



**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE PARLIAMENT OF
THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC
OF GUYANA**

OFFICIAL REPORT

*PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION
(2020-2025) OF THE TWELFTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION
OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE DOME OF THE ARTHUR
CHUNG CONFERENCE CENTRE, LILIENDAAL, GREATER GEORGETOWN*

12TH Sitting

Friday, 25TH September, 2020

**PARLIAMENT OFFICE
HANSARD DIVISION**

The Assembly convened at 9.33 a.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Birthday Greetings

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, on your behalf and on my behalf, we have another birthday member in the House. It is my honour to extend all greetings of the Highest and best wishes to the Hon. Member, Minister Collin Croal, on this very special day for him. I think he might be the first one up today, so please, it is his birthday.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTION

MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE YEAR 2020

WHEREAS the Constitution of Guyana requires that Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure 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, estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of Guyana for the financial year 2020 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 20-09-09,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2020 of a total sum of three hundred and six billion, two hundred and seventy-one million,

two hundred and eighty-five thousand dollars (**\$306,271,285,000**), **excluding twenty-three billion, two hundred and seventy-three million, eight hundred and forty-six thousand dollars (\$23,273,846,000)** which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the under-mentioned schedule, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to make further provision in respect of finance.

[Minister of Public Works on behalf of the Vice-President]

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are doing quite well this morning. It is 9.35 a.m. I want to invite the Hon. birthday Minister and his team. As the Hon. Minister and his team are getting settled, we can turn to pages 330 and 331.

Sorry, I think this morning the place might be extra cold. It is pages 318 and 319. Actually, there is some new technology, anti-fog, and I was told that this cloth is an anti-fog cloth, but certainly it is not doing the job.

Agency 45: Ministry of Housing and Water

Current Expenditure

Programme: 451 – Policy Development and Administration – \$53,956,000

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, since I am on my feet, allow me to personally extend birthday wishes to the Hon. Member, I wish him God's riches blessing for long life and prosperity.

Before we seek to examine the Estimates before us, there are a few observations that I have made between the Estimates and that of the Budget speech. The Budget speech speaks to \$3 billion being appropriated for the Ministry of Housing, proper, and \$2.8 billion for the water sector, giving us a total of \$5.8 billion. When I went to the actual expenditure for both sectors, I realise that we have in excess of \$7.5 billion. My question to the Hon. Minister is whether he could explain the difference or the short fall of the \$1.3 billion, I think it is, from the Estimates?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister I know the question is not under a particular line item, but I think it is a fair question for clarification.

Minister of Housing and Water [Mr. Croal]: The Appropriation Bill will have the total on the two Ministries... *(inaudible)*. This copy does not have the Ministry... *(inaudible)*.

I can explain it, but just let me get the... There is a total in the Appropriation Bill. Under the Ministry of Housing and Water, there is the current expenditure of \$1.3 billion and under the capital expenditure there is \$2.5 billion.

Ms. Ferguson: To the Hon. Member, I am quite aware that, under the current expenditure there is \$1.3 billion. If one is to do the disaggregation, the housing sector will get, I think, \$700 million and the water sector will get \$600 million, which would give the total sum of \$1.3 billion, but you have not answered my question.

The question that I asked is: the Budget speech speaks to \$3 billion for the housing sector and \$2.8 billion for the water sector. When I check the capital expenditure, the total sum would give me in excess of \$7.5 billion. Seven billion five hundred million dollars minus the \$5.8 billion would give a difference of \$1.7 billion, thereabout. The question that I am seeking clarity on is, where in the Estimates can I find the \$1.7 billion?

Mr. Croal: There is no reference to \$7.8 billion. There is a reference to close to \$3.8 billion under the housing programme in the Appropriation Bill.

Ms. Ferguson: Perhaps we are having some difficulties with figures, this morning, Mr. Chairman. I will not seek to waste much time. Perhaps, we will try to find that out otherwise. If I could turn our attention to pages 318 and 319, respectfully, I would seek to consolidate these line items. On page 319, one - I note that for 2020, we have 18 staff. Could the Hon. Member explain to the Committee whether the 18 staff were employed post-August, 2020; two – what are the positions; three – their emoluments; and fourthly – where are these persons assigned and what process of employment was used for the hiring for these 18 staff?

Mr. Chairman: Before you take the floor Hon. Minister. Hon. Members, we are all good word smiths in the House. I am sure that when we make these preambles, it would not escape those responding to amplify their response. I have been allowing the latitude. It states that the Standing Order speaks to the issue of asking questions and you could discuss also the policy with respect to the allocation, but if Hon. Members would insist on making the comments they make, I will have

to allow all sides some latitude and we might be here until early tomorrow morning. Hon. Minister, go ahead, Sir, I think you heard what was said earlier.

Mr. Croal: All 18 employees have been employed pre-August. They are a part of splitting with the Ministry of Communities, so these staff are all currently under the Ministry of Communities and they will be coming over under the Ministry of Housing and Water. They are: an Accountant, one Auditor, the Expenditure Planning and Management Analyst and a Planning Officer.

9.48 p.m.

Do you want to know the salaries too? [**An Hon. Member:** (*Inaudible*)] Okay, sure: an Accountant at \$133,000; an Auditor at \$160,000; an Expenditure Planning and Management Analyst at \$144,000; a Planning Officer at \$103,000; two Clerk III at \$80,153 and \$74,798, respectively; two Accounts Clerk III at \$100,000 and \$78,000; two Office Assistants at \$70,000 and \$77,000 - I am just rounding it off, I could go exact if you would like; Drivers at \$70,000; Cleaner \$77,000, a Permanent Secretary at \$742,000; Administrative Assistant at \$119,000, two Drivers at \$99,000 and \$70,000, respectively; and a Security Officer at \$90,000. Those would take care of the 18 employees.

Mr. Sears: I just want to use this opportunity to, also, extend birthday wishes to the Hon. Minister. Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: I would like to know if any of this allocation, the \$5.4 million, will go to regional offices and which or what are those regional offices?

Mr. Croal: These are all on administration. These costs will be at the Brickdam and the Camp Street locations.

Mr. Sears: Line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence: could the Hon. Minister state, out of the \$2.5 million, where in the interior location might the outreach or travel be done?

Mr. Croal: The expense is not specific to any one region. This is part of aiding in the administrative staff to do their work effectively, inclusive of travelling.

Ms. Ferguson: I turn our attention at line item 6284 – Other: I see an appropriation sum of \$10 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain what ‘Other’ entails?

Mr. Croal: This expense includes advertisements as well. There is a Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programme that previously fell under the Ministry of Communities. There is a \$5 million allocation there. That is for public awareness on sensitisation on sanitation and hygiene. There are other allocations that include advertisements in relation for the Ministry, notices, markings, work-study attachments... (*inaudible*).

Ms. Ferguson: Hon. Member, if I could quickly take you back to line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings. You said the Brickdam and Camp Street offices, could you identify which office is at Camp Street?

Mr. Croal: As the former Minister would very well be aware, there are staff under the Ministry of Communities at Camp Street. Most of the administrative staff that I called out in the prior question are currently housed there. That is what it is.

In terms of the Brickdam office, that is to do the electrical works and plumbing at the Ministry.

Mr. Sears: In regard to line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): I would like to ask the Hon. Minister, just to give us an idea as to what those training programmes are and, which departments it will likely benefit?

Mr. Croal: These are in terms of procurement for staff development. We would realise that we are now under the Ministry of Housing and Water, proper, so there are some internal training that we would like to have.

Programme: 451 – Policy Development and Administration – \$53,956,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 451 – Policy Development and Administration – \$5,000,000

Mr. Sears: With regard to project code – 2507000 – Furniture and Equipment: it states – “Purchase of furniture and equipment...”, I would like to know, out of this allocation, which offices are these furniture going to be designated to? What likely would be the timeframe for this project to be completed, if before December?

Mr. Croal: These equipment and furniture are for the central Ministry. There will be a new Permanent Secretary because of the split. It caters for that office as well as for the administrative staff. The procurement - these are all routine procurement, so they will not take longer than a month.

Programme: 451 – Policy Development and Administration – \$5,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 452 – Housing Development and Management – \$714,300,000

Ms. Ferguson: If I could turn the Hon. Member's attention to Staffing Details, I note for 2020, you intend to hire, perhaps, three staff. Could you explain their positions, emoluments, where they will be assigned and if these persons were hired post-August 2020?

Mr. Croal: There are no new staff catered for or mentioned here in terms of [*inaudible*]. These were all staff under the Ministry of Communities and, as part of the split, they are coming over to Ministry of Housing and Water. We are talking about two Architects, at an emolument of \$226,037 and a Typist Clerk for \$74,706.

Ms. Ferguson: Line item 6294 – Other: I note that we have an appropriation sum of \$10 million. Could the Hon. Member explain what entails 'Other'? Sorry, line item 6284 – Other.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6284 – Other: caters, primarily, for a launching and the proprietary work for a building expo to be held in the first quarter of 2020.

Ms. Ferguson: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: I know on page 97 that this sum will be going to the Central Housing and Planning Authority - \$700 million. Could the Hon. Member detail for the Committee what this sum will be utilised for?

Mr. Croal: The \$700 million is the subsidy that is finally being returned to the Central Housing & Planning Authority (CH&PA) for which was stopped in 2015. The \$700 million breakdown includes: the salaries for \$531 million; other direct labour cost for \$42 million; benefits and allowances – \$40 million; materials equipment and supplies – \$35,200,000; and fuel and lubricants – \$27,500,000.

Ms. Ferguson: On that very line item, even though the Hon. Minister made mention that there was a cessation to the subsidies, at least, the Central Housing & Planning Authority was able to survive for five years under the Coalition Government, salaries were paid amongst every other thing. Two, we know that the Central Housing & Planning Authority is a semi-autonomous agency that generates its own income.

Could the Hon. Member explain the number of staff who are expected to benefit from the \$700 million? Perhaps you could provide the first five, their designations and their emoluments amongst other things.

Mr. Croal: May I advise the former Minister that the day is going very nice. I do not want to appropriately respond because the Central Housing & Planning Authority had \$8 billion in 2015 and, at July to August, 2020, it was left with \$3.6 billion. So, please do not let us go down that road, I could appropriately respond.

Staffing - there are different categories for staffing and we are talking about 250. There are various categories, let us go; administrative and probably I will give you the two highest on each - there is a Director of Operations – \$722,000 per month; Director of Finance – \$580,000; Senior Technical the category, Head of Monitoring and Evaluation Unit \$624,000; Director of Community Development \$530,000; Other Technical and Craft Skilled; the Executive Assistant \$314,000; Legal and Conveyance Officer \$288,000; Clerical and Office Support; Senior Community Development Facilitator \$217,000; Community Development Officer III – \$179,000; Semi-Skilled Operative and Unskilled; two Excavator Operators \$214,000.

10.03 a.m.

The other one is \$188,000. For Contracted Employees, there is a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) at \$794,000 and a Deputy Director of Projects at \$580,000. For Temporary Employees, \$167,240 is for a Payment Officer and \$162,750 is for a Clerk of Works

Ms. Ferguson: I just want to make it clear to this honourable Committee and, perhaps, to those viewing in nation land that, even though the former Government, the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C), left \$8 billion, some of those moneys were used to ensure that housing units were constructed for ordinary Guyanese citizens. That is it for me on this particular programme.

Mr. Chairman: It is only fair that I ask the Hon. Minister if he wants to respond. If we want to make statements rather than ask questions, I will be fair to both sides.

Mr. Croal: I hope the former Minister is not referring to the houses at Experiment, which persons cannot even afford to buy. I hope the Hon. Minister is not talking about some of the houses at Perseverance to which we have to do repairs. I am begging her to please do not go down that road because it would not be a nice road.

Ms. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister. Hon. Members, I now put the question that the sum stated...

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman...

Mr. Chairman: Do you have a question, Hon. Mdm. Ferguson?

Ms. Ferguson: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Ms. Ferguson: I do not have a question.

Mr. Chairman: I will not allow a statement, please.

Ms. Ferguson: Pardon?

Mr. Chairman: I will not allow a statement. Thank you.

Programme: 452 – Housing Development and Management – \$714,300,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 452 – Housing Development and Management – \$1,870,615,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman, I did tell you before that you need to consider fumigation for this honourable House. A lot of speaking is going on.

Mr. Chairman: Is that included in that line item?

Mr. Mahipaul: It is ‘project code,’ Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I think that we have passed Parliament Office already.

Mr. Mahipaul: Project code 1903100 – Infrastructural Development and Buildings: There is the sum of \$1,720,615,000. I see that there is a rollover of \$176,105,000. In the Legend, it states, under the description of project:

“Provision for electrical hardware, LED streetlights and recreational facilities.”

I am aware that there were some streetlights on the main road leading into the La Parfaite Harmonie scheme and, unfortunately, they were removed. My first question is: would this consideration be for light emitting diode (LED) streetlights for the people of La Parfaite Harmonie?

Secondly, the Legend states there would be:

“Upgrading of roads in Prospect, Perseverance, Little Diamond, Great Diamond, Parfaite Harmonie, Herstelling, Eccles and Zeelugt.”

La Parfaite Harmonie and Zeelugt are large schemes – Zeelugt has three phases. I would appreciate it if the Hon. Minister can say which phase would be dealt with in this allocation. The same goes for La Parfaite Harmonie – which phase the allocation would deal with and what are the length of the roads? Could I have a comparison between Zeelugt and La Parfaite Harmonie in terms of the allocation for each area?

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Member. Thanks for the representation for Eccles.

Mr. Croal: Maybe I can start with giving a summary of the total expense and then we can go into some of the specifics. For rollover projects from the previous Administration, the allocation is \$176,105,000. For the development of existing housing schemes, the allocation is \$300,000,000. For the first phase infrastructure for new housing development, such as land preparation and the construction of access roads, which is only to commence, the allocation is \$292,000,000. For installation of lights, it is \$49,200,000. For boreholes and two wells in the Central Housing & Planning Authority’s (CH&PA) housing areas at Lust-en-Rust and Prospect, it is \$80,000,000. Procurement of electrical hardware materials to provide electricity in a number of areas, I can

willingly go through them – \$200,000,000; and land acquisition – \$622,500,000. That is a summary of how the \$1,720,615,000 will be spent.

Let us go to the specifics: installation of LED lights in Belle West, phase two; Uitvlugt, phase one; and Zeelugt, phases one and two, all in Region 3. Let me give you all: In Farm, it is phase one; Covent Garden, Good Hope, Herstelling, Plots A, B and C; in Providence, it is phases two; and three; in Peter's Hall, it is phase one; and Section B, Non Pareil; Experiment, West Coast Berbice; Kilcoy; Chesney; Tabatinga, Lethem; Amelia's Ward, Linden; and Wisroc Phase 1B, Linden. That is for lights.

Let us go to roads. I will give you the rollover projects just now. Do not worry, I have time. For the development of the existing housing areas, we are upgrading the main access roads for Prospect and Perseverance. We are upgrading the main access road at Little and Great Diamond for industrial and commercial purposes. We are upgrading roads to asphaltic concrete at La Parfaite Harmonie. If time permits, I will show you the map. We have them all here; we walked with the office. We will be upgrading the roads at Herstelling and Eccles. We will be upgrading roads to asphaltic concrete at Zeelugt.

Let us go to the other road works. There would be first phase development for new infrastructural works. It includes land preparation, as I said, construction of access roads and bridges in Block A1 being part of Annandale Plantation; Recht Door Zee, West Bank Demerara; Cummings Lodge, Parcel 1768 and 1767; Industry 409; Plantation Prospect's remaining areas; Tracks NX and NY, La Bonne Intention (LBI); Block A1, which is a part of Vigilance; Block B1's portion of Plantation Bladen Hall; Block B1's portion of Plantation Strathspey; Great Diamond; Little Diamond; Block WW, Mon Repos; Parcel 115 Providence; Area C, that is lot 16 or what is called Experiment; Number 79; Skeldon Estate back land; Williamsburg; Hampshire; phases two and three of Ordnance Fort Lands; Lethem; Kwakwani; and Amelia's Ward and Wisroc, Linden. Do you require any more information?

Mr. Mahipaul: Let me thank the Hon. Minister for being so kind as to provide the information with no political rhetoric. Follow-up: I take note of the provision for land preparation for the construction of roads and bridges. May I please ask the Hon. Minister whether the bridges to be constructed are reinforced concrete bridges or timber bridges?

Mr. Croal: They are heavy-duty reinforced concrete bridges.

Ms. Ferguson: On the same project code 1903100, Infrastructural Development and Buildings, if we look at reference number 240 in the *Estimates of the Public Sector, Volume 3*, item three states:

“Provision for land preparation and construction of roads and bridges in Recht-Door-Zee, Annandale, Cummings Lodge, Prospect, Little Diamond, Great Diamond, Providence, Lethem and Amelia’s Ward.”

Could the Hon. Member explain to us where exactly in Lethem there would be land preparation?

Mr. Croal: The allocation for Lethem, Kwakwani, Amelia’s Ward and Wisroc would be for severe works and land preparation for new lands that we are about to receive upon the payment of some transfer of money.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson, just hold a second please.

Hon. Members, I just want to bring your attention to the issue of items that are in the courts. Please be mindful of the Standing Order with respect to our comments here on matters that are *sub judice*.

Ms. Ferguson: On the very project code 1903100, Infrastructural Development and Buildings, *Estimates of the Public Sector, Volume 3*, page 240, item three, could the Hon. Member explain to the Committee whether survey works have commenced in the Amelia’s Ward area?

Mr. Croal: No. I did say, “to commence.”

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Cox. Hon. Member, Tabitha Sarabo-Halley. His microphone was on five minutes ago.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Just for clarity on the same project code, the planned duration, as I see for this, is from 1st October to 20th December this year. With all that has been highlighted, I am wondering if the procurement process and the building and the construction of roads and bridges will be completed in the next three months. Would all of these moneys be utilised for all of these different areas?

Mr. Croal: The answer is yes. We are ahead of the game; we have already started the bidding process.

Mr. Chairman: I thought you had abandoned the question, Hon. Member Mr. Cox. Hon. Members, we do make copious notes with respect to the line-up. I take umbrage to the fact that I call an Hon. Member and he or she cedes. I do not know that Hon. Members have the power of the Chair here. Hon. Member, Mr. Cox.

10.18 a.m.

Mr. Cox: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Happy birthday, Mr. Croal. To the Hon. Minister, I noticed there are limited provisions for hinterland development under this programme. I am particularly interested in the two housing developments in Mabaruma at Khan's Hill and Hubu Hill. Are there any provisions for those housing developments? I am aware that there are many persons awaiting approval for house lots. Thank you.

Mr. Croal: It is an issue with which both of us are very familiar. There is a contentious issue in terms of Khan's Hill area. The housing development drive for Mabaruma is expected to take off in the 2021 budgetary programme.

Mr. Mahipaul: It may have slipped me to wish the Hon. Minister a happy birthday and so I take the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Chairman: Do you want to know which item the birthday expenses will come from?

Mr. Mahipaul: Project code 1903900: May I ask the Hon. Minister what percentage of work has been completed thus far and could he give us a status update on this same project code?

Mr. Croal: The Adequate Housing and Urban Accessibility Programme, intended for five years, commenced in December, 2017. It is a US\$27 million programme. For three years, only \$5 million have been expended. It is intended that the Ministry will complete this programme. We will actually reformulate the loan to ensure that it is in keeping with our guidelines for providing the necessary adequate housing. We will complete the remaining expenditure within two years' time.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you very much. I did hear the Hon. Member say that this project started in 2017. I am looking at *Estimates of the Public Sector, Volume 3*, reference 241, and the planned duration is from 1st January, 2019 to 31st December, 2023. Could the Hon Minister be kind enough

to verify if, indeed, his 2017 is accurate or is it 2019, as guided from this document, *Estimates of the Public Sector, Volume 3*?

Mr. Croal: The document I have in front of me states that the loan was signed in December [inaudible].

Ms. Ferguson: On that same project code 1903900 – Adequate Housing and Urban Accessibility Programme, I heard the Hon. Minister refer to the position that it is more than likely that this project will be reformed. Have I heard you correctly?

Mr. Croal: We are looking at reformulating the loan in terms of beneficiaries and so forth and we are currently engaging the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). I am very much familiar with the intended target for the project, in terms of the areas identified, and we will complete this exercise within the month.

Ms. Ferguson: On this same project code, I know it is a US\$25.8 million loan that the Government of Guyana was able to get from IDB through the reformulation of the Sheriff Street/ Mandela Avenue project. Some portion of that money was shared between the then Ministry of Public Infrastructure and the Central Housing & Planning Authority. I know for a fact that some aspects of the work commenced in 2019, after the loan was finalised in 2018. I know that the staff at Central Housing & Planning Authority had started some work in the field to ensure that beneficiaries of this particular project are the ones who will benefit. I know the project is from La Bonne Intention (LBI) to Sophia and, also, some works are to be done in Westminster and La Parfaite Harmonie.

My simple question to the Hon. Member is: would your Government continue with the work that the former Government started? Regarding those persons who have already applied for this particular project, the core home and the home improvement, would they benefit? I know that tremendous work was put into ensuring that the beneficiaries were identified. If you are saying that you are going to reform the project, I am trusting all God that those persons will not be neglected.

Mr. Croal: After that long preamble, I will give a three-line answer. I did state that \$5 million would have expended to date. In fact, there is an allocation for \$150 million on the specific, which

is the foreign inflows. So, it indicates that we will be completing whatever is there in the programme. There are some aspects of the project that have not been completed as yet. I am referring to those and not the existing work that is ongoing.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you to the Hon. Member for the explanation. I know the \$5 million plus that were expended was basically to do works in the Sophia area to upgrade roads and playgrounds.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, again, I caution with respect to the Standing Orders and asking questions. The last observation was not a question. I will say that it was a speech after the Minister had finished his response. If we continue like this, I guarantee you that tomorrow will reach us here.

Programme: 452 – Housing Development and Management – \$1,870,615,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 453 – Water Service Expansion and Management –\$606,507,000

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson. Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul.

Mr. Mahipaul: Line item 6321– Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: \$600 million. I am guided by the same Volume that this amount be going to the Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI). Sir, I am aware that, under the previous Administration, there was a number of Indigenous communities that received potable water. I happened to have visited some such as Kaicumbay, Hiawa, Mocomoco and the like. My question to the Hon. Minister is: is there consideration in this \$600 million for that project to continue where GWI will be providing water services to Indigenous communities? Secondly, is there any consideration for water treatment plants in Region 3? For example, I know that A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) did one in Uitvlugt. Is there any other that will be done in Region 3?

Mr. Croal: The Hon. Member started out with line item line item 6321 which is “Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations”, which, in this case, would be GWI. When we get to the capital works programme, he can ask some of the questions on the hinterland. The contribution for this is towards electricity charges as well as some operational cost for the hinterland operations

staff. Since I am on my feet, in terms of electricity charges, since 2018, GWI has not receive subvention or contributions from Central Government for electricity. So, this is to recommence that aspect.

Mr. Sears: With reference to Staffing Details, line items 6111, 6112 and 6117, we are seeing staff complement of four for 2020. The question I want to ask the Minister is: Were any of these employments made post-August, 2020? Could you state the highest and the lowest paid employees?

Mr. Croal: The answer is the same as in the two previous programmes. There is no new staff catered for here. These are all part of the split. It is one Communication Sanitation Officer at a salary of \$142,819, two Engineers – one Senior Engineer at \$276,606 and one Water Sanitation Engineer at \$224,000 – and an Administrative Assistant for \$90,277.

Mr. Sears: Line item 6284 – Other: There is an allocation of \$2 million. Could you please give us the details?

Mr. Croal: Line item 6284 caters for advertisement, procurement notices, airing of television programmes and so forth. This is the water aspect; this is the water programme [*inaudible*].

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6291– National and Other Events: Could the Hon. Minister indicate what this \$200,000 would be used for?

Mr. Croal: Line item 6291 is for recognition of our different cultural and national events that we will have. Hence, we have Diwali and the Christmas season coming up. So, this is the allocation for those in terms of having programmes as well as for benefit for the staff.

Mr. Chairman: I now put the question.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman....

Mr. Chairman: Mdm. Ferguson, I thought I had recognised you when I had to call Mr. Mahipaul after. Go ahead and then I will read Standing Order 38 (2). Go ahead, Hon. Member, Mdm. Ferguson.

10.33 a.m.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I turn our attention to the Budget speech, page 80 of 85, Measures to Support our Senior Citizens:

“effective January 1, 2021, Old Age Pensions will increase from \$20,500 to \$25,000, allowing \$4.4 billion, on annualised basis, to be injected into the disposable income of our senior citizens.

6.23 Pensioners will also benefit from free water service, which will also improve their disposable income.”

I am aware that pensioners ... \$15.5 million per month, which is only \$126 million annually. The question to the Hon. Member is: Could you explain to us how the Government arrived at the \$4.4 billion that will be injected back into the disposable income of our ...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I just want you to first point me to the line item.

Ms. Ferguson: I am coming to that, Mr. Chairman. I am coming to that.

I would like the Hon. Member to say to us where in *Budget 2020* these moneys will be injected back into the disposable income of the elderly?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, once again ...

Ms. Ferguson: He should say whether it will come under line item 6321 or wherever else.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, once again, we see a number of discourtesies to the Chair. The Hon. Member concluded. I was now summing up to put the question to the Minister, but she continued to speak as I took the floor. If I shut off the microphone, I will be labelled as being unfair. The Hon. birthday Minister has had a really pleasant birthday so far and the House has been exemplary so far in its observation of the *Standing Orders*. Hon. Minister, would you like to make a comment on that comment?

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, my first comment is that the former Minister should remember that she is no longer the Minister. She has to remove some of that zeal. Let me give some information. The value to our pensioners, who will not be paying for any water, is to the tune of \$227 million.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, as a soon-to-be pensioner, who will be benefitting from this, you just said, “who will not be paying.” Is it a subsidy or would we be exempted?

Mr. Croal: These pensioners will be exempted from paying value-added tax (VAT). Well, there are two categories. There is the complete removal of VAT for everyone and there is the non-payment by pensioners. The figure I gave, \$227 million, is the value which the GWI will be losing as a result of the measures being taken by the People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government to ensure that we take care of our elderly. Hence, our 100% subsidy.

Programme: 453 – Water Service Expansion and Management - \$606,507,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 453 – Water Service Expansion and Management – \$664,985,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Project code 1601800 – Water Supply Improvement Project: I see a total sum of \$30,000,000. I am guided by the Legend which tells me there will be improved water supply services in areas such as Leguan and Wakenaam. I am also aware that \$69 million was spent by the People’s Progressive Party/Civic to drill a well in Sans Souci, Wakenaam, and, to date, it cannot be operationalised. Could the Hon. Minister indicate if this sum for Wakenaam, Leguan, and the other areas will be to upgrade the existing wells such as we have at Free and Easy, Noitgedacht, and the like? If not, is it for the construction of new wells? Also, was a feasibility study done to ascertain the area in which this well would be dug? I am being specific to Wakenaam and Leguan.

Mr. Croal: I will approach the question in two ways. One: the \$30,000,000 is a Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)-funded project and the activities are a consultancy service for the preparation of a detailed design for water supply improvement works – and that is to look at the Hope Canal as a sustainable, potable water source – and consultancy services for strengthening governance in the water sector. This is across the country.

Regarding the second part of your question, which deals with Wakenaam and Leguan, that is currently being done in-house by the GWI in this year’s programme. They are currently addressing

the issue and the challenge that you they are having. We expect that, within a month or under a month, it will be rectified.

Mr. Mahipaul: Follow-up: Am I to interpret correctly – and I could be wrong and I am subject to correction – that no part of the \$30,000,000 would be focusing on Wakenaam and Leguan?

Mr. Croal: Through you, Mr. Chairman, the study will include Wakenaam and Leguan. They are part of the complete study.

Mr. Mahipaul: Rather than to go through it again, the same question applies for project code 2802100, Hinterland Water Supply. I am interested in knowing the areas that are being considered for water supply improvement in the hinterland. Could the Hon. Minister say, out of this \$130,000,000, if moneys were already utilised for the Hinterland Water Supply project? If so, which communities benefitted? For moneys to be used, which are the communities that will be benefitting?

Mr. Croal: For the Hinterland Water Supply project, there are a number of activities. Firstly, there is the installation—I will come to the complete answer to the second part of your question just now—of the mains for new services in Port Kaituma. This is to benefit those residents who are living between One Mile to Four Miles. This is a new installation. An allocation of \$20 million is made available. While we are buying pipe fittings, the well will be dug sometime in the new month through a rig that has already been procured under the GWI.

The second activity is expansion works at the Mabaruma spring. They currently receive three hours of supply three times a week. We are looking to increase that to a minimum of eight hours of supply daily. For my friend from Mabaruma, that is between 6.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m. and 3.00 p.m. to 7.00 p.m. daily. For expansion works at the Barabina spring, we are looking to improve the water supply to the residents there to a minimum of eight hours. We expect to do this work within two months.

For the expansion works at Wanaina spring, again, this is expected to increase to a minimum of four hours of supply five times a week.

There would be the rehabilitation of the storage tank, which everybody is familiar with when they travel to Mabaruma. That tank, unfortunately, has been repaired—in my records, when I looked—

about two or three times previously by the GWI. What will be done is we will repair the trestle and we will place six new plastic tanks to provide storage of an average of 40 cubic meters. This will now service the hospital and the North West Secondary School on a continuous supply. There is the upgrade of distribution networks in the settlement area—there are about 400 persons—to improve water for a minimum of 12 hours daily, especially in the area that is called “Jungle”.

In Santa Rosa, we are looking to improve the water supply in the Santa Rosa network that will be expanded. These areas include One Mile, Rincon, and Santa Rosa Island, which is across the bridge. Those are the completions that we expect by the end of this year. We will commence distribution networks in Mora from the current Santa Rosa well network. We are also looking to increase the pumping hours in Santa Rosa to a minimum of 12 hours daily.

Part of the hinterland programme will also see the procurement of a number of photovoltaic systems. This is for the in-house drilling for distribution networks at Shulinab, Shea, Mabaruma, and Cheong Mouth. There would be the purchase of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) for a number of sub-regions. These include Paramakatoi, Mahdia, Santa Rosa and Matthews Ridge for the Matarkai end.

Installation of a distribution network at Shulinab: there is already a Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF) project for the drilling of a well. There is already a project for the procurement of the materials. What this hinterland programme will cater for is drilling a well at Shulinab.

There would be the installation of a distribution network at Shea and the drilling of a new well there also. The well that is in Shea currently has collapsed.

For Cheong Mouth, an allocation is made for the drilling of a new well, installation of mains and service connections and other fittings.

That will complete the hinterland programme for this year. Hence, the money that is stated there, \$130,000,000, is all for new works.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Mahipaul, is this a follow-up?

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, it is a new project code.

Mr. Chairman: Let us take the Hon. Ms. Ferguson. She has been waiting for quite some time.

Ms. Ferguson: Project code 2802100 — Hinterland Water Supply: Could the Hon. Member explain, because I do not see it in *Budget 2020*, whether his Administration has abandoned the project for the Hosororo falls? I know that some works would have commenced under the Coalition Government.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, I did allude to the CDB-funded programme of studies. That supply was sourced and will be part of the studies to ensure that we have adequate information before we make the level of investment that is required.

10.48 a.m.

Mr. Mahipaul: Project code 2802200 – Coastal Water Supply: The Legend guides us that it includes the drilling of well at Uitvlugt. I will appreciate if the Hon. Minister could indicate which part of Uitvlugt and say why there is need for a well at Uitvlugt.

I am grateful to note that there will be the completion of wells at Vergenoegen, Pouderoyen and Westminster, in Region 3. There is provision for smart metres and bulk flow metres for La Parfaite Harmonie and other areas. Sir, I know that La Parfaite Harmonie is a big scheme that is awaiting to be handed over to the Neighbourhood Democratic Council (NDC), and, similarly, Tuschen and Zeelugt new schemes. Tuschen has two phases and Zeelugt has three phases. Sir, Tuschen and Zeelugt are older schemes than La Parfaite Harmonie, my question to the Hon. Minister is whether there is any consideration for smart metres and bulk flow metres for Tuschen and Zeelugt schemes the same way they are being considered for La Parfaite Harmonie. Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Croal: The allocation for the well at Uitvlugt, for which the Hon. Member is aware that a new well has been constructed in that area... the allocation is to complete the payment and that includes a variation of \$20,750,000 and a retention of \$7,153,000.

The other activities would be the completion of the well at Vergenoegen. This, of course, is a rollover project and it is to be completed. There is a variation of \$28 million and a retention of \$22 million. The question that was asked about the smart water metres, that will be in the programme for 2021 and moving forward. What we have sought to do here is to ensure that the activities that are stated be completed in this year.

Mr. Mahipaul: A follow-up: If I am hearing the Hon. Minister correctly, smart metres and bulk flow metres will be placed at La Parfaite Harmonie first before Tuschen and Zeelugt new scheme, notwithstanding that Tuschen and Zeelugt are older schemes than La Parfaite Harmonie.

Mr. Croal: This allocation is for the procurement of smart water metres and bulk flow metres at La Parfaite Harmonie, Mon Repos/Beterverwagting area and Friendship/Providence area.

Mr. Sears: With reference to project code 2802700, Water Supply and Infrastructure Improvement Programme, I would like to pose the question to the Minister. Under this project, it is expected that there will be installation of distribution and transmission networks, could you state if this applies to Region 10?

Mr. Croal: The simple answer is no. It applies to Regions 3, 4 and 6.

Mr. Mahipaul: A follow-up on the same project code, I see there is construction of water treatment plants at Cornelia Ida to De Kinderen. I am very happy about that. I am assuming that you are talking about the same water treatment plant that is at Uitvlugt, which distributes water from Cornelia Ida to De Kinderen. Sir, I may be wrong, so I am seeking some guidance. Is there a difference between the one before, which we were talking about in relation to the drilling of a well at Uitvlugt, and this water treatment plant that is stationed in Uitvlugt distributing water at Cornelia Ida to De Kinderen? I am seeking clarity on that, Sir. [**An Hon. Member:** *(Inaudible)*]

Mr. Chairman: I, again, hear unparliamentary language in the House. I do not want to name anyone.

Mr. Croal: The well is placed next to the water treatment plant. As simple as that. Those areas that you have identified are part of the distribution network.

Programme: 453 – Water Service Expansion and Management – \$664,985,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: This concludes our consideration of this particular agency. I want to thank the Minister and his staff, and I want to thank the Hon. Members for giving him an extra 15 birthday minutes. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members, could we now turn to Agency 43, the Ministry of Public Health. We are waiting for the Hon. Minister of Health and his team to settle. We are about to consider the Estimates for Agency 43.

Agency 43: Ministry of Public Health

Current Expenditure

Programme: 431 – Policy Development and Administration – \$1,211,534,000

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support: I noticed that there is a steep increase of about 29 staff members, and there is, more or less, the same allocation of \$85 million. Could the Minister please indicate to this Committee the designation and the remuneration of the top five and the bottom three staff members.

Minister of Health [Dr. Anthony]: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you very much Hon. Member for the question. Indeed, there has been an increase in 29 new staff in this area and those persons include three Bond Clerks, five Clerk II, one Office Assistant, two Typist Clerks, two Data Entry Clerks, ten Stores Attendants, two Handymen, an Accounts Clerk, a Receptionist and one Accounts Clerk II. The salary range for these categories of persons is between \$70,000 for the Bond Clerks and \$73,000 for the Clerk II.

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: Could the Hon. Minister layover the items that would be purchased under this line item and the remaining to be spent, I think, for the three-month period for this year?

Could the Hon. Minister also suggest to us the list of importers of the drugs? We want to know if they are in sync with the standards of the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department (GAFDD). Sometimes there would be little problems with the standards of the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department. We are asking if there are any importers of the drug who are not complying with the standards of the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department.

I am asking two questions, one is for the drugs and supplies to be bought under this line item to be laid over, and two is for the Minister to state if there are any problems with the importers regarding

the standards of Government Analyst Food and Drug Department and, if so, whether the problems would be solved.

Dr. Anthony: The expenditure is about \$30 million. These moneys were spent on emergency purchases of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). I am told that the then Ministry spent about \$11 million on PPEs and then another \$18 million worth of reagents. Those were reagents that were bought for various laboratories and we can layover the examples of the reagents that were bought. I am not sure if the staff would be able to tell us whether they bought it locally or imported it, but I am sure that they probably had to get those reagents imported. We would provide the list of the importers or the persons who had the contracts for delivery of those reagents and the types of reagents.

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: I noticed that, even going to Agency 47 as well, it is repeated that most of the local organs are just the Cancer Institute of Guyana and the Guyana Chest Society. What has become of the Guyana Diabetic Association, the Guyana Sickle Cell Association and the Guyana Haemophilia Society and so on, because I see that no subventions were allocated to them under this line item? It has been omitted. Are you not catering for these other smaller organisations like the Guyana Diabetic Association and the Guyana Sickle Cell Association as I mentioned before?

Also, for those that are already getting subsidies, like the Guyana Chest Society or the Cancer Institute of Guyana, do you have reports that we can look at and, if you do, could you lay them layover them?

Dr. Anthony: As far as I am aware, \$18 million has been spent from January to September of 2020. While the Hon. Member is asking about the Board of the Cancer Institute of Guyana, I do not think that is captured here. The organisations that would receive funding under this line item includes the Central Board of Health, the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Board, the Guyana Red Cross Association, the St. John's Ambulance Brigade, the Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association (GRPA) and the Presidential Commission on Non-Communicable Diseases.

11.03. p.m.

Now, Mr. Chairman, as you are aware, we just came into Government and, therefore, we would have expected to see reports, because these organisations have been receiving these contributions for the last five years. Hon. Member, when I was sitting on the other side, if you go back to the *Hansard*, you would see that I had asked similar questions for such reports but, unfortunately, when I asked for those reports I did not get them. I will definitely ask these organisations, as a condition for getting the subvention, to be able to get reports at the end of the year.

Programme: 431 – Policy Development and Administration – \$1,211,534,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 431 – Policy Development and Administration – \$17,356,000

Programme: 431 – Policy Development and Administration – \$17,356,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 432 – Disease Control – \$1,557,762,000.

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6222 – Field Materials and Supplies: Could the Hon. Minister give us examples of some of the field materials and supplies that we are talking about under this line item?

Dr. Anthony: For this line item, \$32.3 million were already expended. The things that were bought under this head include face masks for the persons working at Port Health, PPEs and other items that are required by the National Malaria Programme, cables for the Television (TV) programme, labels for a printer and other accessories for the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Sexually Transmitted Disease (STI) programmes, another printer for the National Public Health Reference Laboratory and \$28.7 million went to the Health Emergency Operations Centre (HEOC).

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6292 – Dietary: I see there is a massive increase for about \$23 million, could you say for what was that used?

Dr. Anthony: Twenty-nine million dollars was indeed expended, of which, we spent approximately \$22.7 million for the quarantine and isolation facilities for persons who are housed there. When you have people in these facilities you have to give them food. Three meals per day amounted, so far, to \$22.7 million. We spent \$4.4 million through the HIV programme for persons who would normally come into the National Aids Programme Secretariat (NAPS) to be able to get some relief. This has been an ongoing programme. The sum of \$2.3 million was spent by the Tuberculosis (TB) programme to provide relief for TB patients.

Dr. Cummings: My last question on this programme. Line item 6117 – Temporary Employees; There is an increase of 94 persons in temporary employment, why is there such a huge number under temporary employment?

Dr. Anthony: Indeed, we had an increase of 96 temporary staff, and these include Field Assistants who are helping us with surveillance. We had relief Cleaners, Monitoring and Evaluation Officers, Surveillance Officers, Psychologists, Mental Health Counsellors, Receptionists, Handymen and some senior Inspectors. This body of people comprised the 96 persons which accounts for the increase.

Programme: 432 – Disease Control – \$1,557,762,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 432 – Disease Control – \$88,063,000.

Programme: 432 – Disease Control – \$88,063,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 433 – Family Health Care Services – \$871,753,000.

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6117 – Temporary Employees: Was the programme for family healthcare partly included in the COVID-19 exercise and why is there an increase of 20 extra persons for this line item?

Dr. Anthony: These persons are mainly from the dental services. During the period, 11 Dental Aids were employed, five Dental Surgeons, one Nutrition Auxiliary Officer, one Medex and one Telephonist.

Programme: 433 – Family Health Care Services – \$871,753,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 433 – Family Health Care Services – \$408,425,000.

Programme: 433 – Family Health Care Services – \$408,425,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 434 – Regional and Clinical Services – \$12,764,094,000.

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: We know that you have been complaining about no drugs in the regions. I am wondering, since I see that the number remains the same for 2020, if it would be adequate to cover the different regions? I know that the regions warranted the drugs to the Ministry of Health and they had some amount of 40% in emergency supplies. In the light of COVID-19, would this number be adequate for the main and basic essential drugs, looking into the formula.

Dr. Anthony: In terms of drugs and medical supplies, what we have there is an expenditure for January to September, which was \$289 million. Among the moneys that were expended, the Ministry bought general supplies of medicine worth \$121 million. It also bought supplies for Linden Hospital Complex, which was worth \$39.7 million, and medical gas for various hospitals which costs \$67.5 million. This took care of the sum of money that is budgeted here. When we are talking about the new procurement, when we come the other section of the Budget, which deals with October to December, you will see that there are allocations there to adequately take care of the purchase of goods.

Programme: 434 – Regional and Clinical Services – \$12,764,094,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 434 – Regional and Clinical Services – \$1,588,412,000.

Programme: 434 – Regional and Clinical Services – \$1,588,412,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

11.18 a.m.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 435 – Health Sciences Education – \$361,884,000

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6302 – Training: I am wondering if this training is for Community Health Workers. What is the category and number of persons being trained, and are they from the various regions?

Dr. Anthony: The categories of persons who will be trained under this heading include, Community Health Workers, Pharmacists, Environmental Health Assistants, Dentex, Medex, Rehabilitation Assistants, Laboratory Technicians, X-Ray Technicians, General Nurses and Public Health Nurses. We do training in general administration, as well.

Programme: 435 – Health Sciences Education – \$361,884,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Capital Estimates

Programme: 435 – Health Sciences Education – \$773,000

Programme: 435 - Health Sciences Education – \$773,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Current Estimates

Programme: 436 – Standards and Technical Services - \$830,464,000

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skilled: There is an increase from 68 to 81, could you give us the designations of those persons and their emoluments?

Dr. Anthony: Under this category, we have Medical Technologists, Medical Laboratory Technologists and X-Ray Technicians. There is an increase of 13 persons and those 13 persons are Medical Laboratory Technicians. Their salaries are \$88,621.

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: I noticed that the Revised Budget for 2019 speaks to approximately \$549.8 million. There was an increase to \$580.7 million, which is showing that drugs were bought. Could you give us examples of some of the drugs that were bought under this line item?

Dr. Anthony: This line item deals with the purchase of reagents and supplies for the Blood Bank. The sum of \$180 million was spent on supplies to the Blood Bank, \$276.6 million were spent for laboratory reagents and services and \$124 million were spent on issues relating to the COVID-19.

Programme: 436 – Standards and Technical Services – \$830,464,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Current Expenditure

Programme: 437 – Disability and Rehabilitation Services – \$359,774,000

Dr. Cummings: I noticed that, under this Programme, we have some newly trained Optometrists from the University of Guyana. Could you tell us if they are employed under contracted employees or are they under technical and craft skilled? If they are not found under either of the two, could the Minister say where will they be placed?

Dr. Anthony: Hon. Member, we have five persons who are employed from that category under line item 6112. We also have some of these persons who newly came in and are currently under ‘temporary employment’ as we work to place them in the right category.

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Does the Ptolemy Reid Rehabilitation Centre come under this line item?

Dr. Anthony: Indeed, the Ptolemy Reid Rehabilitation Centre comes under this line item. The organisations that we normally give subventions to include the Ptolemy Reid Rehabilitation Centre, which normally receives about \$15.3 million per year; the National Commission on

Disability, which normally receives \$17.7 million; and the Eye Care Guyana, which receives \$9.2 million. These are generally the organisations that receive subsidies.

Programme: 437 – Disability and Rehabilitation Services – \$359,774,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 437 – Disability and Rehabilitation Services – \$12,753,000

Dr. Cummings: Project code 2509000 – Equipment – Medical: This is for the purchase of the medical equipment and it is a rollover project, could you give us the status of this project and say what exactly the equipment entails?

Dr. Anthony: The equipment that will be bought under this line item include a medical table, which costs \$652,000; 12 mats for early stimulation, which costs \$8,436,000; and an upper limb tank, which costs \$3,664,000.

Programme: 437 – Disability and Rehabilitation Services – \$12,753,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I thought that the birthday was being celebrated by the Hon. Member, Mr. Croal. Thank you. Could we continue with Agency 47: Ministry of Health, since we have some time?

Agency 47: Ministry of Health

Current Expenditure

Programme: 471 – Policy Development and Administration – \$645,616,000

Dr. Cummings: With the rise in the COVID-19 cases and with the rise in deaths, I am wondering, under this line item 6221, Drugs and Medical Supplies, if there are adequate PPEs and drugs. You spoke about the different hydroxide and the drugs that are being used in the fight against COVID-19. Does this number adequately address the concerns of this pandemic?

Dr. Anthony: We will get to where we are buying drugs for the pandemic but, unfortunately, under this particular head, that is not what we are buying here. We are paying for reagents for the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department. This is the head where we buy reagents for that agency. Later on, we will come to the point about where we are buying drugs.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: I am also seeking your guidance as to whether I am right on this particular item. The programme states, "Policy Development and Administration". I am enquiring about the Minister of Health, the Ministry of Health and the Government of Guyana's policy as it relates to the COVID-19 pandemic and how it is that we should deal with that, given the large increase of deaths and persons who have gotten the virus?

Dr. Anthony: I am not sure which line item the Hon. Member is referring but, I am very pleased to talk about the Government's policy in dealing with COVID-19. If we look at what we need to do in the health system, we need to do a couple of things.

11.33 a.m.

We have to get adequate personal protective equipment (PPEs) for frontline health workers. That has been addressed because when we came into government, there were less than 1,000 N95 masks available. As we speak, today, there are thousands of masks in the Materials Management Unit (MMU). One of our priorities has been to ensure that we were able to address the shortage of PPEs, which includes masks, gowns, things for the hair, shoe covers *et cetera*. That is one priority of the Government.

The second one was to treat patients who come to the hospitals. Most of our facilities did not have the relevant equipment to be able to provide the quality of treatment that was necessary. This includes having ventilators, continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) machines, bi-level positive airway pressure (BiPAP) machines and so forth. At the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC), we have our infectious disease Intensive Care Unit (ICU) where there were less than four working ventilators. Those ventilators were not fit for the purpose because they were bought to be used for the transportation of patients; they do not work for more than two hours before shutting down. They have a limited scope of time and are not for continuous monitoring or assisting patients with perfusion. We have started to remedy that situation. The Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation received five new ventilators two weeks ago and, as of the 12th October, we

will have another 21 ventilators coming into Guyana. Some of the ventilators will be going to the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation, while the rest will be distributed regionally. We also have in the pipeline, through various projects that we are pursuing, another 30 or 40 ventilators that will be coming in and these too will bolster what we have in the region. That is in terms of equipment.

In terms of treatment and getting medicines to the people who need critical care, we have been able to source the medicines that we know would help patients, especially those who are hospitalised. We have ensured that all of our hospitals have adequate stocks of dexamethasone, which is one of the drugs used to treat patients. We have also, over the last two weeks, been able to access Remdesivir, which is one of the anti-retroviral drugs that is used in the treatment of the COVID-19 patients. All our critical patients at the hospital can now benefit from Remdesivir. We also brought in and have in stock Ivermectin, which is another drug that is being used for the treatment of COVID-19 patients. That is on hand and, if it is necessary, it is available for the doctors to use. All the other medicines that they need are available at the hospitals.

In addition to that, you all know that we had challenges with testing, because we did not have enough test kits in the country. We had less than 1,000 to 1,500 kits before August, but we have rectified that. Over the last couple of weeks we have brought in about 50,000 kits. We have 40,000 kits from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Government of Barbados gave us 10,000 of those kits, so we now have close to 50,000 kits. These have been distributed to the regions, so if it is necessary for a test to be done out there, it can be done. We have been getting more samples coming in and we are processing more at the National Public Health Reference Laboratory. At the National Public Health Reference Laboratory, we are able to do our own testing and, at times, when we have a lot of cases backing up, we have worked out an arrangement with the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), so we are able to send samples there. We have now worked out an arrangement with the United States of America (USA), so that we can send samples there as well. We are in the process of working out an arrangement between Region 9 and Brazil, in order for our samples from Region 9 to go across to Brazil, so that the samples do not have to come to town for us to work on them. In the interim, we have looked at a number of other options on how we can treat the backlog and the processing time.

Additionally, we have already ordered and are awaiting an extractor which can help us to process these samples faster. Right now, it takes the National Public Health Reference Laboratory, about eight hours to process those samples. This extractor we have bought, and are awaiting the delivery of, would take about two hours to do about 96 samples. We are expecting that extractor shortly. We are also expecting a donation from the Government of the People's Republic of China, which should come in at the end of September, and we will get another extractor.

In terms of testing in the public health system, we are going to be able to process more than 1,000 samples per day, by early October. That is in the public sector. In the private sector, two days ago, I had the pleasure of going to the Eureka Medical Laboratories Inc., where they have bought all of the equipment. They will be able to process another 1,000 or more samples per day with the equipment they have. So, there is the private sector effort in this as well. I am also aware that, very shortly, the St. Joseph's Mercy Medical Hospital is going to have a thermal cycler (PCR) machine in place and will be offering testing, in the private sector. Guyana's capacity would increase dramatically, in the next couple of weeks, so the testing capacity would no longer be a problem.

In addition to that, we have already in the country, from other programmes, a machine called a GeneXpert machine. These machines can be repurposed to do COVID-19 testing. The challenge that we were having was to source the cartridges to put in to do the test. These machines are great because, instead of waiting for 24 or 48 hours, we can get the tests done within 15 to 45 minutes. It is called a point-of-care machine, and we have five of them which have already been serviced. We are sourcing 1,052 cartridges through PAHO, and are expecting them to come into the country within a week or so. Once we have those cartridges, we will be able to use the machines and deploy them to the regions. These are some of the measures that we are taking to ensure that the people of Guyana remain safe.

One of the things that we all have to do is talk to people, so that they wear their masks and they keep social distancing, since these are our preventative measures. There are a lot of people who are not complying with those measures.

So, yes, we have done quite a number of things and we can get the health system ready. At the end of the day, it is a societal problem and we all have to confront it together. If we do not, then we will fail. That is something that we all have to understand. I will just stop there.

Mr. Chairman: I just want to ask a question, before you go. Did I hear you say ‘Ivermectin’?

Dr. Anthony: Ivermectin.

Mr. Chairman: Do you take two of those tablets?

Dr. Anthony: They are also used in the filaria programme. A lot of people, through the mass administration that was done for filaria elimination, already have taken some of those tablets. This is one of the tablets that was recommended in the treatment protocol.

Mr. Chairman: I asked because I was told that was the treatment. I thought I was special, so I had two, not knowing this was the generally available treatment by the Ministry of Health. Thank you for making me feeling so very special.

Hon. Member Ms. Sarabo-Halley.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Thank you, Hon. Minister, for the information and all of that has been done thus far since you came into Government.

A follow-up: My question is based on what you said in the last two minutes, which is that prevention is better than cure. While most of what I heard from you is dealing with the cure and not the prevention aspect, I am still a bit wary. What is the policy in terms of ensuring that persons do not contract the virus in the first place? As you know, when one contracts the virus and there is an underlying symptom, there is very little that you can possibly do at that point. I think that the effort should be spent more on prevention than on the cure. I have heard mostly about the cure rather than the prevention aspect. Could you give us some clarity on that part?

Dr. Anthony: Indeed, we have to spend more efforts on prevention and we have been doing that. We have had a number of educational programmes on television and on radio, working with different stakeholders to get this message out. We have the order that is in place which speaks to the curfew. However, as you all know, when we leave here, we still see a lot of people who are breaching these orders, so we have to get a lot more enforcement. We have had meetings with the law enforcement agencies, talking to them about enforcing the curfew. I do not think a lot of people realise that, if they do not wear their masks in public, it is an offense and they can be prosecuted. If they go to court, they may pay a fine, or they may end up with more serious consequences, so

we need to do more law enforcement. We have been working with various stakeholders and partners to try to spread that message. I think, one of the things that would help us tremendously is if we have some coming together, between political parties *et cetera*, so that the message can be a unified message going out to everyone. Everyone's life here is at stake, and that is why we need to say that over and over; repeat that because it is important.

We have a draft National Risk Communication Plan. We have, also, been working with and repurposed some of the money from the grant that we have for malaria from the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center under Breakthrough ACTION+RESEARCH For Social and Behavior Change. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has allowed us to repurpose some of that money to be able to do more risk communication and we have been doing that. This morning, we were able to get the approval to reprogramme US\$395,000 from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, some of which will be going into the preventative action. We are also working with other stakeholders and partners so that we can spread this message out more.

A notable thing is that the private sector, of their own volition, has been asking us for the technical advice and have been putting up billboards, so that people can see the message to wear masks and so forth. We have spoken to a number of businesses, which have programmes on the radio and television, to sponsor some of the advertisements that we have, so that we can keep the messages going and people can understand.

We have done three knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) studies, with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), so that we can tailor our risk communication messages to peoples' behaviour - how they behave and their nuances - to be able to target some of the recommendations coming out from those KAP studies. We have been working at it and we will continue. We welcome people joining into the effort because, I think, the more people we have repeating these messages, it is better for all of us.

11.48 a.m.

Dr. Cummings: It is music to my ears to hear the Hon. Minister speak about unifying. I am not saying that it is coming a little too late but, I mean, better late than never. Definitely, working together as a team we will achieve more. When the Minister spoke about COVID-19, he spoke

about the three Ts. He spoke about testing - and I am assuming it is the Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test that we are using - and he spoke about treatment. But what about tracking, the surveillance aspect? How are we doing with that? Where are the hotspots? We talk about the traffic lights - the pockets - so as to know where is red, or green, or yellow or where we need to address specifically.

The Minister spoke about prevention and the primary healthcare system which is a very important aspect of prevention. I would like to subscribe that some of the health posts and health centres need to be repurposed to the Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely (SMART) initiative to accommodate pregnant mothers and family health services. Going forward, some of these health centres need to be retrofitted using the SMART hospital initiative and so forth. How would we address those primary health care facilities where people go to at first? How are we address the tracking?

Dr. Anthony: Thank you very much, Hon. Member, for the question. Indeed, we have been doing active surveillance and, actually every morning, we have the team of all the Regional Health Officers (RHO) plus the Surveillance Officers (SO) getting together. We go through what has happened with cases over the last 24 hours to determine where we are and everything else. We have geo-locations and we are able to track that. Based on the information that we had accumulated over the last 24 hours, then the medical teams are deployed accordingly. Our Surveillance Officers are also engaged, so that we can track people who are at home in self-isolation and monitor their symptoms. We have a team of more than 30 persons who are there centrally, and in every region there are teams of persons who do the surveillance. Persons are called, tracked and monitored, and this is an ongoing process.

We also have persons who are in self-quarantine, because they were exposed to someone who is positive. Those persons are tracked similar to the persons who are in isolation. However, in the case of quarantined patients, we monitor them to see whether they are developing any signs or symptoms. In the case of the persons in isolation, because they have tested positive, we monitor them to see whether they have a deterioration in their condition that warrants us bringing them in to one of the hospitals. This has been an ongoing process, and every region has Surveillance Officers who are dedicated to doing this.

In addition, there is the hotline and we are also making some changes. We have spoken to the Guyana Telephone and Telegraph Company (GT&T), for example, so no longer would the doctor have to be permanent at the hotline centre. Once a call comes in, it can be routed to the doctors who are on call so that they can take the call and provide medical advice. It is an ongoing process and, at some point, we would also have to look at other methodologies. We have been talking to a number of companies because other applications are available which can help us to do monitoring. This is a process that is actively being explored, at this point in time.

In terms of cases, one of the issues that we have to look at... As of today, for example, we have 2,709 cases overall, but, of that number, 1,881 persons have recovered. We have a recovery rate of close to 70%. The persons who have died – and it is regrettable that people are dying from the disease – amounted to 74. This represents about 2.7% of the overall people who were infected. We are working and, again, the appeal is for us to get more of this message out there.

In terms of the question on primary healthcare, one of the challenges that we had... I think in March, when the first case appeared, most of the staff of the health centres across the country were scared to deal with COVID-19 patients. Many of the personnel who were there, for various reasons, did not provide full service to the people and that has compounded the problem. If somebody with a chronic non-communicable disease, like Diabetes or Hypertension, goes to one of the primary care facilities and cannot get help then it puts the person even more at risk because the person would not have medications and things like that. That is a problem. We are working with all of our primary care facilities to make sure that they are re-opened. If they were not working effectively, we want to make sure that the systems like the sanitisation of hands, the keeping of social distance and so forth are in place. We are putting those measures in place and we have to continue service. That is one of our priorities. All the RHOs have been told this. We have to keep the services going, especially for our chronic non-communicable disease patients. We would see more of this happening and we would be working to keep these services going.

We have another challenge at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC), because that is where a lot of our critical cases go. One of the challenges is that, since March, many of the planned surgeries were not performed. Again, while we battled with COVID-19, we also had to reopen some of these services to ensure that people could have access to the services. This is an issue that we are still trying to figure out, that is, how we could do both. As of now, if somebody

needs an emergency surgery and comes to the hospital, obviously the person is going to get that emergency surgery. We feel that we can do more, and we have to figure out how we could do more. This is an ongoing process and we have been working at it. Again, I would like to say that the medical staff has been at this since March. They have been working very hard and I want to commend them, because they have done a fantastic job so far.

Dr. Cummings: I do not want to belabour the point. We are focusing, also, on decentralisation. In terms of the surgeries why not try to beef-up the New Amsterdam Hospital, the Lethem Regional Hospital and these other hospitals. At least the number of persons going to the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation would be less because that is the tertiary, referral hospital. If we could, probably, beef-up the hospitals in the major towns like the Suddie Hospital and so on, I guess it will assist.

Dr. Anthony: I think the point that the Hon. Member is making... For example, at the Lethem Regional Hospital, we have recently repaired the surgical theatre which was not working. We have a surgeon in Lethem so that surgeries could occur now in Lethem. The Hospital was short of a diathermy machine and we bought the machine for \$1 million so that surgeries could be done in Lethem. We are building the capacity in these regional hospitals to ensure that we can have more of these services decentralised.

We have looked at the West Demerara Regional Hospital (WDRH). We had a team from the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation that went across to that Hospital to see whether we can reassign some surgeons to the West Demerara Regional Hospital, so that more surgeries could be performed at the Hospital. This is a plan that would be coming, maybe in another week or two. We would be doing more surgeries at the West Demerara Regional Hospital. At the same time, while we are doing all of this, the Diamond Diagnostic Centre was closed, because we are now retrofitting that Centre so that it becomes a SMART centre. But, even while that centre is undergoing retrofitting, some sections are still working. We are trying to do the work and still maintain some of the services. We are hoping that we could get this through, so that we could put that centre back into operation.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: I am not trying to belabour the point but, I think, it is an important issue to be ventilated. The Hon. Minister said that there were over 1,800 recoveries. What I see happening

is that, persons are seeing these numbers and are saying that if they get the virus then they should be okay. Has there been any consideration given to going to those persons who have recovered to see what may have been the long-term effects of getting the virus and putting that out there, so that people could understand that, yes, one may recover but not recover at 100%? That may sort of assist in deterring people from thinking that it is okay.

Dr. Anthony: Thank you for that question because it is on a very important area. What is emerging right now is that persons who have recovered are now seeing that they have what is called a long recovery. That is now coming up in the scientific literature. Two or three months after someone would have gotten rid of the virus, one is seeing other types of illnesses emerging. The last illness that emerged, maybe about a week ago, is that persons who had COVID, three months after, now have Myocarditis, which means that the muscle of the heart is being infected or there is some inflammation there. That is attributed to the virus, the past infection. The same is also being seen with many of the other organs in the body. It is an important question and that is something we definitely have to put a mechanism in place to be able to monitor.

In addition, one of the other things that we have started is to use convalescent plasma. The persons who have recovered would have in their blood the antibodies that can help somebody who is really ill to fight off this virus. We have been encouraging people who have recovered to come forward and make a donation at the National Blood Transfusion Services (NBTS), so that we could get the convalescent plasma and use it on patients who are sicker. In these two ways we are working. One is to monitor the long-term effect, but the more medium-term or immediate-term is to be able to get the convalescent plasma to help other people. I must say that the persons who have been asked, so far, have been responding. We are getting a good amount of convalescent plasma at the hospital.

Programme: 471 – Policy Development and Administration – \$645,616,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Assembly resumed

12.03 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Before we suspend, let me just bring this to the attention of the staff: this morning we were waiting for a quorum to start at 9.30 a.m. but, I think, we failed to take into account that

we had several of our Hon. Members who were online and present. They included Minister Teixeira, the Hon. Member Mr. Datadin, the Hon. Member Mdm. Catherine Hughes and the Hon. Deputy Leader.

Hon. Members, we want to apologise to you who are online this morning. I think we failed to take into consideration your presence. We will keep our eyes on those who are present virtually so that we do not lose them after the luncheon session.

Hon. Members this is a good time to take the suspension.

Sitting suspended at 12.04 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 1.14 p.m.

Assembly in Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, welcome back. As we await the Hon. Minister and his staff to get in place, let me commend the lunch put on by the birthday Minister, Mr. Collin Croal.

Hon. Members as we wait, those of you who are here and those who are joining us virtually, it has been a tradition that at the end of the process of the budget debates and the consideration of the Estimates that we have a cause for uniting. That unity celebration will happen after the session this evening. I am confident that from what we saw at lunch, much more awaits us at that celebration.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 471 – Policy Development and Administration – \$139,044,000

Dr. Cummings: Project code 1216200 – Ministry of Health - Buildings: I notice that there will be a spanking new building at the Ministry of Public Health. I think this sum of \$124,044,000 is talking to it for 2020. I have noticed \$43.95 million and I do not know if that has already been spent or it is to be spent. What is the status of that building including the date of the completion? It is a rollover project.

Dr. Anthony: This is comprised of a number of projects. We have \$9 million for VIKAB Engineering Consultants Limited, which is the consultancy firm that is overseeing the Ministry of

Public Health's headquarters. They have a contract that was signed on the 6th April, 2018. That contract is about a year contract, so these sums are going to them.

We also have, under this heading, the construction of the Ministry of Public Health's head office - \$34.9 million allocated here. This, again, is a rollover project. The contractor here is Chung's Global Enterprise. The original contract sum was \$356.8 million and that contract was signed on the 8th November, 2017. This sum of \$34.9 million in work still remains. They are currently trying to finish off.

Then, \$5 million was spent on remodelling space to house the COVID-19 secretariat. We also have construction of the Ministry's head office. So, within the next three months, we will be spending or are projected to spend \$68.5 million to continue the works on the head office building. That is going to be a new contract. We are going out to a public tender and when we tender then we would know who would be the persons.

We also have, under this heading, consultancy services for supervision and, again, this is a \$1.5 million to a contractor who was supervising the construction at the Ministry of Public Health. There is also \$5 million that is allocated for the completion or to pay for the electrical works at the Materials Management Unit (MMU). Again, this contractor is not determined as yet because we will have to go to public tender.

Dr. Cummings: Could the Hon. Minister layover that information for us?

Project code 2405600 – Land and Water Transport: there is the purchase of a vehicle. Could the Hon. Member give us the specification of the vehicle and where the vehicle will be placed?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, are you laying over the previous information?

Dr. Anthony: I will be happy to layover the information that I just mentioned.

Project code 2405600 – Land and Water Transport: This is for a truck that is being bought for the MMU so that we can use it to deliver drugs and medical supplies.

Programme: 471 – Policy Development and Administration – \$139,044,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 472 – Disease Control – \$3,943,440,000

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Mr. Chairman, if I can, I am looking at what we passed earlier under programme 472, Disease Control. *Budget 2020* had zero and 2019 not much, but I am seeing here at line item 6241, Rental of Buildings, \$7,500,00. Could the Hon. Minister say which building is to be rented or has been rented and for what purpose?

Dr. Anthony: This here would cover rental for a number of places: the call centre at Craig and Millington Street; a building that is being rented in Bel Air Park; one in South Road; and it also covers a building in Prasad Nagar. These buildings were there from March and continue onwards, because this is where we are housing some of the surveillance staff and some of the people that we are using now in the COVID-19 response.

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6294 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister tell us what constitutes Other?

Dr. Anthony: Here is where, I think, the Hon. Member had asked in the Budget presentation about the filaria programme. Here is where we are going to be spending moneys for the mass drugs administration for the continuation of the filaria programme. Later in the year, we are going to be expending money to continue that programme because, as you are well aware, we have completed year one and we are now into year two. The activities had been suspended earlier in the year because of the COVID-19, but we are putting the necessary measures in place so that we could finish this exercise, because if we miss this year then we will not be certified. The moneys had been allocated here to do just what you asked in the budget presentation.

Programme: 472 – Disease Control – \$3,943,440,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 472 – Disease Control – \$4,002,514,000

Dr. Cummings: Under Project code 1216200, Ministry of Health, Buildings, provision for health facilities, could the Hon. Minister expand on this provision please?

Dr. Anthony: This covers a number of things including the construction work that was done on the Mental Health Institute. Actually, it is a rollover project, so we have liabilities that we are paying. This is a \$8.3 million liability that is going to be paid. Similarly, there was the retrofitting of the Mental Health Institute to accommodate COVID-19 operations, again that is a \$1.4 million. We also have electrical works that were done at the Health Emergency Operations Centre (HEOC) and we have emergency rehabilitation works that were also done at the HEOC.

1.28 p.m.

There are some other things here; outstanding works for the Ocean View International Hotel. There is a huge sum of money - \$202 million that we have to pay at the Ocean View International Hotel. We also have some works that were done for the conversion of the Convention Centre at the Ocean View International Hotel to house patients for quarantine. Similarly, there is a sum here to deal with the consultancy services for the person who was contracted to oversee or supervise the Ocean View International Hotel.

Dr. Cummings: Project code 2405600 – Land and Water Transport: I have noticed here, purchase of ambulances and vehicles. I know it includes the all-terrain vehicle (ATV) and ambulances. Could you give me the specifics, where they are to be sent? Ambulances – where are they being purchased from? We certainly do not want any minibus with things inside. We want a real ambulance.

Dr. Anthony: Under this heading we will be buying seven ATVs and they are for Kwabanna, Eteringbang, Puruni, Aishalton, Karasabai, Mahdia and Kato. We are also buying two ambulances. One of the ambulances would be located at the Ocean View International Hotel and one will be located in Region 3.

Dr. Cummings: Project code 4402700 – HIV/TB/Malaria Programmes: could the Hon. Minister disaggregate the sum and tell us, how much for Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Tuberculosis (TB) and Malaria?

Dr. Anthony: Could you repeat the question?

Dr. Cummings: Project code is 4402700 – HIV/TB/Malaria Programme: could you disaggregate the sum under each head? Thank you.

Dr. Anthony: Here, we will be spending \$45.5 million on HIV. This would include purchasing of equipment, doing biological behavioural study, and surveillance survey. For TB we will, also, be spending \$15 million for procurement of computers and furnishing for the National Tuberculosis Programme. We will also be spending \$4.5 million for malaria. This is going to go for the procurement of a wooden boat and engine to be used in Region 1. We will, also, be procuring an ATV for Mabaruma in Region 1.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: The Hon. Minister spoke about the Ocean View International Hotel. I am wondering whether or not we could get some clarity as to what the Ministry or the Government plans to do with this building. Will you rent it? Will you acquire it? How will the Government move forward at this particular building?

Dr. Anthony: The building originally had, I think, eight persons who were contracted to work there and a ninth person to supervise. The work they did leaves a lot to be desired and that has been a challenge for us. This is because different contractors, apparently, were given different sections of the building. We have begun to house patients there and the constant problems we are experiencing are in terms of the electrical wiring and plumbing. Right now while we are constructing a sewerage system, we have to put in a water reservoir as we are not yet connected to Guyana Water Inc. (GWI) because the fittings and the pipings that are there do not match so that is an ongoing process. As we house patients there, we are trucking in water into the facility. Electricity was a challenge, but we are now connected to Guyana Power and Light Inc. (GPL). We are constantly fixing things.

The area that we are using to go in where the doctors have to go; first they have to decontaminate before they use that area and when they leave, they have to do the same. We had to redo the whole area, both for the males and females. Apart from fixing a lot of these things...one of the things that we were supposed to have is an elevator to take patients up and down. We do not have an elevator, but we have an elevator space and that person was given an advance of \$14 million. We now either recoup the money or we get them to start doing the work. In another instance, one of the contractors received an overpayment of \$70 million. In another case, there was a contractor who received an overpayment of \$4 million. These things we now have to reconcile while we still fix the facility.

[An Hon. Member: Who paid them?] Do you want to know who pay them? Really!

We want to put things in place. There is an area for an X-ray unit and we are working to get that up and running. We have an area for a theatre, so we have to get that up and running. We do not have the equipment in that area, we therefore have to buy these things and put them in. Pharmacy: we would have to do the same thing. A laboratory ought to be there; we have to do the same thing. It was built to have a dialysis area; we have to put in the dialysis machine. Of course, there is a space there for Intensive Care Unit (ICU). We will be putting in the gas lines and so forth, so that we could now operationalise the ICU.

There is a lot of work to be done. We have set aside in the Budget about \$700 million to complete some of those works.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: I am not sure if the Hon. Minister heard me clearly. I was really trying to get a sense of the ownership. What does the Government intend to do? Do they intend to rent it? Do they intend to buy it from the person who is claiming ownership? How are they moving forward with the building? Is it by compulsory acquisition? That is what I was trying to get from the Hon. Minister.

Dr. Anthony: That is a very good question and very important question. Those legal matters I would defer to the Attorney General (AG). We have received papers from a lawyer who is representing the gentleman and those documents have been sent to the AG's Chambers for advice. I am sure the AG would be dealing with that.

Mr. Cox: Project code 4402700 – HIV/TB/Malaria Programmes: The Hon. Minister mentioned earlier that they will be purchasing, I think, a boat, an engine, and an ATV for Mabaruma. Could the Hon. Minister give a little bit more details in terms of specifications for these engines and boats? Which communities particularly would be benefiting? Thank you.

Dr. Anthony: I do not have the details here, but I could provide that to you. What I do know is from the capital budget here, it is intended - because these were done by the malaria programme - they have decided where this is going to go. It is boat, an engine and the ATV. I could seek more details and lay that over to you.

Mr. Figueira: Project code 4405200 – COVID Response Programme: I am seeing an allocation of almost \$3 billion for the remaining three months of the year. Could the Hon. Minister provide

some degree of clarity with respect to some of the initiatives that will be implemented within this time frame of the remainder of the year?

Dr. Anthony: This is an arrangement that we have through the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization PAHO/WHO where a number of donor organisations has put money into this PAHO fund. We are able to requisition for different types of materials whether it is personal protective equipment (PPEs) or whether it is buying equipment using this fund. It is basically being administered by PAHO/WHO.

Mr. Figueira: Minister, under the same line item, could you provide us with the initiative with this fund? How will it benefit the youth demographic, the senior citizens demographic and the prisoners who have a different attitude towards dealing with the COVID-19 situation? Some of them are even far more vulnerable in regard to the World Health Organization and how we should approach or deal with the aspects of COVID-19, social distancing and such.

Dr. Anthony: This heading, we have been using it to procure PPEs and other essential things that we require. For example, earlier I spoke about PAHO assisting us in getting packages for those GeneXpert machines, this is where those funds are going to come from and to supply us with test kits and so forth. This fund is what was used to purchase those things.

In terms of specific things dealing with the Lusignan Prison, we will have to do that with the resources that we have within the Ministry of Health and within the Ministry of Home Affairs. We have put measures in place there such as, providing more washroom stations, giving the persons who are there masks and so forth. Those measures are being provided by local funds through these two Ministries.

1.43 p.m.

In terms of the older persons – that is a legitimate concern because, as we know, with COVID-19 the older persons are more at risk. In our risk communication strategy, this is one of the segments of the population that we have been targeting, addressing and trying to get them to understand the risks that they face.

In addition to them, we have also been targeting persons who have other chronic non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and so forth, because these persons too, are

at a true risk. If they get COVID-19, the chances are, they would have a more difficult time. Meaning, they will probably have to be hospitalised, and, in some cases, they might require the use of the ICU.

These are two important segments; we are trying to paint a message to get people to understand the risk that they have in this pandemic.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you Hon. Minister. Hon. Members, I just want us to keep our eyes on the time. This Agency is scheduled to finish at 2.00 p.m. I know we started at 1.15, but we have also gotten back some time from the previous head. We still have close to 11 subheads remaining.

Mr. Figueira: Hon. Minister thank you for that response. I am recognising that you understand the very serious nature of COVID-19 and, more so, the vulnerable. Taking that into consideration, would the Ministry of Health or you make the recommendation, given the fact that the prison, in itself, is a very high-risk environment that is overcrowded. The position of social distancing is a challenge that most of us, in this COVID-19 environment, cannot really put measures in place to address because we do not have the facilities. Given that reality, would the Ministry of Health recommend that prisoners who are charged for petty crimes and sentenced to three to six months be given pardon to do community measures to clean schools, health centres and so forth as a means to protect the other prisoners?

Dr. Anthony: At the Lusignan Prison, as you know, the story is there were two positive patients, within a few days – then you got back the results within 24 hours – because of where they were located, the possibility was that they would have infected other persons. That is because of the [inaudible]. We went in and tested 200 persons in that area of which 142 tested positive. The spike that you are seeing in Region 4 is because of the Lusignan Prison where 142 persons tested positive. We have since removed those persons from that area and they are in isolation facilities. Nobody who has tested positive is actually in that general population. They have been removed and placed into isolation, where they will remain for the duration of time. We have a medical team that is observing them to ensure that if they develop any signs or symptoms, whether they need to go to a hospital or whatever, those measures are put in place.

Regarding the things that you raised, I am sure that when the Minister of Home Affairs speaks, he can address some of those. These are things that are probably under active consideration, but the Minister of Home Affairs would be able to address them.

Programme: 472 – Disease Control – \$4,002,514,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 473 – Family and Primary Health Care Services – \$820,127,000

Programme: 473 – Family and Primary Health Care Services – \$820,127,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 473 – Family and Primary Health Care Services – \$85,085,000

Dr. Cummings: Project code 1216200 – Ministry of Health - Buildings: ‘Provision for vaccine bond...’ Could the Hon. Minister tell us more about the construction of the vaccine bond and where would it be located?

Dr. Anthony: This here has to do some civil works on the upper floor of the cold storage bond at Kingston.

Dr. Cummings: Project code 4403200 – Maternal and Child Health Improvement: There is \$60,000,000 for the provision for health facilities and institutional strengthening. I noticed in the *Estimates of the Public Sector, Volume 3*, description of the project speaks to the rehabilitation of Dr. CC Nicholson Hospital. Could you tell us when would that commence?

Dr. Anthony: This is an International Development Bank (IDB) project that we have the modernisation of the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) programme. We have moneys that have been set aside to do a number of infrastructural works, including works at the Dr. CC Nicholson Hospital in Nabaclis. I know that there is an allocation for the Dr. CC Nicholson Hospital and it, also, includes the building of maternity homes. There are two or three maternity homes that are

going to be built. There is one in Lethem and one on the East Coast. Of course, the Dr. CC Nicholson Hospital is in this project so that we can do the rehabilitation with the [inaudible].

Dr. Cummings: Is this for the remainder of the year?

Dr. Anthony: No. It is an IDB project so the life of it is beyond the three months. The source of the funding is from the IDB and it has to go through our Budget so that we will be able to do the expenditure. Certainly, whatever works we start now, will be rolled over, as they were from the previous years. Many of these infrastructure projects were started through this project and they rolled over until the life of the project or the facility was completed.

Dr. Cummings: I look forward to it. As you would recall, sometime in 2014 when you were at [inaudible].

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, would you talk through the Chair, please.

Dr. Cummings: Yes. Through the Chair, we really want that to be up and running at the Dr. CC Nicholson Hospital to stop persons from coming from the Upper East Coast to deliver their babies in Georgetown. We would look forward for that.

Dr. Anthony: I share the Hon. Member's concern. As you now, I worked up there for five years, so I hear you very well.

Programme: 473 – Family and Primary Health Care Services – \$85,085,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 474 – Regional and Clinical Services – \$6,479,998,000

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister move to line item 6241, Rental of Buildings. I see there is an amount of \$263,000,000. Could we get some information on which buildings are to be rented, where and for what purpose?

Dr. Anthony: There are a number of buildings here that we are renting. These include a building in Linden for the persons working there; we are spending, I think, \$2,200,000. We have a sum here allocated for the New Guyana Pharmaceutical Company (New GPC) Incorporated, for expenses

that were incurred over the last five years and arrears that were not paid. We also have here a sum of \$9,500,000 for the rental of residences for the Cuban doctors. We have the rental of buildings for nurses, that is \$3,500,000. We have the rental for a unit in Linden for COVID-19; that is \$1,300,000. We have been renting a facility in Festival City while they were doing the Government facility. That is costing us over \$8 million dollars.

Programme: 474 – Regional and Clinical Services – \$6,479,998,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 474 – Regional and Clinical Services – \$439,781,000

1.58 p.m.

Dr. Cummings: Project code 4402800 – Modernisation of Primary Health Care System: of course, we know the public health mantra is to have healthy people and healthy communities. I have noticed here in the project legend that the project entails design, rehabilitation and construction of primary healthcare facilities in West Demerara, Bartica and Suddie. This construction should have gone on for some time, but there is this back and forth in terms of the persons who are going to do the construction *et cetera*. Would the project, kindly, come on stream this time? I think it is from the Government of India. I would not say hesitancy of the programme, but there was some sort of hesitation, for want of a better word.

Dr. Anthony: This is a project dealing with the modernisation of primary healthcare. It is going to look at three hospitals; the West Demerara Regional Hospital, Suddie Hospital and Bartica Hospital. There is a sum here from the local counterpart to start the project at \$10 million. The actual foreign input is going to be US \$17.5 million that is going to go to these three hospitals. We have initiated the discussion. His Excellency the President, had started the discussion about three weeks ago with the Government of India and they have assured us that we will be able to get this project.

In fact, we are scheduled to have some follow-up meetings so that we could move this project along. I am very confident that within the next month or so we would have more concrete information because, as you know, the process entails that the Exim Bank of India would have to

do some of the tendering and so forth. There is a whole series of processes to be followed. We are going to work with the Government of India to make sure that we return this project to Guyana and ensure these three hospitals are completed.

Programme: 474 – Regional and Clinical Services – \$439,781,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I turn your attention to pages 358 and 359. We have six heads to go and no time to go but, let us see if we can go through them.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 475 – Health Sciences Education – \$197,981,000

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): it comes under the institute of the Health Sciences Education. Could the Hon. Minister tell us what is the plan for training under this line item? Who would be the participants and the beneficiaries of this training? Would it be the nurses, the allied health staff, x-ray technicians, community health workers?

Dr. Anthony: I did answer this question earlier when we did the first part, but the training is the same group of people. We are looking at pharmacy assistants, environmental health assistants, dentex, medex, audiology, personnel, laboratory technicians, x-ray technicians, general nurses and public health nurses. These are the categories of people.

Programme: 475 – Health Sciences Education – \$197,981,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 475 – Health Sciences Education – \$6,743,000

Dr. Cummings: Project code 1216200 – Ministry of Health - buildings: there is a provision made here for the sum of \$6 million for building and trestle. Could you say which nursing school annex? It is in Linden, New Amsterdam or Georgetown?

Dr. Anthony: Hon. Member, this is to do some work at the New Amsterdam School of Nursing and the Kington Annex. We also have \$6 million which is going to provide for a water tank and

trestle that would be built. The sum that we have provided is \$4.5 million. We are looking to purchase some electrical pumps and, also, to do some repairs of some defective walls that are on the building.

Programme: 475 – Health Sciences Education – \$6,743,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 476 – Standards and Technical Services – \$1,187,329,000

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6294 – Other: could the Hon. Minister tell us what constitutes this item? I know of the Standards and Technical Services. They are the ones that is a part of the inspectorate. Does the traveling and so come under this? What is this ‘other’ for?

Dr. Anthony: Under this line item, we cater for the payments of inspectors when they go out - under Standards and Technical Services, we have to evaluate various hospitals and health facilities. Persons who are on those teams are paid a stipend so that is where this came from.

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6284 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister indicate what this \$12 million allocation we are looking at is for?

Dr. Anthony: This line item caters for activities at the National Blood Transfusion Service Guyana which includes buying badges. There are two things, one is to do some activities at the National Blood Transfusion Service Guyana and the second has to do with the persons who are in radiology such as the x-ray technicians. We have paid for some special badges that they wear when they are in the x-ray room, so that it monitors the dose of radiation. Those things are then sent every three months to a special lab where they are accessed to see, whether or not, that they have been over exposed to radiation. Most of the moneys here is really for that.

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6302 – Training (including scholarships): I am seeing an allocation for \$6 plus million. Would this allocation be catering to the frontline workers in providing them some additional training in this risky environment? I know that you are aware that right now, across the country the nurses, as well as other frontline workers, are picketing for risk allowance as well. Could you share some light in this regard?

Dr. Anthony: This sum provides for training for National Blood Transfusion Service Guyana staff. There are different types of training that they will have to undergo. This is for both central and those in the regions.

Programme: 476 – Standards and Technical Services – \$1,187,329,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 476 – Standards and Technical Services – \$13,400,000

Dr. Cummings: Project code 2509000 – Equipment- Medical: would this equipment cost \$13.4 million for the National Blood Transfusion Service Guyana? I know that you want to increase operation efficiency. What medical equipment would be purchased under this project code?

Dr. Anthony: Basically, what we are doing here is we are buying two solar refrigerators with inverter and panels *et cetera*. One is for Region 1 and the other is for Region 9, which would cost about \$7 million. These are solar refrigerators.

Under this heading we are also buying two blast freezers. These freezers can do minus 20°. They are necessary for the storage of the agents. With the T-cell receptor (TCR) testing if one wants to store samples and do not make them degrade, one would have to store them at minus 20°. We are buying two freezers. One is going to Region 2 and the other is going to Region 6. In addition, these freezers could be used to store plasma that is harvested.

Programme: 476 – Standards and Technical Services – \$13,400,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 477 – Disability and Rehabilitation Services – \$163,629,000

Programme: 477 – Disability and Rehabilitation Services – \$163,629,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

2.13 p.m.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 477 - Disability and Rehabilitation Services - \$4,320,000

Dr. Cummings: Project 2508900 — Office Furniture and Equipment: Could the Hon. Minister tell this Committee where the furniture and equipment will be going, to which building or buildings?

Dr. Anthony: There are a number of things that we are buying here. There are four semi-executive chairs, three refrigerators, six stand fans, two air conditioning units, four water dispensers, three microwaves, one office desk, and one filing cabinet. All of these would be at the Disability and Rehabilitation Services of the Ministry of Health, Georgetown.

Dr. Cummings: My final question under this item. Project code 2509000 – Equipment – Medical: The purchase of medical equipment, at the sum of \$2,420,000 is allocated to this project code. Could the Hon. Minister tell us where this equipment will be located and what equipment it is?

Dr. Anthony: These are a couple of things here, one, it is a rollover project and it is for the supply of arthroscopes. We are spending \$1.8 million on arthroscopes – eight of them. We are also spending moneys – \$182,000 – on ankle weights. Again, this is for the rehabilitation programme and we are also spending \$386,000 for 11 massage beds.

Programme: 477 – Disability and Rehabilitation Services – \$4,320,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: On your behalf, we all thank the Hon. Minister and his team for taking us through this agency. Thank you very much, Hon. Minister.

We now welcome the Hon. Minister of Social Protection and her staff. As they get into position, let turn to pages 256 and 257; we are starting this head at 2.17 p.m.

Agency: 49 Ministry of Social Protection

Current Expenditure

Programme: 491 – Policy Development and Administration – \$240,294,000

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Could the Hon. Minister tell us how many of the local organisations would have received their subsidies or contributions from January to September?

Minister of Human Services and Social Security [Dr. Persaud]: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for the question, Hon. Member. The number is reflected in the book, at the back, but just to let you know, the Guyana Relief Council ...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, you may have to come closer to the microphone.

Dr. Persaud: Come a bit closer? Sure. Is this better? Thank you for the question. The Guyana Relief Council, the Amerindian Handicraft Association, Friends of the Needy, the Guyana Red Cross Society, Rural Women's Network (RWN), Women in Environment (WIE).

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Just to clarify, is that from January to September?

Dr. Persaud: Yes, Hon. Member.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Thank you.

Programme: 491 – Policy Development and Administration – \$240,294,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I turn to page 456. Sorry, it is page 656. That was a *Manzoor moment*, not a *Mahipaul moment*.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 491 – Policy Development and Administration – \$17,930,000

Dr. Cummings: Project code 4504400 – Technical Assistance: I have noticed under the title of Technical Assistance that the legend speaks of a provision for a social protection strategy. What is the status of that strategy? Has it been done, completed, or how far along the continuum is it?

Dr. Persaud: That is a very good question. This project attracted US\$60,000 and US\$20,000 would have been expended. There are five components to this project. Within that unit, you would have seen things like alternative payment systems, social safety net strategy, social expenditure

and, also a poverty assessment map. These are all there to enhance the efficiency of the Ministry. Thus, currently, the status is that the reports would have been submitted. Since I have gotten there, I have been in discussions with the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and we are advancing the process because it has been held up for a number of years. But they are very good reports and recommendations to strengthen the delivery of services through this strategy.

Programme: 491 – Policy Development and Administration – \$17,930,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 492 – Social Services – \$12,314,823,000

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6284 – Other: I am seeing an allocation of \$49,181,000 for the remaining three months of the year. Could the Hon. Minister shed some light in this regard?

Dr. Persaud: Hon. Member, is it line item 6281?

Mr. Figueira: No, Hon. Minister, it is line item 6284.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, it is line item 6284. The question is if that is for the remaining part of the year.

Dr. Persaud: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and Hon. Member. What was purchased were a number of things, including services as well, renting of tents and chairs for the post office – as you know, pension delivery requires a lot of this – cutting residents' hair at the Palms Geriatric Home and the Night Shelter, funeral expenses, financial and other assistance to vulnerable persons – this would come under the Difficult Circumstances Unit (DCU) – television, radio and social media based programmes focusing on trafficking in persons, domestic violence and advertisements.

Programme: 492 – Social Services – \$12,314,823,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 493 – Labour Administration – \$421,245,000

Programme: 493 – Labour Administration – \$421,245,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

2.28 p.m.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 494 – Child Care and Protection – \$461,497,000

Programme: 494 – Child Care and Protection – \$461,497,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency 39: Ministry of Human Services and Social Security

Current Expenditure

Programme: 391 – Policy Development and Administration – \$87,553,000

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Line item 6112 – Senior Technical: I would be happy if the Hon. Minister would tell us the designations of the four senior technical persons, their salaries and their benefits.

Dr. Persaud: The designations include a Superintendent of Works; a Procurement Officer and two Expenditure Planning Managers.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister list the number of buildings being rented and where they are located?

Dr. Persaud: The Ministry rents rooms at the Maraj Building for the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic.

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Could the Minister give us a list of these areas where infrastructural works will be done and tell us the cost of each?

Dr. Persaud: The total cost is \$2.1 million, and it is for general weeding and cleaning of the compounds at Cornhill and Lamaha Street where the Ministry is housed; maintenance of a section of the reserves utilised by the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Line item 6282 – Equipment Maintenance: Could the Hon. Minister say to us what are the equipment to be maintained within the next three months for \$1,896,000?

Dr. Persaud: The maintenance of equipment includes maintenance of the generators at those buildings, information technology (IT) equipment and other smaller bits of equipment.

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): Who are the persons to be trained and from which department would the training be taking place?

Dr. Persaud: As you know, there is need for training and training has been on a halt or pause because of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). So, we are moving the Ministry towards virtual training for all sections of the Ministry. But this in particular, speaks to patient care assistance and other areas where there is dire need of improving the skills of those who care for the elderly and other persons that fall within the ambit of the Ministry.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Line item 6271 – Telephone & Internet Charges: Could the Hon. Minister say whether the sum of \$2,614,000 is allocated to the Hon. Minister’s office, but if not, please give us details for the estimated sum?

Dr. Persaud: Could the Hon. Member please repeat because she was not quite clear on this side?

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Line item 6271 – Telephone & Internet Charges: Could the Hon. Minister say whether the sum of \$2,614,000 is allocated to the Hon. Minister’s office, or if not, please give details of the estimated sum?

Dr. Persaud: Could the Hon. Member please repeat because it was not quite clear on this side.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please repeat your question.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Line item 6271 – Telephone & Internet Charges: Could the Hon. Minister say whether the sum of \$2,614,000 is allocated to the Hon. Minister’s office, or if not, please give details of the estimated sum?

Dr. Persaud: Thank you Mr. Chairman and Hon. Member, actually, no. The Minister’s office does not fall under here at all, and this is for all of the Ministry, both at Lamaha and Cornhill.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members I will now put the question.

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, how could I leave you.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I have one question on two line items and I will merge them as one. Line items 6284 and 6294 – Other: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to layover the details of these expenditures to this honourable House in writing? Thank you.

Dr. Persaud: It is a very short list, so I will be happy to say what it is if the Hon. Member does not mind. Under Line item 6284 – Other: It is the payment for the sanitation services, rental of photocopying machines and washing of curtains. For line item 6294 – Other: It is the purchase of sanitisers in light of COVID-19 and also, hampers for senior citizens. As you know, they are extremely vulnerable at this point in time.

Mr. Mahipaul: A follow-up question, did I hear correctly that the Hon. Minister said rental of photocopying machine, and also cleaning and extermination services?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I did not hear the last part, but go ahead.

Dr. Persaud: Let me just rephrase, it is not cleaning, but Sanitact Services. In terms of rental and photocopies, we have a few, but what we have found in the Ministry or what was there before I got there, and I had an extensive discussion with the members of staff, was that the repairs – if you purchase photocopying machines, they cost quite a lot – it is cheaper and more cost effective, generally, to rent.

Programme: 391 – Policy Development and Administration – \$87,553,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 391 – Policy Development and Administration – \$6,160,000

Programme: 391 – Policy Development and Administration – \$6,160,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 392 – Social Services – \$9,043,856,000

Mr. Chairman: I recognise the Hon. Member, Dr. Karen Cummings.

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: Could the Hon. Minister tell this Committee what will be purchased under this line item and who are the beneficiaries? Is it for the Palms Geriatric Home or where is it for?

Dr. Persaud: This is a very important line item because what was purchased includes drugs and medications. I should say dietary supplements and other medical supplies for residents of the Palms Geriatric Home, the Mahaica Hospital, the Hugo Chavez Centre for Rehabilitation and Reintegration, the New Opportunity Corp (NOC) and...*[inaudible]*.

Ms. Philadelphia: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I recognise that there is a total number of 74 contracted employees. Could the Hon. Minister be so kind to give us the designations of the first five, of course, remuneration and if there is any arrangement being made to put these persons on the fixed establishment?

2.43. p.m.

Dr. Persaud: The persons, fortunately or unfortunately, cannot be transferred to the fixed establishment because they are over the age where that can happen. They include three Administrators, a Senior Gender Affairs Officer, and two Instructors; and that is it for the first five. The remuneration ranges, roughly, between \$132,000 to \$239,000...*[inaudible]*.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister state which buildings are to be maintained?

Dr. Persaud: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: The buildings that are to be repaired which comes under the Ministry are the Hugo Chavez Centre, the Palms Geriatric Home, the Night Shelter – in fact, the Night Shelter needs quite a lot of work and I have to say that going there, I was quite horrified at the state in which I found it; so right away, that flew to the top of my list and we have already started to put things in place and a lot of work will be done there for the *[inaudible]* – basically, all the buildings that fall under the Ministry.

Mr. Mahipaul: Line item 6284 – Other: I have taken note under the Ministry of Social Protection for the nine-month period that \$49,181,000 was spent. Now, we are at a three-month period under the same line item and there is a budgeted sum for \$70 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain the heavy increase?

Dr. Persaud: This is one of the initiatives that we are launching in the last quarter of the year. I am very happy to say this because it affects so many people who have been impacted through economic hardship and COVID-19. Just to tell you some of the areas that add up to this – and not a very big sum in light of what the Ministry needs to deliver – mapping of the juvenile justice system because we are responsible as a Ministry for mapping the services for this special category of youth. This will allow us to have a comprehensive assessment of the services as well as work on the rehabilitation, reformation and reintegration of these young people. So, it is giving them a second chance and creating an environment whereby giving them the opportunity to not only be given a second chance, in word, but in actually working with them to reintegrate them back into communities. This also means working with their families. It is a wonderful programme and I know people who have young people in their homes that would want to be part of this programme.

The second one falls under the Difficult Circumstances Unit and this is a huge programme for the Ministry because benefitting under this will be a number of categories of workers such as healthcare workers, security officers – as in those who work in guard services –, those who are a part of the cleaning community, vendors, police officers, prison officers and a slew of categories. When I speak of these categories, it means that workers who fall under these categories will benefit from childcare subsidies for essential workers. I think that is very necessary because lots of these essential workers go out to work and, while many persons were home, they had to think of where to leave their children. What happens here? Fifteen hundred children under the age of five will be taken care of in childcare facilities and subsidies will be paid directly to the childcare facility, so that the parents could be relieved, in terms, of knowing where their children are.

We will also be doing a number of television, radio and social media based programmes to target very weak issues such as domestic violence and trafficking in persons. I have to tell you that, since I have gotten here, we have already started that, and this will continue. We want all segments of society to have information on what we do and how we can stop a lot of what is happening out there, especially, noting that there has been an escalation with COVID-19. Of course, to get our

word out there, we have to pay for advertisements. Both electronic and print media will be utilised, so that constitutes the \$70 million that you see.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister. Hon. Member, are you following up?

Mr. Mahipaul: Yes, Sir. I did hear the Hon. Minister say childcare facilities. My question is...

Dr. Persaud: It is subsidies.

Mr. Mahipaul: Subsidies to the childcare facilities – are these...

Dr. Persaud: It is to the workers to go towards that.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, could we avoid the cross talk?

Dr. Persaud: Sorry, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

If I may follow up on the same basis, is the Ministry considering the construction of childcare facilities so that it can become Government owned like what the A Partnership for National Unity/ Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) started in terms of the early childhood development centres?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I will allow you to answer the question. Unfortunately, that Hon. Member knows better with respect to the line item. We were going so good. Hon. Minister, please go head.

Dr. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, I would like the Hon. Member to listen to the answer that he asked for. There are 225 existing childcare centres in the country, so I do not think that building more will make sense. What we will do is have public/private partnership, in the sense that, we will encourage people, out there, to get into this and there will be training and incentives, so that there are more facilities. In fact, to give you a little heads up, we are not only looking at day-care facilities but what is to come will be night care facilities. We understand that a lot of women, in particular, have to really decide where to leave their children when they go out to work and we know this. It is a huge problem. So, it is working with the communities, with people in the country to expand the services provided under childcare.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you Hon. Minister. We have Hon. Member Dr. Cummings then the Hon. Member, Ms. Philadelphia.

Mr. Mahipaul are you going to make another statement because that particular one did not qualify. That should have been part of the policy issues with respect to the budget debates.

Mr. Mahipaul: I am guided.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, Sir, follow-up if you would like to.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Sir.

Line item 6284 – Other: I take note under the Ministry of Social Protection for the nine-month period a total of \$19,820,000 were expended and under this same line item for the three-month period, I see \$12,550,000. Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to explain this expenditure?

Dr. Persaud: I think the Member made a mistake with the line item, but I am a kind person, so I will say that the \$12 million will go towards paying stipends for boards and to procure essential items for 390 residents. Those residents come from all of our institutions including 240 from the Palms Geriatric Home, 62 from the Night Shelter, six from the NOC, 12 from the Mahaica Hospital and 18 from the Hugo Chavez Centre.

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6343 – Old Age Pensions and Social Assistance: Could the Hon. Member tell this Committee how many pensioners we have in Guyana and how many persons are on social assistance? Of course, the APNU/AFC boasted that we would have moved the pension from \$7,000 to a whopping \$20,000. We were happy for that. It almost three times from when we came.

Having said that, for social assistance, I want to know that in light of COVID-19, what are they going to have in terms of remuneration; would it be that plus the \$25,000 per household in this category because it is a whopping \$8 billion?

Dr. Persaud: Yes, yes and yes. We are very conscious of the economic part of it. We are very conscious that vulnerable groups have been affected and this includes both the \$25,000, shop or cash relief, that we will be offering to households to the tune of \$4.5 million. The remainder of

which will be spent on 59,200 recipients of old age pension, 14,000 persons who will receive public assistance and \$300 million goes towards water supply for the elderly.

Dr. Cummings: Just a follow-up question: During our time, when we had the COVID-19 on our plan, we had the software that would have allowed persons to fill that form and so forth, would that include this new set that would have filled the forms, would they be included on the old set?

Dr. Persaud: Mr. Chairman and Hon. Member, I want to say that not much was done. We are going to be doing a lot more, and the \$25,000 per household is a significant contribution to people in this short period that we are in.

Interestingly enough, that is not all; we are going to be continuing our distribution of hampers. The information system to which you refer, will be utilised. There is a partnership with the Civil Defence Commission (CDC), and hampers will be given. That process will continue, and we are now rolling over to phase two. So, the applicants who are there, and have not received, will be considered; they do not need to reapply. Of course, we will have new applicants added to that, so that it will continue. But that data base system – if you will remember me mentioning about the IADB – we will be improving that system to capture more people across the country. This is looking at human services in a very holistic way and ensuring that we capture all the people who are in great need.

Ms. Philadelphia: Mr. Chairman I passed the question over to my Colleague.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, if you lose this chance, you might not get it back.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Line item 6294 – Other: I give you that number because I am searching for something, I may not be right, and I stand corrected by the Hon. Member. I heard you call some activities just now, but I am wondering if this line item provides for psychosocial support for our citizens.

Dr. Persaud: The simple answer is no because this is the line item where I clearly said that this was to pay board stipends and procure essential items for the Palms Geriatric Home, Night Shelter, NOC, the Mahaica Hospital and the Hugo Chavez Centre.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Would the Hon. Member kind enough to direct us where we can find the expenditure for psychosocial support?

Ms. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Cox.

Dr. Persaud: Should I answer that?

Mr. Chairman: I do not see where that question pertained to a line item.

Dr. Persaud: No, there was not.

Mr. Cox: Line item 6284 – Other: there were a number of measures which were mentioned, that will be taken into consideration moving forward and so on. I am particularly interested in what programmes will be implemented for residents especially in hinterland communities, more so, Region 1?

Over the last two weeks, my Colleague, the Hon. Vincent Henry, stressed a lot about Baramita which has one of the highest suicide rates in the country, among other issues. What particular programmes are in place for those residents?

Dr. Persaud: Hon. Member, I am happy to tell you that all our programmes will be computerised including those for the hinterland. We are taking cognisance of the fact that we have geographic issues, but every effort will be expended to ensure that whatever services – subsidies, anything to do with gender-based violence and all that I would have mentioned, previously, would be opened to the hinterland. These are all our services being made accessible countrywide, which includes *[Inaudible]*.

2.58 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Cox, do you want to follow-up?

Mr. Cox: Yes, Sir. Thank you. What I want to get clear is that, those communities are very remote, and you have highlighted things that will be done, mostly on a mass medium. I want a little more clarity on how exactly do you plan to meet the communities, such as those?

Dr. Persaud: I understand your concern because it is indeed a concern of mine. What we will be doing is training trainers from the region, through the regional system and in collaboration with

the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, to get those persons into your communities, so that the services that cannot be accessed by social media or any other service that requires internet connectivity and is not applicable to the hinterland, will be offered.

I want to say to all the Members here, the services are opened to all of Guyana. Please feel free to reach out to me at any time, should you know there is any vulnerable person or community that requires such help. That is a given.

Ms. Ferguson: Under line item 6284 – Other: I know you have a budgeted sum for \$70 million. Is there any consideration for the vagrants?

Dr. Persaud: This Ministry is embarking on a comprehensive programme to restore dignity to the indigent and the homeless. I would like to refer to them not as vagrants, but I think they deserve the dignity. It does not matter that they do not have.

This programme will allow us, in terms of the coastland, to pick those persons off of the streets and get them into the night shelters, where we will be working on rehabilitation and integration, based on their level, in terms of their physical capability. If persons are willing to be trained and they are young and healthy, but they have fallen on hard times, they will be trained.

As I mentioned, the night shelter is the triage point, where they will be provided with hot meals, shelter and the care that they need. So, yes, we do have a programme.

Ms. McDonald: Under the same line item 6284 – Other or line item 6294 – Other: could the Minister say to us what provisions are in place for psychosocial support to be given to persons who would have gone through trauma.

I am referring to line item 6284 – Other or 6294 – Other, I am not sure which one, but could you be kind to say to us, where would psychosocial services be applied to, with regard to persons who would have gone through trauma. I am talking here about the four deaths that we had: Haresh Singh – the parents; the Henry boys and the Orlando boy from Berbice? Under which one of those headings would that fall?

Dr. Persaud: I believe that trauma is something that can scar you for life. I refer to something called post-traumatic stress disorder. Under both line items – 6284 and 6294, those services will

be provided not only to the parents and family members, but we have already gone ahead and reached out to all of the family members and we will continuously engage them under these line items. This is because I think that it is not only the humane thing to do, but that it is the right thing to do. Again, this is available to anyone who requires it. We just have to be aware of where the situations are and who requires it and that will be done through both line items.

Programme: 392 – Social Services - \$9,043,856,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 392 – Social Services - \$12,000,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Project code 4504400 – Technical Assistance: provision for social protection strategy – the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) previously reflected. It entails expenditure review, targeting the poor and vulnerable, alternative payment systems based on geographic consideration and preparation of social protection strategy. Could the Hon. Minister give us an update on this project, since it started in 2016? I figure that the contract was signed in 2016 and comes to an end in 2021.

Dr. Persaud: Thank you, Hon. Member. I am so happy you asked because I was just raring to tell you. In fact, since the contract was signed, nothing has been done. It remains on a shelf in the office. I will be happy to pull it off the shelf. I have already met the IDB, as I mentioned.

When we speak of alternate payment systems, this deals directly with pension. As you know, I have said a lot in the media and here about what we plan to do with pension: giving direct delivery of pensions to pensioners who are shut in and looking at other ways in which pensioners can access their pension at the end of the month, which means going to alternate venues like Money Gram or Western Union. Looking, basically, at ensuring that the pensioners do not have to traverse long distances or suffer the agony of whenever there is inclement weather.

It will be a blended system and we will be working closely with the IDB. In fact, another meeting is scheduled within a few days to follow-up on this. There are many models that exist in the world and we have a lot of information on them, so we will be able to see what works best for our system to give that relief to our pensioners.

There are five, as I told you. The Poverty Assessment Map - the information inputted at that time was very flawed. In fact, the 2012 Census was used. So, while it was paid for, it is something that cannot be used. We are currently waiting on data from the Bureau of Statistics so that we can repopulate that Poverty Assessment Map, so that it could be relevant to our current situation.

We are also looking at how we get value for dollar looking at social protection expenditure and the social safety nets that exists. For example, if a woman or someone in a violent relationship comes to the Ministry, we tell them to go through these steps – the framework that exists to support them. So, that is where it is, and I guarantee you that it will be moving with alacrity.

Mr. Mahipaul: A quick follow-up: I heard the Hon. Minister say that nothing happened since 2015. If I heard incorrectly and based on your answer, to me, it sounded as though a little was done then. Is it possible for you to engage in the negotiation of extending this project from where it is stated there as December, 2021 to a later date, so that it can be extended all across Guyana?

Dr. Persaud: As I mentioned, the reports were done in that very initial stage but the last one, which is the Building Information Modeling (BIM), the information garnering segment, will have to be extended because that one is the biggest of them all. Yes, we will negotiate for an extension because it is crucial for the optimum functioning of the Ministry.

Programme: 392 – Social Services - \$12,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 393 – Child Care and Protection - \$254,949,000

Ms. Philadelphia: Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: Could the Minister be so kind to explain to us what are the events to be undertaken during this period?

Dr. Persaud: As you know, children need to be engaged and entertained, especially when festive occasions come around. Right now, we are in Child Protection Week and that will go over into the last quarter because there are a number of activities that will exceed the week that we are in. A lot of the activities will be rolled out across the region, including activities that engage children, not

only on the coastland but in the hinterland, the utilisation of the multi-media awareness programmes. This is a major thing on the Child Protection Agency's calendar, so that is very big.

We will also move into the Diwali and Christmas celebrations and any other thing that comes up that could be rolled out across the country. As I said, children especially during the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) situation, need to be engaged.

Mr. Mahipaul: Line item 6281 – Security Services: I see for the Ministry of Social Protection, for the nine-month period, a total of \$29,104,000, and for the three-month period under Child Care and Protection Agency, the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security, a total of \$25 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain this high increase?

Dr. Persaud: The Family and Child Centre in Plum Park too is new, and it is getting to the stage where it is fully operational. There has been an increase in security costs for that in particular because it is housing a complex at several buildings. As you know, when we house children and families, we need that enhanced security. That is an add on to it.

Mr. Mahipaul: Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to lay over to this Committee a breakdown of the number of security officers and their shifts at the Ministry and compare it with the month of July?

Mr. Chairman: I think you are pushing the boundary there, laying over a comparison of the two. Is this for a future question?

Mr. Mahipaul: No, Sir. I heard the Hon. Minister say that because of a new building...

Dr. Persaud: A complex.

3.13 p.m.

Mr. Mahipaul: That because of a new complex, that caters for the increase to \$25 million for three months, as opposed to what I ...

Mr. Chairman: So, you want to justify that, okay. Thank you very much. Fair question. Hon. Minister, can you please lay over that?

Dr. Persaud: Really there is nothing to layover, other than to say that the building was not operational during the period that the Hon. Member is referring to. It is now fully operational. As I mentioned, it is not a building, it is a complex with a number of buildings.

Mr. Mahipaul: Could the Hon. Minister, give the number of security members that will be there on a 24-hour basis, in terms of the shift - every eight hours, how many will be there?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, the number of security members that will be on site at all time.

Dr. Persaud: Three security members at every shift and there are eight-hour shifts. I am sorry if you were not hearing me properly before.

Mr. Mahipaul: I thank the Hon. Minister for that answer. Based on my estimation, therefore, it will be nine security officers per day, which is increasing the total quota of security officers. I still find that the sum allocated here extremely high for the three months period, taking into consideration that the nine months period was a total of \$29 million, as opposed to three months period of being \$25 million, with just nine security members added. That is why, I am hoping that I can get a breakdown, in terms of a comparative analysis between July and now, telling me how much increases in security costing the Ministry is bearing.

Dr. Persaud: I would be happy to lay it over but, just to let you know, the type of security guards has changed, in that, we are now having guards with radios, so that is an additional cost. I would be happy to lay it over.

The requirements would have changed once the building became operational, rather than just having someone to look at the building, we are now looking at security for people and the building, so it is a little different.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, just one follow-up and then I will go onto the next line item. I just want to know, if there are any armed security guards that will be stationed there and how many shifts per day, if there will be any?

Line item 6294 – Other: will the Hon. Minister be kind enough to breakdown this line item for us, which carries a sum of \$ 25 million?

Dr. Persaud: Under line item 6294 - Other, these are ongoing expenses. These expenses include purchasing a number of items for children, including shoes and other articles of clothing. As fast as children come into the various homes and shelters, these are things that wear and tear and as you know, children are always growing, and they leave.

We also purchase for the care centres, bed linens, household articles and other equipment. There are other expenses for various programmes, including the independent living skills programme, which is a transitional housing programme for young people, set to age out of the formal care systems and the families from the new family centre. What this means is, when the children are placed in shelters and they reach a certain age, we do not just let them go out there with nothing, we try to make sure they have shelter, they have a little bit to get them started in life. The moneys within there would vary, depending on the ages of the children who are going to be transitioned out of the home.

Under this line item there is also the screening and processing of potential foster parents, maintenance of the Adoption Board, the ongoing National Multimedia Awareness Child Abuse Campaign, our Teen Pregnancy Prevention and Empowerment Programme, special 'parent training' programme, community partnership development programmes and there is a new programme that is going to be rolled out in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which is the special COVID-19 Child Abuse programme. Those are all encapsulated in the figure that you are asking me about, Hon. Member.

Mr. Mahipaul: I did not get the answer on whether there are armed security guards at the complex?

Dr. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, I misunderstood the Hon. Member, I thought that was to be laid over, there are no armed security members.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Figueira, I was wondering if your microphone had changed from *handomatic* to automatic because I see it coming on and off. Go ahead, Sir.

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6343 – Old Age Pensions and Social Assistance: I am recognising an allocation of \$17 million but we are all aware that no increase was allocated for old age pension in 2020, could the Hon. Minister, proffer an explanation for this allocation?

Dr. Persaud: Hon. Member, just to let you know that, although it states that, it is for foster care payments, not old age pension as is listed. I am so advised, that is how it has always been listed but that is what it is.

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6284 – Other: could the Hon. Minister provide information concerning this line item's more than \$5 million allocation?

Dr. Persaud: Hon. Member, this includes goods and services that will be purchased. I actually had the opportunity to see how some of this was utilised, when I visited the Children and Family Care Centre. The children who are there institutionalised, have to have an outlet. So, to provide for them and to prevent them from becoming depressed, withdrawn and overwhelmed by their problems, these are payments that will be made to skilled professionals to engage the children creatively. The moneys will be paid for services to the children in the care centres. These services include - dancing; karate; football and physical fitness coaches; psychological counsellors because we also have to look at their psychological wellbeing; and remedial teachers, to cater for the education deficits they may have because of their difficult lives. Throughout the remainder of the year, this will occur at the three care centres and will look at our social and educational advancement of children.

Most of these children are from underprivileged homes, they are disadvantaged and many of them would have been abused or neglected. As you can see, it is a much-needed outlet. I had the opportunity to participate and to see what this can do for children.

Mr. Figueira: Follow-up: Those said employees, they will be Contracted Employees, could you state what their benefits will be and, more so, since there is a need for them, would the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security consider putting those said employees on the fixed establishment?

Dr. Persaud: These are not employees, *per se*, these are people who were brought in for these special purposes. They are like one-offs, as needed, when they are needed. We contract their services based on the need and what is applicable to the children that we are dealing with at the same time.

Mr. Mahipaul: I have taken note on what the Hon. Minister has said, in terms of the new complex and I am looking at line items 6271 – Telephone and Internet Charges, 6272 – Electricity Charges and 6273 – Water Charges, which all speak to utility charges. When I look at the Ministry of Social Protection, for example line item 6271 - Telephone and Internet Charges, I am seeing over the nine months period, a spending of \$4.6 million, in comparison to the three months period for the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security, which \$3,441,000. Similarly, to the electricity charges, there is a steep increase, as well as for the water charges, there is a steep increase. Are all these increases attributed to the new complex or are we anticipating higher charges for water, electricity, telephone and internet in the coming months?

Dr. Persaud: Hon. Member, just to let you know, some of those were not paid within the first period and some of that will roll over to this period and, also, taking into account the event of both.

Mr. Cox: Line item 6294 – Other: the Barima-Waini region is plagued by a new issue, which is the migrants from Venezuela. They have placed a lot of stress on our social services system in the region. How would the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security cater for those migrants? At the end of the day, we have to accommodate them - those are the migrants. For our own Indigenous residents, what programmes are in place for them?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are you asking if those services are under a particular line item? Could you state that line item for me or I will disallow the question?

Mr. Cox: I did, but for repetition, line item 6294 – Other.

Dr. Persaud: Hon. Member, just to let you know that would have been the earlier programme and not this one, so it does not fall under this line item. We are partnering with UNICEF, International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and a number of other entities, so that the hinterland will benefit, specifically, the migrant population. In fact, there is ongoing work, but it does not fall under this, Mr. Chairman.

Programme: 393 – Child Care and Protection – \$254,949,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 393 – Child Care and Protection – \$28,500,000

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Project code 2407500 – Land and Water Transport: could the Hon. Minister, state the nature of the vehicles being purchased and for what activities?

Dr. Persaud: The Childcare and Protection Agency has been starved of these resources for some time. I want to really hammer this home because a lot of children are at home and there are many cases of child abuse. A lot of these cases are not reported and, in the times when they were reported, because they did not have the requisite vehicles to send the teams out, when it was needed, they had to wait for one vehicle to come back before going back. It was very difficult, let me just put it in that way. It was very difficult, and it was challenging for the Childcare and Protection Agency to really serve the children.

What is being requested here is a frontier 4runner double cabin vehicle and the purchasing of two 15-seater buses. This is to allow the Childcare and Protection Agency to get into communities that are difficult, in terms of terrain. These areas are not easily accessible by regular vehicles, including the Soesdyke-Linden Highway and beyond that. If we are to look at the rates of child abuse, these areas have particularly high numbers, so this is badly needed. I would like to have your support on this Hon. Member and all Members.

Programme: 393 – Child Care and Protection – \$28,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

3.28 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much Hon. Minister and staff. Thank you on behalf of all of us for taking us through those agencies. As we allow the Minister and her staff to leave, we have coming next, a new arrival, the Hon. Minister Joseph Hamilton.

Let me welcome the Minister and his team, a team that is very familiar with the Chairman. Welcome, once again.

Agency: 38 Ministry of Labour

Current Expenditure

Programme: 381 – Policy Development and Administration - \$184,845,000

Ms. McDonald: Line item 6281 – Security Services: Would the Hon. Minister be kind to say to the Committee the name of the security services that are being employed at the Ministry of Labour? While I am on that, could he explain to us under line items 6281 – Security Services and 6284 – Other, what is meant by other?

Minister of Labour [Mr. Hamilton]: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman and thank you Hon. Member for the question. Line item 6281 caters for security services at the Hadfield Street and Brickdam locations.

Ms. McDonald: I was trying to find out the name of the security services that are being employed.

Mr. Hamilton: The name of the security service that I went there and met was the Roshan Khan (RK) security services.

Ms. McDonald: At the same time, I did ask about line item 6284 – Other. Could the Hon. Minister be kind to explain the sum being sought under this line item.

Mr. Hamilton: The \$5.4 million is for the inspection of Occupational Safety and Health Officer (OSHO) officers for the survey that they have to do, hosting and upgrading of website, the Central Recruitment and Manpower Agency(CRMA), development of software for the Co-operatives Department for the inputting and retrieving of files, purchasing software for labour units in the first instance.

Ms. McDonald: We are on page 267 and I was referring to line item 6284. The sum of \$3 million.

Mr. Hamilton: Yes. I would have indicated to the Hon. Member what the provision made under line item 6284 is for and I just answered that question. It is for the inspection, website support, developing a software for the Co-operatives Department.

Ms. McDonald: Line item 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skilled: under the Staffing Details, I have recognised there is Other Technical and Skilled – one... In total, we have 21 persons there. Would the Minister be kind enough to say to us what was the procedure; how many persons, if the Ministry would have employed new persons; and what was the procedure used for employing these persons or fulfilling the vacancies?

Mr. Chairman: If you would employ new persons, but that is now going a little bit outside of our remit.

Mr. Hamilton: Let me say to the Committee that, it must be recognised that the Ministry of Labour is a new Ministry to be re-established, a promise made to the Guyanese workers by the People's Progressive Party Civic (PPP/C) when we campaigned. Therefore, presently, all we have are six technical departments. We have to create about six or seven administrative departments. Therefore, the average amount of persons, based on the advice that I have gotten, will be in excess of some 60 persons added to the present complement of staff.

Also, as I on this matter, let me also report to the Committee that the technical department should have a complement of a 137 staff, presently we only have 87 staff. Just on the technical side, we are short of 60 staff members, including senior staff members in all the technical departments. So, yes, some six or seven new departments will be created to ensure that the Ministry of Labour is properly staffed.

Mr. Mahipaul: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: I see the Board of Industrial Training (BIT) will be getting \$144,882,000. This is a very important organ within the Ministry of Labour, and it was given its rightful place and prominence under the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC). My question to the Hon. Minister is, could he please outline what are the programmes that will be done to empower young people and continue to empower and educate young people across this country and if he could state each one of the areas/communities that the Ministry would go to extend the programmes of the Board of Industrial Training?

Mr. Hamilton: Let me say to the Hon. Member and this Committee that, presently, the Board of Industrial Training is not where it should be, and we have already planned and outlined where it will be going. So, already, we have put in place to expand the programme, that it will reach every region through the length and breadth of Guyana, wherever they are. That is the first point.

The second point is that, we plan to increase the number of programmes under the Board of Industrial Training.

Thirdly, we have already had consultations with other training institutions: the Critchlow Labour College and the Kuru Kuru Co-operative College, to see how we can collaborate with some of the programmes that are to be done.

The other point is, also, I believe that, whilst we do all of these training through the length and breadth of Guyana, the Board of Industrial Training will also focus on upgrading and training staff members that need training. We have already started. In the instance of foreign language training, we have already identified 24 staff members to start doing Portuguese. We will also have a programme to train staff members to do Spanish and Chinese, more so, our Labour Officers and Occupational Safety and Health Officers.

Also, the plan is to ensure that, in every region, we have at least two Labour Officers, two Occupational Health and Safety Officers and wherever Co-ops exist in the region, we will also have Co-op Officers, people who will be trained and will go back into their regions as resident of the regions.

These are the plans and programmes that we have already put in train to be utilised. If the Member so desire, I could lay over this document to the Parliament for circulation. It outlines all the programmes and all the regions in the different phases we will be doing.

Mr. Mahipaul: If I heard the Hon. Minister correctly, the document that he will lay over to this honourable Committee is a document of all the projects that the Ministry will do for the three months period? My question to the Hon. Minister is, are there programmes that are currently ongoing that will also be utilising, I am guessing, a part of this \$144,882,000? If there are programmes that are ongoing, could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to tell us which region and what are the programmes that are ongoing?

Mr. Hamilton: The first answer to the first question in yes. Also, I can lay over to the National Assembly the list of all the programmes that are already being executed, where they are being executed and the types of training programmes that we have already embarked on.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Line item 6281- Security Services: could the Hon. Minister state what his policy would be in relation to security services throughout the country? We had the perennial problem of security services not actually following the Labour Laws and leaving their employees

needing their moneys, including the security service that he called earlier. I was just wondering what the Minister has in mind, in terms of policy, in ensuring the security services follow the law?

Mr. Hamilton: If I grasp the question properly, the first point I would say as I would have said, the security service that is at the Ministry, when I got there, it was already there. If I grasped the question properly, it is the continuing issue with security services and payment to their staff. I could tell you that I have engaged at least one or two security services and that report has come to the Ministry. They have stated that their contention is that their problem revolves and surrounds, the Government not paying them on time.

3.43 p.m.

My position on the matter is they have employees and they have to pay them. They have to make the necessary arrangements to ensure that their employees are paid on time based on their contracts. It should not have anything to do with their responsibility and their relationship with the Government. Yes, it is a problem that we know exists. It is pronounced in actually all of the regions. We have already started to engage, at the level of the Labour Department, the security companies that are responsible for affecting their staff.

Ms. McDonald: I heard the Hon. Minister list a whole lot of training programmes, but I would have been happy to hear that the Hon. Minister is having ongoing training programmes or that the Ministry of Labour would be starting training programmes in industrial relations, collective bargaining and those kind of things. We are all aware that there are a number of workers who suffer under various systems. I would have been happy to hear the Hon. Minister mention that on his list of priorities for training.

In addition to that, we have had the experience of having all of these stores – and let me narrow it done – on Regent Street where there is the exploitation of our Guyanese citizens. I would have been happy to hear the Hon. Minister say that there are programmes in place to deal with those and the measures that are going to be employed to deal with those errant employers.

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Member, I have already stated that part of the training programme will be upgrading and training staff at the Labour Department, the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Department and the Cooperatives Department.

Secondly, presently, the departments are not fully staffed. I said earlier that we will commence training programmes for new Labour Officers and OSH Officers and expand the supervisory role in all the regions to ensure that all the regions are properly supervised in this regard.

The other point I mentioned was recognition of the limitation of our officers, presently, to engage migrants. That is the reason we have already started foreign language programmes. I have already said that 24 staff members have been identified to start the Portuguese and Spanish programmes. I have said, also, that I have engaged the Ambassador of China to Guyana to help in the area of training. This is because one cannot properly supervise the stores unless one can speak to them in their language. When the man says, “I cannot speak English”, the conversation is over. When the Spanish employer says, “I only speak poco poco ingles”, the conversation is over. Therefore, to do all the things that the Hon. Member is talking about, it could only be done if the staff have the capacity, facility and the language skills to engage. Recognising that, we have already put in place those type of training programmes.

I could say also, whilst I am on my feet, that, regarding the new industry of oil and gas, we have already put in place mechanisms to deal with that. There is cooperation between the Ministry of Labour and the oil and gas companies. We have joint technical committees – the Ministry of Labour and ExxonMobil Corporation, the Ministry of Labour and American Chamber of Commerce of Guyana (AmCham), the Ministry of Labour and Gaico Construction and General Service Incorporated – Mr. Komal Singh. They will help us to ensure that our Labour Officers and OSH Officers are trained so that they could supervise the new industries that we have. We are thinking ahead. I dare say this: what the Ministry of Labour has done in six weeks, past Government did not do in five years.

Ms. Philadelphia: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I recognise the number being six. I understand this is a new Ministry. I recognise the total sum allocated there is \$9,915,000. Could the Hon. Minister be so kind as to say to us what are the statuses of these six contracted employees, their financial remunerations, and, of course, if any arrangement will be made to put them on the fixed establishment?

Mr. Hamilton: A couple of things, Mr. Chairman and Hon. Members, this Assembly must recognise. When we come here and we talk about putting every contractual employee on the fixed

establishment, we must first know the procedure and protocols. If one is over 45 years, that is out of the question. That is the first point. [**An Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)] Yes, I am telling you now.

The second point is because we have not trained enough and sufficient Labour and OSH Officers over time, presently, all the officers that are heads of departments are retirees that we had to bring back into the system to help us because of the paucity of people with the skills. Therefore, the answer to the question about contractual employees under line item 6116 is because of two matters I have just outlined.

Ms. Philadelphia: The Hon. Member spent over one minute explaining, but he did not provide this Committee with the status of these persons and their financial remuneration. Those were the specific questions that I asked.

Mr. Hamilton: The Chief Labour Officer – \$357,000, Chief Cooperative Officer – \$236,000, OSH Officer – \$105,000, International Labour Organization (ILO) Consultant – \$393,000 and Chief Recruitment Officer – \$272,000. This can be laid over to the National Assembly.

Programme 381 – Policy Development and Administration – \$184,845,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 381 – Policy Development and Administration – \$20,000,000

Programme: 381 – Policy Development and Administration – \$20,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 382 – Labour Administration Service – \$98,840,000

Ms. McDonald: Under Staffing Details, I recognise that there are six for Administrative. Would the Hon. Minister be kind as to say to us the designations of those six persons and their remuneration packages?

Mr. Hamilton: Could you repeat the question please, Hon. Member?

Ms. McDonald: Under Staffing Details, Administrative, there are six persons. Could you be kind as to say to us the designations of those six persons and what are their remuneration packages?

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Member, the designations of the persons are Cooperative Officers and Regional Cooperative Officers. The salary range is from \$147,000 to \$133,000.

Programme: 382 – Labour Administration Service – \$98,840,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 382 – Labour Administration Service – \$7,100,000

Programme: 382 – Labour Administration Service – \$7,100,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister and staff, thank you very much for taking us through this agency.

Mr. Hamilton: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we have a few more agencies. Should we press on and just allow persons to take a break and refresh themselves and come back as we continue the work? I am just afraid that when we take this break, we will take an hour and a half to get back here. Hon. Members?

We should press on. Thank you very much.

Next is the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs. It seems as though he has ‘pressed’ out. Could someone get the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs? I am sure the Clerk of the National Assembly has arranged something for our good behaviour after this.

Hon. Members, the Hon. Minister said he was scheduled for 6 o’clock and none of his staff is here.

3.58 p.m.

Let us try and get him to get the staff. We will take a half an hour break. Thank you. Let the Assembly resume.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: We will suspend until 4.30 p.m. Thank you very much.

Sitting suspended at 3.58 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 4.42 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Members. Please be seated. We shall resume as the Committee of Supply.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Mr. Chairman: Let me invite the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs and his team to join us in front. Hon. Members, before I put the question, just a little housekeeping. Noting that the Minister has a big team, we will have to give the Minister and his team an opportunity to change over after we finish the particular programme.

Agency 54: Ministry of Public Security

Current Expenditure

Programme: 514 – Policy Development and Administration – \$612,908,000

Mr. Henry: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: there is some \$3.36 million budgeted. In Region 9, we have a number of Community Policing Groups (CPGs) that are very active. During the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, they have been extremely active at the various check points. We want to ask if this is the heading for them and what sort of assistance they will be getting.

Minister of Home Affairs [Mr. Benn]: I believe the issue of community policing comes under a separate head, line item 6294 – Other.

Programme: 514 – Policy Development and Administration – \$612,908,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 541 – Policy development and Administration – \$245,958,000

Programme: 541 – Policy development and Administration – \$245,958,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 542 – Police Force – \$9,789,078,000

Programme: 542 – Police Force – \$9,789,078,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 542 – Police Force – \$740,046,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Project code 1216800 – Police Stations and Buildings: would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to give a list of the police stations and buildings on which the \$734,620,000 was spent?

Mr. Benn: There are a number of police stations which benefited from improvements, construction and rehabilitation. I cite construction for Anna Regina Divisional Headquarters – \$30 million, construction of Fort Wellington Divisional Headquarters – \$40 million, construction of Mabaruni Divisional Headquarters – \$25 million, construction of Golden Grove Divisional Headquarters – \$25 million, construction of Mahdia Divisional Headquarters – \$45 million, rehabilitation of Cove John Police Station – \$10 million, rehabilitation of Special Branch – \$5 million and rehabilitation of Brickdam Police Station. I could layover the long list of stations.

Hon. Members might remember that many of these rehabilitations started under a citizen security project which started in 2014.

Programme: 542 – Police Force – \$740,046,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 543 – Prison Service – \$1,727,545,000

Programme: 543 – Prison Service – \$1,727,545,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 543 – Prison Service – \$484,927,000

Programme: 543 – Prison Service – \$484,927,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 544 – Police Complaints Authority – \$16,582,000

Programme: 544 – Police Complaints Authority – \$16,582,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

4.56 p.m.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 545 – Fire Service – \$1,268,037,000

Programme: 545 – Fire Service – \$1,268,037,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 546 – Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit – \$282,863,000

Programme: 546 – Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit – \$282,863,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency 51: Ministry of Home Affairs

Current Expenditure

Programme: 511 – Policy Development and Administration – \$282,417,000

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Mr. Chairman, if it pleases you, I respectfully direct the Hon. Minister to line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies. Could the Hon. Minister provide a breakdown of the materials that were made available or will be made available to the Guyana Forensic Science Laboratory (GFSL) and, also, the categories of drugs catered for under this line item?

Mr. Benn: The categories for the Guyana Forensic Science Laboratory include: procurement of additional re-agents and supplies that are specific for the equipment, re-agents test kits, Nitrogen gas, consumables for the other equipment at the Guyana Forensic Science Laboratory, and medical supplies for the staff at the Ministry in the event of minor accidents.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Hon. Minister, I direct you to line item 6116 – Contracted Employees. Could you state for this Committee what steps, if any, have been taken to place these staff on the pensionable establishment? This is against the backdrop that, out of the 250 employees, 218 are contracted employees. This amounts to 51% of the workforce.

Mr. Benn: I am glad about the direction of the Hon. Member. This is a situation that I inherited. This matter will be reviewed, and the appropriate steps will be taken to make sure that persons are placed in requisite positions where they could perform efficiently for the Ministry.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Hon. Minister, are you confirming that, since 2nd August, you have taken no steps to place these 218 employees on the pensionable establishment?

Mr. Benn: In the first instance, I understand that most of these employees are over 45 years of age. Secondly, my predecessor had the opportunity for over four and a half years to make the necessary adjustments. I think, with due respect, we will not rush into a situation where we will not be able to appropriately place people in positions where they cannot or may not be able to perform at the best levels.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: The specific answer to my specific question is that no action has been taken since 2nd August.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are you making a statement or asking a question?

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: I am making a statement for my purposes.

Mr. Chairman: I will allow the Minister to make a statement in return.

Mr. Benn: I think I gave an answer. I do not know what answer will satisfy the Hon. Member but that is it.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Mr. Chairman, if it pleases you, could the Hon. Minister state the staff employed, if any, after 2nd August, their emoluments, designations, terms of services and benefits along with the duration of their contracts? Could you also state the emoluments, terms of contract and qualifications of your advisor who was recently appointed?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I would just like you to direct that observation to the particular line item or items.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Respectfully, Mr. Chairman, it is directed under line item 6116, Contracted Employees.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much.

Mr. Benn: We have not employed anybody, simply put. We have not employed anybody. We have not made any changes.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: I refer to line item 6284 – Other: could the Hon. Minister provide the specific details with respect to the utilisation of the \$11,411,000 allocated under this line item?

Mr. Benn: Under this line item, we have spent \$9,100,000 for software upgrade; just over \$1 million is identified for advertisements and public advisory for invitations for bids; \$20,000 is for the washing of curtains, mats and hand towels; \$800,000 is scheduled for internet service; \$380,000 is identified for brokerage services, bank charges and outreaches; and \$10,000 is for repairs to door locks. These total \$11,411,000.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: I now direct the Hon. Minister, through you, Mr. Chairman, to line item 6294 – Other. Some \$18,310,000 has been allocated. Could the Hon. Minister state specifically, with details, how this \$18,310,000 will be expended?

Mr. Benn: The expenditure will be made in relation to the Special Organised Crime Unit (SOCU) for \$4,449,000; operational expenses for SOCU is \$4,500,000; for the Task Force on Trafficking in Persons (TIP), it is just over \$2,500,000; for the National Anti-Narcotics Agency (NANA), it is \$300,000; there is \$3,000,000 for Community Policing Groups; there is \$2,000,000 for the

Juvenile Holding Centre; there is \$100,000 for the Guyana Fire Advisory Board (GFAB); there is \$300,000 for the Firearms Licensing Approval Board; stipends for members of the boards and Evaluators; and there is \$800,000 for general administration. These total \$18,310,000.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: I respectfully direct the Hon. Minister to line item 6112, Senior Technical. A sum of \$13,245,000 has been allocated for the 23 staff under this line item. Could the Hon. Minister state the designations, emoluments, duration and the terms of contracts for the top five highest paid employees under this line item?

Mr. Benn: This increase in the budget is reflective of the appointment of one Evidence Officer, one Planner, and salary increases for 2019. The details in respect of the top five highest paid persons, we can lay them over to you.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Could the Hon. Minister commit to a timeline for the submission of the information requested, please?

5.11 p.m.

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, I will be pleased to have it handed over on Monday.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Hon. Minister, I thank you very much for your cooperation. Through you, Mr. Chairman, I refer the Hon. Minister to line item 6241 where \$2.5 million has been allocated. Could the Hon. Minister provide the list of all buildings rented under this line item?

Mr. Benn: There is just one building and it is rental for the building for the National Anti-Narcotics Agency (NANA).

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Through you, Mr. Chairman, I respectfully direct the Hon. Minister to line item 6242 where \$3.6 million has been allocated. Could the Minister layover the list of all the Buildings that are to be maintained under this line item and the present state of all buildings under this head?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, it is for laying over.

Mr. Benn: I will follow the direction of the Hon. Lady and lay the information over.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Hon. Minister, are you committing to layover this information on Monday?

Mr. Benn: That is right.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: I respectfully direct the Hon. Minister to line item 6255 – Maintenance of other Infrastructure. The sum of \$2.7 million has been allocated, could the Hon. Minister explain what are the ‘other infrastructure’ that are to be covered under this line item?

Mr. Benn: In response to the direction of the Hon. Member, line item 6255, Maintenance of other Infrastructure, payments will be made for the capping of the compound at the main office which has been flooded, repairs to the boundary fence and the Juvenile Holding Centre, modification of the parking lot at the main building, weeding of the compounds of the Guyana Forensic Science Laboratory (GFSL), the Citizen Security Strengthen Programme Building and general routine maintenance works.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: I respectfully direct the Hon. Minister to line item 6321 where \$3.3 million has been allocated. Could the Hon. Minister confirm whether contributions have been met to the Guyana Veterans’ Legion and the National Road Safety Council? If they have been met, could you please state the dates?

Mr. Benn: I am advised that the National Road Safety Council received an amount of \$3.8 million and the other agencies will receive their contributions, to use the right word, in this last quarter.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Minister, could you confirm what you just said, and that is that \$3.8 million was paid to the National Road Safety Council?

Mr. Benn: Under the Ministry of Public Security, that money was paid. That is my advice.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Could you provide the date please?

Mr. Benn: Indeed, on Monday, we can provide the date that the payment was made.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: I direct the Hon. Member, respectfully, to line item 6281. Could the Hon. Minister state which service is providing the security service and, specifically, state the type of security service contracted by the Ministry?

Mr. Benn: The increases and the moneys are being paid for security services for the Stephen Campbell House and the Berbice and Linden Immigration Offices. Under the Department of Citizenship, this is the immigration support services. This is to cater, also, for security for the building which houses the Citizen Strengthening Security Programme (CSSP).

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: I am not sure if I missed the Hon. Minister's answer to the type of security contracted. I also refer you to line item 6272 where \$12.7 million has been allocated. Could the Hon. Minister state for which buildings are these electricity charges?

Mr. Benn: The increases are attributed to additional charges for the Department of Citizenship, again, the immigration support services, also electricity charges for the Ministry's main office, the Juvenile Holding Centre, the Guyana Forensic Science Laboratory and the office of the Citizen Security Strengthening Programme.

Mr. Holder: If I heard correctly, under line item 6284, Other, there is an allocation for advertisements. My question is what media will be used?

Mr. Benn: It is for advertisements in all the newspapers and it is in relation to bid invitations and public advisories.

Mr. Holder: I would like the Minister to list all the newspapers in which these advertisements would be featured.

Mr. Benn: It would be featured in all the national newspapers.

Mr. Holder: My specific question is whether the *Weekend Mirror* newspaper is featured under this line item?

Mr. Benn: I would not be surprised if advertisements could be placed in the *Weekend Mirror* newspaper because the *Weekend Mirror* newspaper goes all over the country on Sundays.

Mr. Holder: I would like to confirm that the *Weekend Mirror* newspaper is one of these newspapers.

Mr. Benn: Now that the Hon. Gentleman has raised this issue, I am aware that the *Weekend Mirror* newspaper goes all over this country on weekends. If there is something called the 'new nation' newspaper, which falls into similar category, I would have no objection to advertise [*inaudible*].

Programme: 511 – Policy Development and Administration – \$282,417,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 511 – Policy Development and Administration –\$245,511,000

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: I respectfully direct the Hon. Minister to project code 1216600. Could the Hon. Minister provide the details on the provision of the trestle and the gate, where it would be constructed and the specific allocation on labour and material cost?

Mr. Benn: There would be the construction of the trestle at the Guyana Forensic Science Laboratory and the construction of gates at the Ministry.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, do you have any information on the specifics, especially materials and labour costs? I think that is what she asked.

Mr. Benn: Unfortunately, there has not been any award of a contract yet, so, with respect to labour cost, it will go to public tender.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: I respectfully refer the Hon. Minister to project code 2608200. There is an allocation of \$20 million for the provision of furniture, equipment for the head office of the Guyana Forensic Science Laboratory, NANA, Juvenile Justice Department and the Juvenile Holding Centre. Could the Minister layover the details on the specifics about the items to be purchased and the cost per item?

Mr. Benn: We have a long list of these items and we could lay them over to the Hon. Lady.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Is the Minister committing to laying over the requested information on Monday?

Mr. Benn: Yes.

Programme: 511 – Policy Development and Administration – \$245,511,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

5.26 p.m.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 512 – Guyana Police Force – \$5,290,340,000

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Respectfully, through you, I direct the Hon. Minister to line item 6111. There are 173 staff with an allocation of over \$100 million, could the Minister state the designation and the emoluments, along with the benefits, of the five highest paid employees under this line item?

Mr. Benn: Again, this is under the Guyana Police Force at the senior level. It is for Cadet Officers to the Deputy Commissioners. There is an increase of 8.5% due to the promotion of 23 ranks. Twenty-six ranks were paid acting allowances and one rank was reactivated and paid a difference in salary. The listing of the first five, or ten, whichever you want, I can give that to you on Monday.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Under line item 6114, there is an allocation of \$1.3 billion for clerical and office support. Could the Minister state the designation of the highest paid staff and the designation of the lowest paid staff? Also, could you layover the designation and the emoluments for the highest 20 staff and the lowest 20 staff, please?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I just want to save the trees and save the paper. No, it is already included at the back of the Estimates. All the salary scales and all of the designations are included there. This is just in event that this question comes up again and again.

Mr. Benn: I am advised that the Constables get \$94,000 and that is the highest of that range of employees, and the Corporals, too.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Through you, Mr. Chairman, I respectfully direct the Hon. Minister to line item 6241 where there is an allocation of \$7.6 million. Could the Hon. Minister either tell us now, or layover the list of all buildings rented under this line item?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, you are being invited to call or layover, or do both.

Mr. Benn: This item relates to some increase in the rental of buildings due to the need to conduct intelligence work, the housing of Commanders' offices at Regional Division #4(b), and some liability payments. Due to some requirement for confidentiality, I cannot layover the list and the location of these buildings.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: I appreciate your response, Hon. Minister. I direct you, respectfully, to line item 6284, could you provide the specific details in respect of the utilisation of the \$83 million allocated under this line item? Also, could you state whether we can expect a special victim's unit within this year?

Mr. Benn: Line item 6284, Other, caters for the payment of radio rentals, intelligence gathering, and, also, for the laundering of curtains, *et cetera*. I think the Hon. Member made some reference to a special victims Unit. I cannot speak to that at the moment. I cannot speak to that here and now, but as soon as I get some information on that, I will [*inaudible*].

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: I respectfully direct the Hon. Minister to line item 6302 where \$72,213,000 has been allocated for training. Could the Minister state, specifically, the ranks to be trained and the areas of training? I do not need the names of the ranks. I am asking for their designations in terms of ranks.

Additionally, could the Hon. Minister state how he expects to better prepare our men and women in uniform to bring down the crime rate, solve gruesome murders and violence related offences against women, sexual offenses, and the illegal landing of cocaine planes in our airstrip?

Mr. Benn: This line item refers to training, in both national and overseas courses, and the fees for lecturers. There has been a decrease because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which made it impossible for some of these courses to be done at the scheduled time.

In relation to the larger items, the issue of the reduction of crime and so on, I did make a presentation to this honourable House last Thursday. I spoke to particular approaches in relation to improving the professionalism of the force, bringing in additional capital support to the force, and about how this issue of training and retraining would be done in order to improve the performance of the force, so that we can all be safe.

Mr. Ramsaroop: Just a follow up question on the same line item. Could the Hon. Minister say to this noble Committee if the police officers will be victimised by pursuing their scholarships?

Mr. Chairman: Could you repeat the question?

Mr. Ramsaroop: Under line item 6302, there is training (including scholarships).

Mr. Benn: I am sorry, Mr. Chairman, I did not understand the question. I was asking for a repeat of the question.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Ramsaroop, could you repeat the question?

Mr. Ramsaroop: The question is whether the Hon. Minister could say to this noble Committee if police officers will be going on scholarships without being victimised?

Mr. Benn: Thank you, Hon. Gentleman, for the question. I do not find a connection between persons going on training and being victimised. If they go on training, it will be at the instance of the police force. We would be sending them to do the training, so I think we would be enhancing their opportunities and promotional skills. I do not understand, I am sorry.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Through you, Mr. Chairman, I respectfully direct the Hon. Minister to line item 6322. Could the Hon. Minister confirm whether contributions have been paid to the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police? If the answer is yes, could you please provide, to the Committee, the dates?

Mr. Benn: These are the required payments to be made because we want to remain in INTERPOL itself and in the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police. I can give information as to the payments which have to be made.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Hon. Minister, are you confirming that the payments have been made and you are seeking to layover the dates of the payments on Monday?

Mr. Benn: I am told that part payment has been made. I will give you the breakdown and the schedule in relation to those payments.

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6294 – Other: I am seeing an allocation of \$117,344,000, could the Hon. Minister provide the Committee with an explanation of how these funds will be utilised?

Mr. Benn: The line item caters for the payment of services rendered for the handling, transportation and storage of bodies and the cost of sending radio and television messages. The increase in the number of handling, storage, and transportation of dead bodies, and liability payments have given rise to this increase.

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: Could the Minister inform the Committee for what the events will this allocation cater?

Mr. Benn: The national events relate to Republic Day, Mashramani, and security coverage required for the events and all public national holidays.

Programme: 512 - Guyana Police Force - \$5,290,340,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 512 – Guyana Police Force - \$779,584,000

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Through you, I respectfully direct the Hon. Minister to project code 1216800. This is the project for the retention and construction of buildings, could the Hon. Minister state what projects this retention is for and whether the new improvements will accommodate facilities to house women police officers?

5.41 p.m.

Mr. Benn: The sums are allocated for the continuation of construction of various police stations. I have seen the designs in relation to these old police stations and I am aware that facilities are being designed and being constructed with respect to the housing of female officers.

Mr. Chandan-Edmond: Through you, Mr. Chairman, I respectfully direct the Hon. Minister to project code 2405900, Land and Water Transport – Police. There is an allocation of \$428 million, Could the Hon. Minister state which regions will benefit from the vehicles to be purchased and

also the types of vehicles to be purchased? If you do not have this information readily, I would not mind you laying them over, respectfully, on Monday.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much Hon. Member, that is very considerate for the Minister to do.

Mr. Benn: These vehicles will be assigned to Regions 1 to 10. There is an intention to buy a 500cc motorcycle, one all-terrain vehicle (ATV), one Land Cruiser, one motor car, 40 bicycles, one bobcat (backhoe) and one 50 double cab pick-ups, because we have a large deficit in terms of operating vehicles that are of a suitable type.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Through you, again, Mr. Chairman, I respectfully direct the Hon. Minister to project code 2509500, Equipment and Furniture – Police. There is an allocation of \$12 million, could the Minister layover, or either provide to this honourable Committee, what are furniture and the specific equipment to be purchased and for where?

Mr. Benn: The equipment to be improved in relation to the police stations range from stand fans, padded office chairs, executive desks, filing cabinets, computer systems, television sets, refrigerators, microwaves, colour printers, adding machines, water dispensers, executive chairs, fire extinguishers, photocopying machine, industrial fans, industrial gas stoves, writing desks and a heavy-duty staple machine, totalling \$12 million. We could layover the information to the Hon. Member.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Through you once again, Mr. Chairman, I respectfully direct the Hon. Minister to project code 2608300, Equipment – Police, where reference is made for the purchase of arms and ammunition. Also, there is reference to musical equipment. Could the Hon. Minister state what equipment will be purchased and, also, inform us whether the special weapons purchased under this project are for the benefit of the tactical team?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, do not give out too many secrets now you know.

Mr. Benn: There will be no purchases of arms and ammunitions this year, but some musical instruments will be bought. If it is of interest to the Committee, one Bb clarinet, one Bb clarinet pad, tenor saxophone pads, flute pads, cork for clarinet and saxophone, bass guitar strings and rhythm guitar strings, amongst other items will be procured.

Mr. Duncan: Project code 1216800 – Police Stations and Buildings: There is a big total there and it is a rollover project, could the Hon. Minister state for the Committee which police stations are being rehabilitated and constructed and in which areas?

Mr. Benn: I thought that I had already called out the names of the police stations, but I can do so again. The ongoing retention projects are 15 in number: the Anna Regina Police Divisional Headquarters, the Fort Wellington Police Divisional Headquarters, the Mabaruma Police Divisional Headquarters, the Golden Grove Police Divisional Headquarters, the Mahdia Police Divisional Headquarters, the Cove and John Police Station, the special branch building, the Brickdam Police Station, the Matthews Ridge Police Station and the Lethem Police Station. There is the rehabilitation of the special branch building on Camp Street, the Fort Wellington Police Divisional Headquarters, the Anna Regina Police Divisional Headquarters, Cove and John Police Station and the construction of the Golden Grove Police Divisional Headquarters.

Mr. Mahipaul: A follow-up on the very project code: Is there any consideration for the construction of a police station in Tuschen and Zeelugt New Schemes, and, if not, could you say when you will consider that, since those schemes have a lot of people living there?

Mr. Benn: That will not be done under the present arrangement and budgeting. Now that the gentleman has raised it, we can take it up for review.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Good representation, Sir.

Programme: 512 – Guyana Police Force – \$779,584,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 513 – Guyana Prison Service – \$872,287,000

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Through you, Mr. Chairman, I respectfully direct the Hon. Minister to line item 6116, Contracted Employees, where there are nine staff in this category with an allocation of over \$6 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain how the \$6 million will be expended and the designation and the emoluments of all staff? Could you also confirm whether these nine staff are

all civilians? Could you tell us, also, what percentage of increase our hardworking prison officers could expect in December?

Mr. Benn: The contracted employees relate to a Head of Strategic Management at a basic salary of \$461,000; a Planning Research, Resource and Mobilisation Officer at \$277,000; a Technical Officer Prison Project Management at \$287,000; Staff Welfare Officer at \$103,000; a Prisoners Welfare Officer at \$160,000; three Prison School Teachers at \$133,000 each; and a Doctor at \$133,000.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: I did not hear from the Minister what percentage of increase the officers can expect at the end of December. When you are going to answer that, could you also refer to line item 6284, Other, and line item 6294, Other, where there is an allocation of \$29 million and \$13 million, respectively. Could you tell us how these moneys will be allocated under the line items?

Mr. Benn: I think the Ministry of Finance would be better able to tell us about increases going toward the end of the year. Under line item 6284, this allocation is for the rental of tents, portable toilets, tower lights and clearing of septic tanks at the Camp Street and Lusignan Prisons.

Line item 6294 – Other: This allocation to support the development plans of the agricultural sector for enhancing productivity of meat kind and green vegetables.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Through you, I respectfully direct the Hon. Minister to line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships), where there is an allocation of \$32 million for training. Could the Hon. Minister state, specifically, the ranks to be trained and the areas of training? Also, could the Hon. Minister state how he expects to better prepare our men and women in uniform to deescalate hostile situations at the prison, to reinforce Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) to ensure they are adhered to at all times so as to prevent occurrences of riots and disturbances within the prison, and to build capacity within the prison?

Mr. Benn: The training refers to training for both the prison officers and for the prisoners. I have a long list of courses for the prison officers: a Probationer's Proficiency Course, the Supervisory Course at the Competence Level 1, Supervisory Course at the Competence Level 2, the Junior Manager's Proficiency Course Level 1, the Junior Manager's Proficiency Course Level 2, the

Junior Correctional Leadership Course Level 1, and the Junior Correctional Leadership Course Level 2.

Interestingly, the Philosophies of Prisons Criminology and the Criminal Justice System Model 1, the Philosophies of Prisons Criminology and the Criminal Justice System Model 2, the Cadet Officer Course in conjunction with the Guyana Defence Force (GDF) and the Food Management Course at the Carnegie School of Home Economics...

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Through you I respectfully direct the Hon. Minister to line item 6222 – Field Materials and Supplies, where there is an allocation of \$51 million. Could the Hon. Minister layover, please, the specific items under this head and the purpose?

Mr. Benn: The allocation refers to the provision of adequate clothing, toiletries such as toilet paper, bath soap, toothpaste *et cetera*, mattresses and eating chairs for the inmates, and stab proof vest for officers.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: I, once again, respectfully direct the Hon. Minister to line item 6292 – Dietary where there is an allocation of \$172 million. Could the Hon. Minister state whether the procurement of dietary is subject to a public tender process and what are the amounts that are usually allotted for tender?

5.56 p.m.

Mr. Benn: Yes, there is a public tender process in relation to this item and the results, based on the specific numbers for the periods, will result in the quantities. The tender process will yield the specific numbers related to cost and quantities against the amounts that we have.

Mr. Duncan: Mr. Chairman, as you know, when the Advisor on Security, Mr. Harry Gill, visited the prisoners recently, they complained about their quality of meals. I am just trying to find out under the same line item 6292, what does dietary constitute?

Mr. Benn: The question of dietary for the prisoners is always a question of concern. I did visit the Lusignan Prison three days after becoming a Minister. I have made a request to the Cabinet to have a large area of land to develop for agricultural purposes so that the prisoners can get fruits, green vegetables and other things into the prison system. I understand that the Mazaruni Prison is doing

much better at that end. I want the House to rest assured that we want to have continuous improvement in the conditions for our prisoners and the conditions of the prisons themselves. [**Mr. Mahipaul:** Continue the good work that Mr. Ramjattan left.] I wish he did not bring that up.

Programme: 513 – Guyana Prison Service – \$872,287,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 513 – Guyana Prison Service – \$1,576,980,000

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Mr. Chairman, through you, once again, I respectfully direct the Hon. Minister to project code 1216900, Buildings Prisons. There is a huge provision of \$1.5 billion and there is a payment of retention. Could the Hon. Minister explain to us what this payment is for? Could the Hon. Minister state whether there is any change of design or variation of design for the reconstruction of the prison and the holding bay at the Lusignan Prison, bearing in mind that this is a roll over project?

Mr. Benn: I just want to say that the \$1.55 billion, in respect of these projects, is something that we are locked into. It was inherited from my predecessors' sojourn. There are, indeed, some conflicting issues in respect of the large amount of money to be spent and what results, in terms of holding prisoners, but we have to continue. We have restarted, as I said last Thursday, the building of the prisons in Georgetown and Mazaruni, and work will go ahead in New Amsterdam. If I could state the numbers: \$479 million for Mazaruni; \$607 million for Georgetown; \$414 million for New Amsterdam; there is the extension of a storage bond for only \$8 million; an exercise bay at Mazaruni for \$579,000; and there is the construction of a holding bay at the Lusignan Prison.

We have indeed, I would say, completed the preliminary designs and estimates for the building of a larger prison at Lusignan, but the budgeting for that will come in future years; next year. As I said, there is the view that this money could have been better spent but we are locked into this. The details which you require we can provide. Right now, we are constructing temporary facilities at Lusignan. We have 70 or more prisoners at Madewini on COVID-19 restrictions. As I said on Thursday, when I made my presentation, we inherited a situation where hundreds of men were

lying next to each other on the ground and in hammocks at the top. That is what we inherited and we are going to make it better.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Through you, Mr. Chairman, I respectfully direct the Hon. Minister to project code 2406100, Land and Water Transport - Fire. There is an allocation \$411.7 million. Could the Hon. Minister lay over to the House, since time is against us, how many vehicles and busses will be purchased, the specifications and the exact cost for each item and for which location?

Mr. Benn: I was not aware that time is against us. We intend to buy two minibuses for the holding bays at Lusignan and Timehri. The estimated cost is \$5.6 million. We intend to buy two pickups at \$6 million for Georgetown, Lusignan and, also, to help service New Amsterdam.

Programme: 513 – Guyana Prison Service – \$1,576,980,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, you can bring your next set of staff from the General Registrar's Office. Sorry, the Guyana Fire service.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 515 – Guyana Fire Service – \$452,671,000

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: I respectfully direct the Hon. Minister to line item 6284, Other and 6294, Other. There is an allocation of \$6.4 and \$901 million respectively. Could you tell us how these moneys will be allocated? Could you tell us whether you will be making representation on behalf of the officers for an increase?

Mr. Benn: Line item 6284 – Other: this caters for payment to Massy Technologies Guyana Limited (CCS Ltd) for air time, payment for internet services, clearing of Guyana Fire Service equipment from the wharf, medical examinations for recruits, advertisements in the media, rental of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) cylinders and other services.

Line item 6294 – Other: There have been established auxiliary units in five hinterland areas, namely: Kwakwani, Mahdia, Mabaruma, Port Kaituma and Lethem. The service will also be extending and expanding the auxiliary units in more areas. These moneys are the payments for

stipends for these auxiliary unit members along with payments of bridges, stipends for work-study students and members of the recruitment boards for Transport & Harbours Department and other services.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Line item 6243 – Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies: There is an allocation of \$4.5 million under this line item. Could the Minister state to this House whether there are any programmes for prisoners to do janitorial work to earn credits *per se*, which could be used in conjunction with good behaviour for early release? If there is such a programme, could the Minister respectfully lay over the work programmes and the credits earned per hours of work?

Mr. Benn: With respect to this line item 6243, Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies, under the Guyana Fire Service, there is no conflation between the Guyana Fire Service and the Guyana Prison Service in respect of this line item.

Mr. Duncan: Under line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister tell us or give us a list of the buildings and where they are situated?

Mr. Benn: The buildings are the repairs to the Mahaica Fire Station, general repairs to the Timehri Fire Station, repairs to the Linden Fire Station, repairs to the Diamond Fire Station, repairs to the La Grange Fire Station, the Central Fire Station, the Rose Hall Fire Station, the Ogle Fire Station, and the Anna Regina Fire Station. The normal maintenance of buildings are catered for.

Mr. Duncan: Under Line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence: Could the Hon. Minister be so grateful as to tell us what kind of activities are specifically covered under the line item?

Mr. Benn: Travelling and meals for officers conducting inspections in various locations including payment of subsistence at the Bartica Fire Station and offsetting of cost for accommodation and meals for officers on transfer. The normal activity in terms of... [*inaudible*]

Programme: 515 – Guyana Fire Service – \$452,671,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

6.11 p.m.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 515 – Guyana Fire Service – \$62,860,000

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Mr. Chairman, through you, I respectfully direct the Hon. Minister to project code 2406100. There is an allocation of \$31 million, for land and water transport, to purchase “water tenders and bus.” Could the Hon. Minister tell us the type of bus the service is considering to procure and for which location?

Mr. Benn: I am pleased to say that it is a new minibus and it will be for the Timehri Fire Station.

Mr. Chairman: What is the seating capacity?

Mr. Benn: It is a 15-seater minibus.

Mr. Duncan: Under project code 1217000, Fire Ambulances and Stations, there is provision for an \$8 million driveway. Could the Hon. Minister tell us where that driveway is located?

Mr. Benn: This is for the construction of a driveway at the Mahdia Fire Station.

Mr. Cox: Under project code 2406100, I just want to know if there is any provision for hinterland fire stations, especially the one in Mabaruma. Is there any provision for land and water transport? That area is predominantly traversed by personnel using fuel on the waterfront, especially those at Kumaka waterfront.

Mr. Benn: I thought, Mr. Chairman, that the Hon. Gentleman is an auxiliary fire person and that he will be aware that the station will be commissioned this year.

Mr. Mahipaul: A follow-up on the same project code. Is there any consideration for water tenders for the islands of Wakenaam and Leguan? If not, when will that be?

Mr. Benn: There has, indeed, been consultation on this matter but it has not been effected as yet, but it will be.

Programme: 515 – Guyana Fire Service - \$62,860,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Current Expenditure

Programme: 516 – General Registrar’s Office - \$113,341,000

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Through you, Mr. Chairman, I respectfully direct the Hon. Minister to line item 6284, Other. Could the Hon. Minister provide the specific details, with respect to the utilisation of the \$13.6 million allocated?

Mr. Benn: The \$13.6 million will be spent in relation to registrar fees, marriage performances, agency fees, bulk postages, cleaning of the vaults and fumigation, and the spraying of books for worms.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: I respectfully direct the Hon. Minister to line item 6114, Clerical and Office Support, where there is an allocation of \$21 million for 87 staff under this head. Could the Hon. Minister lay over the designations, the qualifications, the emoluments and the benefits of the 10 highest and the 10 lowest staff?

Mr. Benn: We will lay over on Monday.

Mr. Duncan: Under line item 6116, Contracted Employees, could the Hon. Minister tell us who are the five highest paid employees, their designations and emoluments?

Mr. Benn: The highest paid staff is the Head of Immigration and Support Services at \$379,950. The lowest paid is \$70,000 for a Cleaner.

Mr. Duncan: A follow-up question on the same line item. Could the Hon. Minister state whether these persons would be placed on the fixed establishment?

Mr. Benn: I did say, previously, that there was a consideration that persons who are over 45 years... [*inaudible*] Those are the people who were left there by my predecessor.

Programme: 516 – General Register Office – \$113,341,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 516 – General Register Office – \$1,000,000

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: I direct the Hon. Minister to project code 1700200, There is a provision of \$1,000,000 to purchase furniture and equipment. Could the Hon. Minister lay over to this

honourable House, what furniture will be purchased and the specific equipment that will be purchased, and for where?

Mr. Benn: Yes, we can lay it over. Printers, refrigerators, fax machine, air conditioning unit, fans, chairs, metal cabinets and so on.

Programme: 516 – General Register Office – \$1,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 517 – Customs Anti-Narcotics – \$125,469,000

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Respectfully, I direct the Hon. Minister to line item 6241, Rental of Buildings, where there is an allocation. Could the Hon. Minister lay over the number of buildings rented – I know for security purposes you may not be able to tell us the exact buildings rented – the date of commencement of tenancy agreement, duration, monthly rental and, if you can, the purpose of rental? I understand the security restrictions.

Mr. Benn: It is payments for buildings from July to September, and they are at Lethem, Charity, Berbice and Parika. I do not think we need to know where these buildings are in the specific localities. I would be leery about that.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: I asked for the numbers.

Mr. Benn: The numbers are four.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Respectfully, I direct the Hon. Minister to line item 6255, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure, where there is an allocation of \$1.2 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain to the House what are the other infrastructure covered under this item?

Mr. Benn: This is for the recapping of a compound at Timehri, repairs to the main gate there, the filling of a slope on the partition and the fixing of the fence and the walkway at Timehri.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: I respectfully direct the Hon. Minister, to line items 6284 and 6294, both Other. There is an allocation of \$1 million and \$7.5 million, respectively. Could you tell us how these moneys will be expended?

Mr. Benn: The payments are for rental services; washing of mats, curtains and towels; maintenance of email, server services and internet charges; maintenance and expenditure pertaining to the internet advertising bulletin for wanted persons; and some activities which were cancelled due to the COVID-19 but which will be completed in the last quarter.

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Respectfully, I direct the Hon. Minister to line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships), where there is an allocation of \$1.5 million. Could the Hon. Minister either tell us now, or lay over, the specific areas of training, the breakdown of training programmes which are envisaged here and state whether scholarships are going to be offered and whether training programmes would be done in person or virtually, having regard to the pandemic?

6.26 p.m.

Mr. Benn: Training, including scholarships, is for the officers. The training schedules have been re-envisioned so there will be a staggered manner in which training will be facilitated, to allow for the social distancing and virtual training aspects. Ranks will be operating under the operational, technical and legal requirements and procedures required of them. The unit expects to still complete the remaining training scheduled for the latter part of 2020.

Mr. Duncan: Mr. Chairman, just for clarity, at line item 6116, Contracted Employees, I do not see any employees for 2020 but I notice there is... I withdraw the question.

Mr. Mahipaul: Line item 6293 – Refreshment and Meals: I am aware that this is a three-month-old Budget that we are considering, and I see a sum of \$10,500,000. When I look at the Ministry of Public Security, for the nine-month period, under line item 6293, Refreshment and Meals, it is \$7,445,000. Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to explain the heavy increase in refreshment and meals?

Mr. Benn: I am not sure that there is any heavy increase in refreshment and meals. There was a one twelfth requirement in respect of payment, so there is a carryover of sums into the last quarter, which is reflected in that number.

Programme: 517 – Customs Anti-Narcotics – \$125,469,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 517 – Customs Anti-Narcotics – \$20,200,000

Ms. Chandan-Edmond: Project code 2609200 – Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit: “Provision for trailer, vehicle, storeroom and equipment” and there is an allocation of \$20 million. Could the Hon. Minister tell us the specific equipment that will be purchased, the type of vehicle and the details in relation to the storeroom?

Mr. Benn: In relation to the trailer, there has been the seizure of a number of go-fast boats. There is a requirement to move these boats around in these trailers, which comes up to \$1.9 million. A freezer is required; there is a 4x4 pickup truck which will be purchased at \$10 million; there is a DuraScope; there are mobile phones; the construction of a store room for \$3.1 million; security camera systems for \$800,000; drones and accessories for \$900,000; and twenty body cameras at \$2.4 million.

Programme: 517 – Customs Anti-Narcotics – \$20,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: We thank the Hon. Minister and his team for securing us and taking us through the agencies.

Agency 03: Ministry of Finance

Current Expenditure

Programme: 031 – Policy and Administration – \$14,570,835,000

Mr. Rajkumar: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister say which building is to be maintained at the cost of \$27 million?

Minister of Public Works [Bishop Edghill]: Mr. Chairman, \$1.5 million will be spent for painting of the interior walls of the ground floor of the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) building; \$3 million for the rehabilitation of the kitchenette and washroom facilities in the Minister’s office, which is the head office building; \$3 million for repairs to the ceiling of the first and second floor of the head office building, and you would recall

that there was a water situation there; electrical maintenance and other electrical works to all buildings in the head office compound, as well as those in Croal Street and Camp Street, and \$8 million will be spent there on; miscellaneous repairs, carpentry and other minor repairs, minor plumbing and guttering works, and minor painting works will be for \$11.5 million; which is a total of \$27 million.

Mr. Rajkumar: Line item 6284 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister give us a breakdown on the spending of \$61 million under this head?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, under line item 6284, Other, we will be spending \$225,000 on the main building; \$137,000 on the Information Communication Technology Unit (MISU) building, where we have our information technology (IT) infrastructure; the Valuation Division, \$77,000; the public washrooms, \$65,000; the new building in the compound, \$81,000; payment of legal fees locally, \$38,200,000; hire of personnel for the monitoring of surveillance cameras at the security hut, \$500,000; advertising, which will be revenue notices, \$350,784; vacancies, sale of unserviceable vehicles, tenders and so on which are all under advertising, \$1.5 million; preparation of notice boards, signs and other art work, for national and other events and activities, \$480,000; and the binding of records for the Accounts Department, \$200,000. With our public relations activities, which is for a total of about \$5 million, some of the money is for the production of the Citizen's Guide for the budget, the printing of the Citizen's Guide and things of that nature, and the production of the Budget handbook. Those are some of the main big-ticket items in the breakdown. I thank the Hon. Member for the question.

Mr. Rajkumar: Line item 6294 – Other: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister give us a breakdown on the spending under this line item?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, it is for the hosting of delegations and special invitees, which would include foreign delegations, if they do come, \$1.5 million; purchase of miscellaneous items for the Minister's office, \$120,000; purchase of miscellaneous items for the Minister within the Ministry, \$45,000.

6.41 p.m.

Overseeing regional visits to ensure that the budget is being implemented in a manner that it should, \$800,000; miscellaneous items for the Finance Secretary's office, \$480,000; miscellaneous items and expenses for the Deputy Finance Secretary's office, \$180,000; donations to organisations, \$480,000; Christmas party, purchase of venetian blinds and retreat for senior staff, strategic planning, development for the Ministry, functions for some of the retirees that we honour in the Ministry, ensure our administrative offices have what is required, reimbursements for vehicles crossing the Berbice and Demerara river bridges are some of the items that are taken care of under this line item.

Mr. Rajkumar: Could the Hon. Minister say if the Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo visit was paid under this head?

Bishop Edghill: To the Hon. Member, no. He was not a guest of the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Mahipaul: Line item 6141 – Other Employment Costs: a perusal of this entire document, on every page with this line item is a 0. On this particular page, under this particular line item, there is a budgeted cost of \$6,314,840,000. Is this the budgeted cost for salary increases for Public Servants retroactive January 2020 or is it for a one-off bonus in December? If it is for none of the two, what is it for?

Bishop Edghill: I thank the Hon. Member for his interest in this matter. Line item 6141, in the Budget, every year it is the same question. The simple answer, this is the budget line that moneys are allocated for salary adjustments to take care of new recruits and other...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I think the Hon. Member, might be a new recruit to the Parliament.

Bishop Edghill: He might be a new recruit to Parliament that is why I am saying this. The Hon. Member would be so advised that all of those matters, if people have to be paid *in lieu* of leave and all of those matters are taken care of traditionally under this line item.

Mr. Mahipaul: Follow-up: This is very specific since the Hon. Minister seems to be acting as the Minister of Finance. Is the Hon. Minister considering an increase in salaries for the Public Servants or is he considering a one-off bonus for Public Servants, which will be paid under this line item? If so, could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say, what are the figures he is considering for public servants increase of what is the figure he is considering for a one-off bonus?

Bishop Edghill: For the avoidance of doubt, I think I informed the honourable House that His Excellency the President, in keeping with the provisions of the Constitution have designated yours truly, at this particular time, to be responsible for finance. At the time of the reading of the Budget the House was so informed. [**Mr. Mahipaul:** I was not here.] Well, you should have been here. It would have helped you to understand the Budget.

Secondly, the question about salary increases, bonuses and the rest of it, let me put this matter to rest since we have a lot of Public Servants who are listening. The People's Progressive Party Civic (PPP/C) has a track record. The PPP/C has a standard that every year, once there is fiscal space and there is performance in the economy, consideration has always been given. That has been our tradition which they criticised while they were in Opposition, while we were there for 23 years. I would like to assure the Hon. Members of this House, even in the midst of underperformance in the economy, mismanagement, mal-administration and spending without due recourse, the PPP/C will at all times, at the appropriate time consider whatever is workable even in the COVID-19 pandemic environment to do what is good for Public Servants. That is why we did not have to wait for Christmas to deal with bringing relief to Public Servants and all Guyanese. We ensured that every Guyanese had a \$25,000 support in the COVID environment. We ensured that all of our people who are working get their necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs). We ensured that all of our people are taken care of.

As it relates to this question, at this particular time I have no announcement for the Public Servants. What I can say to you, is that as the implementation of the Budget goes on, at the appropriate time, ensuring that all matters are considered, we will make a determination and the Nation would be so advised.

Mr. Mahipaul: It seems as though I would not get a direct answer, so I am going to ask a simpler question on the same line item. Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say to this House, from 1st January to 31st July, 2020, how much out of the \$6,314,840,000 was spent already? I would gladly appreciate if I can, also, get the amount from 1st August to 30th September, 2020.

Bishop Edghill: An indirect answer to the Hon. Member, from 1st January to 31st July, 2020, without parliamentary cover or oversight \$2.9 billion of this amount was already spent. Since the restoration of democracy as of 2nd August, 2020, to 30th September, 2020, \$0.75 billion was spent.

I could indicate to you that all of the expenditure whether it was from January to July or from August to September, the line item, finance, new recruits and adjustments is in keeping with what it was traditionally intended to do. Thank you.

[Mr. Chairman left the Chair]

[Mr. Seeraj, Presiding Member, assumed the Chair]

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, you caught me by surprise. I was expecting to hear from the substantive Chairman. **[Mr. McCoy: (Inaudible)]**

Presiding Member: You may go ahead.

Mr. Patterson: As the new Chairman, maybe you can do something about the chattering over on that one side. Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: the Guyana Securities Council. There is an increase under this head. Could the Hon. Member please elaborate on this please?

Bishop Edghill: This total of \$7,743,362,287 will be spent or is accounted for in this manner. The National Bureau of Statistics – \$637,316,000, the Guyana Revenue Authority – \$6,597,577, Guyana Association of Securities Companies and Intermediaries Inc. – \$13,208,000, the Financial Intelligence Unit – \$144,846,000, the Guyana Securities Council – \$231,415,287 and the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board – \$119 million.

Mr. Patterson: I can and did read what is stated in the legend. I asked a question specifically under a particular head.

Presiding Member: Hon. Member, your question was on line item 6321.

Mr. Patterson: The question I ask was on the Guyana Securities Council. The amount budgeted in the past was \$110 million and it is now \$231 million. This was my specific question. I did not ask how the moneys would be catered for.

Bishop Edghill: He is asking about the Guyana Securities Council and he is asking this question at a time, when we badly need a proper functioning Guyana Securities Council. The increase is mainly due to the fact that, we have removed the facilities from a small location in the Bank of

Guyana and, we have given an opportunity for the tribunal roles and functions of this body to be properly conducted and exercised by putting them in a proper building, which is obliquely opposite the St. George's Cathedral which is responsible for rental. That is what is also responsible for some of the increase.

Mr. Patterson: A similar question, there is an increase for the Guyana Revenue Authority. It is almost \$700 million for 2020.

Bishop Edghill: Presiding Member, I am having a difficulty in hearing what the Hon. Member is saying. Could the Hon. Member use the microphone, so that I can hear him clearly?

6.56 p.m.

Presiding Member: I think the Hon. Member heard you clearly.

Mr. Patterson: Yes. I think you heard me clearly. I was hoping that, Mr. Chairman, you could translate for the Hon. Member. I am saying that \$700 million was increase for GRA. The similar question I am asking is, could the Hon. Member, give the House an explanation?

Presiding Member: Hon. Minister, was the Hon. Member clear enough for you, Sir?

Bishop Edghill: I am sure that every Hon. Member of this House recognises the importance of the Guyana Revenue Authority. We also should be appreciative that such a body should be given all the tools that is needed and necessary to ensure that its work is implemented, it is properly staffed and modernised to ensure that it can meet all the current trends. Whether it is ensuring that our citizens who receive barrels do not have to stand and wait for long hours to get them unpacked, then repacked, to make sure that it could be properly scanned, that we have the proper mechanism in place, all of the monitoring, processing and everything...

The increase carter to develop, apply and evaluate human resources management policies, procedures programmes to develop an effective governance framework and for streamlining internal processes. There are a number of things that are being done to strengthen the institution and that is why this increase is being offered. I would hope that every Member of this House would lend support to ensure that we have a modern, efficient and well-functioning Guyana Revenue Authority, thank you.

Mr. Patterson: Wow, that is my only response. Presiding Officer, I will ask your assistance here, once again. During the Budget debate, we were told that the Government owes the Guyana Power and Light (GPL) \$16 billion... [**An Hon. Member:** Which line item?] It is line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. We were told that this matter was to be address by the Ministry of Finance. Could I ask the Hon. Member, under which line item is the indebtedness to GPL or Guyana Water Incorporation (GWI)? The Government is said to be repaying. Where exactly is it located and how much would GPL be receiving in *Budget 2020*?

Bishop Edghill: We are examining the budget for the Ministry of Finance, Programme: 031 – Policy and Administration and we are examining budget lines in this programme. I do not know what the Hon. Member is seeking after, but there is nothing in any of these line items that speak to financing debts to GPL. If the Hon. Member could take the time to study his budget document, he has had five days, if he did not read it before, to sit here and go through it.

A number of agencies would have passed. He might have missed his opportunity already to deal with such a matter.

Mr. Patterson: The designated Minister of Finance by His Excellency, who he was proud to say. Obviously, he is one of the prime authors of this Budget...

Presiding Member: Do you have a line item Hon. Member?

Mr. Patterson: Is the Minister of Finance unwilling to share with the poor and silly Mr. David Patterson? Could the Hon. Minister direct me or tell me exactly where I can find the funds that the Government owes for GWI and GPL?

[*Mr. Chairman assumed the Chair*]

Bishop Edghill: The Hon. Member who was a member of Cabinet before ought to have known that in every programme where it says electricity charges the money is going to GPL and where it says utility charges or water charges the money is going to GWI. The Government does not pay electricity or water to any other company. It is to the Guyana Water Incorporation or the Guyana Power and Light company. I think that we should remain focus and help the process.

Secondly, we are in the Committee of Supply where we are examining line items. If the Hon. Member has a question there is a Parliamentary process that could be applied, so that he could ask such a question whether it is for oral or written reply at the appropriate time. As of right now we are in Committee of Supply where we are looking at numbers and programmes.

Mr. Patterson: I am so directed. Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: Could the Hon. Member list for this House which building exactly and which cooperation the Ministry of Finance will pay electricity charges on? Could the Hon. Minister list for the House the buildings and companies that charges are to be paid to?

Bishop Edghill: The Estimates that are before us suggest that for the entire year we are paying \$57,540,000 in electricity charges to the main administrative building and all the buildings in the compound inclusive of the Ministry's parking lot. That would include the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Unit where we have to keep our infrastructure running with proper cooling, air conditioning and all the rest of it. Then, we are also paying \$4,464,000 for lights for the valuation building at Camp Street and a \$660,000 for lights at the Sub-Treasury in Region 9 – Lethem.

Mr. Patterson: The Hon. Member confirmed that there is no money for GPL under line item 6272, Electricity Charges. Line item 6273 – Water Charges: A similar question, can I ask the Hon. Member what is this paying for?

Bishop Edghill: In many of the agencies that we have already approved, in their line items, there were appropriations made included taking care of arrears. Your question is in order, but in all of the line items that we have gone through for every agency where there were arrears for water charges, this budget cycle ensure that those arrears were taken care of. This is because of our understanding is that GWI's position is, if the Government pays the company its arrears it is good to go and that has been addressed.

Under this line item 6273, Water Charges in this programme, the expenditure is as follows: water charges for head office – Main Street and all of the buildings in the administrative block, we anticipate for the year \$4,603,380 and this is an increase of 20%; in the Valuation Division which is at Camp Street, for the 12 months, we anticipate a total of \$973,260 and for the National

Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) we anticipate water charges for \$584,820. That gives you the breakdown, thank you.

Mr. Patterson: My final question. Line Item 6141 – Other Employment Costs: The Hon. Minister said that \$3.8 billion has already been expended. During the Minister of Public Service presentation, she said that there will be a collective bargaining agreement and there is no salary increase budgeted under her Ministry. She also alluded to the fact that it is housed in the Ministry of Finance. Thank you for nodding and agreeing with me.

May I ask the Hon. Minister, is the Government prepared or is the Government going to have a discussion with the unions, so that you can come to a collective bargaining agreement, because from my calculation there is about \$3 billion remaining? If an agreement has been reached over the number of Public Servants that it has, what percentage increase does the money remaining represents?

Bishop Edghill: Now, Mr. Chairman, I do not know where the Hon. Member got the sum \$3.8 billion from.

Mr. Patterson: It is what is remaining, because you said \$2.2...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, allow him to clarify.

Bishop Edghill: What I said in the House is that \$2.09 billion plus \$0.75 billion was spent on the two periods of January to July and August to 30th September.

As it relates to Government's policy of negotiating with unions, we are very clear as a pro-poor and pro-working class Government. We respect and encourage trade unions. That is why you will see even in our Budget there is contributions to local organisations. Contributions were made to trade unions including the Guyana Public Service Union (GPSU). The issue of negotiations is not a Ministry of Finance issue. It is an issue of the Ministry of Public Service and the unions, but I am giving you broad policy, we believe in engaging the trade unions.

The Minister of Labour would have told you that he is establishing the Trade Union Recognition Board and all the other things to do with ensuring that workers right are protected. Since you want to know more, in this line item 6141, Other Employment Costs, that you are asking for, the men

and women in uniforms who have been told that they will get their two weeks bonus, it is included here.

Our frontline workers who have been told that there is money in the Budget, it has been included here. Remember that this is the line item that take places with any salary adjustments, new recruitments and all the rest of it. This is where moneys have been appropriated or we are asking the House to appropriate moneys to ensure that those commitments to improve the welfare of our men and women in uniform and our medical personnel are taken care of.

7.11 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much for the elucidation. Follow-up: Therefore, it is \$2.09. Could the Hon. Member tell us simply, how much of this money is allocated for the two weeks for the discipline forces? How much money out of this is for the frontline workers?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I know that you are familiar with finances. The calculation will be done based upon the payroll at the time in which it will be done.

Mr. Patterson: Is the Hon. Minister of Finance of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana saying to this Committee that the Ministry of Finance does not have a fixed sum allocated for frontline workers, for the Guyana Defence Force (GDF) personnel? Do you not have a sum? There is a possibility that you may not have enough money. Could you desegregate the amount?

Bishop Edghill: It is known around this whole country, probably except on the other side, when I read the Budget, \$150 million was dedicated towards frontline workers. It is in the Budget. The ballpark figure when you extrapolate based upon the two week that are promised to base upon the time of budgeting, the figure for the men and women in uniform is in the ballpark of about \$600 million.

Mr. Patterson: That leaves us about \$2.4 billion. I am asking the Hon. Member based on the strength of our public service. What percentage remains if that is applied as a salary increase?

Bishop Edghill: I think the Hon. Member is trying to fish for a number. Let me help him, when it comes to new recruits, we will have to look and we have established based upon vacancies that have to be filled and everything else, about \$3.795 billion, other shortfall in expenditure and

salaries – \$418,932,000, salary in *lieu* of leave about \$50 million, gratuity that has to be paid – \$50 million. This is well structured, Sir.

Mr. Patterson: It depends on the answer. I heard the Hon. Member said that it is well-structured and things of that sort. If it is so well structured, are you confirming there is nothing for public servants in this Budget? There is no mention, whatsoever, in your well-structured response. Are you confirming that, Hon. Minister of Finance?

Bishop Edghill: The Hon. Member is seeking to create an impression that I have not so stated. In every year and in every budget cycle, this line item, there are projections that are made. At a particular time of the year when you do all of the mathematics, you seek to see how much money is remaining and it is based upon those considerations, that you then could make other considerations.

When I am saying to him that you cannot convey to public servants the erroneous notion that there is no money in there. He is now talking about collective bargaining. We cannot have it in cake and bake. I have said the people's Progressive Party/Civic over 23 years and now that we are here, traditionally every single year, once there is fiscal space and the budget allows, whether the unions complete negotiations or not, the Government offers benefits to the public servants; every single year. In this COVID-19 environment and an economy that we have inherited while we are seeking to put things on the road at the appropriate time, we will be doing all the reviews and an announcement will be made.

If we are looking for a political statement to tell the public servants there is nothing in the Budget for them, you will fail. Everything in the Budget is to improve the lives of the ordinary people and the working class.

Programme: 031 – Policy and Administration – \$14,570,835,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 031 Policy and Administration – \$14,133,034,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Project code 1202200 – Buildings: “Provisions for buildings and fence – rollover \$34 million.” The remainder from the \$54 million, what is it going to?

Bishop Edghill: The Hon. Member may be aware that, there is an annex building that is being constructed at Croal Street, which is way behind schedule, thanks to the Administration that was there before. It is a rollover amount of \$31,832,000 and we have some other works; civil works – \$30 million, consultancy services – \$1.5 million; a fence – \$2.5 million, installation of network infrastructure, data and telephone – \$14.5 million, and fire suppression systems including sprinklers – \$5.2 million.

Mr. Mahipaul: I do not know if it is a Mahipaul syndrome, but I heard the Hon. Minister said \$31 million rollover and from my book I am seeing \$34.332 million. I do not know if it is a mistake from the Hon. Minister’s part.

Bishop Edghill: The Hon. Member would know that there is a rollover for civil works and you also have to have the rollover for the consultancy. When you put the two together, you will end up with the \$34 million. It is not a Mahipaul syndrome. Maybe it is another problem.

Mr. Patterson: Project code 2401300 – Land Transport: The project profile entails the purchase of vehicles – \$60 million and the status is new. I would obviously think this is new coupled with new vehicles in every ministry so far. Could the Hon. Member tell us the type of vehicles? Who are the vehicles for? I know the Minister of Public Works have a new vehicle. What are the number of vehicles that the Ministry is going to procure under this project code?

Bishop Edghill: It is because of the short budget cycle that we had that an assessment would not have been done throughout the entire Government system. That is why you will find in a lot of the programmes that were approved, very few had any vehicles at all. This is how we plan to deal with any issues in there. This \$60 million is to be used to secure vehicles to satisfy across the Government services after an audit has been completed; which has already commenced. This allocation is intended to fix the gaps identified during that assessment and the funds would be warranted to the various agencies where they are critical shortfalls to ensure that we are not handicap in the delivery of goods and services for the rest of the year. This is how we plan to deal with it with a sum of \$60 million.

When the Hon. Member asked about what type of vehicles, procurement would tell anyone that one cannot name the brand and not the rest of it. If one goes out to the market and one knows that if it is a bus, one goes for a bus; if it is a 4x4 then one goes for a 4x4; if it is a car, then one goes for cars. The market would then determine the name, brand and cost depending on the procurement process.

Mr. Patterson: Follow-up: Is the Minister saying that the \$60 million like the \$95 million in the Office of the President, is just an estimate that the Ministry or the agency does not have no idea if it wants a mini bus, a van, a car, a 4x4? Are they just simply guessing and then at some point in time they will say what they want? Is that the Minister's response, as was the previous Minister's response with the \$60 million here?

Bishop Edghill: I will go very simple for the benefit of the Hon. Member and all other Members. Normally, when you have a budget cycle and a budget circular goes out, everybody who thinks that they need a vehicle puts that in their proposal. Maybe the Parliament Office would have done the same thing, but because of a short budget cycle and you did not have the opportunity to complete an assessment, we did not appropriate moneys in all of the various areas. We have put a block sum of \$60 million, that when we complete the assessment in the short three months that are remaining, the critical areas would be addressed in 2020. From that assessment, we will be able to rollout a plan for 2021.

For example, the Guyana Police Force has an allocation, and I am not sure that that was properly ventilated, of 50 vehicles and that was because of a rapid assessment that was being done to ensure delivery of services. We ensured that the Ministry of Home Affairs have that. We did not have the time to do that for every agency. A paltry sum of \$60 million is to deal with critical issues to ensure that we could continue for the rest of the three months and then in 2021 the Hon. Member could come back and ask many questions on why we are going in a particular direction.

7.26 p.m.

Mr. Mahipaul: Project code 1900400 – Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF): My first question on this project code, I reference the *Estimates of the Public Sector, Volume 3*, Reference 45 where it states under the description of the project – Upgrading of water supply distribution systems at Shulinab. There are a number of other villages there, but Shulinab is mentioned. I also would like

to turn your attention to Reference 243 under the Ministry of Housing and Water which also states, Shulinab. I would like to know if there is a repetition here or if there is going to be double spending in this area, could the Hon. Minister clarify, please?

Bishop Edghill: I thank the Hon. Member for his interest. It looks like he is reading very intently. There is no repetition or duplication; with the local funds, we have built a well. With these Basic Needs Trust Funds, which is funded through the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), we are dealing with distribution. Thank you very much.

Mr. Mahipaul: I am happy that the Minister clarified that with the Basic Needs Trust Fund, they are dealing with distribution. Did I hear you, correctly, Sir?

Bishop Edghill: Yes, you did.

Mr. Mahipaul: At Shulinab, we will be distributing water supply. On reference 243, *Estimates of the Public Sector, Volume 3*, Agency 45, the Ministry of Housing and Water, the description of project states:

“Provision for distribution networks in Shulinab...”

Could the Hon. Minister please clarify?

Bishop Edghill: The Ministry of Housing and Water through appropriations under its project codes, are building a well. Through this provision, we are dealing with the distribution. So, building the well and the people cannot get it, is like we did not provide a service. The way the People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) does business, is that it provides completeness to what it does. We are building the well and we are distributing the water so that the recipients could get service in a complete manner.

Mr. Mahipaul: For clarity to you, Sir, the Ministry of Housing and Water, in the document that I have states: distribution to Shulinab, and in the same document, at Reference 45, states: distribution in Shulinab. So, ‘distribution’, is used in both documents. But if I may continue, on the same project code 1900400 – Basic Needs Trust Fund...

Mr. Chairman: Maybe it is a very big village, so you have to do the distribution in two...

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, I have been there, and it is not a big village. I can assure you of that.

Mr. Chairman: I know Shulinab, very well – Hon. Member Mr. Henry, thank you very much.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, with your permission, the early childhood development centre, I take note that the Hon. Minister has a budgeted sum for the construction of one at Turkeyen. I am grateful to know of that. Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say to this honourable Committee, how many early childhood development centres were constructed, so far and if he could be kind enough to tell us where they are located?

Bishop Edghill: The Hon. Member will be advised that there are six early childhood development centres in Suddie, Dartmouth, Anna Catherina, Ann’s Grove, Ithaca and One Mile, which is Region 10.

Programme: 031– Policy and Administration – \$14,133,034,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 032 – Public Financial Management Policies and Services – \$6,080,782,000

Mr. Rajkumar: Line item 6262 – Overseas Conferences and Official Visits: Could the Hon. Minister say what travels are envisaged between October to December 2020, in these COVID-19 times?

Bishop Edghill: The Hon. Member is making an assumption that in budgeting you do not have the luxury of doing. There are trends and patterns that govern the formulating of assumptions for budgeting. If you would check and compare, even the sum that is allocated here, is far less than what would have been budgeted in other times. This is a sum for whether there are travels that Ministers have to undertake to ensure the business of the Government takes place. I would just like to remind him that even in COVID-19 times, while many things are being done virtually, for example, His Excellency, did not, personally, travel to the United Nations (UN) to deliver three distinguished addresses, but it was done virtually. However, there are times when you have to be there, so this is an allocation to ensure that once that is required, we are able to respond adequately.

Mr. Patterson: The same line item 6262 – Overseas Conferences and Official Visits: there was a big hue and cry that the Government under Mr. David Granger was massive and over bloated. The Budgets for 2015, 2016, 2017 and every year were \$300,000,000, which averaged out as \$25,000,000 per month for overseas travels for that over bloated Cabinet. For this here, the revised 2019 sum was \$308,040,000. The balance for three months is \$105,000,000, which is \$35,000,000 per month in the middle of COVID-19. Where, internationally, at least, 3/4 of the airlines are not flying, could the Hon. Minister explain the increases for the last three months?

Bishop Edghill: Thank you for the opportunity. The Hon. Member asking the question was a Member of Cabinet, even though they should have resigned since 21st December, 2018. He would well know that out of this \$105,000,000 budgeted, is not for three months – some of this money has already been spent, while there was no legal Cabinet, travelling was taking place. The issue here, is one that you must take note of; money from this was already spent.

Secondly, under this budgeted line item – this is not a budgeted line item where you could vire money from to other line items – if the money is not spent, the money goes back to the Consolidated Fund. There is no fact in this and in three months, you do not have the luxury of coming for a Supplementary; this will be the only Financial Budget Paper that you will probably have for the year because we have to now start implementing. This is less than half and moneys from this have already been spent at a time when Ministers ought not to have been travelling and representing the State. Thank you, Sir.

Programme: 032 – Public Financial Management Policies and Services – \$6,080,782,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 032 – Public Financial Management Policies and Services – \$87,254,000

Mr. Mahipaul: I have noticed with project code 2502300 – Furniture and Equipment: the purchase of furniture and equipment. I noticed in the first programme, there is also the purchase of equipment. Could the Hon. Minister be kind to say what are the furniture and equipment to be purchased under this project code?

Bishop Edghill: I thank the Hon. Member for the question. And just to let the Hon. Member and other newer Members to the Committee know that, in every programme you deal with furniture and equipment specific to that programme. You do not just buy for the whole Ministry; it is specific to the programme. For this programme, it would be things for the Accountant General's Department, the Information Communication Technology Unit and the Office of the Budget, which has to do with the Fiscal Management Department, the Debt Management Division, Enterprise Monitoring, the Expenditure Planning and Monitoring Unit (EPMU), the Economic Policy Unit, the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit and the Project Cycle Management Department. These are things for the various departments that fall under this programme.

Programme: 032 – Public Financial Management Policies and Services – \$87,254,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Ladies and Gentlemen, that brings us to the conclusion of the Estimates of Expenditure tabled before the House. Let me thank the Hon. Minister and his hardworking team for being here today and for putting this Budget together. Thank you very much, staff.

7.41 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: If you would just allow me for just one moment, I would like to put on record the Administration's appreciation for the professional men and women, skilled and highly talented staff of the Ministry of Finance who worked with us to ensure that we were able to bring to this Committee, this Budget. Their hours of work were long days and, literally, long nights. They did it without complaints because they recognised the environment in which we were in and the need to get this done. So, whether it was working from home, working virtually, or meeting in small groups to facilitate the COVID-19 protocols, they did it without complain and we are extremely thankful to them and I would want to ask that we appreciate them, Sir.

Thank you, very much. [*Applause*]

Mr. Chairman: That brings us to the end of these Estimates. And again, our thanks to everyone across all agencies, all ministries, all departments along with the lead team for the Ministry of Finance, for all of your hard work and to all the staff here at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre

(ACCC), the police and all the supporting staff who have taken us through the last 10 days of *Budget 2020*. Thank you very much.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, could we just get a two-minute consultation with the two Chief Whips – the Clerk and me?

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Members. We shall continue.

Hon. Members, we have a second item of Government Business to deal with. We are actually breaking new grounds, and this might be one of the first times that this has been tabled in our National Assembly.

Article 219 (3) of the *Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana* provides, and I quote:

“Where at any time Parliament has been dissolved before any provision or any sufficient provision is made under this Title for the carrying on of the Government of Guyana, the Minister responsible for finance may authorise the withdrawal of such sums from the Consolidated Fund as he may consider necessary for the purpose of meeting expenditure on the public services until the expiry of a period of three months commencing with the date on which the National Assembly first meets after that dissolution, but a statement of the expenditure so authorised shall, as soon as practicable be laid before the Assembly by the Minister responsible for finance or any other Minister designated by the President and, when the statement has been approved by the Assembly, that expenditure shall be included, under the appropriate heads, in the next Appropriation Bill.”

We have to conclude this motion for the approval of this excess, which has been tabled.

I thus, now, call, just before I call, we have established some rules, the mover of the motion will get 20 minutes if he needs that long and a two-minute extension; every other speaker will get 20 minutes if they need that long and I will give them a five-minute notice before the end with no extension. We have a pretty impressive list of speakers, but we also have a pretty impressive end of the budget consideration awaiting us.

Hon. Members, I call on the Hon. Minister of Public Works to move the motion standing in his name.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Just as a matter of housekeeping, I looked at the clock and I noticed that it is 10 minutes to eight. I was wondering if we could have the motion for the suspension of the Standing Orders so that the House can continue to sit until the completion of this debate on the Statement of Expenditure and allow for the passage of all three readings of the Appropriation Bill, tonight, when we come to that. I would ask that that motion be allowed and that we will be able to continue to sit.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, I did ask that you move the motion, so that we can suspend the necessary Standing Order so that we can proceed to the conclusion of the business.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO. 11

BE IT RESOLVED:

“That Standing Order No. 11 be suspended to enable this sitting of the National Assembly to continue with its business beyond 10.00 p.m.”

[Minister of Public Works]

Bishop Edghill: I formally move that the Standing Orders be suspended, that the House continues to sit until the conclusion of our business this evening.

Question put and agreed to.

Standing Order suspended.

Mr. Speaker: Just before the Hon. Minister moves the motion before us, I want to inform the House that the Hon. Deputy Speaker, has been with us and he will join with a contribution after the Hon. Minister of Public Works makes his first presentation.

MOTION

APPROVAL OF STATEMENT OF EXPENDITURE FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2020 TO SEPTEMBER 30, 2020

BE IT RESOLVED:

“That the Assembly approve the Statement of Expenditure for the period January 1, 2020 to September 30, 2020, and for the sums \$183,156,687,000 which were withdrawn from the Consolidated Fund to be included in the Appropriation Bill No. 1 of 2020.”

[Minister of Public Works on behalf of the Vice-President]

Bishop Edghill: I move that the Assembly approve the Statement of Expenditure for the period 1st January, 2020 to 30th September, 2020 and for the sums of \$183,156,687,000 which were withdrawn from the Consolidated Fund to be included in the Appropriation Bill of No. 1 of 2020.

Mr. Speaker, as far as I am aware, in our post-independence history, this is the first time this provision of the Constitution has had to be activated and, even though, it is history making, I am not proud to be the mover of this motion because of the journey that got us here.

7.56 p.m.

Every provision of the Constitution indicates that the longest period that the House should be in suspension or dissolution is four months – three months within dissolution for the holding of an election and one month after the holding of an election for the reconvening of the Parliament.

As it relates to when the Parliament comes to an end in its five-year cycle, there are three months to hold an election. When there was the successful passage of a no confidence vote, like that which took place on 21st December, 2018, elections should have been held within three months.

Of recent times, both the National Grade Six Assessment (NGSA) and the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) results have been out and I am sure that all of our children can count the months – January to December 2019, it is 12 months; January to August 2020, another eight months; and January to 2nd March, when the elections were held, it is 15 months. This was unprecedented and unheard of in our history.

Why were we there and, why are we here tonight? It is because those who told this nation that they believe in the rule of law, that they believe in democracy and that they govern for the people and by the people, when the parliamentary provision which resulted in the defeat of that

Administration, they refused to obey the Constitution. During that period of refusal to obey the Constitution, they did not only break the law of articles 106 (6) and 106 (7), but they broke every law as it relates to fiscal management and accountability. They ensured that our financial architecture entered into a dispensation that had no legality, whatsoever.

My Colleague, the Attorney General, will speak later. I am not the lawyer on this side, but I am a lawmaker and I understand the Constitution. As a decision maker, I understand what must be done, but more than anything else, we as lawmakers, must be governed by some moral and ethical code. When there is a moral and ethical code that is lacking, the society thrums on it.

Why are we here? The first thing is, may I remind this House, that we asked that the motion of no confidence, which was tabled, be debated before the passage of the 2019 Budget. We had asked for that and it was refused. They went ahead and passed, with their one seat majority, the 2019 Budget in December 2018. And, shortly thereafter, lost their legitimacy to govern and to have access to the Consolidated Fund, but continued to behave as if nothing happened.

We learnt that when we said publicly that the Cabinet must resign, that a new creature was created which was called ‘Ministerial Plenary’. Nowhere, in the Constitution speaks about a ‘Ministerial Plenary’. During the time of the ‘Ministerial Plenary’, members of the then Administration, including attorneys-at-law, who are supposed to be officers of the court, with a duty to uphold the law, broke the law. They awarded contracts; they spent moneys that ought not to have been spent and; they violated their status of what should have been known as a, ‘caretaker status’.

This Statement of Expenditure, that is before this House, indicates that during the period of the no confidence motion to the elections of March 2020, \$419.2 billion was expended by a government that had no legitimacy to do so – \$419.2 billion; it is billions with a ‘b’.

When democrats – people who believe in the rule of law – when a no confidence motion is lost, go to your people and ask them to renew your mandate so that you can act with legitimacy and continue to govern. But what we saw happening was the misuse of our judicial process, that I heard, or I should say ‘abuse’.

I heard one other Member talking about weaponising the judiciary; language like that was used, ‘no weapon that is formed against us, shall be able to prosper’.

Mr. Speaker, I believe in God and I will always believe in God, but you do not use God as an excuse for wickedness. You do not use and invoke the name of God as an excuse for unrighteousness and corruption. You do not use the name of God and scriptures to hoodwink, deceive and fool a population by spinning alternative facts and very mischievous narratives that have no foundation in truth or fact.

If you think that was worse, even if they want to make the argument that, at least, there was a budget in 2019 which was approved and that they had the right to spend moneys, 2019 came to an end on 31st December, 2019. The Parliament was dissolved on 30th December, 2019, and I have records to prove that, on 31st December, 2019, the illegal, unconstitutional, and desperate APNU/AFC Granger-led Administration, was signing contracts for moneys appropriated in 2019, as if it was spent in 2019. This Budget, this Statement of Expenditure, which we are debating, has rollover projects in excess of \$20 billion.

Do you know what that means? Let me make it clear for the Hon. Members who do not understand. The fiscal year comes to an end on 31st December. It means that any moneys not spent, ought to be returned to the Consolidated Fund. However, on the last day of the year, contractors were called. I see that some of the persons who did that, are lined up to speak, but I will have the last say, as the mover of this motion, tonight – contractors were called and they signed contracts to implement projects in the year of 2019, on the last day of the year.

Do you know what I [*inaudible*]... Mr. Speaker? In a political environment where you have lost all your court cases; where the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) has already ruled that the provisions of articles 106 and 107 apply; that your caretaker status actually expired in September 2019; where you used the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) to prolong your life by all the sand dancing, the fancy foot works and the mischievous explanations; if it was time you wanted to go and woo the electorate back to you, then, do not rape the public purse. That must be denounced in the very strongest language and, I do so tonight. The nation must know that there is a group of people in this country, some of them are sitting in this House, who stood on platforms, went on *Facebook* and to the media, in an era where the National Communications Network (NCN), the Department of Public Information (DPI) and the *Guyana Chronicle* were being misused, to spin narratives and did not comply with the law – \$183 billion.

My Colleague, the Hon. Deodat Indar, is going to speak, and he is going to speak about a particular matter; I will only mention it, but he will develop it. This Government, in June, 2020, after the elections – several months after the elections, after they had hid all of their Statements of Poll (SoP), and after the world knew that the PPP/C won the elections – that illegal group, or that group of people acting illegally, went out and borrowed in excess of US\$10 million. And if you think that was bad, people without a constitutional mandate was putting the country in debt; and if you believe this was bad or unheard of, the Government lent a company – the Guyana Power and Light Incorporated (GPL) – from the Consolidated Fund, which it had no legal access to, \$10 billion plus. Shame! Shame! Shame! Ten billion dollars; billions with a ‘b’.

It gives me no joy to have to speak about these matters in this honourable House. Just, now, I noticed that when we were discussing the Ministry of Finance, under the project code, where we dealt with the capital project, the \$10 billion is recorded there, but not a question was asked; not a question because they do not want it to be discussed, but it will be discussed, tonight.

Mr. Speaker, listen to this narrative from the budget debates, ‘well, if the treasury is empty, how could you bring a \$329.5 billion Budget?’

8.11 p.m.

They do not want the people of Guyana to know that, tonight, when this Appropriation Bill, which will come after this, will be passed \$183,156,687,000 of that money has already been spent in an era where Procurement Laws were breached, where the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act (FMAA) was breached and where the *Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana* was breached. Mr. Speaker, when you look at where the money was spent, it was for campaigning, vote buying and giving to friends and cronies contracts so that they could benefit from kickbacks.

After all of that, when they realised that they still lost the elections... [**An Hon. Member:** *(Inaudible)*] Alright man *yuh* lose... [**Mr. Duncan:** *(Inaudible)*] ... but listen *nah*, like a *last lick*... You know, when I was going to school, on the last day of school there was something called a *last lick*. The *last lick* was the Ocean View Hotel - the shell. The *last lick* was \$1.6 billion - contracts entered into. We spent it on a building and a property which we did not own; for which we are paying \$13 million per month rent. What kind of man or people do such things? You have to be a

special breed; you have to be such a special kind. You have to be bold, barefaced and brazen to behave like that.

The reason why we are laying this paper tonight, it is because we are a people who believe in the rule of law; we believe in constitutionality; we believe in transparency; we believe in accountability. If they follow the accompanying tables, they will see in every line and in every ministry, what was spent between January to July and what was spent... [**Mr. Duncan:** Pick up the offering.] You took the offering, that is why we have this; \$1.83 billion was your offering. The nation will be able to see what was spent between 2nd August to 30th September.

Before I close and allow this debate to go forward, I want to emphasise another point. At the beginning of this debate, Mr. Speaker, you read for the House the constitutional basis for a Statement of Expenditure, as outlined in article... [**Mr. Mahipaul:** Your time is up.] Your time was up since 2nd March...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, I just want to inform you that, for the time allocated, as we agreed, you have two minutes remaining.

Bishop Edghill: I will wrap up in two minutes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to indicate to you that article 219 (3), which speaks to the Statement of Expenditure, speaks to drawing rights and access to the Consolidated Fund is to ensure access to public services. Public services cannot be new capital projects, like a \$823 million school to a financier of your party on the Linden/Soesdyke Highway. Capital projects cannot be entering into civil work contracts and public services, and also entering into contracts with foreign agencies for millions of United States (US) dollars. This is a clear breach, because the intent and spirit of the law was not followed. It was not followed since 21st December, 2018, when a no confidence motion was passed. It was not followed after the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) ruled in June and issued the Consequential Orders in July. The spirit and intent of the *Constitution* was not obeyed. When we went into an election on 2nd March, and even right down to five months, after those horrendous five months of squander mania and spending unauthorizedly, we still have people who are prepared to make excuses.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, do not squander the last 30 seconds.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity and I pray tonight, Sir, that this motion, standing in my name, will be passed and that the House will approve it, even though, it is not a very honourable moment for our country. I thank you very much, Sir. *[Applause]*

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. We have the Deputy Speaker joining us virtually. Let us patch through the Hon. Deputy Speaker to start at 8.17 p.m.

Deputy Speaker [Mr. Shuman]: Mr. Speaker, can you hear me?

Mr. Speaker: Yes, Hon. Deputy Speaker, we can hear you.

Deputy Speaker: Mr. Speaker, Colleagues and all of Guyana, I want to thank you for this opportunity to be able to speak on this issue. I will say to all my Colleagues in the House, that it is a very uncomfortable position to be sitting alongside Colleagues who had attempted to steal democracy from Guyana. It is uncomfortable to hear the taunts, when we have to go out on the frontline and defend democracy, yet, sit shoulder to shoulder, fighting for people who are fighting against an \$800 plus million for our Indigenous peoples. It is uncomfortable to sit next to Colleagues who would have spent in excess of or close to \$601 billion from 2019 to now. If we are to break that number down, for every single Guyanese, it should come up to roughly \$802 million per Guyanese from the start of 2019 to this date.

I want to ask my Brothers and Sisters and Colleagues in the House, how many of us have seen or enjoyed the fruits of that \$802 million? We have a responsibility to our future generations. We have a responsibility to every single Guyanese to act responsibly, to conduct ourselves in a moral and ethical manner and to abide by the laws which they have charged us with developing for Guyana and for the future guidance of Guyana. We have a responsibility for that and to those people.

I have said it before, in my inaugural speech to Parliament, that we are in September presenting a budget for a year that has already or almost concluded, which shows how far we have deteriorated as a nation. I take you back to the days when I grew up as a child, watching Mr. Burnham rig elections, continuously, and then having to leave Guyana, forcibly, due to racial tensions, then coming back and being inserted into the same racially charged environment. All because some

people do not want to respect the democratic will of the people. That is a demonstration of how far we have not come as a nation.

Fifty-four years of independence. We struggled for independence and then, 54 years later, we are fighting to maintain not only that independence, but to develop a democracy. We have brought this country on the precipice of a dictatorship.

I am happy to say that, myself and my Colleagues of the Joinder Party, and what I would say now the Government's side, fought very diligently, feverishly and tirelessly to defend democracy. I am happy about that, and it is a proud and marker moment in my life and in the lives of many of the young people who sat side by side with us.

We are in September and so much money has been expended already. The Indigenous peoples have not seen a single cent of development in that circumstance. Yet, I have Colleagues who sit side by side with me and want to deny \$800 plus million which goes towards the most marginalised population in Guyana. That they want to deny that, makes me very uncomfortable.

I do not have a long speech to give. All I want to say is that I support the motion put forth by the Hon. Minister of Public Works. I look forward to everyone, whether it is Colleagues on my side or on the opposite side, to everyone and for everyone to put our hands, hearts and minds together because, when you look at it, \$802 plus million per Guyanese from 2019 to now, should have seen a tremendous growth. We should have seen rocket scientists, doctors and engineers, amongst a whole host of other things, out of every single Guyanese, but we have not seen that. So, let us put it all together and work for Guyana. I thank you Mr. Speaker, I thank you Colleagues and I thank you Guyana. *[Applause]*

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much Hon. Deputy Speaker. You have set a great tone, taking only a few minutes, actually five minutes. The next speaker is the Hon. Roysdale Forde.

Mr. Forde: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I stand this evening to debate or to offer my response or to lead this side's response to this motion, I must say to this honourable House and to every Member present here today, that this is indeed a historic motion. It is a historic motion because we have never had such a motion presented to the House before. You would recall, on the very first

day of these proceedings, I urged openly and privately to you, that, in my opinion, this was an essential requirement.

No amount of sand dancing and no amount of pretension by the other side can cover the fact, that all the documents and the Budget Estimates presented by the Hon. Minister, Bishop Edghill indicated, at the time of presentation, that those on the other side, whose duty it was to present such a Bill and a motion, recognised the constitutional importance of such a Bill.

When we discussed or came to debate this Bill, and I listened to my Hon. Friend, Bishop Edghill, I recall and this country recalls, the unconstitutional use of finances by the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C).

8.26. p.m.

The Hon. Minister, Bishop Edghill, in 2014, was the junior Minister of Finance at the time. I suggest by virtue of the proximity to the constitutional offence that occurred in relation to the expenditure that, he would have been personally aware of what would have happened in that time. The records of this august body, Financial Paper No. 1/2014, indicate the misuse, misapplication and improper use of public moneys, totalling \$4.554 billion by the PPP/C Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh. The Government at the time brought a Bill with respect to a total amount, which I do not recall at this time. The combined Opposition would have used their majority to reduce and remove certain items from the Bill, totalling \$4.554 billion. Do you know, Mr. Speaker, the then Hon. Member and Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh, spent \$4.554 billion without Parliamentary approval? There is no excuse, there is no debate about that. Those are the records of the country; those are the records of this honourable House.

We have a situation before us that cannot be compared. You cannot compare the situation where this Assembly, by a positive decision, empowered by the Constitution, made a decision that \$4.554 billion must not be spent and a Minister of Finance, of which the mover of this motion tonight was the junior Minister, how ironic. How ironic, he would have been able to say to this House and provide no explanation for that use of funds.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, what we have before you is a motion brought by the Hon. Member, recognising the legitimacy of the APNU/AFC Government to have used those funds. Article 219

(3), permits the Minister of Finance in the absence of the Parliament to spend those funds. Every cent, every dollar spent, was not only legally spent, it was spent for the benefit of the Guyanese people. They have no moral authority.

I heard the Hon. Member, the Bishop, telling us about moral authority and ethics. He sat in a Government that spent money, positively refused and denied by the Parliament and he has the gumption, he has the face, he has the strength, tonight, to stand before us and to tell us about morals.

Not only is the spending of this money is legitimate, but the great irony is that the Hon. Bishop Edghill has included every single dollar spent by the APNU/AFC for the period under review and have included it in the Appropriation Bill, which they propose to pass tonight. The Hon. Member, by inviting this debate has invited this country to engage in a comedy. They have included in paragraph 2, clause 2 of the Appropriation Bill No. 1/2020, \$329 billion - they included every sent. So, tonight, and I challenge all 33 of you over there, if you do not like the fact that the money was spent and you do not want to approve it, reject your Appropriation Bill tonight; reject your own Bill, reject the expenditure. That is the sum total of the comedy of this debate.

The important thing about your words is that they are always recorded and, tonight, I was smiling as heard my Learned and Hon. Friend, Bishop Edghill, speaking tonight. I want to close my presentation on this historic Bill, by making two references, the two statements that he made that were recorded in the newspapers of this country. This is the first one, he said this,

“Any attempt to cut or amend the Estimates and pronouncements to do so before the debate starts or even before the questions are asked and answers given, displays clear intent of someone who does not want to see the display of successful development programmes. Someone who wants to ensure that the Government looks bad at all costs and someone who is not prepared to partner for national development.”

These very words I use tonight against him. There is no dispute that, the moneys brought to this House to be ratified and approved tonight was part of the programme for the national development of this country. The Hon. Bishop does not want the success of the programme of APNU/AFC to be recognised, but I have adverted to the fact that what he has done tonight is to incorporate it, accept it, hug it and make it his own.

The Hon. Bishop said this, in relation to what he was accusing the then Opposition of doing in relation to cutting the Budget. This is what he said:

“This is expected because you are fuelled by the bitterness and your politics is about grudges and settling scores and you want to use your one-seat majority to settle scores. You do not have to wait for the information to speak. You know exactly how you are going to settle that political score.”

Tonight, in view of the undoubted fact that they have recognised and accepted every dollar spent under the period under the review, this is simply about using their tainted majority, the fraudulent 33 to seek to settle another political score. I thank you. [*Applause*]

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Nandlall]: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Bishop who began our debate made several references to the almighty. I am not so schooled in the religious texts, but I do know that God has made his children differently and it has to take a special quality to make certain people think and behave in a particular way, having regard to their antecedents. We, tonight, were prepared to lay this Statement of Expenditure before this Assembly, quietly, to satisfy our constitutional requirement. We have said before that it was as a result of the dastard violation of the *Constitution* by the other side, since December 2018, when they refused to resign after a no confidence motion was passed against them. They squatted and trespassed in Office until 2nd March. After 2nd March, they lost at the elections and they spent five months attempting, you will stop me from saying steal the Government, but what else can I say. They tried, for five months, to steal the Government, causing every constitutional deadline to be expired, [*Inaudible*] the side, a bundle of constitutional violations. We are trying to put Guyana back on constitutional track as a result of those destructionists on that side. They have the audacity and the temerity to abuse us. I do not understand Mr. Speaker.

You are a Guyanese. As a Guyanese you endured the five months of torture that they put you and your family through, and they have the audacity to come here and scold people. We need a panel of psychiatrists in this place.

What is the Statement of Expenditure about? First of all, Mr. Forde, who has now come to this Assembly, he has now joined the Assembly and, rather than try to acquaint himself with our history, he comes here, and he begins to lecture everyone as though he is some great new find.

There is nothing that Mr. Forde has said that we have not done in this House. Quite apart from the unprecedented Statement of Excess that they caused us to lay. For example, he takes credit for discovering article 219(3) of the *Constitution*. Can you believe that?

We have been saying for months that we will have to lay in this House, in compliance with article 219(3), a Statement of Expenditure to cover the unlawful plundering of the treasury by the other side, when they squatted in Government without an Appropriation Bill. We have said that repeatedly. [*Interruption*] You have verbal diarrhoea.

It is no new invention that Mr. Forde has discovered. Articles 218, 218 (3) and 219 are constitutional provisions with which we are absolutely familiar.

Mr. Mahipaul: I stand on a Point of Order.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Attorney General. Hon. Mr. Mahipaul, what is the Point of Order?

Mr. Mahipaul: Standing Order 41(5), for the second time I heard the Hon. Member refer to the Hon. Mr. Forde as Mr. Forde.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Attorney General, I think I heard once, yes, please, Hon. Members, we refer to by...

Mr. Nandlall: My apologies, I did not intend to not say honourable. The Hon. Member was not here when we dealt with article 218 of the *Constitution*.

8.41 p.m.

Sir, the Hon. Member was not here when we dealt with article 218 of the Constitution. When they cut the budget and there was an Appropriation Act and we spent beyond the Appropriation Act. We went to the High Court before the Chief Justice and we got a ruling, in writing, from the Chief Justice. I believe we got a ruling from the Speaker of the National Assembly, that the cut could be restored. I do not think the Speaker ruled that way, but the Chief Justice, Justice Chang, ruled that we can restore the cut and bring it back to the Parliament for approval in the form of a Statement of Excess in compliance with article 218 (3).

The whole noise and loud clambering on that side, that Dr. Ashni Singh spent \$4.4 billion illegally, is completely wrong. Chief Justice Ian Chang ruled that the money should be spent and accounted back in the Parliament by the laying of a Statement of Excess and that is how it was done. Mr. Ramjattan, who is there, went to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) and made a report that Dr. Ashni Singh unlawfully spent over \$4 billion. What did the DPP do? They refused to entertain him. They spent five years in Government. They charged Dr. Singh for selling a property at market value or below market value. Why did they not charge him for the \$4.4 billion? They are coming here to tell *Nancy Stories* to the people of this country.

It is simply not true. We have always complied with the articles of the *Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana*. We said that there will be difficulty in bringing the ship of Guyana back to a constitutional harbour, all because of what they have done. They removed Guyana from the parameters of the *Constitution*. They removed the entire nation state from the fiscal and legal infrastructures of the country. They were running this country like a rogue nation. That is why we are here today, trying to bring back the ship of Guyana to the safety of constitutional waters. Let me read article 219 (3):

“Where at any time Parliament has been dissolved before any provision or any sufficient provision is made under this Title for the carrying on of the Government of Guyana, the Minister responsible for finance may authorise the withdrawal of such funds from the Consolidated Fund or he may consider necessary for the purpose of meeting expenditure on the public services until the expiry of a period of three months commencing with the date on which the National Assembly first meets after that dissolution...”

Parliament was dissolved since December. The three months that we were supposed to lay the Statement of Expenditure has long gone because they spent those three months trying to rig. Do you remember, Sir? They tried until August. For eight months we were out of time. The Constitution continues:

“...but a statement of the expenditure, so authorised...”

By the Hon. Minister - we do not know, as we have said, and I will demonstrate to you, Sir, and the Hon. Member Bishop Edghill has done it, that Mr. Jordan did not comply. He did not spend the money with the limitations that the *Constitution* placed on him.

What are we going to do? Are we going to leave it like that? Two wrongs do not make a right. We are trying to bring back constitutionality to the country. That is what we are doing and when we are doing that, they are holding up their hands and saying you all are legitimising it. We are not legitimising it, Sir. We are putting back the accounting mechanisms in place as is required by the *Constitution*. All they know about is to destroy and break. We build and we comply with the laws of this country. That is what it states “as soon as practicable”. Those are the operative words.

Mr. Forde’s contention is that it must be laid before the Estimates. Where is it stated that way, where there it stated a time? It states that “the Minister of Finance must determine as soon as practicable when to bring the statement”. That is what the Constitution states. There is no time frame. If the framers wanted it to be laid prior to the Estimates being considered, it would have said so. If the framers wanted it to be laid at the first Sitting, when the Parliament resumed, it would have said so. The Constitution states that it must be laid at a time that the Minister of Finance determines to be practicable.

Why is that so? There is a reason. All moneys that are expended outside of an Appropriation Act must be mopped up and brought under the Appropriation Act and merged into it to receive the *imprimatur* of the House. So, were we to bring it at the time when the Estimates were laid, two weeks ago, then what would have accounted for the expenditure from two weeks ago, when the Estimates were laid, to now, when the Appropriation Act would have been considered?

There is a gap, that is why it states, when the Minister of Finance determines it to be practicable. The only practicable time is immediately preceding the Appropriation Act because moneys continued to be spent outside of the Appropriation Act. It is as simple as that. You have to practicably bring it at the time when the Appropriation Act is brought, so it mops up what Mr. Jordan spent and also what Bishop Edghill spent as well and brings it into the Appropriation Act for approval.

It is the Auditor General of Guyana and not this National Assembly who determines what is wrong and right in law. This Assembly makes the law. It is the Auditor General, when he will examine the 2020 accounts for Guyana, that determines whether the moneys were properly spent or not. All we have to do here is fix the accounting record for his auditing. That was how the law was set out and that is how the law is expected to be complied with. It is as simple as that. This whole

hullabaloo that we are hearing on the other side, is absolutely unnecessary. Everyone knows, and we have made that public, and that is why we have a long memorandum, outlining what we feel are the unlawful spending. There is a three-page explanatory memorandum that lists all the excessive spending. It is our duty to bring it back into the accounting system for the Auditor General. When the Auditor General audits, he is free to make recommendations, he is free to call in the DPP and the police, to activate the investigative arm of the State, in relation to those spending.

Our duty here is to ensure that the constitutional requirements are satisfied. That is all that we have to do. We should be complimented on this side because we are mopping up the mess created by that side. You do not have the sense to express gratitude to us and you do not have the common sense to understand the gravity of the wrong that you have done. That is why the people of this country, once they are ever given an opportunity to vote, will keep them on that side because they are wrong, and they want to play strong. It is because of their violation of the law, rather than come here and accept that they have done a wrong, and that that are trying to correct it, they want to abuse us. The audacity and temerity of these people, absolutely an immoral and unethical group of people. That is why the people of Guyana put them there and will keep them there for a very long time.

Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to consume anymore time. I believe that we, on this side, have complied with the Constitution, as we had every intention to do from the beginning, and we signalled that intention. The Hon. Member, Mr. Forde, disagrees with our timing, but I reject his attempt to take ownership. He wants to take ownership of article 219 (3), that only he has knowledge of it. I reject that completely. While we were out of Government, we were speaking about article 219 (3) and complying with it. The then Leader of the Opposition had many press conferences because we discussed it. It is not a new innovation that Mr. Forde thinks that he has discovered for us.

We are here tonight, trying to set the record of this Assembly straight and putting the accounting architecture in order, in our continued attempt to bring the ship of Guyana back into constitutional harbour because they have taken it astray and taken it adrift for the past year and a half.

I thank you very much, Sir. [*Applause*]

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Speaker and Colleagues, good night. I have a couple of disclaimers here because I know that we are going live across the globe, I hope. One of the disclaimers I want to start off with is to say I am not a lawyer, so I will not even venture into anything in the law. I do think that my Colleague, Mr. Roysdale Forde and my Colleague who will speak after me, can delve in the law and constitutionality.

I will use the time that you so graciously allotted to me to speak to the world about the numbers here. From the beginning of this debate, up to when the mover spent it, and the Hon. Attorney General, we were regaled that a \$183 billion of this Budget has already been spent by the APNU/AFC Government. Of the \$330 billion Budget, of course, that \$330 billion had the biggest budget deficit ever, \$75 billion, but I will not go there. They told the world and the nation that the APNU/AFC, before this Budget, spent \$183 million. We asked them to provide this so that we could make an account of what we spent. What we have and happened with the Budget is that we had a budget which had a lump sum of \$183 million and then of course, the rest. All the expenditures that were done from January to September were co-mingled. We were unable to disaggregate them and explain to everyone and ask everyone why and how this two-month old Government spent the money.

8.56 p.m.

So, let me do some disaggregation to let the person and the world know. Of the \$183 billion to be spent by the 30th of September; \$40.1 billion, 23%, was spent by this Government from 2nd August to 30th September. Let us do it by the numbers. The preceding time, from 1st January to 31st July was 213 days. From 2nd August to 30th September is 57 days. If each and every single number is divided, one will see exactly why they did not bring this Statement before we started.

Under current budget, between January to July, the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) Administration spent an average of \$15.9 billion per month. In the two months that the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) has been in Office, that has gone up to \$18 billion. These are the figures. They can do the Mathematics themselves. We did not have an opportunity to ask them where they spent \$2 billion and what they did in 59 days that allowed them to spend \$3 billion more per month than our Government spent. These are the figures. There

is a calculator. You can use it yourselves. That is why I am speaking to the world. I am not speaking to them.

Let us look at the Ministry that I left, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure. It is here and I am referring to it here. [*Interruption*] I am speaking into the microphone and so it does not matter how much you heckle me; the world will know what is going on.

In the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, from 1st January to 31st July, \$6.6 billion was spent in 213 days. From 2nd August to 3rd September, \$2,957,000 was spent. When I left that Ministry, the Ministry was spending \$940 million per month. In two months, the two honourable gentlemen over there have been spending \$1.6 billion per month. That is the current budget. And imagine persons were fired. They got rid of people. Yet, they have almost doubled what was being spent per month. That is what this Statement of Expenditure tells us. That is why we wanted them to bring it. They can speak about the Constitution. We wanted to say to them: Where did you spend the \$1.6 billion? Where did you spend the extra \$600 million? Who has it? This is what happened in 59 days and that is on the current side. It is even worse on the capital side.

On the capital side, Mr. Speaker, you very well know –I am watching at my time– it is projects, it is buildings. It has to go to tender. It has to have evaluations. It has to go to the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB). When it goes to NPTAB, there must be an award and a signing ceremony. Generally, to start the process, there is a mobilisation period. All of these things have to be done for a capital project.

Mr. Speaker, I am looking at the profile you have sent me. From 1st January to 31st July, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure spent \$9,832,000,000 on projects. They could say it is roll over, roll under or whatever it is, but all I can tell you is that every single one was procured publicly and legally. That averaged \$1.4 billion dollars per month. Let me tell you what happened in the 59 days during which these two honourable gentlemen were in charge. [**Mr. Ramkissoon:** What happened to D'urban Park?] D'urban Park was in 2016 and so it is not in here. From 2nd August to 30th September, \$3.3 billion; 35%; and 59 days. And there was no budget. We are now passing the budget. One of the things we should do, and I will ask my Chief Whip to do it, is, take a picture of this and upload it online for the people to see. [**Mr. McCoy:** The 30th September has not reached as yet. What are you talking about?] This is what this document, submitted by the Hon. Bishop

Edghill, states: 2nd August to 30th September. The people over there are heckling and saying that 30th September has not reached as yet. But he brought it. He is a *see-far man*. I am using his numbers. I did not invent it. I will not be distracted. [**Mr. Persaud:** People are laughing.] Yes, I know that they are laughing. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: I said Order!

Mr. Patterson: For the two months under the Ministry of Public Works, the average per month is \$1.7 billion. How can they explain to the world that their spending increased in 59 days in capital projects? That is unless they single sourced everything, handed the money to their supporters and used it without any scrutiny. What they did is bring this, throw it into the budget and we will pass everything as a whole. I know the Hon. Member has come here...some \$3.3 billion. I would like him to tell us – he will have an opportunity when he stands – what are the projects he spent on?

It is not just my Ministry. I will tell it so that the lay persons and the people who are looking online could understand. In the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, under the APNU/AFC Government, from January to the 31st July, we were spending \$31.2 million a day. Under the PPP/C Government, they are spending \$50 million a day. And they have fired persons, terminated contracts, called in people and said, “listen to me”... and they have reduced it. The first day they went into Government, they looked at someone and said, “Well, your name begins with ‘k’, you look political, go home.” They reduced the staff, but they increased the spending per day by \$19 million. That is why this Statement of Expenditure is coming now.

Let us look at the Ministry of the Presidency (MoTP), which is now Office of the President (OP). From January to July, \$3.78 billion were spent. From August to 30th September, \$1.6 billion were spent. Under the APNU/AFC Administration, we were spending \$17 million a day to keep the administrative section running. In 59 days, it has gone up to \$26 million a day. One can remember that the very first thing they did at the Ministry of the Presidency was say that all persons who are political appointees should not go back. They did not only lay off the political appointees, they

laid off the driver, the cleaner and all of those persons. They reduced the staff. Where did the extra money go? This is why we wanted to know. We wanted to question them about this.

I continue. I am doing well with time, Sir. Thank you.

Let us look at other little things. Region 6: I am quoting because they will go on television and other platforms to say that I fabricated these numbers— David Patterson fudged it.

Page 3, Agency Code 76, Region 6. We have spent, up to 30th September, according to the numbers by the Hon. Member, \$5.1 billion. Look at the second to last item. From January to July, \$4 billion was spent. It was \$4 billion in seven months. From August to September, it is \$1.2 billion. [**Hon. Members (Government):** So?] They are shouting, “so”. Some 25% of the moneys spent in this Budget was spent by them, but we do not know where and we do not know to who. Sir, they could withdraw the paper, tell us that it was a typographical error, then I would redraw every single thing.

It is the same thing for Region 4; some 20% was spent in the last 50 days.

When it comes to the Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul’s region, when we left Office, on average, we were spending \$14 million per day in Region 3. It is not one of our regions. From August to September, it is up to \$18 million. I know that the Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, has his job but I know several other persons in Region 3 who do not have jobs. Where is the extra money going?

We could have had a debate on what you have done. I say that there are visionaries over there. They could have built an invisible car park that could take anything, and we would have said, “Yes, we give you full *kudos*”. They could have started out plans to get to the moon, we would have given them... We have not seen anything, but the money is gone.

This country has no way of knowing how the money, from August and September, has been spent. It is now gobbled up in this massive \$330 billion. There is no scrutiny. They will say that the Auditor General will [*inaudible*]. But when the Auditor General comes, I would not be there and they would say that I spent it. They will say that the Hon. Khemraj Ramjattan spent the money. He would not be there to defend it. That is why we were insisting that the Statement should have come before the debate so that we could have dispensed of it and then the people of Guyana would have known what is the true scrutiny of what is going on.

I would like to say that I am disappointed that the Deputy Speaker is not here. I would have told him that he is sitting there and talking about the length of time we have.. His employment happened between August to September. He said it is a travesty, but it is a travesty for all of us.

9.11 p.m.

I would like to put it on record, and would like to finish and close with these points. *According to the Statement of Expenditure January 1 – September 30, 2020*, a total of \$183 billion was spent. Of that \$183 billion, APNU/AFC spent a \$141 billion. Some 23% of the that – 40 billion – was spent by the PPP/C. We know nothing. Sir, you may be in the know but I am not. The country knows nothing. All you hear about is all the squandermania done under the APNU/AFC. What we do not know is how a Government could take Office and spend...we wanted to ask questions. If they had this Statement of Expenditure...We do not know how a Government could take Office, fire over 1000 persons and still spend more money. They may have given themselves a pay increase. I do not know. We do not know. I could speculate, but I would not do this honourable House the disservice of speculating where the moneys went. I would hope that when the Hon. Gentlemen and Ladies get up to speak, they would be able to elaborate.

With these few words, I would like to say it is a travesty that this Statement was not here before, so that we could have had this debate and we could have go through each and every line item, meaningfully. They could have dispelled with all the sins that they wanted to give us and they could have started brand new. But they did not. What would happen now is anything and everything that is wrong, they will say it was my Government.

I cannot support this, but you support it. With these few words, thank you very much for allowing me to talk. *[Applause]*

Minister within the Ministry of Public Works [Mr. Indar]: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for recognising that we needed to debate the Statement of Expenditure. I have heard some of the comments made by the Hon. Member Patterson. I am sorry that he has left, but he will hear me. I heard some of the comments Mr. Roysdale Forde made and I intend to respond firmly.

For those who are watching us on television and those who are interested across the world and have been watching Guyana from 2nd March, 2020 until today, I would like to make sure that they are fully apprised. I believe it is my obligation to do so.

The first issue is that the 2020 Budget has a total figure of \$329.5 billion. That is the size of this Budget. When we were looking at the numbers in crafting this document, it showed that \$183 billion was already spent. Some 55% of the entire Budget, which we have been looking at for the past 10 days, have been spent. The Hon. Minister Juan Edghill said that, from the time of the no confidence motion until recently, the Opposition spent \$419 billion of taxpayers' money. Mr. Speaker, I want to let you and those who are watching understand how much money this is. If this money were to be converted into thousand-dollar bills and packed into 20-foot containers, it will be 23 and ½ 20-foot containers of money that they spent. For the first part of this year when they were in Government, they spent a \$183 billion and that is 10 ½ 20-foot containers of money that was spent out.

The Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson, just spoke about his Ministry, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure. He said that it is his Ministry. Over the past days, the Members on the other side have been questioning us *fine, fine*, line by line. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure's budget in total for the entire year of 2020 is \$31,432,000,000. When we put the numbers in the budget, \$22,730,000,000 *done spend out! You done spend it out!* That is 70% of the money already spent. What he spent it on, God in heaven knows. One has to strain one's eye to look at the capital works in the country; one has to strain one's eye to find it. It is nowhere. From 2nd March, 2020 to now, you all stopped working. The minute election happened, you all stopped working. What did you all spend this money on?

Let me tell you what they spent the money on. I will let the people know. Under miscellaneous roads, they built 216 roads with asphalt from the Asphalt Plant that they could not have paid for. Do you know what the Ministry would be doing for the next three months because all of the fiscal space was used up? We are only going to be building 35 roads. We cannot find the money because you all spent it out.

Let us look at the other issue – hinterland airstrips [*Interruption*].... You all spent out the money. Some 83% of the money is already gone.

Let us look at the Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA). Look at the money that is in the Budget for the CJIA project. More than half of the money is gone. You spent it out. All they were doing was spending out the money. What they were spending it out on? We cannot seem to feel the benefit. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, Hon. Members.

Mr. Indar: That is why, during the last couple months, when one went to the countryside and walked in the villages, people did not have jobs. People were starving. That is why somebody setup a hamper programme. This country has people who know the difference between right and wrong and that is why they voted every single one of you all out of office. They voted you all out of office because you all spent moneys on yourselves – squandermania. There is nothing good about spending money in an unauthorised manner.

I would like to point to some of the things that they said they did for the people. The means, Hon. Member Forde, do not justify the end. You cannot spend money illegally and expect to say that it was spent for the people. The entire capital amount spent was in contravention of Section 36(2) of the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act (FMAA). You could not have spent moneys on capital projects; it should have been normal services. But what? They decided to sign contracts for rollover works of over \$20 billion for capital works.

I would like to bring to the House's attention that a lot of the comments from the other side over the past two weeks were about the Government being illegal. I would like to say that the Commonwealth, the Organization of American States (OAS), European Union (EU), United Kingdom (UK), Canada and over 140 countries have said that the results of 2nd March, 2020 General and Regional Elections make the PPP/C Government a legitimate Government. Here we are, *now bringing to book*, all the illegal spending that the other side would have done to make it right. That is what this Government is about – making it right. [**Hon. Member (Opposition: Inaudible)**] The means does not justify the end.

I would like to bring attention to a particular matter. This particular matter happened on 29th June, 2020 and I remember what happened that day. On that day, the Canadian Government was telling you all to obey the law and leave office because the Canadian Government had realised that you all had lost the Elections. Do you know what you all went and did? You all signed a contract for

US\$10.6 million for Lot C of the Power Utility Upgrade Programme. At that point, you all were spending moneys.

The other thing is that, for the first time in history, a country took US\$50 million from the Consolidated Fund and lent an organisation such as the Guyana Power and Light Inc. (GPL). You all were doing this when you all had already known that you all had lost. While you all were taking matters to court, you all were spending US\$50 million of taxpayers' money to fund GPL for something that we will not see the benefit of until 2021.

Hon. Member Patterson, you spoke just now about dividing and finding averages. The law of averages does not work with this. This is money that you have spent out. Every single number stated could be traced to a contract or to the payment of a staff. This is what you spent. There is no law of averages here. I am a student of history and I am aware of a man name Mr. Joseph Goebbels. But from what I have heard in the past 10 days in this House, some of them across on the other side could teach Mr. Goebbels *a thing or two*. He was a master of manipulation but some of them, from what we have heard, could teach Mr. Goebbels *a thing or two*.

I would like to bring to the House's attention the other matter of them spending moneys as stated in the Statement of Expenditure. During the early part of this year, \$826 million was spent as capital expenditure that they were not supposed to get involved in. It was \$826 million for BK International Inc. (BK) to build a school. Why did you all spend out the people's moneys? It was taxpayers' money. You stated that you were legitimate in office, took every matter to court and weaponised the court against its own Constitution to stay in Office. What were they doing in Office? They were spending moneys and signing contracts and now the PPP/C Government has to come to this House to legitimise all of their illegal spending.

I would like to say that every time we looked at the Estimates over the past 10 days, we found persons asking questions, as if they were *holier than thou*. It was as if they have now come to the forum and as if they have never seen these numbers before. But these are the very people who were spending those same sums throughout the past eight and a half to nine months. They have been spending the moneys. We, this team across here, had to justify and explain to them what they had been spending. I am saying to you all that it is utterly shameless. You all spent that money and

are now asking this side of the House to explain to them what they have already spent. Where is the sense in that?

9.26 p.m.

I would like to conclude on my comments. I would like to say this to the Hon. Members who raised the matter about moneys being spent to benefit Guyanese people. This document has a long list of benefits. There is a long list of reversal hardship measures that we have put into the Estimates to make sure that the people of this country really benefit from spending in Government, not the kind of spending that you all were doing. The money that we will spend will see reduction in taxes and an enhancement of capital expenditure in projects that deliver benefits to people.

Lastly, we will make sure that we reverse all of the hardship measures. That is the moneys in the budget and not matter what you do, you all cannot erase that. It is written and it is in the *Hansard*. Everywhere it will be shown to people. They will feel the benefits, from now until the end of the year, of all of the spending that we have in the Budget to benefit them. It is not the kind that you guys had, such as the brown elephant.

Mr. Speaker, I rest my case. [*Applause*]

Mr. Ramjattan: I wish to say, at the very inception, that this seems to be the irony of ironies. It is a complete paradox whereby the Government wants to call us culprits, illegal and unconstitutional, but instead of prosecuting us, they have brought this to defend us. If they want to say that we spent illegally, then vote against this. Vote against your own motion. You seem not to understand the budget process.

I want to correct the record, especially for the young people in this Parliament. I recall that, in 2012, when we had a majority in the Opposition, we cut the budget. We *scissored* it from \$192 billion to \$172 billion. When we did that it was totally legitimate and legal.

The PPP/C then went court and the former Chief Justice, Mr. Ian Chang, ruled that we could have either approved a budget or disapproved a budget; we could not have cut it. In view of all of that, we then went to the Court of Appeal and won the case. Mr. Ian Chang's ruling was heard to be narrow and restrictive, faulty and contradictory and undermining the National Assembly. Nobody in the PPP/C saw it fit to go to the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) because they knew they would

have gotten another *cut tail* there. From the Ian Chang's judgment in 2012 when the cut was made right up to the decision in 2014, they utilised the judgment do a whole heap of unauthorised expenditure, although we had cut the budget. That was illegal and it was unauthorised because the National Assembly had said that the then Government could not have taken moneys out of particular line items.

Do you know what happened the very first month after we cut the budget? Mr. Ashni Singh went and gave himself \$4 billion from one of the line items that we had cut. That is criminal under the FMAA. They were utilising the fact that there was no judgment, having gone to court. So, they utilised the court for purposes of getting an interim judgment that the budget could either be approved or disapproved. Then, they went and did their wickedness.

Now, in that same analogy, we are saying that access to the court is an entitlement of every citizen of Guyana. After the no confidence motion, people went to the court, but it seemed like that side of the House felt that we did not have a constitutional right to go to the courts. Well, you cannot deny us the right to go to court. Even CCJ ruled that we were entitled to go there. Although I could call it a painful period in our history, one must at least allow citizens to access the court for such purposes.

Since Parliament was dissolved and there could not have been a budget prior to now in 2020, you now have to bring that Statement of Expenditure. My Learned Friend, left of me, was just advising the Government to do it. The other day we also advised them to ensure that all the new ministerial portfolios were gazetted in accordance with the FMAA. The Hon. Member, Cde Gail Teixeira, got up and said that it was not necessary and that *yuh don got de ting gazetted*. On Wednesday morning, they went and corrected it. [**Mr. Patterson:** They backdated it.] Yes. We are here to give you some assistance in the law if it is required.

Please understand that the Committee of Supply never acted unlawfully in that time when we cut the budget. The Chancellor (ag), Mr. Carl Singh, indicated that Mr. Ian Chang was completely wrong and that we had every right to cut the budget. You as a Government, then, were totally wrong to go and unauthorisedly spend out of cut items of the budget. So, if there is anybody who behaved illegally, it was the PPP Government then.

I dare this Government, if it is saying that what we did from that time when could not have had a budget was illegal, from 1st January of this year up to now, to vote against its own Appropriation Bill. It will be so stupid of you to do that – and that is not unparliamentary language by the way. In correcting you to get you sensible, you seem now to have summersaulted and are saying that we are illegal. The FMAA has laid out the procedures in which this can be done. I am urging *all and sundry* that you cannot but come this way to get all these expenditures approved and authorised. There is no other way that you can do it. Why then say it is illegal?

Let me make this point. In January of this year, we were still in Government. We still had to pay the policemen. We still had to pay the firemen. We still had the persons on the Parole Board to pay. We still had teachers to pay. What are you telling me? Is it that we should not have paid them? How ludicrous and ridiculous of you people to say that when we paid the public servants, it was illegal. Was it illegal to pay all those workers and even rollover contracts from 2019? It was never illegal.

I remember lecturing to PPP/C in the 2014 exercises on the cuts in 2012. I am quoting from a book called the *Budget Process* by Alexander – I have forgotten the surname, but I have it. I have given it to the Speaker to distribute to Hon. Members on the other side. The whole point of it is that, in budget cycles, these things must happen to regularise that which could not have done before.

We did not have a budget before. There is now a budget. In accordance with the Constitution, the same article 219 (3) states that when the budget comes, this must be done. You came and you were reminded by Senior Counsel (SC) that you had to do it. When you are doing it now, you are calling us illegal. It is only to make political mileage. That is obviously what it is. You are politicking and trying to tell your supporters in all areas of Guyana that the APNU/AFC was illegal. That is why I am saying, if you feel that we were illegal, why are you defending us? Dump this thing and do not support it. [**Mr. Forde:** Withdraw it.] Withdraw it. I dare the Hon. Member, Bishop Edghill, to withdraw it and let us get charged by his Attorney General. The Hon. Member seems not to understand it. He seems to have forgotten that budget cut case. It is the first time I am hearing about the allegor, the person making the allegations, instead of prosecuting us, they are defending us by stating that a Statement of Expenditure has to be brought.

In England, it is called the Statement of Excess. Here, it is a Statement of Expenditure, in accordance with the article in the Constitution. Hon. Member Gail Teixeira, you know the whole story. You should have reminded them.

I also want to say that there is a little context here. Before I take my seat, I want this context to be understood. The PPP/C, in going to court to Mr. Ian Chang, Chief Justice (ag) then, in that same budget cut case, utilised that access to ensure that they did their *thing*. It was something to which to bring finality because it was unprecedented in relations to cutting budgets. As a matter of fact, they all said that, but we did it in accordance with the Standing Orders that stated we could have reduced the budget.

The Hon. Member, Bishop Edghill, is giving the impression that once the Chairman of the Elections Commission (GECOM) did not finally make a declaration, everything was illegal. Right up to that time when a declaration is made, a government must be in place. It was our Government that was in place. Under the Constitution, that same article 219 (3), that Government had to take care of all agencies and programmes with one twelfth of the money. And that is what we did this year.

By the way, I think the former Minister of Finance, Mr. Jordan, has written about the legality of what he did, in view of the fact that there were no budgets. So, you must not confuse the public out there for your political millage by saying that it was illegal and unconstitutional. You are not leading properly.

9.41 p.m.

If it is anything that you are doing, you are misleading this House, misleading the supporters out there and misleading Guyana as a whole. That is completely wrong, simply because you want to jump on this fire and fuel it to say that they are illegal and this one is unconstitutional...

It is so important that Members out there understand that this, as I have indicated, is but an attitude that I noticed right throughout this Budget session. When one asked the Minister a simple question, especially Mr. Dharamlall, he went off. That is the same thing that they are doing here. [**Mr. McCoy:** It is Hon. Member.] Hon. Member Dharamlall. I am sorry. It is Mr. Dharamlall, the Hon. Member. A lot of the other Members tried to do it all the time, circulating around that

squandermania, unconstitutionality, all manner of things... To our utter surprise, those fellas want to get us off by saying that the Appropriation Act, now, must include all the illegalities that were done. What is that? What kind of nonsense is that? If there was illegality, then I would have already proven it in the 2012-2014 Estimates by the Peoples Progressive Party Civic (PPP/C). Thank God Mr. Carl Singh, Chancellor of the Judiciary, remedied the situation. Remember, now, that we could cut budgets.

We also have to pay attention to this aspect of the matter so that we do not undermine the National Assembly. The undermining of the National Assembly could be done exactly like what the Hon. Member, Mr. Bishop Edghill, is doing here. The clause in the Constitution that states when necessitous circumstances like this occur... There is a Budget in September month. One must do exactly this and it will become totally legal and constitutional if ever there was, in abeyance, a state of affairs that one could question. It gives us the authority and you too out there must understand that the authority resides in you. You must not go outside, mislead the people and tell them that it is illegal and about squandermania. By telling the people that, you are impressing upon their minds and you are telling them a whole lot of things that are actually inaccurate. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Ramjattan: I want to say, on this other point that was made, that when we became a ‘caretaker’ Government, we still had the full panoply of powers as an executive Government. I have quoted that extensively. We had the full panoply of powers so that Government workers could have been paid and that contracts could have been done. You are only lying when you said that we could not do it. Under the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act (FMAA)...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have two minutes and I think we have our...

Mr. Ramjattan: Okay. I will try to utilise it in an extended two-minute period.

Mr. Speaker: You may use the two-minute period to take back the word ‘lying’.

Mr. Ramjattan: I withdraw that word. I am saying that the panoply of powers given to a ‘caretaker’ Government include paying the firemen, paying the policemen and paying everybody. If we spent the \$179 billion, as you are saying, from January to September, we are saying that it

was legal. It was utterly legal. You are now indicating that it is wrong. As I have quoted, extensively, from Peter W. Hogg's Constitutional Law of Canada, these powers are of course substantive and substantial. It is not as if you could come here and say that we cannot do that. Who would have done, the PPP/C? It was still in Opposition. It is important to understand that what the PPP/C is trying to do by its own sleight of hand is going to affect them. The PPP is telling us that we are illegal and is now coming to defend us with this motion.

I wish to say this, finally, that when one brings a Statement of Expenditure, as I understand it, one does not have to bring all this long speech. This is what one has to bring. You simply bring the Statement of Expenditure. I noticed that the Bishop signed a statement. One set of crap he is talking, stating that this subsection and that subsection says this or that. What you do is to bring a Statement of Expenditure like this and you lay it on the table just like you brought the Estimates and laid it. You brought the Statement of Expenditure and you talk about all kinds of story. Not only did the Hon. Member put it in this five-page document, but he got up and spent another 25 minutes saying how illegal the APNU/AFC were. All of a sudden, he is now legalising our illegality. Are you not ashamed?

This is a little piece of politicking that the PPP/C will always do. It misrepresents what happened in the budget cut case and it is misrepresenting all of these things. I am very glad... and my learned Friend left of me should be commended for informing the PPP/C that it has to bring a Statement of Expenditure, just like he should be commended for ensuring that the Hon. Member, Ms. Gail Teixeira, gazetted her Ministry under the FMAA. *[Applause]*

Bishop Edghill (replying): I would first like to thank all of the Members on this side of the House who stood in support of this motion and spoke on why we are here. I would also like to thank the Hon. Members on the Opposition for displaying to the whole world that they are inflicted with the twin sins of ignorance and arrogance. I want to begin by just reminding us that it is not the first time in Guyana that we have a budget eight or nine months into a financial year.

In 2015, the then Hon. Member, Mr. Jordan, read the budget in August. There was no budget from January to August. Did the A Partnership for National Unity /Alliance for Change, that is lecturing us tonight on constitutionality, bring a Statement of Expenditure? No. It did not know it then.

There has been a phrase that has been coined over the five months while democracy was under serious threat, because it was under threat since December of 2018 – sanctimonious gangsterism. That is what we have here tonight. The arguments that are being made are both illogical and irrational. Why is it irrational and illogical? The APNU/AFC is coming tonight to say that the Government must vote against this motion. What we are doing is fulfilling our constitutional duty. The Auditor General also has a constitutional duty and the Auditor General will write his report. Then there is a place called the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) where people will have to account, in the National Assembly, for how and why they spent moneys.

The Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson, got up and did some fumbling with mathematics. I did say that the APNU/AFC has problems with both mathematics and English. The Ministry of Finance, over the 12-month period, made releases using the one twelfth provision. For the two months that we have been in Government, it is the same one twelfth provision of the previous year for the agency that was used.

Do you know why they had accelerated spending or what they want to call it? It is the rollover projects that were signed on the 31st December, 2019, shamelessly, by your Administration... The moneys were only paid now because of COVID-19. If COVID-19 did not take place and those contractors did not have to stop working and the COVID-19 Task Force did not issue the orders for Government contracts to start again, the money would have been spent. If it was not for COVID-19, the money would have already been spent. It is the same staff and the same National Procurement & Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) that the APNU/AFC left... [**An Hon. Member (Government: (Inaudible))**] That is true because they did not use tendering.

As the Minister, who have the responsibility designated by the President to deal with these matters, one single contract went to the Cabinet for no objection during this period and it is for \$168 million for emergency works at Dantzig in Mahaicony. One! Do not stand here tonight and put out misinformation to the people of Guyana as if the PPP/C went on some spending between the last two months.

Secondly, I want to indicate to this honourable House that we have available, for the world to see, a Statement of Excess that was tabled in this National Assembly for the period ending 16th June 2014, totalling \$4,000,553,000. A Statement of Excess is totally different from Statement of

Expenditure. A Statement of Excess is when one spends more than what is appropriated. A Statement of Expenditure is when one spends what has not been appropriated. Do you get it right?

9.56 p.m.

When you used your one seat majority to cut the budget to a dollar and placed this country under pressure, by way of the court order, we spent and laid before the National Assembly, a Statement of Excess, which is here. Every single thing was transparent and accountable to the people of Guyana.

It will be instructive to note that the court case that the Hon. Mr. Ramjattan spoke about, which was won in the Appeal Court, was filed by Mr. Basil Williams, in his personal capacity. When the case was determined in the Court of Appeal, he was the Attorney General representing the State. **[Mr. Ramjattan:** Was that the case?] That was the case. The arguments that was won a case, is one where a man in his private capacity filed a case against the State and then he defended the State as the Attorney General against a case that he filed in his private capacity. He had a particular interest. There is no way that we could be satisfied that the State was properly represented on these matters.

When you talk about transparency, accountability and keeping the law, do not be sanctimonious. Why did you not bring your Statement of Expenditure in August 2015? Where is it? Where was your Statement of Expenditure? On Monday, when the APNU/AFC tried to raise the issue about the Statement of Expenditure it was because it did not want the period under which it spent moneys illegally, to be examined. It was hoping to have a Statement of Expenditure that minuses nine months so that the scrutiny of the Budget would only be for three months. The Statement of Expenditure was already included in the Appropriation Bill. The numbers were already there.

What is important here... It is Friday night, and it would appear that we have a lot of comedy. Public service is what Mr. Ramjattan tried to explain and I am glad that it was he who introduced it; the police had to be paid, the soldiers had to be paid, the prison wardens had to be paid and the nurses had to be paid. A ‘caretaker’ Government cannot enter into what I am about to discuss with you. On the 14th April, 2020 – not in April of 2019 because in April of 2019 you had already gone past the three months provision for a No Confidence Motion, we are talking about in 2020 and this

is not public service – by cheque numbers 07386248 and 07386350, you raided the Consolidated Fund and withdrew \$1,153,000,000. It is billion, with a ‘B’.

On the 25th May, 2020, by cheque numbers 07399701 to 07399741, you raided the Consolidated Fund and drew out \$4,520,000,000. This was not for the public service. Do you think the story finished there, Mr. Speaker? The story did not finish there. On 29th June, 2020, by way of cheque numbers 07401218 to 07410270, you raided the Consolidated Fund and withdrew \$5. 088 billion. It is billions with a ‘B.’ Mr. Speaker, let me tell you where these three withdrawals of moneys that was done by the people who want to lecture us about legality went.

This money went to the Guyana Power and Light (GPL) Incorporated. It was the first time ever that loans were given directly, by the Government, to GPL. This was the first time ever. It was not the National Industrial and Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL) helping GPL; it was the Consolidated Fund. What is worse? These moneys were supposedly paid for generators to a company called Wärtsilä Corporation. The generators are sitting in a foreign land not yet shipped. They are in Finland. Do you know why they are not shipped? When the generators reach here, they must have civil works done in order to put the generators on. The civil works are not expected to be completed until another nine months. Even if one wants to tell me that these moneys were an emergency purchase, how could one spend moneys, have the generators nine months sitting somewhere, another nine months before they become operational and call it an emergency? This is the nature of the recklessness that we are talking about.

To the Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan, who is daring us to vote against it, I want him to know that one good thing about accounting is that, even if there are problems, the books still have to be made available by putting in the numbers. When the numbers are placed in the books, it is subjected to external review. While we are passing this Statement of Expenditure tonight and the APNU/AFC is telling the nation that we are making legal what we call illegalities, that is not the case. We are settling the record that the time of what is legal and illegal will be determined by the investigations that will follow. That is when we are going to have the illegality and the legality, so take notice.

In the Explanatory Memorandum for the Statement of Expenditure January 1 to September 30, 2020, which was issued and that you seem to have a problem with, we already gave notice about the investigations to follow.

The Hon. Member sought to indicate that we fired over 1000 people. I heard that in this House and I am calling on the Hon. Mr. Patterson to do two things tonight: either he proves to the people the names and designations, and I believe that we will be willing to help you to publish the list if you could find such, or withdraw it. If you do not withdraw it, you will face the consequences. You cannot use the National Assembly to spread misinformation. When I stood up in the last Parliament and I told you that, with the actions that you had taken, it had cost the State almost \$1 billion, you sought to sanction me. When we went to the Committee of Privileges, of which Mr. Ramjattan was a part, I produced to the then Chairman of the Committee that it was not only a \$1 billion; it was \$1,26 billion. I had miscounted, I had not exaggerated.

The issue is clear. What we are settling here tonight, the nation must know that the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) is acting in keeping with the law and the *Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana*. The Constitution states that the Statement of Expenditure is to be laid so that it could be included in the Appropriation Bill. We are dealing with this now. In another few minutes, when we come to the vote, we will be going to the Appropriation Bill. The timing is perfect, and we are in full compliance with the Constitution.

The rumblings of the Hon. Member sometimes are very intriguing – calculating days and the amount of money and all the rest of it. The one fact is that you were not supposed to even spend a dime because you had no legality to do so – not a single dime. You know what? With your 'might is right' approach, with your 'do as you want' approach where you believe 'you were untouchable' approach, you went out and you entered into engagements that were illegal, unconstitutional, immoral and unethical. Some of the people you entered into contracts with could almost be described as criminal engagements, because these are the people who you were in bosom with to finance your campaign and up until now, you cannot show to the people of Guyana what you did with the moneys.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have two minutes to wrap up.

Bishop Edghill: The fact of the matter is that we have a Government that is in full compliance with the Constitution and a Government that believes in transparency and accountability. The law tells us that the Minister of Finance or the Minister designated by the President, should present the Statement of Excess in a manner that he deems fit. Do you know what we did? We ensured that

we showed the two periods. We did not hide anything. We ensured that the world could see what you did and what we spent. Time will tell the tale.

Guyana must move on. Guyana must go forward. The economic downturn that this nation faced because of the almost criminal actions and behaviour of the last Government, the people must be relieved of it. This Budget, including this Statement of Expenditure, is a necessary action to ensure that Guyana gets back on the track of accountable economic architecture, where we are operating within some rules and some regulations.

10.11 p.m.

It is not an excuse for the illegalities that have been made. The investigations will follow.

I call upon this honourable House tonight, to support the motion standing in my name and let us approve this Statement of Expenditure to get an Appropriation Bill, so that we could bring to the people of Guyana, goods and services that they deserve by a legitimate Government that is in Office through a democratic process.

Thank you very much.

Motion put.

Mr. Jones: Division.

Division bell rang.

Inaudible

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, to take a division, please let us have some silence in the House.

Assembly divided: Noes 0, Ayes 64, as follows:

Ayes

Mr. Shuman

Mr. Sears

Mr. Figueira

Mr. Sinclair

Mr. Jaiprashad

Mr. Jordan

Mr. Ramsaroop

Ms. Philadelphia

Ms. Flue-Bess

Mr. Mahipaul

Mr. Holder

Mr. Cox

Mr. Henry

Ms. Fernandes

Mr. Duncan

Ms. Singh-Lewis

Ms. Walton-Desir

Mr. Rajkumar

Ms. Hughes

Ms. McDonald

Mr. Patterson

Ms. Ferguson

Mr. Jones

Ms. Chandan-Edmond

Ms. Sarabo-Halley

Dr. Cummings

Dr. Henry

Ms. Hastings-Williams

Mr. Trotman

Mr. Forde

Mr. Ramjattan

Ms. Veerasammy

Mr. Williams

Dr. Smith

Mr. Jaffarally

Dr. Westford

Dr. Ramsaran

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks

Mr. Narine

Mr. Datadin

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Charlie

Mr. Seeraj

Ms. Rodrigues

Mr. Anand Persaud

Mr. Indar

Mr. McCoy

Ms. Parag

Mr. Ramson

Dr. V Persaud

Mr. Croal

Mr. Dharamlall

Mr. Bharrat

Mr. Hamilton

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai

Mr. Mustapha

Ms. Manickchand

Dr. Anthony

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Todd

Ms. Teixeira

Mr. Nandlall

Mr. Jagdeo

Mr. Phillips

Motion agreed to.

Bishop Edghill: I am assuming that we are moving on to the Appropriation Bill.

Mr. Chairman: We have to report from the Committee of Supply.

Bishop Edghill: I have to report that the Committee of Supply considered the Estimates of Expenditure for the Financial year 2020 and approved of these items as printed.

Mr. Chairman: I will now put the motion which is:

“That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2020 of a total sum of three hundred and six billion, two hundred and seventy-one million, two hundred and eighty-five thousand dollars (**\$306, 271,285,000**), **excluding twenty-three billion, two hundred and seventy three million, eight hundred and forty six thousand dollars (\$23, 273,846,000)** 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 make further provision in respect of finance.”

Motion put and agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL

Suspension of Standing Orders Nos. 13(n) and 54

BE IT RESOLVED:

“That Standing Orders Nos. 13(n) and 54 be suspended to enable the Appropriation Bill 2020, Bill No. 1 of 2020 to be introduced at this stage.”

[Prime Minister]

Prime Minister [Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips]: Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I move that Standing Order Nos. 13(n) and 54 be suspended to enable the Appropriation Bill 2020, Bill No.1 of 2020 to be introduced at this stage.

Question put and agreed to.

Standing Orders suspended.

Bishop Edghill: In accordance with paragraph 2 of article 171 of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended the Appropriation Bill 2020, Bill No. 1 of 2020 for consideration by

the National Assembly. I now present the Bill to the Assembly and move that it be read for the first time.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND FIRST READING

The following Bill was introduced and read the first time:

Appropriation Bill, 2020, Bill No. 1 OF 2020

A Bill intituled:

“An act to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December,2020, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.”

[Minister of Public Works on behalf of the Vice-President]

Question put and carried.

Bill read the first time.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Appropriation Bill 2020, Bill No.1 of 2020 be read a second time.

BILLS – Second and Third Readings

Appropriation Bill 2020 – Bill No. 1 of 2020

A Bill intituled:

“An act to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December,2020, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly,

and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.”

[Minister of Public Works on behalf of the Vice-President]

Question put and carried.

Bill read a second time.

Assembly in Committee.

Bill considered and approved.

Assembly resumed.

Bill reported without amendments, read the third time and passed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, this concludes our business for today.

ADJOURNMENT

BE IT RESOLVED:

“Mr. Speaker, I move the adjournment of the Assembly to 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, 29th September, 2020.”

[Prime Minister]

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I move the adjournment of the Assembly to 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, 29th September, 2020.

Motion put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Assembly now stands adjourned to 10.00 a.m., next Tuesday.

Adjourned accordingly at 10.25 p.m.