 million. With that we reassessed and decided that what we should do is to ask all 12, and any additional persons under the public/private partnership, to tender for a four-lane, high-level, 70-meter navigational span bridge. Regarding our budget, we already knew that the maximum price would be US \$197 million. The answer to the question that the Hon. Member asked is that the estimate is US \$197 million at the max. I do hope that addresses your problem.

Mr. Chairman: The last question. Hon. Bishop Edghill, you have the question.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I am sure that ... No, I am not sure, but the Hon. Member is going to say something of interest to all of us. I was going to say that I am sure we all want to hear, but I am not sure.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, may I enquire of you if this is the last question under this project head?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Hon. Member.

Bishop Edghill: It is a little difficult, but I will try. I would just like to indicate that there are a number of issues under this one, in keeping with our timeline. Under the Berbice River Bridge, project code 1101300, an allocation of \$120,000,000 is being sought for the rehabilitation of pontoons. It means that the government is about to undertake capital works on the Berbice River Bridge. Could the Hon. Minister tell us what the timeline is that the government envisages as it relates to the present arrangement, as announced in this House, regarding the Government and the Berbice Bridge, where we are asking for \$120 million for capital work, the timelines for exit?

Mr. Patterson: The allocation under project code 1101300 is for the rehabilitation of pontoons. This would allow us to rehabilitate only six pontoons in 2019. There are 39 pontoons supporting that bridge, and as you would know, the recommended time for rehabilitation of a pontoon in that type of water is three to five years. Next year, 2019, would be 13 years since all 39 have been in the water and they have not been rehabilitated. The Government of Guyana will be assisting the rehabilitation process to ensure that that particular bridge remains operational. This sum is to undertake that.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Ms. Teixeira, that was the last question I would allow.

Ms. Teixeira: Sir, we have two and a half hours on this item, on this Ministry.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Ms. Teixeira, what we are doing ...

Ms. Teixeira: We have used the two hours, and therefore ...

Mr. Chairman: If the Hon. Member wishes to speak over the Speaker, then I will sit and wait.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Sir, because I do need to say this. I apologise for being rude, but this particular programme has two pages of capital works. We did not finish the time for this

programme as yet. This is one of the biggest ministries, with enormous money, and it has been controversial. There are two and a half pages for this programme alone. I am sorry, Sir. I am saying that the next item, which is Transportation, is not the big one that has two and a half pages of capital items. There is one item alone of the next issue.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I am sure that we will make full use of the time we have when we do that.

[Mr. Chairman in aside with the Clerk]

7.03 p.m.

Hon. Member, I am sure that we will make full use of the time we have when we do that. Hon. Members, I shall revise my conclusion and I would leave the floor open for questions on the particular item. What I would ask Hon. Members to do, is to not leave me with the impression that what we wish to do when we ask questions is to make political speeches.

I form the impression very quickly that Members are not interested in dealing with the meat of the problem, but rather in making a political point. If Hon. Members would just think that that is something of consequence, please proceed.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you most graciously, Mr. Chairman for allowing us to continue. Sir, I would like to move onto Project code 1403800 – East Bank - East Coast Demerara Road Linkage: Could the Hon. Minister share with this House any documentation that is in his possession as it relates to this particular project, bearing in mind that he indicated that the price will move from US\$50 million to US\$120 million?

Mr. Patterson: The Hon. Member is asking to layover something which we will do.

Bishop Edghill: Project code 1403800 - East Bank - East Coast Demerara Road Linkage: Did the Hon. Minister in requesting the additional US\$70 million for this road take into consideration the studies that were done previously for the very same road?

Mr. Patterson: There was no study done. This is a brand-new study from point mile marker zero plus 15 kilometre for a highway road. The Hon. Member asked me to layover some documents which I will.

Bishop Edghill: Project code 1404500 – Highway Improvement East Coast Demerara: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us, what is the expected date for the completion of this project?

Secondly, is he aware that there are serious traffic management issues with this road that is under construction? What steps his Ministry, as the executing agency, intends to take to ensure that the traffic management of this road while under construction complies with what is required?

Mr. Patterson: The completion date is 29th September. The question that the Hon. Member mentioned regarding traffic management is an ongoing process. We are working with the contractor and consultant to ensure that we do improve on the traffic management situation. I would just briefly say that we added additional lights, and warning tapes for the warning signals.

Also, a problem that we are also experiencing is speeding. The speed limit in the construction zone is 20 kilometres per hour, but our drivers find that a bit too restrictive and they try to go a bit faster. We are addressing it with the help of the police, the contractors, and the consultants. Let me offer my apologies, but it was a matter that was brought to the Ministry's attention and it will be addressed.

Bishop Edghill: Project code 1404500 - Highway Improvement East Coast Demerara: Could the Hon. Minister assure us that the traffic management plan that was submitted to the consultant to facilitate the construction, which was approved, is being executed in keeping with that very same plan? This is because I am sure he is aware of the confusion, the delays, as well as the injuries that have occurred on this particular project as it relates to traffic management.

Mr. Patterson: Hon. Member, I can assure you that the traffic management plan which was submitted and approved is being followed. I would also tell you it is a dynamic situation. If any issues arise we would seek to address them immediately. As I said before, we have been addressing and we will continue to address all difficulties that arise.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item, and this is for the sake of the people of Guyana. Could the Hon. Minister confirm to this House that the site meetings that would involve the members of the executing agency, which is the Ministry of Public Works, have addressed this matter with both consultant and contractor and the plan that is in place and causing some concern is under review?

Mr. Patterson: I can confirm that the site meetings do address that. I can even address and inform the Hon. Member that it is even wider than the contractor, consultant and the Ministry. We involved the Road Safety Association and the Police Traffic Management which have a direct line and they do attend the traffic management meeting. As I said it is a dynamic situation, because it is work that is progressing along a very long corridor of roadway. For every issue that arises and there can be some unforeseen or not, we do address, or we will be addressing. Once again, thank you very much, Hon. Member.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 1405200 – Hinterland Roads: In the Budget document a number of areas are listed. Could you say if all of these will be addressed under this allocation of \$2 billion towards hinterland roads?

Mr. Patterson: Sorry, but could you repeat the last part of the question?

Ms. Teixeira: In the Budget there is a reference to a number of roads. Is the project code 1405200 - Hinterland Roads, with an allocation of \$2 billion?

Mr. Patterson: Yes.

Ms. Teixeira: I am trying to find out, are the roads that are listed in the Budget Speech the same roads that will be addressed with this allocation?

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Hon. Member. The roads that were listed will be addressed.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 1405000 – Guyana- Brazil Land Transport Link and Deep Water Port: I recalled in the Budget Speech that this was referred to, but there are no funds allocated for this. However, in the Budget Speech there were references to the Guyana/Brazil land transport link, but nothing is here. Could you explain?

Mr. Patterson: Hon. Member, I am very unclear of the question. What I can tell you is that as it relates to the Deep Water Port it is a study that is ongoing. It was funded by a Technical Cooperation (TC) from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Is that the answer to your question?

Ms. Teixeira: It does in terms of the Deep Water Port but in the Budget presentation there was a reference to kind of resuscitating the discussions with Guyana/Brazil on the land transport link between these two countries but I was surprised to see no money provided for.

Mr. Patterson: There is a different project for the first leg, but the ongoing discussions and agreement with the Federate Republic of Brazil is not included under the Capital Expenditure.

Ms. Teixeira: I thought I saw in the newspaper a few months ago that a consultancy firm had been hired to do an assessment of the alignment of the road. One hundred million dollars was in the newspaper a couple of months ago. I do not see it reflected anywhere. It is that there is some consultancy going on somewhere. I believe from the newspapers.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Hon. Member. There is a Terms of Reference (TOR) for a consultancy which is going via Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The task force is set up, as you would know, under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. My Ministry would have sent our comments on our draft TOR to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry is the one who are the conduit between Brazil and us.

Bishop Edghill: Project code 1405600 – Linden - Mabura Road and Kurupukari Bridge: Sir, in 2018, \$224 million was budgeted and nothing was expended and in 2019, \$200 million is being sought. Could the Hon. Minister tell this House why nothing was done? Could he explain what will be done in 2019?

Mr. Patterson: The Hon. Member is absolutely correct. This is the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), United Kingdom (UK), Department for International Development (DFID) and the lack of expenditures, unfortunately, is not really down to the Government of Guyana. This sum is to procure, and I am advised that the consultancy services will be awarded this month. There was a retender and it is 10 months process.

7.18 p.m.

That carries it into mid-year. I have notes here which states that the procurement and selection of contractor would go starting July 2019 and the prequalification would start in July 2019.

Bishop Edghill: Same project code, could the Hon. Minister confirm that the 10-month process he is talking about is the tendering process or the studies?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the 10-month process is both the design and the final design for construction.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House, why was it necessary for a retender?

Mr. Patterson: It was annulled, because three of the six short listed consultants submitted proposal and were all non-responsive.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate was the process that was used one of selective tendering? The Minister said three out of the six, which means six were selected; three submitted proposals which was unresponsive. Could the Minister tell us who evaluated these proposal, was it Guyana or the United Kingdom Caribbean Infrastructure Partnership Fund (UKCIF)?

Mr. Patterson: This was an international tender. It was evaluated by the UK, DFID, CDB team and the local National Procurement & Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) evaluation team. The process was we advertised internationally and under the international rules then the consultants were short listed based on the criteria set up by us, DFID, and CDB and the law of the mid-technical qualification. Those short-listed consultants were asked to submit bids. The bids that they submitted were non-responsive.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same project code, could the Hon. Minister confirm that the procurement process, even with foreign funded projects, required the local procurement process to be followed and then sent to the international funder for their no-objection? It would have meant that the local people would have found these tenders as unresponsive in the first instance.

Mr. Patterson: The local procurement process was followed, the tenders were open tenders, and they were submitted back at NPTAB. The NPTAB obviously chose the evaluators, a report was prepared and submitted it to NPTAB which was forwarded unto the CDB and all the agencies concurred with the recommendations of the evaluation team.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 1601000 – Stellings: There is an allocation of \$685 million. Two hundred and sixty-two million was spent in 2018 and \$685 million for 2019. According to the profile in Volume 3 it states:

“1. The completion of Leguan, and Bartica stellings.

2. Rehabilitation of Parika Stelling.”

Could you give us the breakdown on how much moneys are allocated in 2019 for these three stellings? What would be the total completed expected cost for the completion of the Bartica and Leguan Stellings that started the previous year?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, Minister Ferguson will respond to the question.

Ms. Ferguson: I will provide you with the breakdown for the first question asked as it relates to the three stellings proposed to be done in 2019. The Leguan Stelling - \$285 million, Phase two of Bartica Stelling - \$350 million, the Parika Stelling - \$50 million which would give you a total sum of \$685 million.

Your second question as it relates to the total cost on completion of the projects: the Leguan Stelling will cost us \$413,259,260 and Bartica Stelling \$579,994,180. Thank you.

Mr. Bharrat: Project code 1214900 - Infrastructural Development: Could the Hon. Minister say how much of the \$250 million has been budgeted for the Diamond car park? Secondly, where will this car park be located? Third question: what works will be done on the car park?

Mr. Patterson: The sum of \$30 million for the construction of car park, market tarmac, and composite bridge at Diamond East Bank. Hon. Member, it is immediately south of where Demerara Distillers Limited (DDL) plant is, there is cell tower, and it is a portion of land between the cell tower and the canal and it extends backwards. This is the preparatory work and obviously we want to do that to ensure that there is safe parking place for persons.

I would like to add that continuing we would be trying have a road linking to First Avenue offering alternative routes in and out of Diamond as well.

Mr. Bharrat: Follow-up: the land identified by Hon. Minister, could he say is it owned by a state land or privately owned?

Mr. Patterson: Hon. Member, part of the land is owned by state and part is owned by DDL. However, as you know we spoke with DDL and being good cooperate citizens the company agreed to give us the portion of land free of cost to accommodate what we would like to do. It is a public private partnership.

Bishop Edghill: Project code 1501700 – Water Front Development: In 2017 nothing was done on this project even though it was in the pipeline. In 2018, \$160 million was budgeted. It underperformed, because only 10% was spent and we are now asked to appropriate \$80million in 2019. Could the Hon. Minister tell us what is responsible for the underperformance? What is this \$80 million exactly for in 2019?

Mr. Patterson: This is once again part of the CDB DFID funded for studies. Unfortunately, it underperformed. It is out of our hands. I could tell you that the contract was signed, and works are ongoing. The Inception Report has been submitted, stakeholder consultations have commenced and are ongoing.

In 2019, the detailed studies and designs, site characterisation, stakeholder consultations, and environmental and social impact assessment, and preparation of detail, engineering, designs and tender documents, initiation of the procurement process for the works and the construction phases. This entire process is scheduled to be completed in 10 months.

Bishop Edghill: Project code 3402400 – Guyana Energy Agency: Renewable energy projects, could the Hon. Minister give us some more information on these projects. What are some of the initiatives being undertaken and who would be the beneficiaries and where?

Mr. Patterson: This intervention under this project code: installation and commission of renewable energy equipment at 80 Government buildings. We have budgeted for \$375 million for that. This intervention would result in the installation of approximately 1,184 kilowatts of renewable energy systems with an energy saving of 1,949 megawatts hours. The cost savings will estimate to be \$180 million annually from this intervention with an avoided carbon dioxide of 1,415 tons.

Also, in there, is the installation and commission of 400 standalone solar power Street lights. The supply and installation of 400 standalone solar power street lamps in all 10 Administrative Regions and that is budgeted at \$100 million.

The procurement of electric vehicle with solar power energy storage system is procured electric vehicle to demonstrate performance and to inform policy at \$10,800,000 is budgeted for that. For a bit of clarification, the electric vehicle will be powered by, as I said, solar power energy. It is not

of the main grid, we would like to see how long it operates under being powered by solar power as opposed to of the electric grid.

We also procured loggers and level senders for the borrowing and trading of hydropower potential - \$1,500,000. The administration monitoring and controlling of renewable energy and energy efficient projects for this to be done we procured a 4x4 for \$14 million, a boat for \$1,200,000. I know that we would also be buying a drone for \$1,500,000 and repairs to our existing equipment for \$5,100,000.

We would also have other supporting equipment to enhance the functionality of the agency, that is \$2,284,000 million improvement of facility for sustainable energy management.

7.33 p.m.

There will be a construction of a shed, an eco- friendly guard hut, and washrooms for Bartica \$1,500,000 and \$1,800,000 respectively. Equipment for optimum usage, of course, two vacuum pumps for testing \$2,500,000 and equipment for relevant software for project execution at \$7,560,000.

I do have a listing of the 80 Government buildings that the solar panels would be installed in. If you would like I can go through them.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, just to say that the Hon. Minister could lay over the document, we will be quite happy to receive the information.

Project code 1404800- West Demerara Highway: There is a provision of the \$252 million for the payment of retention. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House was all the works that were supposed to be done including traffic safety and all other aspects, including the bicycle lane for the eco- friendly operation of this Highway, if everything is in place, the road has been tested as being done for the durability of which it was expected and that we are satisfied with the practical completion that we would have received that we are now qualifying for defects liability period?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I have been advised that all of the items that the Hon. Member mentioned have been completed. We are in the defect liability period. I would say that any remedial works which the Hon. Member may want to go on to, all has to be done by the contractor during this

period. I am specifically referring to a section of the road which due to a depression which has failed and is being addressed now.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same project code- West Demerara Highway: Could the Hon. Minister indicate has there been any significant improvement of usage of bicycles as envisaged in the study on this road to ensure that it is a road that is considered green and energy efficient which helped us to qualify for the concessionary financing for this project?

Mr. Patterson: Obviously, one of the ideas was to be used by Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) and some of GuySuCo workers, that is one on the project profile. That has resulted in much usage as anticipated. Obviously, we are satisfied with the road and what is completed. I do hope that in time, more bicycle users will use the road.

Programme: 322 – Public Works - \$17,823,889,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 323 –Transport- \$93,258,000

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are still in working mode. Let us try to complete what we have to do.

Bishop Edghill: As the Shadow Minister for this sector, I will ask that the question be put so that we could move straight to the capital estimates so that we would be within the time, Sir. There will be no questions on this.

Mr. Chairman: Is there any other Member who wishes to speak?

Programme: 323 – Transport- \$93,258,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 323 –Transport- \$2,768,343,000

Bishop Edghill: Project code 1601300 - CJIA Modernisation Project: Could the Hon. Minister confirm to this House that this project will be completed by 31st December, 2018 as promised?

Mr. Patterson: The project completion date remains 31st December, 2018.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister tell this House what would be the final sum that will be expended on this fixed price project as of 31st December, 2018?

Mr. Patterson: The final figure remains US\$138 million.

Bishop Edghill: May I remind that supplementary provision of two additional air bridges were sought for almost \$600 million. Would this be considered a part of the cost of the CJIA modernisation and expansion?

Mr. Patterson: The loan for that CJIA modernisation is \$130 million from the Export–Import Bank of China and US\$8 million local counterpart money. The air bridges that the Hon. Member mentioned is within the local counterpart money. It remains the same.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same project code, Sir, if it remains the same, could the Hon. Minister explain why was it necessary for a supplementary provision?

Mr. Patterson: My apologies Sir, I have to correct myself. The total project cost is \$150 million. I must apologise, \$138 million and the \$12 million was the local counterpart. It was part of the \$12 million. The reason why there was a supplementary provision is because, it was not included 2016 or 2017 allocation at the time that we did the budget and we had to bring it to books.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House, as of the last Interim Payment Certificate that was tendered, how much money has been spent on the CJIA so far?

Mr. Patterson: I can lay that over. I do not have the exact figure. What I can confirm to the Hon. Gentleman is that all of 2018 Budget will be expended by the...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, have you provided the answer to the Hon. Member?

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Sir. Sir, I have been given an advice of the last interim and valuation at the end of November was US\$126,042,000.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same project code: Could the Hon. Minister confirm that in keeping with the revised contract which was submitted to this honourable House, there has been no variation or changes since then as it relates to this project?

Mr. Patterson: I cannot say that there has been no variation or changes or if you want to say that the answer is no changes. Whichever version suits the Hon. Gentleman.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same project code: Could the Hon. Minister confirm that as the 31st December, 2018 Guyanese can expect to get everything that was indicated in the revised contract which was tendered in this House?

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Hon. Member.

Bishop Edghill: Thanks.

Programme: 323 – Transport- \$2,768,343,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates. [7.48 p.m.]

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Minister and the members of his team.

7.48 p.m.

Agency 33: Ministry of Public Telecommunications

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the members of the Minister's team are not yet here. In fact, the members ought to be here at 8.50 p.m. So, the Minister will endeavour to get them here in another 10 minutes. In fact, they are on their way; they will be here in another 10 minutes.

[*Interruption*]

That is when they should have been here according to the timetable. But they will be here or are expected here in another 10 minutes.

Mr. Croal: A short break.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, a short break, Mr. Croal. Thank you.

Assembly resumed at 7.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I know that you might prefer me to say let us take a suspension or go home but that is extreme; we are not finished. But I fear that 10 minutes will have a way of becoming 20 minutes and then half of an hour. So, I wonder whether Members may wish, for a moment, to just talk to their Colleagues for 10 minutes and then we will resume, because there is no bell to call people back. Hon. Member, if you have brought any comestible in the House...

Ms. Burton-Persaud: No Sir.

Mr. Speaker: The fact that you pushed it on the floor does not change it. It should not be in here.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: It is not that, Sir. It is something else I had.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, let us not do this. We have to have respect in here. If we bring eatables in here, we do not respect it. Let us do what we know is right; it is as simple as that.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Mr. Chairman: We will continue the consideration of the estimates.

Agency 33: Ministry of Public Telecommunications [8.02 p.m.]

Current Expenditure

Programme: 331 – Policy Development and Administration – \$260,158,000

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Line item 6115 – Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled: Under staffing details, could the Hon. Minister say what their positions are? There has been an increase by seven staff members. What are those positions under that line item?

Minister of Public Telecommunications [Ms. Hughes]: Thank you, Hon. Member. The increase in staff members are as follows: appointment of two drivers, a driver/mechanic, one labourer, a handyman and a cleaner, all at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre. You would remember that the Conference Centre was closed for a year and reopened.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Line item 6284 – Other: There has been an allocated sum of \$31.5 million – an increase of \$14.5 million from 2018. Could the Hon. Minister state what are the items and allocations under this line item?

8.03 p.m.

Ms. Hughes: The allocations will cater for a pilot project for our records management in the digitisation of records and that is approximately \$3 million; our e-Agriculture Information and Communication Technology (ICT) policy formulation, \$3 million; our ICT policy formulation for persons living with disabilities is allocated \$3 million; a project for persons living with disabilities, \$3 million; our marketing initiatives, \$5 million; advertisements and stipends for the members of the Ministerial Tender Board, the production of some print videos to promote and explain the Ministry in this area, expenditure relative to the Arthur Chung Conference Centre which is carpet cleaning and the cleaning of tiles, and activities to support Mashramani, \$5.7million .

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Line item 6291 - National and Other Events: Could the Hon. Minister state what these events are and the allocations for each?

Ms. Hughes: Thank you, Hon. Member. We have a contribution of \$1 million for our girls in the ICT programme; Robotic Olympics, \$2 million; the Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU) ICT Roadshow initiative which we had earlier this year, so for our ICT Awareness Week, \$2.1 million; we have a few Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that we contribute to - we are doing some work with the animation area for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Guyana - and those NGOs are an additional \$3 million; and for Mashramani 2019, \$3 million.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Line item 6302 - Training (including Scholarships): There has been a decrease in the sums; for 2018 the sum was \$ 350,000, and for 2019 it is \$135,000. Could the Hon. Minister say what are the programmes and why the decrease?

Ms. Hughes: Thank you, Hon. Member. Most of our training is being done under our Industry and Innovation Policy Unit, hence the reduction.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Under line item 6281, Security Services, could the Hon. Minister tell us what the expected prevailing conditions are to cause the reduction in the security votes? I know that it is above that of 2018. I am just curious.

Ms. Hughes: We have a reduction because we had provided security for the Chinese team that was refurbishing the Arthur Chung Conference Centre, but they have now left.

Mr. Bharrat: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: Hon. Minister, there is expected to be a reduction in the allocation for 2019, however, there is an \$8 million increase in the allocation for Contracted Employees. Could the Hon. Minister explain the increase please?

Ms. Hughes: It caters for the appointment of three additional staff members and the increase in salaries.

Mr. Bharrat: A Follow-up on the same line item: According to the staffing details, there will be a reduction in 2019 and not an increase as you are suggesting.

Ms. Hughes: We have some staff that came onto the payroll after the Estimates of Expenditure was prepared.

Mr. Charlie: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: The budgeted sum is \$5 million. Could the Hon. Minister say if a part of this sum is to undertake rehabilitation works to ICT hubs in Indigenous communities in the hinterland?

Ms. Hughes: No, this line item 6242, Maintenance of Buildings, has nothing to do with the ICT hubs. It is, in fact, repairs and maintenance to the Ministry of Public Telecommunications at 205 Camp Street, Georgetown, and some areas that were not in the Scope of Work (SOW) when the Chinese contractors did the restoration and renovation at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre. To give you specifics, there is \$2 million for the repainting of our Registry Office, lacquering of the lobby area and regular maintenance at the office. At the Arthur Chung Conference Centre, there is some welding, servicing of shutters and repairs to door hinges - renovations work to the tune of \$3 million, which was not in the Scope of Work, as I have mentioned.

Mr. Charlie: The Hon. Minister spoke eloquently during her Budget 2019 speech about the Information Technology (IT) that will be introduced in the hinterland, specifically the Amerindian villages. Could the Hon. Minister direct me to where I can find this sum that will see the ICT hubs, in Indigenous villages, being rehabilitated to take on the ICT programme in the respective communities? Relate the line item. Where can I refer to?

Ms. Hughes: It is in Programme 332. We are coming to that in a minute.

Mr. Charlie: Thank you.

Programme: 331 - Policy Development and Administration - \$260,158,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 331 - Policy Development and Administration - \$68,500,000

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Project code 1219300 - Buildings: There is a sum of \$ 60 million for the rehabilitation of buildings. Could the Hon. Minister say which building or buildings would be renovated?

Ms. Hughes: These funds are for the renovations and enhancements of what was formerly the call centre at Kara Kara in Linden. As you may know, there was a call centre there. There is a structure that has been severely damaged over time. The Ministry of Public Telecommunications has had several meetings with representatives from the community in Linden. This building has tremendous opportunities for us, to look at refurbishing it with a view to instituting a call centre once again, and the possibility of hiring close to 300 persons.

Mr. Bharrat: Project code 1219300 – Buildings: That is the same project code. Hon. Minister, you mentioned the rehabilitation of the building at Kara Kara. Is there any immediate planned use for the building or could you say how early a call centre would be established in Linden as you suggested?

Ms. Hughes: Thank you, Hon. Member. Regrettably, this building needs extensive repairs, so we would have to start those repairs before we could even get to open a call centre. I would hope that, by the end of 2019 we would have completed the repairs.

Programme: 331 - Policy Development and Administration - \$68,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

8.18 p.m.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 332 - Public Telecommunications - \$1,847,610,000

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Line item 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: There is a sum of \$1.8 billion to be a part of this subsidies and contributions to local organisations. The local organisations stated under the details as the National Data Management Authority. Could the Hon. Minister say what this amount is being paid over for?

Ms. Hughes: Hon. Member, fuel and lubricants; and the increase is as a result of our network expansion also for the Centre of Excellence in Information Technology which would be operational in 2019. Fuel is also for the bucket truck.

We have a new data centre and that is approximately \$2.6 million; the long-term evolution (LTE) sites and also a generator. Also, under this line item, we have rental and maintenance of buildings. The buildings that we are currently in, that is the NDMA, the rent was increased, so it covers the increase, the maintenance and janitorial services for that building.

At this point I want to say that the Ministry is currently in the process of finalising the design for its headquarters. Once constructed, it would host about 80% of our staff in one location. So, we would not have to rent so many buildings. Currently, and for 2019, the sum also includes the rental of a storage bond.

Then we have maintenance of infrastructure. As one would know a few of our sites have increased and so \$3 million is there. There are repairs to the fibre, because we are laying fibre as we connect; so we have \$5 million budgeted. Then, of course, \$7 million for the removal of some batteries. We have maintenance work on fibre at customers' locations, and fences and bridges at the LTE sites; and we have the transport, travel and postage. I could lay over this information and it is also in the appendices of the estimates at Appendix 'T'. There are utility charges, other goods and services... I do not know if you want me to give you all that or just lay it over.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Yes, Hon. Minister.

Ms. Hughes: No problem. Transport, travel and postage - local travel increased by \$3.7 million...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, may I just interrupt. Hon. Member, did you say you wanted it to be laid over?

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Ms Hughes: Sorry Hon. Member, I thought you said to go through it. I am happy to lay it over. Thank you.

Programme: 332 - Public Telecommunications - \$1,847,610 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 332 - Public Telecommunications - \$2,184,895

Mr. Bharat: Project code 1219000 – National Broadband Project: There is an allocation of \$2,040,000,000 and it involves the construction of a data centre. Could the Hon. Minister say where this data centre will be constructed and the timeline for the construction?

Ms. Hughes: Mr. Chairman, the funds are for the National Broadband Project and it has several aspects to it. It includes the construction of the data centre which will start in early January, 2019 and be completed in 2019. The rest of the project is actually a multi-year project and so it goes until 2020.

Mr. Rohee: A follow-up to the question that was asked in respect of the National Broadband Project. This appears to be a project from the People's Republic of China and funded by them. Is the Hon. Minister aware of the implications that have arisen as a result of the Huawei issues that could have implications for this project as it proceeds?

Ms. Hughes: I am well aware of the fact that Huawei has been in the news over the last three or four days. I think you would know that the concerns regarding Huawei are strictly with regard to its Chief Executive Officer (CEO), issues to do with the company and suggestions that it has not adhered to international treaties and sanctions that it is required to. We, in our project, have focused a lot on cybersecurity and, therefore, we are confident. We have gotten our own cadre of Guyanese technicians and experts who have been trained in cybersecurity. So, we are very confident that we are able to monitor some of the concerns that have been aired.

Mr. Rohee: I am not impressed with the answer, but I will proceed to another. In respect to project code 1217300, IT Centre of Excellence, this appeared to be a project funded by India. Could the Hon. Minister indicate whether there is a home or house or location for this Centre of Excellence?

Mr. Chairman: I beg your pardon.

Mr. Rohee: I am not finish with the question as yet.

Mr. Chairman: Do finish the question.

Mr. Rohee: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, concerning the Centre of Excellence, the \$40 million that has been allocated for the centre, could the Hon. Minister indicate what is the nature of the technology which the Centre is to be equipped with and whether it would be accessible to any stratum of the population in our country?

Ms. Hughes: I regret that you are not aware that the Centre of Excellence has a spanking new home. It is located on the campus of the University of Guyana, at Turkeyen. It is actually the old NDMA building on that campus that we have renovated. I would ensure that you be invited when we open the centre.

With regards to your question about the technology, we are going to have an array of state-of-the-art modern technology. It is geared towards training and information and communication technology. So, we have all the computers, multimedia equipment and laboratories. If I can give you an idea of some of the training: the centre is targeted towards providing training to members of the public sector, so some of the courses that are going to be offered include... I should say we have four master trainers from India who would be coming and a range of courses to be offered include network expansion training, data processing, cybersecurity and web development just to name a few. Thank you.

8.33 p.m.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, in respect of the project code 1219000 – National Broadband Project: An amount of \$2 million have been allocated to this project. It envisages the Smart Education, Smart Health Care, Safe City Solutions Project and the construction and building of a data centre. There appears to be a number of data centres being constructed: one for the National Broadband

Project and one for the National Data Management Authority. Could the Hon. Minister indicate, in respect of the Safe City Solutions Project, whether this has to do with the procurement of equipment and say what type of equipment?

Could the Minister say, also, whether this equipment would be procured locally or abroad? How would the equipment be utilised?

With respect to the data centre for the National Broadband Project, could the Minister indicate the equipment that is to be procured? Could he say if it would be procured locally or abroad?

Finally, there was supposed to be some training in 2018 for the Centre of Excellence as well as the National Broadband Project. Could the Minister indicate how many persons have been trained so far and what are the various technological disciplines in which they have been trained?

Ms. Hughes: I will start with the training. A total 142 were trained this year. To give you an idea: Enterprise Wireless Products – 17; Transmission Network Products – 23; and Enterprise Network Products – 23. The difference of course, is the Ministries, representatives and the Technicians from various Ministries who attended. In Web and E-mail – 18; training for the Office of Climate Change – 25; and Data Entry – 3. This gives a total of 142.

To clarify, it is one data centre and not two data centres. We are upgrading our current data centre. We are constructing a new data centre that is part of the project. In terms of the breakdown, you would note that there was \$6.1 million allocated for the new data centre and just about \$200,000 to update the old one.

You asked about the equipment. This is a turnkey project so there is no procurement requirement on our side. The project provides the equipment as part of it. It is of course, being done by Huawei.

Mr. Rohee: In respect of the three projects, the Broadband Project, the Centre of Excellence and the National Data Management Authority, could the Hon. Minister say specifically whether she has any foreigners working on any of these projects and what nationalities are they?

Ms Hughes: We have, through Huawei, a selection of Chinese nationals that are working on the projects. Within the National Data Management Authority, we have a national from India who is married to a Guyanese.

Mr. Bharrat: Going back to project code 1219000 – National Broadband Project, could you say if this project has provisions for the computerisation of rates and taxes collection at the rateable local authority areas throughout the country?

Ms. Hughes: The answer is no. As part of our work works we would be supporting quite a few of the local agencies.

Mr. Bharrat: Follow-up on the same line item, you said that a few agencies will be assisting, does this mean that you will be completely funding the project within those agencies or will you be assisting the local authority areas to ensure that they have a computerised system?

Ms. Hughes: We are not funding but we will be assisting in the local authority areas.

Mr. Bharrat: Under the same line item, the project caters for Telemedicine, could you say whether we are practicing Telemedicine in Guyana as it is now or is it something that we would be introducing in 2019? If so, will it cater for only local interactions or international interactions as well?

Ms. Hughes: We have not started to implement this project. It will start in 2019, so we are not providing Telemedicine facilities. I think that question would have to be directed to the Ministry of Public Health.

Programme: 332 – Public Telecommunications - \$2,184,895,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Current Expenditure

Programme: 334 – Industry Innovations - \$67,138,000

Mr. Bharrat: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There are only three employees in this head. Could you give us their designations and their remunerations, please?

Ms. Hughes: The three individuals are Senior Business Analyst - \$195,614.00; Coordinator of Outreach Services - \$195,615.00; and Coordinator of Web Services - \$194,615.00.

Mr. Bharrat: Line item 6302 – Training: There is an increase of almost \$11 million. Could you say if this involves foreign training and scholarships? If so, how many beneficiaries?

Ms. Hughes: All our trainings are done in Guyana by qualified individuals. It is done throughout our country. It is training in computer basis in website design, web development and mobile technology development. It includes, as I mentioned different regions, training in courses and will include Photoshop, web design, information architecture, illustrator, design planning and analysis on the web development site, java script, frameworks, under mobile development part, mobile applications, architecture of producing mobile applications and mobile application development.

Mr. Bharat: Follow up on the same line item, could you say how the participants for these are recruited in the respective regions?

Ms. Hughes: The key indicator for deciding where we would go was really based on where there were community centres and existing equipment which are usually computers and internet access. We also did assessments. We did quite a bit of training that focused on needs that were coming out of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) hubs that we had opened. Of course, the training in 2018 was done in Regions 3, 4, 6 and 10.

8.48 p.m.

We focused on girls. We also focus on young boys in the nine to 12 age group, code sprints and, also, we did quite a bit of training for women in two of the community centres on the Essequibo coast, in Linden, in Berbice and in New Amsterdam.

Mr. Bharat: Hon. Minister, maybe I did not hear properly, you did not mention how these participants were actually selected in 2018, whether it is by public advertisement, whether it was advertised in the newspapers, whether they were recruited through the school system; what method was used to select the participants?

Ms. Hughes: There was extensive public advertising. We also advertised on our website and at a range of community centres.

Mr. Bharat: A follow-up on the same line item, Hon. Minister could you say if it was published in the daily newspapers?

Ms. Hughes: Hon. Member, yes, it was and just to give you an example, when we advertise for our “Guyanese Girls Code” Programme, we advertised in all four newspapers and we were looking for 20 young girls, we ended up with 57 and we had to do two courses.

Programme: 334 – Industry Innovations – \$ 67,138,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 334 – Industry Innovations – \$9,500,000

Mr. Rohee: I am hoping that the Hon. Minister would be able to explain to us, particularly on this side of the House, or define for us, the meaning of “industry innovations”. I ask this question because I see provision is being made here for purchase of a bus, so I am wondering if the bus would be innovatively used in this industry, and whether it would be used to go around looking for innovative ideas. So, the question is really twofold; one is for the Minister to define for us what is meant by industry innovations and its relevance to the procurement of a bus? This bus, we would like to know, what it is going to be used for, how many seats; is it a two-seater bus or a three-seater bus, what type of bus you are intent to procure, is it from Japan or Korea and the cost of the bus?

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]

Ms. Hughes: I think that this Ministry is what I call out of the box because we have an Industry and Innovation Unit. What we mean by industry...

Mr. Rohee: It should not be in a box, it should be out of the box.

Ms. Hughes: It is a terminology Hon. Member. The thing about industry and innovations is that, in this Ministry, we have sought to match, not just the theory of learning and implementing technology in our Ministries, in the private sector, in schools but in a wide range of areas. What we are focus on, is how is it that we could help to build a larger population that is comfortable with technology and that is why we create the Industry and Innovations Unit that work very closely with the private sector.

This is the unit that, actually, stimulates the development and interest in young people gather skills in the Information and Telecommunications Technology (ICT). This is the department that would

have the hackathons that comes up with persons who are young Guyanese, right here, who are developing incredible apps. This is the unit that would do code sprints. This is the unit that is working to come up with deliverables and solutions to make life better for persons living with disabilities.

Now, an important part of what this unit does is the training area. So, for example, we have provided training to several of the residential homes. This bus is an eight-seater bus. What happens on a Saturdays, if I use the example of the training at some of the orphanages, which we have done, we put our staff in the bus, we take with us eight to 15 laptops, we come out on a Saturday morning, we turn on the laptops and we start a module of training. This could take place in any part of the country. That is why we need the bus to transport individuals.

We have found that you could go to a location... I have called several locations that said "yes, we have a computer room, we have an ICT hub" and when you get there, the equipment is either very old or very slow, so that is why, for us, we realise that we have to go equipped and ready to teach.

Mr. Rohee: Very good.

Ms. Ally: What about the driver and the conductor?

Mr. Rohee: We would come to that, you are doing that very well over there.

I am thankful for the exposition offered by the Hon. Member, but would the Hon. Member be so kind to inform us whether there is a paper, whether some research was done on this matter or produced to inform the general public and the Parliament insofar as the elucidation of what you just mention and its availability?

Ms. Hughes: Yes, we have more than a concept paper. We have a policy document also, which we hope in early January to bring to the Parliament for consultation. So, I would be more than happy to...

Mr. Rohee: Oh, for consultation.

Ms. Hughes: Well, we would never, in our Ministry finalise a policy without putting it out for consultation, especially to our Friends on the other side, so I would be more than happy to present you with those documents.

Mr. Rohee: I would be very grateful.

Programme: 334 – Industry Innovations – \$9,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates. (8.58 p.m.)

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, this brings to an end our work for today. We have completed the work, which we have set ourselves to do for today and I express my thanks to all Hon. Members, for the manner in which we conducted our business today. Hon. Member, we are going to let the Assembly be resumed and then I have an announcement to make.

Assembly resumed

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I crave your indulgence to present to you, for day three and day, four the agencies which we would consider and the order in which we would consider them. So, on day three which is tomorrow, we would begin tomorrow with the Ministry of Education and then when we get to the Ministry of Communities, we would follow this pattern; we would consider Regions 1,8,9,2, and 3. On day four, we would consider Regions 4,5,6,7 and 10. Then, we would continue with the Ministries in accordance with the schedule which we have. Those were the two matters, Hon. Members, which I wanted to bring to your attention for tomorrow and the day after.

Minister of Communities [Mr. Bulkán]: [*Inaudible*] schedule you omitted to mention that the Ministry would precede Region 1 and the other regions.

Mr. Speaker: I apologise for not making it clear.

Mr. Bulkán: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Certainly, the Ministry, that is, Agency 42, will precede the consideration of the regions, I thank you.

Hon. Members we have come to the end of our work now and I would invite the Prime Minister to move the adjournment motion.

Frist Vice-President and Prime Minister [Mr. Nagamootoo]: Mr. Speaker, I moved the adjournment of this House to tomorrow Wednesday 12th December at 10.00 a.m.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Members, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday at 10.00 a.m.

Accordingly adjourned at 9.03 p.m.