



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 (2020-2021) 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

26TH Sitting

Wednesday, 3RD March, 2021

**PARLIAMENT OFFICE
HANSARD DIVISION**

The Assembly convened at 10.08 a.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (71)

Speaker (1)

*Hon. Manzoor Nadir, M.P.,
*Speaker of the National Assembly,
Parliament Office,
Public Buildings,
Brickdam,
Georgetown.*

MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT (38)

(i) MEMBERS OF THE PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY/CIVIC (PPP/C) (38)

Prime Minister (1)

+ Hon. Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Anthony Phillips, M.S.S., M.P.,
*Prime Minister,
Prime Minister's Office,
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Georgetown.*

Vice-President (1)

+ Hon. Bharrat Jagdeo, M.P.,
*Vice-President,
Office of the President,
New Garden Street,
Georgetown.*

[Absent]

+ **Cabinet Member**

* **Non-Elected Speaker**

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (1)

+ Hon. Mohabir Anil Nandlall, M.P.,
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Senior Ministers (17)

+ Hon. Gail Teixeira, M.P.,
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Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance,
Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance.
Government Chief Whip,
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+ Hon. Hugh H. Todd, M.P.,
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[Virtual Participation]

+*Hon. Dr. Ashni K. Singh, M.P.,
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+ Hon. Bishop Juan A. Edghill, M.S., J.P., M.P.,
*Minister of Public Works,
Ministry of Public Works,
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Kingston,
Georgetown.*

+ Hon. Dr. Frank C. S. Anthony, M.P.,
*Minister of Health,
Ministry of Health,
Brickdam,
Georgetown.*

+ **Cabinet Member**

* **Non-Elected Minister**

+ Hon. Priya D. Manickchand, M.P.,
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Ministry of Home Affairs,
Brickdam,
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+ Hon. Zulfikar Mustapha, M.P.,
Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne),
Minister of Agriculture,
Ministry of Agriculture,
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+ Hon. Pauline R.A. Campbell-Sukhai, M.P.,
Minister of Amerindian Affairs,
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South Cummingsburg,
Georgetown.

+ Hon. Joseph L.F. Hamilton, M.P.,
Minister of Labour,
Ministry of Labour,
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+ **Cabinet Member**

* **Non-Elected Minister**

+ Hon. Vickram Outar Bharrat, M.P.,
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Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports,
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+ Hon. Sonia Savitri Parag, M.P.,
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+ **Cabinet Member**

* **Non-Elected Minister**

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Office of the Prime Minister,
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Minister within the Ministry of Public Works,
Ministry of Public Works,
Wight's Lane,
Kingston,
Georgetown.

Hon. Anand Persaud, M.P.,
Minister within the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development,
Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development,
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[Virtual Participation]

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South Central,
Rupununi.

(Culvert City Lethem)

Mr. Ronald Cox, M.P.,
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Silvertown,
Wismar, Linden.

Mr. Devin L. Sears, M.P.,
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Wismar, Linden.

(ii) A New and United Guyana, Liberty and Justice Party and The New Movement (ANUG, LJP & TNM) (1)

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Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly,
St. Cuthbert's Mission,
Soesdyke Linden Highway.

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Mr. Sherlock E. Isaacs, A.A.,
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Parliament Office,
Public Buildings,
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Georgetown.

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Ms. Lushonn Bess,
Reporter

Ms. Bianca Cummings,
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Mr. Rohan Ramjas,
Reporter

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Reporter

Ms. Celisa DeFlorimonte,
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Mr. Parmanand Singh,
Pre –Press Technician

Mr. Saeed Umrao,
Audio Technician

Mr. Daison Horsham,
Audio Technician

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents *Page*

26TH Sitting Wednesday, 3RD March, 2021

Announcements by the Speaker 3443
Public Business – Government Business 3444-3516
Appropriation Bill - Budget Debate 3445-3514
Adjournment - 3517-3518

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before we start, just a few quick announcements.

Taking of Pictures and Videos

Last evening, someone sent to me what I considered a very distasteful video concerning the Hon. Member, Mr Ramjattan, coming out of a washroom on this level of the Arthur Chung Convention Centre, which I call the precincts of the National Assembly. I want to say that if I see any more of these, we will have to ban a lot of the picture taking along the corridors, especially up here.

Circulation of Verbatim Records

The second issue is that, yesterday, I had asked the Clerk of the National Assembly to deal with the verbatim record regarding an exchange I had with Ms. Sarabo-Halley. I will circulate it. However, I will say to Ms. Sarabo-Halley that I heard Minister Parag indicate that the Bertram Collins College of Public Service building will be used as the secretariat to administer the 20,000-scholarship programme. This is what the Hon. Minister said:

“I am happy to inform the Hon. Member that the location is now being used to house the 20,000 online scholarship initiative, which will commence shortly”.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley asked for clarity on the same question. The Hon. Member said that the space will be used for online scholarships. I said no, she said to house, and I used the words ‘secretariat that will administer the programme’. This will be circulated.

PUBLIC BUSINESS**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS****Motion****BUDGET FOR 2021 – MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2021**

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

AND WHEREAS the Constitution also provides that when the Estimates of Expenditure have been

approved by the Assembly an Appropriation Bill shall be introduced in the Assembly providing for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet that expenditure;

AND WHEREAS the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the financial year 2021 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2021-02-12.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2021, of a total sum of three hundred and fifty three billion, eight hundred and thirty three million, six hundred and twelve thousand dollars (**\$353,833,612,000**), **excluding twenty nine billion, two hundred and forty seven million, and seven hundred and forty six thousand dollars (\$29,247,746,000)** 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.

[Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Assembly will now resolve itself into the Committee of Supply to continue the consideration of the Estimates of Expenditure for the year 2021.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are now in the Committee of Supply. We will now proceed in accordance with the Sub-Committee’s Schedule. Hon. Members, kindly get your Volume 1 of the Budget Estimates and turn to pages 118 and 119. As we turn to those pages, let us allow the Hon. Minister and her staff to get into position. I want to give a warm welcome to my good friend, Hon. Sherod Duncan.

Hon. Members, we will start the consideration of the Estimates at 10.15.40 a.m.

Agency 06: Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance**Current Expenditure**

Programme: 061 – Policy Development and Administration – \$50,021,000

Leader of the Opposition [Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon]: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, while we get started, I just want to wish the Hon. Member of Parliament (MP), Mr. Devin Sears, a happy birthday. He is celebrating his birthday today.

Mr. Chairman: The House and I join with you in extending those greetings to the Hon. Member.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Thank you. I want to ask the Hon. Minister a few questions on this programme. Recognising, as I do, that this is a new Ministry established by the Administration, I just want the Minister to clarify a few issues which I have because the allocations are not very heavy. The assumptions I make is that some of these responsibilities are still being carried by the Office of the President. I might be wrong, but the Minister could correct me.

I would like to go to line item 6116, Contracted Employees, for which there is an allocation of approximately \$14.8 million. I want to ask the Minister if she would be kind enough to provide us with the designation of these seven persons, their emoluments, benefits and duration of the appointments.

Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance and Government Chief Whip [Ms. Teixeira]: Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon and Hon. Members of the National Assembly, you would notice that we had budgeted \$6,689,000 in 2020, but we only used \$1.8 million. We have budgeted approximately \$14.8 million for this year. The reason for the money not being used last year was because we did not get all of our staff. We were not able to bring all of our staff on. This year, under this programme, we have the Deputy Permanent Secretary (DPS), the Confidential Secretary, an Accounts Clerk II, a Receptionist, a Cleaner, an Office Assistant and a Handyman.

To answer the issue of the Office of the President, we run our Ministry. However, the money goes through the Integrated Financial Management System (IFMAS) at the Office of the President, as I do not have a Permanent Secretary (PS). The budget items, as listed here, are run by us. We work through the Office of the President to clear our vouchers, expenditures and so on. Did you want the salaries?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Yes.

Ms. Teixeira: Okay, sorry.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I understand that is what is happening, Hon. Minister. Certain things you will have to run

through the Office of President, for now, until you get settled. I am just asking for these questions to be answered.

Ms. Teixeira: I have no problem with that. The Deputy Permanent Secretary (DPS): basic salary, \$364,561; duty allowance, \$50,000; entertainment allowance, \$10,000; and payment for telephone, internet and travelling, \$9,960. The DPS came on in November, 2020. The Confidential Secretary: basic salary is \$160,000; duty allowance, \$20,000 and telephone allowance, \$5,000. The Confidential Secretary came on in October, 2020. The Accounts Clerk II: basic salary, \$72,053; duty allowance, \$10,000; and travelling allowance, \$5,000. She joined in November, 2020. The Receptionist: basic salary, \$70,000; duty allowance, \$10,000; and travel allowance, \$5,000. She joined in December, 2020. She was brought over from the Office of the President. I stole her from the Office of the President. The Cleaner: basic salary, \$70,000; duty allowance, \$10,000; and travelling allowance, \$5,000. She joined the staff in December, 2020. The Office Assistant: basic salary is \$70,000 and motorcycle allowance is \$5,040. The Office Assistant joined in November, 2020. The Handyman's basic salary is \$70,000 and he came on in December, 2020. He was brought over from the Department of Energy. Those are the persons, presently, on staff under this programme.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I had asked the Hon. Minister, apart from the allowances which she actually outlined, whether there are any additional benefits that will accrue to employees in this particular Ministry that are inconsistent with what is happening in other parts of the Administration. Are there any kind of special allowances that will be paid to these persons who are working in your Ministry?

Ms. Teixeira: No, Sir. If we work overtime, they will have refreshments or meals. If we work late and they need assistance, we will help out, but there are no special allowances or special payments whatsoever in this Ministry.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Line item 6284 – Other: I think there is \$4 million here. The figure may appear to be small in relation to other Ministries but, having regard to the fact that there is some amount of co-location, could the Hon. Minister explain what this amount caters for?

Ms. Teixeira: We had \$3.7 million in 2020 and we only used \$1.2 million. This is mainly for some of the needs of the new Ministry. Under 2021, we have the rental of the videoconference system from the National Data Management Authority (NDMA) for \$240,000; we are purchasing some more venetian blinds, carpets, signs and banners; and also

consultancies at \$2.78 million to design a survey with regard to the challenges facing people on accessing goods and services of the Government.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, through you, could the Hon. Minister say whether the projection is that the Ministry will remain within the curtilage of the Office of the President and, therefore, these expenses have to do with the Ministry being co-located in the Office of the President? I just need to clarify that before I [*inaudible*].

10.23 a.m.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon. No. We are a separate Ministry. The Office of the President assists us with the processing of funds in terms of clearance and going through the IFMAS. We are not under the Office of the President. We are separate.

In relation to your question of how soon, I would hope before the end of the year we would have our own Permanent Secretary (PS) so that we could, in accordance with the financial rules, manage a divorce from my dear friend, the Office of the President.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Minister, might you be able to point us to a place where we could actually find a building that is outside of the curtilage of the Office of the President, where we could actually go to meet you or staff of your Ministry?

Ms. Teixeira: We have been located, since October, in the building you used as the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) Secretariat; it is 105 New Garden Street, Queenstown. It is a very nice building and we like being accommodated there. If you wish to meet with me, please, Sir, you know where to find me.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I go to line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this Committee what this sum of money is going to cater for?

Ms. Teixeira: We did not have any money last year in the budget for this. This year, we are looking at painting the fence around the compound – the interior and exterior – \$900,000. There would be repairs for the parking pad – I do not call it the parking lot – in the Ministry compound, with which you are familiar. It is in bad condition with serious unevenness and breakage in the concrete. That has been estimated at \$2.6 million.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I trust, Minister, that you have better security there now so that there is no breakage. You have an item here, line item 6281 – Security Services. Would you be able to indicate to us the security firm that has been so engaged? If it was engaged at the time you had the breakage, what action did you take?

Ms. Teixeira: You are correct. We did not budget last year for security, as the Office of the President was providing that. This year, we have budgeted \$7.6 million. This is with the same security firm that has worked at the Ministry from October last year to now. When we have to go through a new process of tendering, then we would proceed in that direction. At this point, we have a company called Elite Protection Services that is working there, and we are quite satisfied with its services.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: Having regard to the fact that it is such a very small staff, could the Hon. Minister indicate what this allocation is for with respect to the size of her fleet and how she intends to utilise the sum that has been allocated here?

Ms. Teixeira: This year, we have an increase in fuel and lubricants. That is correct. This is for fuel and lubricants for one Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV); one car, which we just received yesterday, which is a Want of Entry car from the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA); two motorcycles; one brush cutter; and one power washer.

Mr. Mahipaul: Under security chargers in line item 6281 – Security Services – may I ask what is the rate that is being paid for the security service?

Ms. Teixeira: I am advised that we are paying \$500 an hour for working days and \$750 per hour for weekends.

Programme: 061 – Policy Development and Administration – \$50,021,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 061 – Policy Development and Administration – \$29,403,000

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Project Code 1220000 – Buildings: There is a sum of \$500 million that speaks to the provision for building. I would like the Hon. Minister to elucidate on this. Is it, in fact, going to be a new building or is the sum going to be spent on the current building? The

project code speaks to something. I would like you to clarify this provision for building.

Ms. Teixeira: The \$5.9 million covers retrofitting the building to include two offices. We are not expanding the building. We are just using the space within the building a little more efficiently. Therefore, we have to break down walls in some areas and create a new office. Downstairs, we are enclosing the garage as a new office as well. We are not touching the architectural integrity of the building. It is one those lovely old Queenstown buildings. We have been guided by the Ministry of Public Works on the scope of works.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: This is not, in fact, a provision for a new building. It is the same building, but you are doing internal works. Thank you for your assistance.

Mr. Mahipaul: Project Code 2407300 – Land Transport: I see an amount of \$14,503,000 – purchase of vehicle. All the legend has is that it includes transportation. May I ask how many vehicles are being purchased? May I ask if the fleet, currently, is four and the number being purchased would now be added?

Mr. Chairman: If the fleet currently is...

Mr. Mahipaul: Is it four and are you adding to it?

Ms. Teixeira: The SUV I have and am using is on loan to me from the Office of the President. I think Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon knows the vehicle. This is a provision for me to have a new vehicle and to return the one that I have had on loan from the Office of the President. The vehicle is not a new one that I have from the Office of the President. We have had to keep it maintained. We have to return it. I am very grateful to the Minister of Finance for providing me with a new vehicle for my personal and office use; of course, my official use.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask the type of vehicle? I would also like to know the fleet at the Ministry.

Ms. Teixeira: The fleet of the Ministry, as I said earlier, is one SUV, one Want of Entry vehicle we just received yesterday, two motorcycles, a brush cutter and power washer. That is our fleet.

Mr. Mahipaul: What is the type of vehicle that is going to be purchased?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, as you know, I am very clueless about cars and vehicles. It is an SUV; this is the allocation from the Ministry of Finance. We will go to tender,

we will see what the tender produces, what could fit our budget and what would be a vehicle that is appropriate for off and on road use. We do not have a particular brand or anything like that. It is just an SUV.

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

Mr. Figueira: Mr. Chairman, I had my microphone on.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Figueira, go ahead.

Mr. Figueira: Thank you for recognising me. Let me commend the Minister for her very dapper outfit. Green really takes her complexion. Project Code 1220000 – Buildings: I am seeing \$5.9 million. The Minister indicated it is for the refurbishment of the building to facilitate two offices. She said the outward structure of the building [*inaudible*].

Mr. Chairman: I do not think the Minister heard you. Personally, I did not hear the last part. I heard integrity.

Mr. Figueira: The microphone keeps cutting off, unfortunately. The Minister indicated that the integrity of the building would not be affected, but it would just be some internal works to facilitate two offices. I am wondering what the size of these offices are. Would windows be applied to these offices as well, given the fact that it is \$5.9 million? Could the Minister give a little more information with respect to the outlook of these two new offices that would be accommodated with this large allocation?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Figueira, the building is an old building. It is wooden. We do have to put windows in because we are converting the garage into an office. We have walls to put up, floor to raise and windows to put in. We also are looking at the conversion of another part of the building into offices, which are not offices right now in terms of structural things we have to do. We are not adding to the building. We are not making the building larger. We are using the space we have in that way. We have some other estimates from the Ministry of Public Works which has guided us on this. This is why we have put this figure. If it comes in less, that would be good. If it is going to be more, we have to make choices of what we could do. This is the figure with which we have been guided. It is the Ministry of Public Works' building. So, we asked them to give us the scope of works and this is what they came up with. We hope to do some work on the washrooms, but we are not sure if we could stretch it to include that.

Opposition Chief Whip [Mr. Jones]: Project Code 2512200 – Furniture and Equipment: We see a significant amount of

\$9 million being allocated for these items. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to either layover or, if she wishes, go through the list of items? Thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you very much, Mr. Jones. The big-ticket item in this is \$7.3 million of the \$9 million for the inverter and batteries for solar panels. We have installed solar panels on the building, thanks to the Department of Environment that was closed. They have kindly installed the solar panels for us. Now, we need to have the inverter and battery so that we could run the solar system when we have blackouts and things like that. We would like to have a green building; not your green. Green meaning environmentally friendly. You are right. It is a big-ticket item; \$7.3 million. Other items include computers; Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS); office cubicles relating to the retrofitting of the new offices; Air Conditioner (AC) units, which also have to be installed in the new offices; and security camera. Do you want the figures for all of those?

10.38 a.m.

I can give that: Computers – \$420,000; uninterruptible power supply (UPS) – \$24,000; office cubicles – \$200,000; and the air conditioning (AC) units – \$406,000. We have one or two AC units that are old. I think Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon may be familiar with that. We have to replace those. There are security cameras – \$160,000; ParaView XML (PVX) File Extension – \$120,000; there is a laptop mainly for the Parliamentary Affairs section – \$195,000; and one pressure washer – \$175,000. That is how we get to the \$9 million, Mr. Jones.

Programme: 061 – Policy Development and Administration – \$29,403,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 062 – Parliamentary Affairs – \$4,000,000

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, there is not much under this programme. In relation to line item, 6284, Other, which seems to be the only item with any kind of sums of money in it, could the Hon. Minister provide us with a breakdown of what is going to be done here? Of course, Minister, we all understand that there are three elements in one Ministry. So, the Hon. Member could actually be making allocations for all three of these elements when, in fact, she is operating in one space. Could you provide some elucidation here, please, Hon. Minister?

Ms. Teixeira: In case Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon did not hear me, we are being transparent, and we are open to questions; that is not an issue. For line item 6284, Other, there is \$1.5 million. This is to cater for consultancy to prepare a parliamentary manual for Ministries and Government agencies to understand the parliamentary system and to understand how Bills and other matters are dealt with in the National Assembly from the perspective of the Ministries, Government agencies and state boards, *et cetera*. What we have encountered is a lack of understanding of the processes in the National Assembly.

It is slightly different from what my Colleague and Friend and Clerk of the National Assembly is doing for Members of Parliaments (MPs). We thought this would be a tool that could be used by the Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs) and the Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs) to get them to understand how Parliament functions. That \$1.5 million is to hire someone to assist us in preparing the manual. We would like to have that done and be available before the end of the year.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am happy that the Hon. Minister indicated that they are transparent and willing to answer any question. May I ask why is there an allocation for local travel and subsistence under line item 6261?

There are also expenses under line item 6221 and other line items here, but there is no staff. May I ask who will the drugs and medical supplies go to and who will be the persons travelling locally and receiving subsistence?

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Mr. Mahipaul. The reason why there is no staff is because it would have to be under line item 6112, Senior Technical and not under line item 6116, Contracted Employees. The staff only started working about two weeks ago and, therefore, could not be reflected in the Budget. The person will then be paid once we approve the Budget in the National Assembly and then go on to his/her position in the office. This is for the Parliamentary Support Officer and we are awaiting all the approvals from the Ministry of the Public Service and the Public Service Commission (PSC). The person is on the Permanent/Pensionable Establishment and will not be on contract. This would be reflected in 2022 in the budget, probably, under line item 6112.

Right now, the staff is already working in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance. We could not reflect it because he/she only started two weeks ago. That is where a

number of issues to do with stationery, drugs and medical supplies, to which you have referred... As Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon correctly said, it is a small Ministry; there is co-sharing in terms of a number of issues.

On the issue of local travel, this is to do with travelling for parliamentary matters and stakeholder meeting relating to parliamentary matters, including what would be air or boat fares, *et cetera*, that we may have to hire. This would include the work that we have to do in outreaches. While it does not reflect a person, we actually have the person who is physically on board.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister. Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, before you continue, I just want to ask the Hon. Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance for some clarification. From the answer which the Hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance just gave, my understanding, Hon. Minister, is that, in preparing the budget, you reflect the staffing as per your establishment at the time. For any new hiring, there is a special provision in the Ministry of Finance for which accommodations are made. Is that something that I am misunderstanding?

Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance [Dr. Singh]: The standard practice, which is a practice that has been in place for a number of years, is that we include, in the respective Ministries and their programmes with respect to their budgetary allocations, amounts or financing relating to persons who are in positions at the time the budget is being prepared and at the salaries that are prevailing at that time. Subsequent new hires and new recruitment and adjustments to salaries, whether for reasons on promotion or otherwise, would be met from the line item 6141 allocation, Other Employment Costs, which is budgeted under the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Chairman, if I understand you correctly, yes, each Ministry's budget will reflect the people who were in place at the time the budget is being prepared and at the salaries that prevail at that time. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I hope that clarifies it.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance. Thank you very much. I think you have cleared up a lot of questions, Hon. Minister.

Programme: 062 – Parliamentary Affairs – \$4,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 062 – Parliamentary Affairs – \$900,000

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, there is a sum here under Project code 2512200, Furniture and Equipment, which is \$900,000. What we are seeing here is that, in one Ministry, there are three separate sums. It is almost as if this total sum has been split among three for some reason, but it is the same Ministry. The first programme, which is Governance, there is a sum there and, now, under Parliamentary Affairs there is another sum, but it is the same Ministry to which all these allocations are going. Could the Hon. Minister explain why it is being done in this manner?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, why is it being done in this manner?

Ms. Teixeira: The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance, when it was designed last year in August-September, was created with three programmes – Policy Development and Administration, Parliamentary Affairs and Governance. So, there are three programmes in which there are different types of activities. The Volume 2 of the Estimates for last year and this year describes the mandate of the Ministry, the programmes and what they do, and the targets of each programme and what those targets are for 2021.

If you turn to page to page 79 and this goes right through to page 87, there are the descriptions for Policy Development and Administration, Parliamentary Affairs and Governance. If there is any confusion on that... There are areas where there are overlaps, obviously, but there are areas where there are distinct features or focus – let us put it that way – in the Ministry Parliamentary Affairs and Governance.

Policy Development and Administration has a number of areas to do with the issues of Parliamentary Affairs and the issues of the Governance areas. This is a larger area which has to do with stakeholders, article 13 of the Constitution in terms of people's involvement, and a number of initiatives being taken under the areas that belong to the Ministry. Policy Development and Administration deals with staffing and general administrative and other issues of the Ministry.

Under Parliamentary Affairs, it describes, in terms of our responsibilities, what we are expected to do with Government's legislative agenda and the work of the

Government. It also deals with ensuring that Government's legislative agenda goes through the National Assembly efficiently and effectively.

Under Governance, you may be aware that there are a number of areas here. These are the treaty reporting on human rights issues of which the Hon. Member knows. Here, we also deal with the reports to the United Nations (UN) and the Organization of American States (OAS), as well as the reports to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and the Inter-American Convention against Corruption. I do not deal with all the treaties; I deal specifically with treaties on human rights, corruption and any other questionnaires that come, including what we have to answer to in relation to the United States of America, Department of State, and reports that we have to answer in relation to Trafficking in Persons (TIPs) and freedom of expression, *et cetera*.

It also includes, under Governance, the areas of national stakeholders and areas which may not be legislative, which is parliamentary. It includes areas to do with stakeholders, policy discussions and the representation of stakeholders. We are trying ensure that we deal with article 13 of the Constitution. Under Governance, as well, there are a number of issues to do with, for example, human rights. Here, we are required to have consultations not only with Government agencies, but with civil society from time to time in preparing the reports that go to the international bodies.

We are also putting some money under Governance in relation to the consultations that would be held to do the constitutional and electoral reform. This is to assist the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs. He will spearhead that process, but I will be the one helping with the non-governmental organisations' (NGOs) and civil society's participation in that process.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I thank the Minister for her elaboration but, basically, I was just asking about project code 2512200, Furniture and Equipment.

10.53 a.m.

What will be purchased here? Irrespective of what duties seven persons have to perform, they cannot sit in three different chairs at the same time. Hon. Minister, I am asking you what is it that you will purchase here for these seven persons?

Ms. Teixeira: Hon. Member, I go back to the fact that we are a new Ministry creating our stock base and ensuring that we are capable of doing things. We did not inherit a lot of staff and there was no Ministry before. The details are: Scanner – \$450,000; filing cabinets – \$91,200; bookshelves – \$150,000; coffee table – \$25,000; digital camera – \$250,000, this is for my secretariat and to be used for uploading information onto the website, if we are going to have photographs, *et cetera*; filing cabinets and bookshelves – \$182,000 and \$117,600. Again, it is trying to stock the Ministry with the facilities it needs to function properly. We have a small place and we have to make sure that we use our space effectively and efficiently.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Sir, if you could please permit me. The Hon. Minister went to great lengths just now and so I have a follow up based on what she said about the Parliamentary Affairs. I was just wondering whether the Chief Parliamentary Counsel (CPC) will be going to the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs. Is there an overlap between what has happened at Ministry of Legal Affairs and the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance? Could you please give us some guidance on that based on what you said you were supposed to be doing under Parliamentary Affairs?

Ms. Teixeira: I could answer the question, but I would like it to be noted that this is not a line item to do with finance. However, I have no problems answering your question. The Chief Parliamentary Counsel would not be coming to the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance. We do not write law; we try to influence law or to look at what has to be amended and to try to have buy in by different stakeholders and to assist Ministries in terms of their consultations with regard to legislation. In agreeing, we also take responsibility in terms of where we feel there should be legislative changes. We, as the Ministry in its own right, could raise those matters in Cabinet. No, we are not taking over the Chief Parliamentary Counsel.

Programme: 062 – Parliamentary Affairs – \$900,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 063 – Governance – \$80,851,000

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Could the Hon. Minister give us a break down on the items that are catered for under line item 6284 – Other?

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you very much, Sir. The sum of \$5 million caters for: consultancies and Government matters – \$4.5 million; and printing of materials such as signs and banners – half of a million.

Mr. Harmon, this figure will include training that we hope to do on human rights treaty reporting, with the focal points that we are asking each Ministry to create so that we would be able to have better responses and timely responses to prepare reports for the international bodies. It is the same for the anticorruption conventions. We feel that we need to train persons within each Ministry in terms of being adequately aware of the treaties and what the requirements of Guyana are in terms of reporting, and also another new follow-up reporting. Each time a report is adopted on Guyana, we have to do follow up and sometimes it gets shelved. This is an attempt to create a tracking system and a training system under this head.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The Hon. Minister spoke about a consultancy for \$4.5 million. Would she care to give us a clearer indication as to what this consultancy is all about and whether, in fact, there would be advertisements, local as well as international?

Ms. Teixeira: We have not hidden anyone. Obviously, the Budget has not been approved. We are hoping... We have been in discussions with a number of international bodies such as the UN in terms of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) technical fund to be able to look at hiring persons or having consultancies come in, mostly, through UN bodies themselves, because they are the most equipped; and, also to, wherever possible, be able to train our people.

Therefore, this would be the request to the UN to have persons to come in to assist us with training; and there are costs involved with this. In addition, it would cater for consultancies to help us to prepare our treaty reports. We have had, in the past pre-2015, assistance from United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), for example, on the Rights of the Child Report. We have reports on the remigrant workers on which we would need assistance. These are short term consultancies to assist us. Most of it, we hope, will be done electronically to cut down on the cost so that we would not have to pay accommodation and other costs if the persons are from outside of Guyana.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask if the same answer could be provided for the staffing details and the expenditure that I am seeing here, if it is similar to what was the question which

related to the Parliamentary Affairs Officer where there are no staff but there is an allocation.

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, we have three staff under this programme. They have not gotten their contracts yet, they have not finalised the processing of recruitment and, therefore, we could not include that in the Budget. The rest of the costs are related to three members of staff, two Research Officers and a Special Project Officer.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, in 2020, there were two staff and they are no longer there, but we are now having three new staff who would be on contract. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say what would be the salary and other benefits of the three staff?

Ms. Teixeira: If we look at *Budget 2020*, \$3.1 million was budgeted, and for the Revised Budget, there was zero. We had hoped to hire those persons before the end of December. We were unsuccessful and, therefore, the moneys were reverted. That is why you would see the figure there, but the Revised Budget is zero. We did not use the money at all. We did not hire the staff as we had projected.

Mr. Mahipaul: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: The Integrity Commission will be getting \$69,242,000. May I ask the Hon. Minister if there is an Integrity Commission in place right now?

Ms. Teixeira: The board of the Integrity Commission expired on 21st February, 2020. The process of appointing a new board has commenced and we hope that will be done within a short period of time. The staff remains in the Commission and they have to be catered for in terms of salaries *et cetera* so as to allow them to function.

Mr. Jones: Follow up to the question by Member of Parliament Mahipaul. Is there a role for the Leader of the Opposition in appointing members to the board of the Integrity Commission?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Jones, if I remember correctly, it is that the President who appoints after consultation, but it is not meaningful consultation as defined by the Constitution. Basically, the President informs the Leader of the Opposition and, hopefully, he would agree. If he does not agree, the President could continue to appoint. It is not a constitutional body which has other legal requirements involved.

Mr. Mahipaul: Follow up: I heard the Hon. Minister indicated that the Integrity Commission expired. The date of expiration was sometime in February...

Ms. Teixeira: I cannot hear you.

Mr. Mahipaul: The date of expiration for the Integrity Commission was sometime in February.

Ms. Teixeira: It was 21st February.

Mr. Mahipaul: It was 21st February and the process for the reconstituting of the Commission has already commenced. Is it possible that the Minister could say who are the persons that are currently being looked at to constitute the Commission?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Mahipaul, unfortunately that is in the prerogative of the President of this country. However, there are some considerations of different people. It is just names that are being suggested and I assume that, when we reach at a certain stage, the President would make his decision. I cannot say who is being considered; that would be rather *infra dig* as it is in the President's domain. Thank you.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, just one more follow up, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: We have the Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul then we have the Hon. Member Mr. Figueira.

Mr. Mahipaul: I do hear that it is within the prerogative of the President to make appointments the Integrity Commission, but could the Hon. Minister say if there is a criteria that is being looked at when selecting these people or are they just randomly picking persons *out of thin air*?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Mahipaul, I am sure that you are aware that the Integrity Commission Act advises on the selection of the persons in terms of integrity and their background, *et cetera*. We cannot just pick *higgly bigly* anyone. It has to be persons of high integrity because this is where all the records for all of us are kept and reviewed – these are submissions to the Integrity Commission. At least for this side of the House we submitted. I hope, in the new year, the Members of Opposition would improve their track record of the last 30 years or last 25 years of not submitting the Integrity Commission reports.

Mr. Figueira: In keeping with the Minister's mandate on governance and the President's 'One Guyana' policy, would you advise or encourage considerations for the Leader of the

Opposition's recommendation for commissioners to sit on that Commission?

Ms. Teixeira: Sir, in the realm of possibilities, anything is possible. However, Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon knows that I am waiting for his submission for the Local Government Commission; so I would use that as a test run, Sir.

Programme: 063 – Governance – \$80,851,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 063 – Governance – \$3,800,000

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I thank the Hon. Minister for her candour in explaining that there is no Integrity Commission right now and the fact that it is still being considered. Of course, the question I have is under project code 2507300.

11.08 a.m.

Why are you now buying equipment for the Integrity Commission when there is no Commission? Why are you spending \$2.8 million?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I think you and a number of the older Members of Parliament would know that there were times when there was no Integrity Commission, but the law still requires us to submit declarations and to hold those persons accountable until a board is in place. The body still has to continue, the staff still have to be paid, and they still have to function. They have to secure the documents, make sure they are confidential and do the tracking. The Integrity Commission has expanded its staff, including investigators, *et cetera* and, therefore, it continues to function – I assume that reports have been received last year – until the new board comes in. I do not anticipate that this will be a long time in coming, hopefully.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I was asking about the expenditure for furnishing equipment where there is no Commission. In fact, it is not that there is no Commission; there has been a Commission. From the time we came into Office, a Commission was, in fact, put into place and its life expired in February of this year. What I am asking is not about whether there are people there because there are staff. The question I am asking is: On what basis are you determining that there is a need to purchase more furniture and equipment for the Integrity Commission when, in fact, there is no body, as such, called the Integrity Commission? All that is there are the staff.

Ms. Teixeira: Maybe if I were to go through the list, it might help to clarify your question, Sir. There is one 600-watt inverter system, one projector with screen and stand, two air conditioning units, and one LaserJet printer. That is wrong; sorry about that. The Integrity Commission – \$2.8 million: Three fireproof storage cabinets - \$1.5 million; and one LaserJet printer – \$150,000. The three fireproof cabinets are to protect the paper records submitted by public officers. There are two laptops in view that we are hoping to hire one more staff in the year and, also, for when the officers go into the fields to do official duties and investigations; there are two air conditioning units since the building needs additional units; there is one pressure washer for the cleaning of the fence of the building which houses the Commission, the guard hut and the building, vehicle, *et cetera*; and there is one five-piece dining set for the lunchroom where the employees eat since they have no table to eat on at this time. Those are for the \$2.8 million.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Just a follow up on the last statement made by the Hon. Minister. The Hon. Minister stated that fireproof cabinets will be brought. Hon. Minister, in this age of digitisation and technology, would it not be easier if the staff just scan the documents, once they come in, and store them on a server so that they will not have to deal with a lot of storage matters?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, Madam, both are being done. There is a system. A software was created where the documents are in a kind of a cloud. What is it called? I have forgotten the name of it now. That has been arranged and some of the fees involved with that have been budgeted in the Current Estimates. They still have to keep paper records because people can challenge the authenticity. They still need to have paper records stored as well as the electronic copy. It is also moving in the direction of electronic submissions of statements, and some people in this Parliament have used that already. There are some documents, especially those that are old, that have to be kept safe from fires.

Programme: 063 – Governance – \$3,800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: I take this opportunity, on your behalf and mine, to thank the Hon. Minister and her staff for taking us through this agency. Thank you very much.

We now invite the Hon. Minister and the staff of the Parliament Office to join us.

Agency 07: Parliament Office

Current Expenditure

Programme: 071 – National Assembly – \$1,802,411,000

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Patterson...

Mr. Patterson: Thank you for acknowledging me, Mr. Chairman.

Line item 6323 – Constitutional Agencies: The sum of \$1.8 billion is budgeted. Could I ask the Hon. Minister what was the amount requested by the Parliament Office for 2021?

Ms. Teixeira: Could you repeat the question, Sir?

Mr. Patterson: Under that line item, which we both agree is the only item, there is a sum of \$1.8 billion. I am asking what was the sum which was requested by the Parliament Office versus what has been allocated here. The Parliament Office made a budget submission, and I am asking for that.

Ms. Teixeira: All the agencies and all the Ministries ask for money. It is the ability of the Government to pay, and so I am advised that the money that has been released is what has been approved by the Minister in relation to the Fiscal Management and Accountability (Amendment) Act and the *Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana*.

Mr. Patterson: A follow-up: I am seeking your guidance. Sir, your predecessor, and I think the one before him, made a ruling, and you can confer with the Clerk, that the House must know, when it came to constitutional agencies, what their requests were versus what was allocated. Then it would be said that, because a workplan for the constitutional agency was examined, a lumpsum... I repeat the question, through you Mr. Chairman, and I ask: What was requested by the Parliament Office?

Ms. Teixeira: We have to deal with the law and with what law we are working under. We are working under the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act, as amended by this Parliament, where the requirement of the Constitution is that these agencies receive their moneys in a lumpsum but are opened to review by this House. It does not have anything, in the previous amendment of 2015, nor this one... In the amendment of this year, it does not include the issue of the request by the agencies and the recommendation of the Ministry of Finance. That has been removed from the Act. Therefore, at this point, we are operating under the most recent amendment of the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member still has not answered. Mr. Chairman, I would like a ruling from you. We can confer with the Clerk on how we arrived at the position in this Parliament. I am, specifically, requesting you, as the Chairman ...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you would appreciate that predecessors to me had their own positions. Hon. Member, you asked a question and the Minister who is responsible to respond has responded. Thank you very much.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, for the *Hansard*, the Chairman declines to make a ruling other than previous Speakers ...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please. That is the decision of ...

Mr. Patterson: For the *Hansard*, Sir.

Ms. Teixeira: There is law ...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I am speaking. I come back to the opening of words of the Leader of the Opposition in the Budget debate about respect. A question had been asked and I had forwarded that to the responsible Minister, who has answered. If there is another request and you want to move a motion otherwise, please, so do. Let us move on. Thank you very much. Hon. Member Mr. Figueira....

Mr. Figueira: Thank you, Cde. Chairman.

A follow-up: In light of the fact that parliamentary operations are guided by precedence, could the Hon. Minister indicate if the requested allocation far superseded what was allocated in the 2021 Budget for this constitutional agency?

Ms. Teixeira: I am not *au fait* with that answer.

11.23 a.m.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Sir. Under the same line item: as a parliamentarian, I would engage a lot with the Parliament staff and so on, and I was told that the Parliament Office requested \$3 billion.

Mr. Chairman: You said you were “told”, but I do not know the authenticity of your telling. A question was asked and answered by the Minister. You could point to who “told” you, otherwise it is just hearsay.

Mr. Mahipaul: That is why I am asking, if I may...

Mr. Chairman: You may not.

Mr. Mahipaul: I noticed an allocation of \$1...

Mr. Chairman: If you cannot bring the ‘who’ so that the person could defend himself or herself, then I cannot allow the question.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, could I please rephrase my question?

Mr. Chairman: I do not know about rephrasing it, but you could ask another question.

Mr. Mahipaul: I am noticing an allocation of \$1.802 billion...

Mr. Chairman: That’s right.

Mr. Mahipaul: ...and I am guided that much more money than this was requested. May I ask on what...

Mr. Chairman: I do not know where the guidance comes from, but the Minister has answered. I will ask the Minister, once again, to deal with your guidance. Hon. Minister, please proceed.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, I have not completed my question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, we will give Mr. Mahipaul an opportunity to complete his question. Go ahead, Hon. Member.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Sir. I noticed an allocation of \$1.802 billion and I am guided or told that much more money was requested. May I ask, what basis or criteria were used to reduce the sum requested to \$1.802 billion?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, you have been told is hearsay. I am very familiar with the term GIGO – garbage in, garbage out – and you and I could discuss what that acronym means.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member is dealing with fantasy. The Parliament Office never asked for \$3 billion...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I did not ask for a comment. I gave a ruling.

Ms. Teixeira: Sorry, Sir. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: I was scanning to see if there is another question. Hon. Members...

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I have another question. I thought you had given the floor to the Minister to answer.

Mr. Chairman: No, Hon. Member. Please, go ahead.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, you have us on this side of the House a bit amazed by your statement.

Mr. Chairman: I have that effect on people, Hon. Member.

Mr. Patterson: The sum has doubly increased.

Ms. Teixeira: What?

Mr. Patterson: Hon. Minister, the Chairman and I are speaking. Mdm. Chairperson, could you detail the work...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, it is 'Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister'...

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, through you, Hon. Minister, could you disaggregate under which heads the sum of \$1.802 billion is allocated.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. It is a good question and very pertinent to the line item.

Ms. Teixeira: I have the information on each of the heads presented under Appendix T, on page 808, in Volume 1, Current and Capital Revenue Expenditure, of the Budget. If you go to that volume, you will get all the information. I was well informed by the staff of this and, hopefully, I could competently answer your questions.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, do you want her to read out Appendix T?

Mr. Patterson: No, Sir.

Mr. Mahipaul: I noticed under line item 6011, Statutory Wages and Salaries, for the disaggregation of the lump sum, there is an increase. Am I to interpret that the staff of the Parliament Office will be receiving an increase in salary in the year 2021?

Ms. Teixeira: This head has to do with the Ministers and Members of Parliament. This has to do with the increase of two Parliamentary Secretaries who are in the Twelfth Parliament. It includes the salaries and allowances for the Leader of the Opposition and the Personal Assistant to the Speaker of the National Assembly. Under that head, all of us in this room are included.

Mr. Mahipaul: Is there any consideration for an increase in salary for the staff of the Parliament Office?

Ms. Teixeira: Are you asking under the same line item 6011, Statutory Wages and Salaries, or have you gone to something else?

Mr. Mahipaul: Out of the lump sum that is allocated there for this Constitutional Agency, could the Hon. Minister say what benefits are expected to go the staff of the Parliament Office?

Mr. Chairman: I would just like to get some clarity, Hon. Member. Those are two questions: One, if there is an increase, and two, what the benefits are. Am I right?

Mr. Mahipaul: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Member. Hon. Minister, you have the floor.

Ms. Teixeira: I believe that the increase for the staff would come under any review of salaries catered for by the Ministry of Finance in the revision of those salaries, as would be handled in the public sector. The staff will be provided with that wherever or whenever that takes place.

Mr. Chairman: Is that ditto also for the allowances?

Ms. Teixeira: I beg your pardon, Mr. Chairman? If it is for the allowances of the staff?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Hon. Minister.

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Mahipaul: Could the Hon. Minister say from this lump sum of \$1.8 billion, what benefit should the staff at Parliament expect?

Ms. Teixeira: I do not know if that is a financial question. However, I assume that they will benefit from the basic salaries. The number of staff is 120. They get responsibility and duty allowance, as well as vacation and commuting allowance, and national insurance. The amount for the salaries comes up to \$186.3 million, and \$69,325,000 for the allowances. That gives a total sum of \$255,692,000 for the staff. In addition to that, I understand that the Parliament Office, from time to time, gives staff a small honorarium for the additional work that they may do in terms of when there is the budget, *et cetera*.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, if I may, one last question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, please proceed.

Mr. Mahipaul: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to give a breakdown as to what the allowances are and the amount that is associated with the allowance for our hardworking staff at the Parliament Office? I would like to know the amount for the meal allowance, if it is \$1,000 or \$1,500, or for the entertainment allowance or whatever allowance.

Ms. Teixeira: The staff of the Parliament Office receives a duty allowance which is between \$20,000 to \$40,000. Their vacation allowance is based on the salary that they receive. The commuted allowance relates to and includes subsistence that they may receive, and they do receive, in terms of when they have to work long hours and overtime for events such as the budget. When we have long sessions of Parliament they would be granted additional subsistence, including refreshments and meals.

Mr. Patterson: Under the same line item, there is a capital expense of \$65 million.

Mr. Chairman: A capital expense?

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Sir. Everything is put as one head. Am I not correct?

Mr. Chairman: I think we are at page 625, where capital expenditure is covered. I am only putting the current expenditure at this position.

Mr. Figueira: Sir, in recognition of the significant [*inaudible*] requested provision by the Parliament Office, would this allocation cater for the number of parliamentary staff that is expected to be promoted and the salary scale?

Ms. Teixeira: As normally done, the Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance clarified the issue. That is, the numbers here reflect the number of persons who are on duty, not the persons to be hired or to be promoted. That comes subsequently with regard to other systems. Many of the members of staff of the Parliament Office are on the fixed establishment and, based on those procedures, there would be promotions and the money would then be released to the Office if there is a shortfall when there are the promotions and the need for additional allowances, *et cetera*. The Hon. Member keeps talking about a massive cut. I am not aware that the Parliament Office had requested \$3 billion. I am advised by the Parliament Office that no such request was ever made.

Mr. Figueira: Could you indicate which staff advised you of that, Hon. Minister?

Ms. Teixeira: The accounting staff that provided the document to the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, you do not have to answer hecklers.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Figueira: I am happy that the Hon. Minister has indicated that she is aware of a document that was provided. Could you state what was requested in that said document from the Parliament Office?

Ms. Teixeira: I am advised in the response to the question I asked them, and that is, did they ask for \$3 billion. Their answer was no.

Mr. Figueira: Is it possible, Hon. Minister, for the said staff, to provide you with what was requested? You said it was not the sum of \$3 billion, so it probably was close to the sum of \$3 billion. Could you ask them to advise you what was the figure requested by the Parliament Office?

Ms. Teixeira: My role here today is to defend the budget request of the Constitutional Agencies.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister.

Ms. Teixeira: Therefore, I could only deal with the numbers that are before me. I am not a magician. I cannot wave my wand and create new numbers. So, I am dutifully saying to you that I am answering on the numbers that are in Appendix T for this Constitutional Agency and all of them.

Mr. Figueira: Thank you for your response and I am happy that you are not [*inaudible*].

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Figueira, you just do not stand up and address the Minister. You seek leave of the Chair to present your request to the Minister. Please, go ahead, Hon. Member.

Mr. Figueira: Thank you for recognising me, Hon. Chairman. I am happy that the Hon. Minister has indicated to the House that she is not a magician, but she probably is a butcher in chopping up this Budget.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you have to withdraw that.

Mr. Figueira: I withdraw, Mr. Chairman. The Hon. Minister is very skilful in saying to us that she dissected the request of the budget for the staff of the Parliament Office.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Figueira, I have not heard the Minister saying that she “dissected” anything. She said that she is here ‘to defend the allocation’.

Mr. Figueira: Thank you for your clarification, Hon. Chairman. In defending the allocation or the request for the Parliament Office, could the Hon. Minister agree with us that the request was indeed cut, and that she is defending what the Ministry of Finance allocated to the Parliament Office and not defending what the Parliament Office wanted?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I hope you will allow me to answer extensively, as Mr. Figueira is asking questions extensively. *Budget 2020* had allocated \$1.7 billion, if one looks at the column. The actual usage was \$1.5 billion, and Parliament started in October, having been in abeyance for the other nine months. Therefore, the \$1.8 billion in current expenditure is an increase to what was used last year. If the Parliament Office requires a supplementary, as all constitutional agencies and all ministries, that is not a problem.

11.38 p.m.

Therefore, I cannot decide what was requested nor what was given. I think I reminded this House that when the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act was amended in this House in August, 2015, the Minister of Finance cut the budget of the constitutional bodies every single year with no discussion on any line item; we were not allowed. The Hon. Member talked about precedence and former things. We were never allowed to ask any question with regard to the lump sum request of the constitutional bodies. This is the first time it is being done. It is bringing the constitutional bodies in line with the Constitution that states they are open to scrutiny and review, as are all bodies which take taxpayers’ moneys.

Mr. Mahipaul: Could the Hon. Minister say if there are members of staff in the Parliament Office who are acting in higher positions or receiving a duty allowance for performing additional duties?

Ms. Teixeira: I am advised that there is one staff who is in the category that you are speaking of and is receiving a responsibility allowance.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we have five minutes remaining for the consideration of the Parliament Office, Agency 7.

Mr. Mahipaul: Could the Hon. Minister say when will this position be filled? And, if they have already begun the

process, at what stage is it with reference to the confirmation of the position through the Public Service Commission (PSC)? This is so that the staff could be assured of security of tenure as opposed to filling it with a contracted employee.

Ms. Teixeira: I cannot answer that question because that is a personnel matter. I am not sure what stage they are at now in the Personnel Department with regards to the appointment.

Programme: 071 – National Assembly – \$1,802,411,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 071 – National Assembly – \$65,000,000.

Mr. Patterson: On the Capital expenditure of \$65 million, could the Hon. Member disaggregate that sum?

Ms. Teixeira: The \$65 million is broken down as follows: procurement of closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras and accessories to be installed in specific locations, as advised by the police, for the security of the Public Buildings, at the sum of \$15 million; erection of polls for security cameras at the sum of \$5 million; construction of monitoring room for security cameras at the sum of \$8 million, and this would be within the compound; procurement of furniture and equipment for the office of the Speaker at the sum of \$600,000; 40 desktop computers at the sum of \$10 million, and this is with regard to obsolete computers in various departments such as Hansard, Committees, Library and Registry; one server at \$1.2 million, and this is to deal with the storage of parliamentary information; four all-in-one printers at the sum of \$250,000 each, and these are to be used by the Clerk of the National Assembly, the Parliamentary Executive Officer, the Executive Planning and Management Analyst and Hansard, as the printers that are currently being used are unserviceable; two shredders for the office of the Clerk and the Registry Department; one double door refrigerator, two executive chairs, five air conditioning units (AC) with regard to a number of departments in the Parliament Office; 10 audio recorders for the Hansard Division to facilitate the verbatim records; one laminating machine, I guess for laminating badges; and for the constitutional office of the Leader of the Opposition, under capital, \$19.8 million for the Hon. Member of the Opposition.

Programme: 071 – National Assembly – \$65,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 08 Audit Office of Guyana

Current Expenditure**Programme: 081 – Audit Office – \$1,016,347,000.**

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask for the total number of staff present at the Audit Office of Guyana, a breakdown in terms of the allowances that they are entitled to and the amount of money that is allocated for each allowance?

Ms. Teixeira: The number of staff at the Office of the Auditor General is 210 and the allowances catered for with regard to [*Pause*] we are just trying to get that information. I am sorry.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul, do you have a follow up?

Mr. Mahipaul: Pardon me, Sir.

Ms. Teixeira: I am just trying to...

Mr. Chairman: I am sorry Minister.

Ms. Teixeira: I am just trying to get the information that was requested.

Mr. Mahipaul: If I may, in the interest of time...

Ms. Teixeira: Just give me one minute.

Mr. Chairman: Just give her an opportunity to get the information. I am watching the clock and I am making notes.

Ms. Teixeira: They are entitled to vacation allowance, which is related to their salaries, as well as entertainment allowance, which is \$5,000, and they receive acting allowances as well. Travelling allowance would be specific to the rank or level of the staff.

Mr. Mahipaul: Are there any other allowances that are given to the staff at the Audit Office of Guyana?

Ms. Teixeira: The only person who would have other allowances other than what I described would be the Auditor General himself, as far as I know. The other allowances that you asked about are: vacation allowance at the sum of \$41 million; motor car and bicycle allowance at the sum of \$3.4 million; entertainment allowance at the sum of \$1.8 million; uniform allowance at the sum of \$26 million; and employers' contribution to the pension scheme at the sum of \$35 million. That would be under benefits and allowances listed under Appendix T.

Mr. Mahipaul: Are the members of staff at the Audit Office of Guyana given a meal allowance?

Ms. Teixeira: I am advised that the answer is no.

Mr. Mahipaul: I did not hear the response.

Ms. Teixeira: I am advised that the answer is no.

Mr. Mahipaul: The staff at the Audit Office of Guyana are not given meals allowance. Thank you for that clarity, Hon. Minister.

If I may ask, are there members of staff at the Audit Office of Guyana who are performing the duties of a higher office, receiving a duty allowance or are there members of staff who are acting in higher positions, and if they are, what measure is the Audit Office taking to fill the vacancies through the Public Service Commission?

Mr. Chairman: Just to clarify, I think the Audit Office of Guyana hires its own staff.

Mr. Mahipaul: Yes Sir, you are correct. You have my apologies. At the Audit Office of Guyana, I think the Auditor General has the authority to employ his own staff. What measure is being taken by the Auditor General to fill the vacancies that are currently in existence. For the vacancies that do exist, what is the salary and the entire remuneration package that is assigned to those vacant offices?

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much Hon. Member, that is quite a bit. I am sure the Hon. Minister will have to get some guidance.

Ms. Teixeira: There are 16 vacancies at the senior level, and the Hon. Member may or may not know that the Public Accounts Committee approves the filling of these posts in accordance with the law and the rules and regulations of the Audit Office of Guyana. There are vacancies and there are persons also acting. These vacancies cannot be filled until the Public Accounts Committee goes through a review of the recommendations of the Audit Office.

11.53 a.m.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I am reliably informed that the Audit Office requested a budget higher than this. Could the Hon. Minister say which areas were cut, and why?

Mr. Chairman: Before I put the question to the Minister, again, I would say, on "reliably informed", that if you cannot

state the reliability of your informant, I will have to take that as hearsay and not...

Mr. Patterson: It is not hearsay, Sir. It was no other than the Auditor General who reliably informed us.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you said the Auditor General himself.

Ms. Teixeira: I will repeat what I said earlier. I am here to defend the Auditor General's office and the numbers in the Budget documents, Appendix II. I have no involvement in the process prior to. Therefore, I am here to defend the numbers that are here before the Parliamentarians.

The Audit Office of Guyana was cut in 2019 and it had \$731 million which was approved by the House. It had requested more in 2019. In 2020, it requested \$906 million and was given that but was refused \$890 million. These are all current numbers. It now has \$1,016,247,000 before the House for its current budget. There has been an increase between 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Mr. Mahipaul: This is the Estimates of Current and Capital Expenditure 2021 of the Audit Office of Guyana. I trust that we are seeing the 2021.

Mr. Chairman: Are you saying it is the Estimates?

Mr. Mahipaul: The request, Sir...

Mr. Chairman: All right.

Mr. Mahipaul: ...the request that was submitted. I am fortunate to have a copy, by virtue of being an astute Member of the Public Accounts Committee. Based on what I am seeing here for the total appropriated expenditure to be voted, which was based on their request, it is \$1,056,566,000. I am seeing that there is a reduction in terms of what is being printed in Volume I, that is before this honourable House. May I ask, why is there a decrease from what was requested by the Audit Office of Guyana?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, before I put the question, you may have answered the issue that you are here to defend the process and the numbers before you.

Ms. Teixeira: As the Hon. Member will remember, the Chairman or whomever, kept asterisking the request of the Auditor General. I assume that it would have been approved by the Public Accounts Committee, had it been discussed. On the difference in figures, Sir, you are correct that there is a \$14 million difference in the request in Current and \$32

million with regards to Capital request. The difference is approximately \$72 million with regard to what they requested and what they have. I can answer that because you are correct. It went before the PAC, but it was never discussed. It was asterisked from the time the PAC started meeting earlier this year. Thank you.

Mr. Mahipaul: For clarity, let me assure you that this side of the House, the four Members who are sitting on the PAC, are prepared to support the request that the Audit Office of Guyana made, that was submitted to the PAC. We are prepared to endorse that amount and no less than that.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, with respect to your comment, I can just tell you what I normally hear here, 'Cabinet has signified'. I think you may have to activate the process of your support for a request elsewhere. Could you ask the question?

Mr. Mahipaul: In terms of rates and taxes, how much money will the Audit Office of Guyana be paying to the Georgetown Mayor and City Council for the year 2021? Is this an updated amount that they will be paying or is it an accumulation of previous years?

Ms. Teixeira: The figure of rates and taxes is \$700,000 that is being paid to the Georgetown Mayor and City Council in regard to the Auditor General's Office in Georgetown.

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Member did ask if this is reflective of current or arrears, or current and arrears.

Ms. Teixeira: This is current, Sir.

Mr. Mahipaul: In light of the recent ruling by the Chief Justice where the Valuation Officer has to revalue properties to get the real value of the properties, would the Hon. Minister agree that is not the accurate figure to be paid the City Hall? When will the revaluation of the properties be done so that the accurate figures could be paid to the Mayor and City Council?

Mr. Chairman: There are a lot of suppositions there. I may have to revert a lot to GIGO – garbage in, garbage out – during these Estimates. Hon. Minister, do you may want to respond?

Ms. Teixeira: Sir, I am delighted to respond because the valuation of properties is not done by the Auditor General's office. It is done by the local authorities, in this case, the Georgetown Mayor and City Council. Until that is done, the agency cannot pay anything other than what is the present

rate. We cannot deal with suppositions and possibilities. When it happens, and if it happens, that there is an increase by the Georgetown Mayor and City Council then the Auditor General's office will accommodate that in the budget. There is no other way to handle it.

Mr. Mahipaul: I accept, and I agree that it is the function of, more specifically, the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, to facilitate the revaluation of properties. In the interest of being good citizens, of being transparent, democratic and all the fanciful words that are used to describe good governance, would the Auditor General endeavour to write the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development requesting that its property be revaluated so that the rightful amount of money can be collected?

Mr. Chairman: I just want to make a comment. This is the first time I am hearing a payee writing to pay more.

Ms. Teixeira: I am not quite sure how to answer that in the sense that I know most people do not like to pay their rates and taxes. If I were to take a survey in this room, I am sure quite a number of people owe rates and taxes to the Georgetown Mayor and City Council. However, if we were to do a quick vote in this House of how many people want their rates and taxes to be increased, I will put my bottom dollar that nine out of ten here will say no. Mr. Chairman, I am facetious but, at the same time, it is a facetious question. We will deal with the reality when it happens, whenever it happens. There is nothing more that we can do. If there is an increase, the Auditor General will make sure that this Agency deals with it. I believe that the issue of increasing rates and taxes is not a popular one in any part of the country.

Mr. Chairman: A caution to the Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, social media is stating that because of your height, you may need to bend to the microphone. They are not hearing your presentations on social media. Hon. Member Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you, Sir. I was trying to get your attention. The Hon. Minister acknowledged that \$40 million was deducted, reduced, cut from the Current. I asked my first question of where the items were cut from but I did not get a response. I would ask the Chairman if he could request to the Hon. Minister to respond.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, please.

Ms. Teixeira: The \$32 million comes from Capital with regards to computers, printers and other such equipment.

Mr. Patterson: (*Inaudible*)

Ms. Teixeira: I am giving it one at a time. There were two things that they were cut from, Sir. Mr. Chairman...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, you do not have to take on the Hon. Member.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you very much...

Mr. Patterson: Just for clarification...

Ms. Teixeira: ...because I have to do this 15 times today.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please. Go ahead, Hon. Minister.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, ...

Mr. Chairman: You have to stand on a point of order.

Mr. Patterson: It is not a point of order. I am just trying to help the Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: You have to stand... I would not ask and interrupt the current speaker on the floor, except. Go ahead, Hon. Minister.

Ms. Teixeira: I have the...

Mr. Chairman: The Minister was just about to go to current.

Ms. Teixeira: I was about to go to current. The total is \$72 million: \$32 million for capital and \$40 million for current. Under capital, it is ...

Mr. Chairman: We could deal with the capital shortly.

Ms. Teixeira: Under current, it has to do with cuts and employment costs, regarding acting allowances and the filling of vacancies.

Mr. Patterson: A follow-up: Is the Hon. Minister saying that the cut for current means that there was a reduced requirement of vacant positions? Is that why Government saw fit to cut it? The Hon. Minister said that there are 16. Is it 16 she said, Mr. Chairman? I am just trying to make sure. You always seem to (*inaudible*) 16 vacancies. You are saying now that they have reduced that. Is that helpful to the Audit Office of Guyana?

Ms. Teixeira: I want to remind the Hon. Member that this is a lump sum. In the case of the Auditor General wanting to fill a vacancy, once it is approved by the Public Accounts Committee, if it is a senior person, then he can move money around from different heads because the exercise that we are going through here is not one... He would receive the money in a lump sum. He will not receive it in terms of so much for each head. This allows some flexibility for all the constitutional bodies, because sometimes the bodies may come across variations or areas they did not anticipate. Of course, if the Public Accounts Committee recommends to the National Assembly that all 16 vacancies be filled, the Ministry of Finance will then have to release additional money if the Audit Office of Guyana is unable to provide the funds to pay those new people.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, that might be catered for in the Ministry of Finance's revision of wages and salaries.

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Mahipaul: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say what is the total allocation, as this lump sum, for total employment costs? I heard her when she said that \$40 million was cut from it. May I ask, what is the total allocation in this Budget for employment costs?

Ms. Teixeira: It is in Appendix T, page 809. The total employment costs is \$817,842,000

Mr. Mahipaul: I heard the Hon. Member say \$817 million. The request that was made – and I do have the Audit Office of Guyana's budget here, as I indicated earlier – is \$887,680,000. When I minus \$817,842,000 from that, I get \$70 million. Could the Hon. Minister clarify if it is indeed \$40 million that was cut from the total employment cost?

12.08 p.m.

Ms. Teixeira: I am so advised that it is \$40 million regarding current expenditure and there was a reallocation within the heads by the Agency. Although you are doing the Mathematics there, the officers who are here are saying that this figure, \$40 million, for the reduction is correct and not the figure you are mathematically putting to the Committee.

Programme: 081 – Audit Office – \$1,016,347,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 081 – Audit Office – \$20,000,000

Mr. Patterson: A similar question as my last question. Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Member say what was cut from the capital expenditure from the submission to the Audit Office of Guyana – the \$32 million?

Ms. Teixeira: I am advised that scanners, desktop computers and laptops were cut from the budget. There is one figure of \$14 million for a vehicle. One vehicle was requested and the sum was cut from \$14 million to \$6.5 million for a minibus.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I was hoping to get a simple answer so that we could have close the head. The previous request was for buildings – \$10 million, office equipment and furniture – \$28.4 million and land transportation – \$14 million. The sum of \$32 million has been cut. Now, there is \$20 million. Am I correct, Mdm. Teixeira? I am asking, where is the \$32 million that has been cut because there is a request for one minibus only?

Mr. Chairman: Someone's cellular phone is disturbing the House.

Mr. Patterson: I think that someone is ringing Mdm. Teixeira.

Mr. Chairman: That is all right. You are very observant, Hon. Member.

Ms. Teixeira: The items that were changed: the Ministry had requested \$10 million for buildings and it was reduced to \$5 million; it had requested for a vehicle at \$14 million and, internally, it was reduced to \$6.9 million; there was \$28 million for office equipment, *et cetera* and that was requested here for \$8 million. I believe that when all of sums are added the figure that you get is the difference.

Programme: 081 – Audit Office – \$20,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: That concludes our consideration of Agency 8: Audit Office of Guyana. This puts us at 12.15 p.m., which is exactly half of an hour for consideration.

Let me thank the Hon. Minister and the staff of the Audit Office of Guyana for taking us through this Agency. I did not express our appreciation to the staff of the Parliament Office for working with the Minister in taking us through the consideration of Agency 8. Thank you very much, Auditor General and Minister.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, this is a good time to take the suspension for lunch. We should be back here at 1.15 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 12.15 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 1.34 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the House will resolve itself into Committee of Supply.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we seem to have had an extended lunch break. Having had that, I am sure that we are going to be well equipped to move faster.

Agency 09: Public and Police Service Commission

Current Expenditure

Programme: 091 – Public and Police Service Commissions – \$151,505,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Line item 6323 – Constitutional Agencies: There is a lump sum of \$151,505,000. Could the Hon. Minister say how many staff is in the Public Service Commission?

Ms. Teixeira: The staff of the Public Service Commission consists of 60 members. This is for both the Public and Police Service Commissions.

Mr. Mahipaul: Follow-up: Could the Hon. Minister say if any of these staff are contracted employees?

Ms. Teixeira: There are two contracted employees who are drivers.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask, what are the ages of these two contracted employees?

Ms. Teixeira: The two contracted employees are 60 years and above, Sir.

Mr. Mahipaul: Could the Hon. Minister say if the Public and Police Service Commission would endeavour to employ younger drivers on the Fixed/Pensionable Establishment, when the contracts of the two senior staff come to an end or will they renew those very contracts?

Ms. Teixeira: I believe that is not a question we can answer. That is for the Public and Police Service Commissions to determine. Apparently, those Commissions are chaired by

Mr. Somersall and Mr. Slowe who made the decision to hire and to put them on contract.

Mr. Mahipaul: Of the 60 staff members, are there persons who are acting in other positions? Are there persons who are receiving a duty allowance for the performance of additional functions in the Public and Police Service Commissions?

Ms. Teixeira: There is one person who is an Accountant and receives an acting allowance. All of the registry and personnel staff are receiving duty allowances.

Mr. Mahipaul: Could the Hon. Minister say, are the Public and Police Service Commissions in the process of filling those vacancies? If so, how far are the Commissions in this process?

Ms. Teixeira: Sir, could you specify, what vacancies you are speaking of?

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, the vacancies that exists. The Hon. Minister said that there is one officer who is acting in a position and there are officers who are receiving a duty allowance, which means that they are performing additional duties. To my estimation that would mean that there are existing vacancies. I am guided, Sir.

Ms. Teixeira: There seems to be only one person who is acting, Sir. Duty allowance is for who officers work are already appointed and receives additional financial support to do with additional responsibilities or longer hours, *et cetera*. In other words, beyond the call of duty.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, my question is directed to the officer who is acting.

Ms. Teixeira: I am advised that it is a work in progress.

Mr. Mahipaul: Could the Hon. Minister say how far the process has gone thus far?

Ms. Teixeira: No. I cannot answer that, Sir.

Mr. Mahipaul: When the Commission sets up a disciplinary tribunal and the public servants are given a duty to carry out the additional function, are they compensated for it? Are they given an honorarium to perform the duties of being members on the disciplinary tribunal?

Ms. Teixeira: I believe those questions are questions you should direct to me as a Minister, outside of the budget process.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, would you like to answer that? This is a lump sum and, because it is a lump sum, I think, it allows some amount of latitude to querying the policies for which the lump sum is assigned.

Ms. Teixeira: There are no allowances that are paid for the disciplinary tribunal, Sir.

1.42 p.m.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, is the Hon. Minister confirming that public servants are given additional responsibilities especially, in the case of serving on disciplinary tribunals without any compensation? I am trying to ascertain if this is accurate.

Ms. Teixeira: I repeat, duty allowance is for work beyond the call of duty. The tribunal members do not receive allowances, honorariums, *et cetera*.

Programme: 091 – Public and Police Service Commission – \$151,505,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 091 – Public and Police Service Commission – \$4,000,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, this project entails the provision for furniture and equipment. May I ask for a breakdown of the furniture and equipment that would be purchased?

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Mr. Mahipaul. It would be a photocopier at a cost of \$1.2 million for the Personnel Department, seven computers to replace unserviceable computers in the Personnel Department, a scanner at a cost of \$800,000 to be used in the Information Technology (IT) Department, one air conditioner unit at a cost of \$120,000, two executive chairs at a cost of \$106,000, an L-shaped executive desk at a cost of \$75,000 for the Public Procurement Officer (PPO), one desk at a cost of \$58,000 for the IT Department, filing cabinets to be used in the Registry Department at a cost of \$156,000, two printers to replace unserviceable printers for the Accounts and Personnel Departments, visitor chairs and a water dispenser to be used by visitors, a coffee table to be used in the Secretaries Department, two refrigerators at a cost of a \$116, 000 to replace unserviceable refrigerators within the Personnel and IT Departments, two paper shredders to be used in the Principal Personnel Officers (PPO) Department, a microwave to be used in the lunch room for the staff, one book shelf for

the use of the Legal Officer and a stand fan for the use within the Accounts Department. This is totalling \$4 million.

Programme: 091 – Public and Police Service Commission – \$4,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister and staff for taking us through that agency.

Agency 10: Teaching Service Commission

Current Expenditure

Programme: 101 – Teaching Service Commission – \$113,822,000

Mr. Patterson: Under this programme head there is provision for the rental and maintenance of buildings and there has been an increase from \$7.9 million from the Revised 2020 sum to \$14 million in *Budget 2021*. Could the Hon. Minister provide some additional details on this increase?

Ms. Teixeira: There is no money allocated for the rental of buildings to which the Hon. Member referred to. The maintenance of buildings is line item 6242 and I believe it is \$7,410,000 that has been put in the budget. It is for repairs to the entire roof and ceiling of the building as well as the eastern external walls of the building which is in a deplorable state. As the Hon. Member would know the building is very old. Mr. Patterson, seeing that we are dealing with heads, \$6 million is allocated for janitorial services.

Mr. Mahipaul: I see there is maintenance of other infrastructure. I would like to know, what are the other infrastructures that are going to be maintained?

Ms. Teixeira: Sorry. I did not hear the question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, what does maintenance of other infrastructure entail?

Ms. Teixeira: This caters for repairs to the perimeter fence of the compound and the repainting of the fence. Behind the Smyth Street location there needs to be replacement concrete and, in some cases, replace bricks and repainting and a cost of \$2 million is allocate for this.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, may I ask, what is the staff complement of the Teaching Service Commission?

Ms. Teixeira: The staff complement is 38 and then there is the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and the three members making up the rest of persons that are catered for in the Budget.

Mr. Mahipaul: Could the Hon. Minister say, of the 38 staff, how many are contracted employees?

Ms. Teixeira: There is one staff who is a contracted employee.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, may I ask the age of the staff member.

Ms. Teixeira: I am advised that the officer is 60 years old.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, may I ask of the 38 staff are there any acting in positions?

Ms. Teixeira: I am advised that five staff are acting.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, may I ask, has the Teaching Service Commission begun the process to fill those five vacancies?

Ms. Teixeira: It is a work in progress. As the Hon. Member is aware the life of Teaching Service Commission expired on 21st February, 2021, but the work is in-progress by the staff.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, may I ask what is the salary and other emoluments or benefits for the Commissioners of the Teaching Service Commission?

Ms. Teixeira: The Chairman receives a salary of \$393,605 and no allowance; the Deputy Chairman receives a salary of \$200,566; and the three members each receive salaries of \$106,516. There are no allowances given to the Commissioners on the Teaching Service Commission.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, is there a difference in salary between a Commissioner that is serving as a full-time and a part-time Commissioner?

Ms. Teixeira: There are no full-time members of the Commission.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, could the Hon. Minister say how many vehicles are assigned or attached to the Teaching Service Commission?

Ms. Teixeira: The Commission has three working vehicles.

Programme: 101 – Teaching Service Commission – \$113,822,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 101 – Teaching Service Commission – \$4,000,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Project code 2500800 – Teaching Service Commission: Sir, would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to give a breakdown for this project code?

Ms. Teixeira: Sir, as you may be aware, the Teaching Service Commission has introduced online applications. The main items under the \$4 million are to support this activity. We have pronoscan at a cost of \$326,000; a scanner at a cost of \$326,000; a server at \$1,628,000; and this is the equipment to allow for a linkage to the 20 computers, where the online applications would be received. There is also an Attached Storage Network (ASN) at a cost of \$1,085,000. The four items that I just read are the keys ones and the ones absorbing the largest amount of money under the \$4 million. There are smaller items such as four printers at a cost of \$75,000 for the Integrated Financial Management and Accounting System (IFMAS) computers, where there is not any for the Chairman, Secretary Office and Personnel Department. There are four executive chairs to be used in the Registry Department, one for the Confidential Secretary and a desk which is called the IFMAS desk at a cost of \$135,000, because it is defective, shaky and it is falling.

1.57 p.m.

It is a modest budget by the Teaching Service Commission. I want to use the opportunity to applaud the Commission for moving in the direction of online application which will facilitate people, especially, in the rural and hinterland areas where they have access to Wireless Fidelity (Wi-Fi).

Programme: 101 – Teaching Service Commission – \$4,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Let me thank the Hon. Minister and her team for taking us through that head.

Hon. Members, we will now turn to the next Agency.

Agency 11: Guyana Elections Commission

Current Expenditure

Programme: 111 – Elections Commission – \$4,041,996,000

Mr. Patterson: Under the same programme, on page 812: Could the Hon. Minister, generally, disaggregate what is

catered for under this budget sum of approximately \$4 billion in 2021?

Ms. Teixeira: Hon. Member Mr. Patterson, that is a rather unusual question. In appendix T, on page 812 has the breakdown of how one would reach to \$4,041,996,000 under the current budget and \$120 million. In appendix T, there are the heads listed but you may not have the details. There is list of the wages and salaries, other charges, *et cetera*. Do you want me to read this charge to you, Sir? [**Mr. Patterson:** No, Hon. Minister.] That is what I thought; you would not want me to read this because it is printed in the Estimates.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, let me be more direct. Where in this Budget, under recurrent charges, is the cost for the Local Government Elections?

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Sir. There are several heads under which the Local Government Elections is reflected. Could you just give me a minute because it is rather long? If you go to other charges, Mr. Patterson...

Mr. Chairman: You have to use the word 'Honourable' (Hon.) or 'Comrade' (Cde.).

Ms. Teixeira: That is all right. He is Hon. Both are wrongly placed. We have several heads under Other Recurrent Charges. Just give me a minute, please. Under line item 6224, Print and Non-Print Materials, there is \$237,760,000. This is for printing materials for the Local Government Elections.

Then, under line item 6231, Fuel and Lubricants, there is \$32,861,000 for the fleet of vehicles; all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), *et cetera*. The new vehicles that it has acquired to have deal with the Local Government Elections. So, that is to cover the fuel and lubricants. I am advised by the Elections Commission (GECOM) that, in the Local Government Elections, there is smaller number of polling stations – 1,700 versus 2,339 – so, some of the fuel costs, *et cetera* are less.

Hon. Member, in terms of line item 6241, rental of buildings, \$81,678,000 is to provide for a place for staff, voters and the public to conduct these transactions, which would include a number of activities relating to elections. I guess it is for registration, *et cetera*. This also includes 17 buildings and polling stations which would be rented because those would be private buildings. [**An Hon. Member:** *[Inaudible]*] I am getting there, take it easy.

Then, under line item 6261, Local Travel and Subsistence, the sum is \$75,609,000. This is for meals and subsistence for permanent and temporary poll staff during the conduct of the

polls. Similarly, that was in 2020 for the Local Government Elections. The number will be for the staffing at the 1,700 polling stations.

It has here postage telex and cablegrams. This is related to the Local Government Elections, and the sum is \$9,099,000. In regard to the regular distribution of identification cards (IDs) as against publishing names and sending registered mails as obtained in 2020, the Commission is trying to deal with the level of IDs still not collected. That is seen as a preparation for elections.

Under line item 6265, Other Transport, Travel and Postage, there are the rental of boats, cars, aeroplanes for charters and to conduct elections. These are for the Deputy Regional Officers (DROs) and the Regional Officers (ROs) to do with their transportation cost in regard to the Local Government Elections.

We are not finished yet, I believe. Under line item 6271, Telephone & Internet Charges the sum is \$26,445,000. The increase that had been given has to do with purchasing minutes for each of the Presiding Officers and field staff. There is an allocation of approximately \$3,000 Presiding Officers and field staff. The electricity charges do not have anything directly to do with it. It has not increased security, *et cetera*, but I understand that if it feels that there is a threat, it will do so.

Some of the figures that they have for cleaning extermination may be used, too, for the registration officers in preparation for a Local Government Election and additional materials to protect the staff the persons working there.

Under line item 6284, Others, they have \$285,782,000. The sum of \$100 million of the said amount is set aside for voters' education. The balance would be for things such as the rental of tents, rental of containers, charters and that sort of thing. I think that is about it.

Mr. Patterson: Before I allow other Hon. Members to ask their questions that I know they want to ask; I want to ask the Hon. Minister the same question that was asked before.

Ms. Teixeira: Can I just interrupt. I missed something. I do not want to be accused of not adequately answering your question. If you would allow me, under line item 6293, Refreshment and Meals, there is a sum of \$89,121,000. Again, this is for Election Day staff meals for the Local Government Elections staff at 1,700 polling stations. It was

averaged to be five members of staff per station. This would be for meals for the Local Government Elections.

Also, I am forgetting, again, you have \$557,589,000 for stipends for the Assistant Chief Scrutineers; the Deputy Scrutineers, who have not had an increase; and the polling day staff. That again goes back to the 1,700 times five.

Under line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships), there is \$135,744,000 for Election Day staff training. They anticipate the training of 8,500 persons at approximately \$18 million for the training of the staff. Depending on some policy decisions that are made by the Commission, they may require additional training, which I cannot answer because the Commission has not made a decision yet.

Now, I have finally reached the end of that issue the Local Government Elections. I am sorry about that before.

Mr. Patterson: Could I ask the Hon. Member before I cede to someone else, to list the salaries and benefits of the Chairman and the Commissioners of GECOM?

Ms. Teixeira: I know that the total for the Chairman and Commissioners sums to \$59,202,000. If you want the breakdown, you will have to give us a minute. [**Mr. Mahipaul:** *[Inaudible]*] Cool it, Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul; just cool down; you know, boil down.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I think, I have the duty to tell him to cool down. I have the honour to tell you to answer the question.

Ms. Teixeira: I apologise. The Chairman's monthly salary is \$2,054,217, which makes an annual salary of \$24,650,604. Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul, I will read the wages and then I will go to benefits and allowances which are separate. The six Commissioners all receive the same salary – \$478,485. The six Commissioners are: Mr. Gunraj, Mr. Trotman, Mr. Alexander, Mr. Corbin, Ms. Shadick and Mr. Narine. The total cost for 2021 would be \$59,101,524.

2.12 p.m.

The duty allowance for the Chairman is the National Insurance Scheme (NIS) – \$46,224,000, the duty allowance... What I am doing now is to give you the per annum rate for the allowance, instead of the monthly rate. I gave you the monthly salaries and now I am going to give you the annual contribution. The employer's contribution is \$46,224.

Mr. Patterson: Is that per annum?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes.

The duty allowance is \$4,368,000; the telephone allowance is \$648,000; the electricity allowance is \$960,000; the security allowance is \$7.2 million; and the fuel allowance is \$240,000 – totalling \$13,462,224.

The other Commissioners get National Insurance Scheme (NIS) contributions, and these may be different based on the ages, Hon. Member Mr. Patterson. Those that are over age 60, are only paying \$46,224, which is the same as the chairperson. The two younger members of the Commission pay NIS of \$258,854.

The duty allowance is the same for all the Commissioners except the Chairman – \$1,008,000. The telephone allowance is the same – \$360,000.

Mr. Patterson: Is that for each Commissioner?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes. It is for each Commissioner. They receive no electricity or travel allowance. They each get \$7.2 million for the security allowance. Mr. Patterson, the \$7.2 million for security, for the Commissioners, could be in terms of the Elections Commission (GECOM) providing the security or the Commissioners choosing their security and GECOM pays, but it is within that cap – the cap of that amount. So, each of the Commissioner would get, except for Mr. Gunraj because his NIS deduction is larger. [**Mr. Patterson:** Did you say two?]

Yes. He pays for the employee deduction, so his is different in terms of the total. The two younger members of the Commission receive \$9,666,854 – Mr. Sase Gunraj and Mr. Manoj Narayan. The older members that are over age 65 receive \$8,854,224. So, those two – Mr. Gunraj and Mr. Narayan receive \$9,666,854 and all the others – the four – are over age 65. The total for allowances and benefits is \$75 million and that is for the Chairman and the Commissioner.

Mr. Shuman: Could the Hon. Minister say to this Committee how much of that allocated sum is being paid to the Chief Elections Officer (CEO), Deputy Chief Elections Officer (DCEO) and the returning officers and how much is being used for security for the CEO?

Ms. Teixeira: Hon. Member, the question was to do with security, is that correct? Is it the security allowance or all the allowances?

Mr. Shuman: Mr. Chairman, I could not hear the Hon. Minister's query, but I will say, again, for the consumption of this Committee, that I am kindly requesting of the Minister to say to this Committee: how much of that allocated sum is being paid to the CEO, the DCEO and the returning officers. How much of that sum is being used for security for the CEO?

Ms. Teixeira: The salary of the CEO from January to March this year is \$3,500,659. The salary as of March to December, 2020, was \$14,702,765. The travelling allowance from January to March is \$120,000. The entertainment allowance is \$360,000. The gratuity is \$787,648; vacation allowance is \$1,458,608; and uniform allowance is \$120,000. The total for January to March, 2021, is \$25,052,026. I will give you the security allowance in a minute or two. Those are to do with his allowances.

The security for the CEO, which GECOM pays, is approximately \$6 million per annum. The question you asked about the DCEO, the salary is... We are dealing with the 2021 Budget. [Interruption]

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: We have been going good, so far. If Hon. Members want to engage in a shouting match, I will ask you to leave the Dome. Hon. Opposition Chief Whip, you have the floor.

Mr. Jones: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. [Interruption]

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Jones: Could the Hon. Minister please indicate, of this sum, how much has been allocated for House-to-House Registration for the compilation of the new voters' list?

Secondly, the Hon. Minister was kind enough to extract the moneys that are there in those lines for the hosting of Local Government Elections, but could you provide us with a total sum based on what you had just extracted? Thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: I have not finished answering Mr. Shuman's question because of the din in the place. So I will not forget...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I would allow you to complete your answers. Because the Hon. Member, Mr. Shuman, is on my blind side, I did not see him standing. Could you proceed with completing the answer for him and then answering the question for the Opposition Chief Whip?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes. I will. The Hon. Member, Mr. Shuman, asked about the salaries for the CEO and the DCEO. I got as far as the CEO, but I did not get further. So, I would like to complete the answer. He also asked about the returning officers, *et cetera*. For the DCEO – this is catered in the 2021 Budget – travel allowance of \$240,000; entertainment allowance and rent of \$1.6... [Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson, and the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary, if you want to continue with the cross the floor shouting match, we could put you across the road, outside of the... Hon. Ms. Ferguson, you did not have the floor. Hon. Minister, please continue.

Ms. Teixeira: I am asking you to protect me. To go back to Mr. Shuman's question, the Deputy Chief Elections Officer's annual salary is \$6,056,512. The Government pays the NIS of \$258,854; travel allowance and overtime – \$204,000; entertainment, *et cetera* – \$1,608,000; acting allowance – \$483,888; gratuity – \$1,362,715; vacation allowance – \$865,216; and uniform allowance – \$120,000. The total salary per annum or this year is budgeted for \$16,523,601.

The position of Assistant Chief Elections Officer (ACEO) is vacant and this is budgeted for \$12,164,121 plus allowances – medical, *et cetera* for these persons and that will come up to \$33,465,997.

To continue Mr. Shuman's question, the returning officers for the Local Government Elections is approximately \$140,000, per returning officer, for the period they worked – approximately, two months. That total would be \$19.6 million.

The returning officers for the municipalities, as distinct from the Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs), is \$250,000 and the total would be \$5 million. This would be for 10 persons. The one I read earlier would be for 70 persons.

Clerks, to the returning officers, would get \$100,000 and that is \$16.6 million. That is for 83 persons. Clerical Assistance to the returning officers – another 83 persons – would get \$85,000 and the total would be \$7,055,000. I think answers your question.

For Mr. Jones, the Hon. Member, I do not mean any disrespect. I am just trying to keep on top of everything and not being disrespectful to my Colleague, Mr. Jones. The total that I read out would answer Mr. Jones question. The total comes up to \$1.1 billion for the Local Government Elections.

Mr. Jones: The second question is, how much of this sum has been set aside for House-to-House Registration to compile the new voters' list?

Ms. Teixeira: There is nothing in the Budget that has been prepared. There is nothing in GECOM's *Budget 2021* – no provision has been made for House-to-House Registration. I believe that would be a decision of the Commission. And if the Commission makes that decision, and additional funds are required and we know what happens. The Commission comes back for a supplementary from this House and it would be granted.

Mr. Mahipaul: The Hon. Minister of Local Government and Regional Development was kind enough to indicate, in his Budget speech, that Local Government Elections is assured unto this nation, this year. In keeping with that, I am asking a question pertaining to when will GECOM begin the process of advertising, educating and training the staff for the Local Government Elections? When will the population be made aware – the awareness for Local Government Elections? What is the procedure that would lead towards voting for Local Government Elections, so that we will not have elections like what happened on 2nd March, 2020?

Ms. Teixeira: I am advised that, in the Budget, the provisions that have been made for training are in their projections. They are looking at the third quarter of the year, depending on the decision of the Commission. They cannot act on their own without the decision of the Commissioners.

Mr. Jones: Cde. Minister, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) team had strongly recommended an investigation into the missing documents from those boxes. Is any of the sum allocated here, caters for such an investigation, based on the CARICOM team's recommendation?

2.27 p.m.

Ms. Teixeira: I am advised that GECOM has placed no money in its budget for any investigation, whatsoever.

Ms. Fernandes: Mr. Chairman, the Programme Performance Statements for Programme:111 Elections Commission, under Indicators, states:

“2. Publication of voters list for each area”

This is something that is stated here that Government is using as an indicator to see that the money that they have put aside does what it is intended to do.

I know that the Hon. Minister just stood and said that if the GECOM wants to look after a new list, it can do supplemental. But it is stated here, under the Indicators:

“2. Publication of voters list for each area”

So, again, I ask, what proportion of this allocated sum is being allocated to achieve this objective that has been set out within this system of a new list?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I think that the Hon. Member is mixing up a number of things. First of all, the voters' list is published by GECOM and that would be done after a process of either registration, claims and objections. That has nothing to do with a new House-to-House Registration or a new list. The money that has been put in the Budget is for the publication of the voters' list. It is in the Indicators.

Your side comment, that the Government wrote this, each agency's information that is in here, is prepared and drafted by the agency and it gets published. So, nobody is sitting and drafting for GECOM; GECOM has enough staff to be able to do it themselves.

The provision has been made for Local Government Elections. I have already advised this Committee of the total that the member, who is here from the GECOM, gave me and it is \$1.1 billion, specifically, put aside for the Local Government Elections.

The issue of training, which was specifically asked, is also catered for in the Budget. The issue of the voters' list, that will come when a decision is made. When the elections are called, the voters' list will come out and it will go through a process of claims and objections and the final publication of the final voters' list. That is what GECOM has put moneys in the budget for. Any other issues will be determined by the Commission. If there are consequences to do with finances and it does not have the money, it will then end up back here, in this House, where we the Members of Parliament (MPs) would either have to approve or not. That is how it works.

Ms. Fernandes: If I may, just a follow-up question, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister.

Hon. Members, we started this head at 1.59 p.m. We are now two minutes over. I will give another two minutes because we have had some interruptions.

Hon. Member Ms. Fernandes, you have the floor.

Ms. Fernandes: Just for clarity, to my understanding, what the Hon. Minister is saying is that the publication of the voters' list for each area, as is stated in here, just caters for the list being published as it is. There is no other indication that GECOM requires any money, at this time, so this objective is, specifically, for the list to be printed as it is. If the Hon. Member may...

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Hon. Member. On Page 107, Indicators, states:

“1. Elections are conducted”

The first indicator is “Elections are conducted”. So, what is ambiguous then, about coming to the number two which is:

“Publication of voters list for each area”

It is affirmed in the document that elections are conducted. So, why are you making it seem as if there is ambiguity? You cannot have elections unless there is list; it is impossible. The Indicators are very clear. The first one is, “Elections are conducted”, which is a commitment by GECOM and that has been reaffirmed from the President, down, that the elections will be held.

The publication of the voters' list for each area has to be done for the claims and objections period to be held and then the final voters' list has to be done so that you have a voters' list.

The issue of what kind of list, is a different issue and that is not an issue for the Budget right now. What we are dealing with is the process of the Local Government Elections.

The third issue under the Indicators is that “Information is disseminated to the public” and that is also catered for in the voters' education. When one looks at the GECOM's budget, there is a commitment and provision advance for the Local Government Elections.

One of the points to do with Local Government Elections, and I pointed it out to Mr. Patterson, is that there are 1,700 polling stations verses 2,339 polling stations and that there are 70 Local Authority Areas (LAA) and 10 municipalities, unlike when we do general elections, and you have the entire Region 4. You may just have the NDCs of Region 4, based on their boundaries and, also, Georgetown. Or in the other areas like Region 8, I think that there is one municipality, and it is the same thing with Lethem. So, it is a little bit different than doing the whole country. It is easier and less expensive in terms of the number of stations. But it is more complicated in terms of voters' education because people do not always

understand the boundaries of each of the local authorities whether NDC or municipality.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, may I have ...

Mr. Chairman: I will give the Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson, an opportunity to ask a question and then I will have to put the Current and Capital Expenditures.

Hon. Member Mr. Patterson, you have the floor.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, just a clarification. When we were in the Business Sub-committee of the Committee of Supply, you said that if we finish early, with the extra time, we could go on. And I know that we particularly dispensed of the two earlier agencies in what the people would say is, *labba time*. Was that not our agreement in the Business Sub-committee?

Mr. Chairman: That is...

Mr. Patterson: So, we are supposed to...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I am explaining to you that is the understanding. The problem I have is that we are asked to come back at 1.15p.m. We waited until 1.35p.m. to recommence the session. And that is why, at the beginning, I acknowledged that we all had a hearty lunch, and we would be energised to work faster. So, Hon. Member, yes, and the particular head started at 1.59 p.m., but go ahead, I will allow the questions because we would only have a few minutes.

Mr. Patterson: No. Mr. Chairman, I am just asking for us to establish something because on the second day, in the Business Sub-committee, we said that we would be given extra time.

The Teaching Service Commission, the Public Service Commission and GECOM were half of an hour each – that is an hour and a half. Sir, if you do the Mathematics, even if we came back late, we still have another half an hour...
[*Interruption*]

[*Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.*]

Mr. Patterson: ... 2.30 p.m. and one and a half hours is 3.00 p.m. I am just trying to establish something.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, just let me check my notes and then I will tell you. You are absolutely correct with respect to the principle of one and a half hour for three. Let me just check, we started at 1.35 p.m., so we should be able

to conclude in one and a half hour and that is 3.05 p.m. So, you actually now have almost 30 minutes to go.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much, for that Mr. Chairman, for the extra 30 minutes.

Mr. Chairman, through you, Mdm. Teixeira, in your summation for the Local Government Elections, I did not hear you mention the printing of ballot papers and moneys set aside for that. Am I assuming that is an omission, or is that going to be done locally or overseas?

Ms. Teixeira: When I gave the figure print and non-print materials, that included the ballot papers. So, the \$237,760,000, which I think was the first figure I gave you, that included ballot papers. That is for print and no-print materials for that total.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Mr. Chairman, a lot was said over the last 15 minutes on the Elections Commission, but I would just like some clarity as to whether the secretariat put together this Budget without first getting advice from the Commission. Was there a separation when this Budget was being prepared?

Ms. Teixeira: I am advised that the technical persons developed the Budget, and it was taken to the Commission, at a meeting where it was approved and adopted.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Continuing in that same line, the Hon. Minister just stated that the secretariat prepared the Budget, and it was confirmed at a meeting of the Commissioners. So, am I to then believe that the Commissioners approved a Budget without putting in line, recognition that a new voters' list is necessary at this stage?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I cannot, in my head, see into the heads of the members of the Commission. All I can say is what I am advised and that is, the Commission received the Budget, they had a presentation and they approved and adopted the Budget. I cannot anticipate what were in their brains at the time when they made the decision.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: As far as I am aware, the Commission is made up of representatives from the various political parties and there is also the Chairman. I am wondering whether or not, the Commission, as it is going forward into new elections, noting what took place last year and the fact that CARICOM actually stated that we need a whole new voters' list, this was taken into consideration when they were reviewing what the secretariat would have brought to them as the budget for this year?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I repeat that is not an issue that I can answer here. That is for the for the Chairman and Commission. And therefore, if the Opposition has a concern, they should go to the Chairman and the Commission. That is not an issue that can be answered in this Committee under the Budget.

Mr. Chairman, the Opposition has three Commissioners who represent their interest. Certainly, I believe, knowing the three individuals, as I do, they are highly competent to raise their concerns.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: In light of the fact that the Commissioners at GECOM, as I indicated before, comes from various political parties, I would like to ask the Minister whether or not the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C), at this current time, recognises the CARICOM report which states that the new voters' list is necessary before an election?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Sarabo-Halley, I am just asking for a clarification, is it the PPP/C or the PPP/C Government?

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: It is the PPP/C Government.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. Hon. Minister, you have the floor.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, the Guyana Government because we represent all Guyanese and not just the PPP/C.

2.42 p.m.

There are many recommendations that came out of the elections, as I am sure you know, from the Commonwealth report, the observer of the Organization of American States (OAS) Mission, the CARICOM, and from the Carter Center; all of us need to look at those reports because there are recommendations in all of them and not all the recommendations coincide – some contradict. The Hon. Member is asking me to commit to one recommendation, when there are about 30 recommendations made in all the international reports on those elections. I am not going to do it, Madam. That is an issue for us as a people to look at and to also raise with GECOM. There are other issues that we have to raise with GECOM, which are of concerns to us, which is to prevent, in the future, under any attempt, to hijack an election.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: We could all agree that we should always prevent any rigging or anything of any elections. I do not think that we have an issue where that is concerned. I

think, the issue that is before us is a recognition that there were obviously some issues in the last elections. If one looks at all the reports that came out, it was stated that there was an issue with the voters' list. If the secretariat is preparing for a new Local Government Elections, or any elections at this stage, one of the foundations has to be who is going to vote at that election. With that in mind, I am asking whether or not the Government is ready and willing to put all-hands-on-deck to ensure that here is a new voters' list before we go to elections?

Ms. Teixeira: One of the recommendations from one of the reports states that criminal changes should be brought against persons responsible for hijacking the elections. Would the Hon. Member support us on that? *[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman: I have an Hon. Member on the floor, and I want to hear her. Hon. Member Ms. Sarabo Halley, you have the floor.

[Interruption]

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Thank you Mr. Chairman. I think this is something that needs to be understood and recognised by all of us here. We are here in this House because we were elected – whether we say fairly or unfairly, we were all elected, and we are here in this House. The people of this nation expect certain things when it come to our elections and if it is that we are going to agree to go to new elections, there are certain foundation that has to be put in place. The Minister has not yet said that her Government would agree to a new voters' list before we get to Local Government Elections. Could she commit to that?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I just wanted to get some clarification from the Hon. Member, Ms. Sarabo-Halley, or if you could provide it. I think that the decision with respect to certain policies to be implemented by GECOM is for the Commissioners and not for any one side.

Ms. Teixeira: Sir, that is what I said a half an hour ago.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Hon. Minister, do you want to respond to what Ms. Sarabo-Halley just observed?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I am not GECOM. Therefore, I cannot speak on behalf of GECOM, on a policy matter. I am here as the conduit to deal with the budgetary request of the Elections Commission. That is what I am dealing with. This

is not an issue. I am here as the messenger – the conduit – to allow this discussion.

The issue of the list and everything else, that is a discussion for this Parliament to have in the appropriate form and in the appropriate way – that would be when the Government and the Opposition are discussing it. At this point, I am here to convey and to answer questions on the budget of GECOM.

I said, a half of an hour ago, that the issue of a new voters' list, which was asked of me a half of an hour ago, is an issue that the Commission, the Chairman and the six Commissioners would have to make a decision on. If they so desire more money, they will come to this House for a supplementary. I am finished with that.

Asking me my opinion, at this point, is irrelevant because that is not what I am here for right now.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister. Hon. Member Mr. Patterson, you have the floor. Sorry Hon. Chief Whip, I will come back to you.

Mr. Patterson: Through you, Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister say, in the budget of \$237 million for print and non-print materials, that is there, how many ballots or voters is the Hon. Minister catering for, knowing that our last voters' list was almost 690,000. Every year, we put on another 25,000 and our population remains at 750,000. How many ballots is the Commission catering to print for Local Government Elections *vis-à-vis* our population and our voters' list?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I just want to get clarity. Initially, you said the Hon. Minister is catering for and now you are saying the Commission *[inaudible]*. Hon. Minister, please go ahead.

Ms. Teixeira: I am advised that GECOM budgeted under print and non-print \$237,760,000 for the publishing of 500,000 ballots as the local government authorities make up approximately over 80% of the voting population.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister. First, I recognise the Hon. Member and Chief Whip of the Opposition, Mr. Jones, and then the Hon. Deputy Speaker.

Also, in the last 36 hours we had a good use of parliamentary language. I am hearing all sorts of unparliamentary words now creeping back into the Committee. Hon. Member Mr. Jones, you have the floor.

Mr. Jones: Thank you very much, Cde. Chairman. Follow-up to my Colleague, Mr. David Patterson's question. The answer given by the Hon. Minister is that the Guyana Elections Commission is preparing to print some 500,000 ballots. The question is, how did the Guyana Elections Commission arrive at this figure without a voters' list?

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Hon. Member Jones. I am advised that the figure of 500,000 was based on the 2018 Local Government Elections which was approximately the same. And as I remember, there were no questions to do with lists or results in the Local Government Elections.

Mr. Shuman: In consideration of what transpired last year, could the Hon. Minister clarify, at this point, if there is any provision in the Budget to pay the Chief Elections Officer (CEO) to take an early exist so that we could have clean elections in 2021? *[Interruption]*

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I do not think it is the prerogative of any one group to ask questions; every Member is entitled.

Ms. Teixeira: Hon. Member, as far as I understand, the budgetary provision has been made for Chief Elections Officer. If it is not for the present, it still has money to pay for a new Chief Elections Officer. So, from a budgetary point of view, the occupant of the post is not at the post at this point, but there is provision if the decision is to be taken, as we are speaking, that GECOM could fill the position as there are funds available to hire a new Chief Elections Officer.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I noticed that there is a photographer in here and obviously you cannot miss him because he has the flash on. It is the first time...

Mr. Chairman: The observation is that there is a photographer in here.

Mr. Patterson: Yes. You have said to all the other media personnel that photographs cannot be taken ...

Mr. Chairman: No. Hon. Member, we said that we are allowing two cameras in from the press.

Mr. Patterson: No problem. I am very photogenic. I do not mind, so that is not a problem.

Mr. Chairman: I think so am I.

Mr. Patterson: Through you, Mr. Chairman, the Minister stated that for the Local Government Elections that they are catering for 500 voters. She also stated that Local Government Elections make up 80% of our voters. At our last general elections, only about 450 persons voted. I would like to ask the Hon. Minister, since you are catering for 500, does that not indicate – while our last general elections which was 100% of our voters and only 450 voted –that you are over catering and bloating numbers on the list?

Ms. Teixeira: They have to cater for the preliminary voters' list publishing and the voters' list publishing. They have to make sure that every station has copies and that the scrutineers have copies in the polling stations. That is what they are catering for in print and non-print.

The ballot papers, you are getting excited about 500,000, but you forget that many times there are spoiled ballots. You cannot have an exact number of ballots per voter. Many times, there are spoiled ballots. In addition, as I said, I am advised, and I have underlined the word 'advised' that it is GECOM that took the decision or has made the budgetary projections of 500,000 ballot papers.

Now, I want to also remind you that in the Local Government Elections there are constituency candidates and proportional representation (PR) candidates. Each one is different in every Neighbourhood Democratic Council and every Municipality. So, I am just reminding you of that.

Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member made a comment about me doing these ballot papers or that I have something to do with the number of the ballot papers. I am advised, and I repeat, by GECOM that GECOM's extrapolation and calculations of the publication of ballot papers has been done by their technical people. They are saying 500,000 based on the 2018 Local Government Elections.

Mr. Patterson: I have a follow-up, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: I had recognised Ms. Sarabo-Halley, but Ms. Sarabo-Halley has declined. Hon. Member Mr. Patterson, please proceed.

Mr. Patterson: Follow-up: Could the Hon. Member ask the officials from GECOM...? Sir, I am watching your time; we have 10 minutes.

Mr. Chairman: That is all right.

Mr. Patterson: Could the Hon. Member enquire of GECOM? She said that the 500,000 ballots that they are

printing is based on the 2018 Local Government Elections. Could the Hon. Member inform this Committee of how many persons voted in the 2018 elections because she said that is the basis of calculating the 500,000?

Ms. Teixeira: I do not have that information, of the number of voters who voted in the 2018 elections. [**An Hon. Member:** *[Inaudible]*] I am not here to answer anybody. I am the one on the floor answering. I have a technical person here next to me, so do not tell me who has to run me.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I am asking for your protection in this place. The question asked, was to ask somebody, who is outside of this place, where we are asking questions, is unacceptable.

2.57 p.m.

I choose, as the person asked to conduct this, who I can have as my advisors. The man who is in charge is this gentleman. Who in this House is telling me who I must bring next to me? I am not going to do it.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister. You are perfectly in order. Hon. Member Mr. Patterson, you have the floor.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I am repeating my question. About 10 or 15 minutes ago, the Hon. Minister said that the Elections Commission (GECOM) is using the 2018 Local Government Elections, to which, if I can paraphrase correctly, the Hon. Member said that there was no issue, whatsoever, about the number of voters and those things in 2018. I am asking, if you are catering for 500,000, how many persons voted in the 2018 Elections?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I cannot answer a question that was not in my head to come to this meeting to talk about. I am talking about budget items. You have allowed the meeting to go other places. Unfortunately, Mr. Chairman, I am not prepared.

Secondly, the 500,000 ballots which have excited these Members so much, please remember that the number of ballots have to match the numbers on the voters' list. Whether the people turn up or not, the list has to reflect that. If you want to start discussing politics on this issue, let us talk.

Mr. Chairman: Do not let us start discussing politics, Hon. Minister.

Ms. Teixeira: No, Mr. Chairman. Let us talk because the voters' list...

Mr. Chairman: Let us talk policies.

Ms. Teixeira: I beg your pardon?

Mr. Chairman: Let us talk policies and leave the politics out.

Ms. Teixeira: This is what they say they are doing, but when I answer, it is politics. When they ask me, it is policy, but when I answer is it politics.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Hon. Mr. Patterson, please, the Hon. Minister did not come here with all the statistics from previous elections, and we are not sure whether her advisors have those at their fingertips. What I understood being said was that, based on the participation of the electorate at the 2018 Elections, they estimated that they can do 500,000 ballots for the upcoming Local Government Elections.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I know the Hon. Member and her team did not come prepared. It was less than 250,000 persons who voted.

Mr. Chairman: I would not say that they did not come prepared.

Mr. Patterson: Google... Sir, I am asking ...

Mr. Chairman: They have come prepared to defend the allocations in front of them. Whether they are coming prepared with the past historic records... I can give that to you; I can go online right now and get it. Just as simple as that, I would have ... I know that you sit at the back and you do your googling; you do your *Manzooring*. You do your elections research, and you do formulate excellent questions based on that fact. Let us defend or ask questions based on what is before us and listen keenly to what is being said.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, with all due respect, when I asked the initial question about the number of ballots, that was the position I was given. I am now saying that I am using that as a historical basis. I am now saying that 500,000 will be doubled the number of voters who voted in 2018. I am asking if that is the Commission's position. Is the Commission concerned ...

Mr. Chairman: Your records show that only ...

Mr. Patterson: I am asking through you, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I thought you were making ...

Mr. Patterson: Is the Commission concerned that the best use of money then, if it is financially, that the Commission is printing in 2021 for doubled the number of voters who voted in 2015?

Mr. Chairman: I just want to ask you, could you just cite me the fact which said... Hon. Members...

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, if you let me answer, because when I was trying to answer earlier...

Mr. Chairman: I just want clarity.

Ms. Teixeira: I want to answer Mr. Patterson.

Mr. Chairman: You will get a chance to. Hon. Member Mr. Patterson, I just wanted to ask if it is a fact that you are presenting, that 250,000 people voted in the last Local Government Elections? I was asking because it sounded like a fact that you knew definitively that 250,000 persons, or somewhere in that vicinity, you were saying, voted. Thank you.

Hon. Minister, you have an opportunity now. Please give the Hon. Minister the same respect that Hon. Member Mr. Patterson had in asking that question.

Ms. Teixeira: The 2018 Elections had a voters' list which advised the GECOM with regard to the number of ballot papers. Hon. Member Mr. Patterson talking about the numbers voting is irrelevant, in terms of the preparation of ballot papers. The number of ballot papers has to match the numbers on the list, whether the list is 100,000, 200,000, or 1 million. It must correspond because to underproduce ballot papers would mean that people would be denied the right to vote. That is number one. Let me speak.

The second issue that Mr. Patterson has raised is the issue of the turnout in the 2018 elections. Unfortunately, Mr. Patterson, I cannot help it if the voters did not go out to vote. The point is that they were on the list. When there was a 30-odd percent turnout in Georgetown, a lot of them were your supporters, if you cannot mobilise your people to support, that is not the GECOM's fault. That is not the fault of the ballot paper production. That is the problem of the political parties.

For the voters list of 2018, regardless of whether there was a 30% turnout, a 50% turnout, or a 70% turnout, one has to look at the list. With the first list, as I understand it, there will

be claims and objections; there will be a period for people to check it and the list may go up or the list may go down. The court has already ruled in this country on the issue of taking names off the voters' list. We have had a ruling since earlier in 2020. The GECOM cannot be above the law and do what it likes. It must obey the law. The law states that GECOM cannot remove someone unless their death certificate is produced. Any other person on the list remains. That is what the Chief Justice ruled in this country. We cannot play around with these issues and make them political. The law states the following, that the issue of the number of ballot papers can never be less than whatever the number is on the voters' list. To do that would be treacherous because it would mean that you would be disenfranchising voters.

It is simple. This matter of 25% and that 250,000 people turn out in 2018 is irrelevant. It is irrelevant. The list had more than 250,000 people. We know that the turnout was low, particularly in your areas. That is why you lost the 2018 elections because people were fed up with you.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Patterson, if there is a follow-up, if not, please ...

Mr. Patterson: I just wanted to follow-up on the last statement, whereby the Member said that if GECOM did not print enough, it will disenfranchise people. I also want to ask the Hon. Member, if GECOM prints and they do not exist, does that not allow for fake, dead, and non-existent voters because there will be excess ballots? I would like her to address that.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, it is an opinion. I think there are Standing Orders with respect to opinions. But since it was asked, I will just give an opportunity to respond.

Ms. Teixeira: If the person does not vote, the ballot papers have to be returned. The ballot papers are produced overseas, they are returned here, and they are checked by the Commissioners, *et cetera*. There is a system in the ballot box where the ballots that are not used are packed in the box to segregate them from ... There is a whole issue of reconciliation. I think that the Hon. Member is *blowing smoke up the chimney*.

The first issue was whether there was money for Local Government Elections. Yes, there is. Then there were the concerns that there was no money for the elections. I think that the GECOM and the Government have managed to allay that. There is money in the Budget.

The second issue being raised was: What were the areas provided for and we have answered that. I think that we have answered the questions that are relevant to the budgetary issues to do with the GECOM. The other issues to do with policy issues for the Commission. Other issues that political parties have regarding elections will have to be fought out in the Parliament and in other areas, not at this point.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are now at the time to stop, but we have had several small interruptions. I will allow two other questions. Hon. Deputy Speaker and Hon. Opposition Chief Whip.

Mr. Shuman: Mr. Chairman, once again, I strenuously say this, and I will stress that, in consideration of what transpired in 2020, could the Hon. Minister say if there is allocation in there for support to local observers to ensure that the integrity of the votes to be cast in the upcoming Local Government Elections is preserved.

Ms. Teixeira: I am advised, Hon. Mr. Shuman, that the GECOM has made no provision in the Budget regarding local observers.

Mr. Jones: To the Hon Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance, noting that the voters' list expired in April 2020, subject to correction, and noting the numerous reports and recommendations from bodies that observed the 2020 General and Regional Elections, my question to the Hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance is, are you worried or at all frightened at the fact that the Elections Commission, in the request for its 2021 budget allocation has made no request for the commencement of house-to-house registration for the compilation of the new voters list? Are you worried or concerned as Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Chief Whip, before the Minister answers that, if we make reference to Standing Order 20, Contents of Questions:

“(j) a Question shall not be asked for the purpose of obtaining an expression of opinion,”

So, there is a standing order on that. Hon. Minister. Do you want to make a comment on the comment?

Ms. Teixeira: You are tempting me, Mr. Jones. You should not tempt me. What I am worried about is not about the voters' list, I am worried about the kind of crookery and roguery that went on in the GECOM in the last elections. What I am worried about is that there are laws that need to be

amended, the electoral reform, to ensure that what happened never happens again in this country.

Programme: 111 – Elections Commission – \$4,041,996,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 111 – Elections Commission – \$120,000,000

Programme: 111 – Elections Commission – \$120,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, let me thank the Minister and the staff of the GECOM for taking us through this particular agency. Please allow the Minister to get the staff together for the Supreme Court.

3.12 p.m.

Agency 55: Supreme Court

Current Expenditure

Programme: 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature – \$2,233,937,000

Mr. Chairman: I did not notice the Deputy Speaker, so let me just propose the question again. Hon. Deputy Speaker, you have the floor.

Question proposed.

Mr. Shuman: Hon. Chairman, I noticed there is a lump sum there and no breakdown. Would the Hon. Minister say if there is provision within that lump sum for the change of designation from acting Chief Justice to substantive Chief Justice?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, the acting Chief Justice and the acting Chancellor...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, yes. Go ahead.

Ms. Teixeira: I beg your pardon, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: I was just saying go ahead.

Ms. Teixeira: All right, Mr. Chairman. The acting Chief Justice and acting Chancellor are already paid the difference in the salaries, although they are not confirmed as Chancellor and Chief Justice. The issue regarding the Chancellor and Chief Justice is an issue in accordance with the Constitution between the President and the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I did not take a decision on putting the question. I heard a little comment about it. Yes, I did put the question, but we did not have a decision. So, I now put the question.

Programme: 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature – \$2,233,937,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature – \$1,200,000,000

Programme: 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature – \$1,200,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: We thank the Hon. Minister and the staff of the Supreme Court of Judicature for taking us through that agency.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, did you deal with the Capital Expenditure?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, on page 668.

Ms. Teixeira: Oh, you dealt with it already. All right, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Ferguson: [*Inaudible.*]

Mr. Chairman: We already put the question and had a decision, Hon. Member.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: I will move this water out of the way. We have the issue of the monitor that is causing a little blind side also. Sorry, Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson. We completed not this agency, but the Guyana Elections Commission, Agency 11. We had one hour for the Supreme Court of the Judicature and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP). So, we could go for these two heads up to, at least, 4.12 p.m. Hon. Members, let us give the Hon. Minister a chance so that the DPP's staff could come in place.

Agency 56: Public Prosecutions

Current Expenditure

Programme: 561 – Public Prosecutions – \$220,859,000

Mr. Shuman: Would the Hon. Minister finally relay to this House how much of the allotted sum will be used for the prosecution of those who attempted to steal democracy last year?

Ms. Teixeira: Under Other Goods and Services, the sum of \$34 million in the Budget relates to legal fees for election matters and other matters that the chamber is addressing. They also have outstanding payments for legal fees for Election 2020 criminal matters. Mr. Shuman, they have put aside \$34 million for the cases regarding Elections 2020.

Mr. Shuman: Would the Hon. Minister relay to this House how many people are owed from the previous election challenge 2020?

Ms. Teixeira: The total sum for the election cases in 2020 was \$48 million. In 2020, they paid \$14.6 million, and the balance of \$34 million will be paid this year.

Programme: 561 – Public Prosecutions – \$220,859,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 561 – Public Prosecutions – \$28,000,000

Mr. Chairman: This was one where my finger touched the keypad, and the page came back down. Hon. Member, Mr. Duncan, please proceed. It was a mistake.

Mr. Duncan: We all make mistakes.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Hon. Member, Mr. Duncan.

Ms. Ferguson: I recognise project code 2500700 – Public Prosecutions, intends to spend the sum of \$28 million towards the procurement of equipment and construction of buildings. I noticed in the profile legend, outlined here, there is no detailed information with regard to how the \$28 million will be expended. Could the Hon. Member provide a disaggregation against the buildings to be constructed, the amount and, also, the type of equipment to be procured.

Thirdly, where exactly will the equipment be assigned, and, also, which buildings are expected to be either renovated or constructed?

Ms. Teixeira: The building works have to do with the expansion of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. This is the western wing, upper flat. They have to do that for the sum of \$3 million. There is the expansion of a storeroom below the office building, as they have run out of

storage area and so forth. That is estimated at a sum of \$500,000. The office also has quite a number of issues to do with software and electronic items – such as Case Closed Software at a sum of \$7 million. This is to do with the office's reliability to have an efficient and organised electronic filing system. Right now, their software system is unreliable, if not defunct.

3.27 p.m.

The office has 20 laptops for members of staff that are needed as a lot of their computers are getting old. They are also using the laptops for video conferencing and court hearings, also, a number of cases are virtual, so they need to have their laptops in order to work virtually. This is for the staff of the Director of Public Prosecutions' (DPP's) Office. Seven desktop computers will be needed to replace damaged systems and to cater for the employment of new staff, once there is the expansion of the building.

In terms of equipment, they need to have four unified access routers and 48 port ultraviolet (UV) kitty gigabytes switch. Forgive me if I am mispronouncing. They need those to improve the network speed and connectivity of the additional workstations, [inaudible] desktops. They need one uninterruptable power supply (UPS) bypass switch because they have been suffering from blackouts and the damage of power surges to their equipment even though they have UPSs. This is apparently something that will save them a lot of grief. The cost of that would be \$860,000. They need 20 kilovolt-ampere (KVA) stabiliser at the sum of \$2.3 million. This is, again, to deal with power surges; two surveillance cameras at the sum of \$400,000; a google platform at the sum of \$1.4 million which is needed to upgrade the office's email service so that they can work in a more modern world; and computer accessories and components. These are things that the office needs. They need 10 Solid State Drive (SSD) at \$30,000 each; 15 computer rams at \$10,000 each; and tools for the Information Technology Department (IT) at the sum of \$150,000 to deal with the maintenance and repairs of computer hardware components and physical NetWare infrastructure.

There are also other items under this head which include 12 American Power Conversion (APC) battery backups; seven paper shredders; one multi-functional laser printer; six book shelves; six two-drawer filing cabinets; four four-drawer filing cabinets; four executive chairs; four L-shaped desks; seven air conditioning units; two water dispensers; lamps that are used mainly in Essequibo and Berbice criminal assizes that

are constantly experiencing power outages, this is to help the two State Counsels that are in Berbice and Essequibo; and the office carpets. I am almost finished. We have one motorcycle at the sum of \$500,000 for delivering mails and documents that have to be filed and served at specific times; and three 10-pound (lb) carbon dioxide (CO2) fire extinguishers at \$65,000 each, which brings up the total of \$28,000,000.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson, would you like a clarification?

Ms. Ferguson: (Inaudible).

Programme: 561 – Public Prosecutions – \$28,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 57 Office of the Ombudsman

Current Expenditure

Programme: 571 – Office of the Ombudsman – \$73,920,000.

Mr. Mahipaul: Could the Hon. Minister say how much of this lump sum is towards electricity charges?

Ms. Teixeira: It is \$3,473,000. Mr. Mahipaul, if you look at Appendix T on page 860 it will give you a better breakdown than the lump sum.

Mr. Mahipaul: If my memory serves me correctly, when we were considering the Police Complaints Authority, the Hon. Minister indicated that the Police Complaints Authority, the Office of the Ombudsman and another office are occupying the building. I am trying to recollect if they are sharing electricity charges or if they are separate meters there.

Ms. Teixeira: The Police Complaints Authority has its own meter and pays for its own electricity charges. The other occupants in the building, the Public Service Appellate and Tribunal (PSAT) and the office of the Office of the Ombudsman, for example, share the cost for the building. There is co-sharing. The PSAT, which is Public Service Appellate and Tribunal and, the Bar Association of Guyana are co-sharing the electricity charges. The Public Service Appellate and Tribunal pays for water for the entire building.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask how many staff are attached to the Office of the Ombudsman?

Ms. Teixeira: There are seven persons, including the Ombudsman.

Mr. Mahipaul: How many of the seven are contracted employees?

Ms. Teixeira: There is one person who is a contracted employee and that is the Typist Clerk.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask the age of the Typist Clerk?

Ms. Teixeira: It would be remiss of me, as a person who has to also look at our human rights issues, to not start and encourage an ageism prejudice in our country. The person is 41 years old. I think, as a Parliament, we cannot be dealing with such discriminatory tones to do with age I hear coming from this Parliament.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you Hon. Minister. I was about to make the caution because, somehow, I felt that things were even targeting the Chairman.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, permit me to assure you and the Hon. Minister that the reason for asking the age is that, if the person is below the age of 44, I will ask if there is any interest or any action on the part of the organisation or the Office of the Ombudsman to at least guarantee staff some assurance of tenure by way of putting the staff under the Public Service Commission. That was the whole emphasis of asking the age. It has nothing to do with ageism or whatever the Hon. Minister would have...

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul. I would just like to ask our Members, as we have stated, to let us stay away from names and to let us also stay away from age. They are all very good intentions. But, sometimes, we have to deal with the sensibilities of people who are collecting a public service pension. Then we will have to deal with the people who are collecting a National Insurance Scheme (NIS) pension, which is 60 years and the old age pension which is 65. Yours truly falls under all three, so let us stay away from the sensitivity of age.

Hon. Minister, would you like to respond?

Ms. Teixeira: Just to advise the Hon. Member that, under this Government, the public servant, a person hired into the public service, has a choice. New recruits are being placed on contract or on the fixed establishment. They could choose. We do not have the system, which was in the previous Government, where contracts were given to whomever they wish, and they made public servants who were on contracts become public servants. That is over. Any new recruits into the public service have a choice of whether they would like to be on contract and receive a gratuity or whether they would

like to go on the fixed establishment where they would be able to accumulate a pension. The choice is up to the persons who have been hired.

Mr. Mahipaul: That answer, I must say, provided great clarity on a number of questions that would have come from further examination. So, I am happy for that answer. It shows the change of policy between the Government of the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) Coalition and the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government.

Mr. Chairman: I thought the Hon. Minister of the Public Service also expressed that when she made her presentation.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, she was not clear to me. Nonetheless, if I may ask, are any of these seven staff who are performing additional duties, acting in capacities higher than the office they are employed under and if there are any who are receiving a duty allowance for additional duties?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, the Office Assistant is receiving a responsibility allowance and the System Accountant is receiving an acting allowance as a Chief Accountant.

Programme: 571 – Office of the Ombudsman – \$73,920,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 571 – Office of the Ombudsman – \$1,625,000.

Mr. Mahipaul: I see the Hon. Minister watching me and laughing, I figure she knows that I am going to ask for a breakdown of project code 2500600 – Office of the Ombudsman.

Ms. Teixeira: It is \$1,625,000 and includes four executive chairs for the Ombudsman, Accounts and the Secretary; four-drawer metal filing cabinet at the sum of \$255,000; two 24,000 British thermal unit (BTU) AC units at the sum of \$520,000 for the Administrative Office and the Ombudsman's Office; one refrigerator for the Accounts Department; one heavy duty printer at the sum of \$300,000 which will be used by the Secretary in the office; one office desk at the sum of \$55,000 for the Confidential Secretary; and a binding machine for general office use – \$50,000, totalling \$1.625 million for the Office of the Ombudsman. This is a very modest budget.

3.42 p.m.

Programme: 571 - Office of the Ombudsman - \$1,625,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we could continue. I do not know if the staff of the Public Service Appellate Tribunal are ready. If they are here, I will suggest we continue. Some Members have said to me that it is very difficult to eat a hearty lunch at 1.00 p.m. and then come back for a hearty dinner at 4.00 p.m.

Ms. Teixeira: It would be nice to have a break when you have been doing this for several hours.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. The staff of the Public Service Appellate Tribunal are in place. Let me thank the staff of the Office of the Ombudsman for assisting us through the last agency.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, could I crave your indulgence before we get to the next item?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Leader of the Opposition...

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I wish to bring to your attention the fact that, over the last week or so, we have had two instances in which computers were stolen from the Dome.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, we will be addressing some developing issues in the Dome.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Thank you very much. Primarily, I would like to say that a few minutes ago, a Member of ...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I am now, like you, receiving some information with respect to incidents that happened, shortly, so...

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I understand, please, but I would like...

Mr. Chairman: Could you please acknowledge my authority to continue with this head? Thank you very much. Hon. Members, we are in Committee of Supply.

[Interruption by members of the APNU/AFC]

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, in the circumstance, we would not take part any further in the Committee's work. We will not. Can I not even speak? Thank you. *[Interruption]* You are assaulting people and all of that. *[Interruption]*

Agency: 58 Public Service Appellate Tribunal

Current Expenditure

Programme: 581 – Public Service Appellate Tribunal – \$62,141,000

[Interruption]

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Chief Whip for the Opposition and Hon. Members, if you want to leave, there is a protocol for leaving the House with decorum.

I propose the question again that the sum stated for Agency 58 – Public Service Appellate Tribunal: Programme 581, Current Expenditure, forms part of the Estimates.

Programme: 581 - Public Service Appellate Tribunal - \$62,141,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Ms. Ferguson: *[Inaudible]*

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson, we will have to have someone move a Resolution against you. This is total disrespect. There is the appropriate time, Hon. Members, to do that but I strongly insist that it be done.

Let us thank the Hon. Minister and the staff of the Public Service Appellate Tribunal for taking us through that agency.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, we have not put the Public Service Appellate Tribunal budget to the Committee for approval. Even if there is no question, it still has to be put to the Committee.

Mr. Chairman: We did. I proposed it and I put it.

Ms. Teixeira: I regret that I did not hear it because of all the noise.

Mr. Chairman: I proposed it twice and I put it. Sorry, Hon. Minister, there was a lot of enthusiasm in the House. Could we have the staff of the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC), if they are here? Thank you.

[Members of the APNU/AFC withdrew from the Dome]

Agency: 59 Ethnic Relations Commission

Current Expenditure

Programme: 591 - Ethnic Relations Commission - \$227,526,000

Mr. Charlie: Could the Hon. Minister tell the Committee of Supply the size of the staff at the Ethnic Relations Commission and the salary scale, benefits and allowances of the Commissioners?

Ms. Teixeira: There are 30 members of staff at the Ethnic Relations Commission, with positions such as Secretary to the Chief Executive Officer, Finance Officer, Legal Officer, Head of the Media Monitoring Unit (MMU), Administrative Officer, Head of the Public Education and Awareness Unit, Head of the Investment Unit, Assistant Finance Officer, three Investigative Officers, five Programme Officers, Special Assistant to the Chairman, Senior Accounts Clerk, a Videographer, four persons in the Media Monitoring Unit, Administrative Assistant, Account Clerk, Driver, Telephonist and Cleaner, *et cetera*. The total cost for staff, outside of the Commissioners, is \$80,518,416, an average monthly of \$6,709,868. They also receive allowances and so on.

In relation to the Commissioners of the ERC, there are 10 members, including the Chairman and Vice-Chairman. The Chairman receives \$379,070, plus a travelling allowance of \$9,504.00. The Deputy Chairman receives \$199,857,000 and a travelling allowance of \$6,336.00. All the other Commissioners receive a monthly amount of \$119,772,000, the total being \$1,537,103 per month which gives a grand total \$18,445,236 on a yearly basis. There is the figure of \$80 million odd for the 30 staff, plus the figure for the Commissioners.

As you recall, Mr. Chairman, the Commission is made up of one representative from the other Commissions – the Women and Gender Equality Commission, the Rights of the Child Commission and the Indigenous Peoples' Commission. Those three persons get a duty allowance of \$5,000 each. These are the non-voting members of the Commission.

Mr. Charlie: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister, for that answer and clarity. Could the Hon. Minister tell the Committee of Supply what is intended to be purchased under the line item, Other Goods and Services, in 2021, for the Ethnic Relations Commission? Could the Minister say when the Ethnic Relations Commission will expire or whether it has expired?

[Members of the APNU/AFC returned to the Dome]

Ms. Teixeira: This would include security services, equipment maintenance, cleaning and extermination. The 'Other' would include extra or expert professional services

that the organisation might need, including lawyers for the prosecution of cases in 2021.

In addition to Other Goods and Services, this includes national events at a cost of over \$400,000. Another 'Other', which in a normal budget would be line item 6294, but in this it is a lump sum, includes \$18,737,892 for a number of interventions. Some of the money has apparently been spent, since the Commission had savings last year, for strategic mission and a plan, national conversations as well as, what is called by the Chairman, blessings for the staff at the end of the year. In that too, there is a subvention for training. That includes a strategic retreat for the development of a five-year strategic plan for the Commission. Of course, there is rates and taxes to the City Hall, which is \$600,000 for the building in Anira Street, Queenstown.

3.57 p.m.

Mr. Jones: Mr. Chairman, in light of an incident that occurred a few minutes ago involving one of our Members of Parliament...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Jones, could you please ask a question regarding this. I will finish this head and ask for a suspension. We will then hear the comments about what transpired and reconvene within an hour.

[Interruption]

Mr. Jones: Mr. Chairman, we have 18 Members of Parliament who are standing, on their feet, and, in keeping with the Standing Orders, we must be heard. [Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are in Committee of Supply.

[Interruption]

An Hon. Member (Government): [Inaudible]

Mr. Jones: Boy, *doan* talk; you *doan* talk. [Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Chief Whip, as I said, we have the same Standing Order that was consulted, Standing Order No. 12. We are in Committee of Supply. We have to leave Committee of Supply after this to go back to the Assembly. When we revert to the Assembly, the 18 Members can stand, and they will be heard.

Mr. Jones: Mr. Chairman, this matter is not a light one, and we request that the House be reconvened.

Mr. Chairman: Sir, let us conclude. We are in Committee of Supply and I am ruling that we complete this head and resume the Assembly. This Standing Order speaks to the Assembly.

Mr. Jones: Mr. Chairman, we refuse. This matter is not a light one. A female Member of Parliament was physically assaulted by Mr. McCoy.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Chief Whip, I am asking you to allow us to convene...

[Interruption]

[Members of the APNU/AFC thumped on the desks continuously]

Hon. Members, I am calling for a suspension.

Assembly resumed.

Sitting suspended at 4.00 p.m.

Sitting Resumed at 7.55 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Members, please be seated.

Hon. Members, we have had an incident that is alleged to have occurred in the corridor. A team, comprising the Prime Minister, the Government Chief Whip, the Leader of the Opposition and the Opposition Chief Whip, along with the Clerk of the National Assembly and I, met. We had asked the police and the Commander of 'A' Division himself, who was here, with a team of persons from the Opposition, from the Parliament Office and from the Government to review the tapes of what happened in the corridor. That team comprised of the Hon. Prime Minister; the Hon. Member, Mr. Christopher Jones; the Hon. Member, Ms. Natasha Singh-Lewis; and the Clerk of the National Assembly.

The Commander has reported that what has been witnessed on the tape cannot inform a decision of what allegedly occurred, and that he now has to rely on statements from witnesses. We have asked the police to continue that exercise and statements were taken from a number of persons. The police will continue with their investigation.

It has been decided that we will convene now and adjourn until 10.00 a.m. tomorrow. I now call on the Hon. Prime Minister to move the adjournment.

ADJOURNMENT

BE IT RESOLVED:

“That the Assembly do now adjourn to 10.00 a.m. on 4th March, 2021.”

[Prime Minister]

Prime Minister [Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips]: Mr. Speaker, I move the adjournment of the Assembly to 10.00 a.m. on Thursday, 4th March, 2021.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Assembly stands adjourned to 10.00 a.m. tomorrow.

Adjourned accordingly at 7.58 p.m.