

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2015-2016) OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

32ND Sitting

Thursday, 18th February, 2016

Assembly convened at 1.08 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS

MOTION

MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2016

“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 2016 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2016-01-29.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2016, of a total sum of two hundred and twelve billion, nine hundred and sixty three million and one hundred and thirty two thousand dollars (**\$212,963,132,000**), **excluding seventeen billion and seventy three million, three hundred and ninety four thousand dollars (\$17,073,394,000)** 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.” *[Minister of Finance]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we will continue our consideration of the *Estimates of the Public Sector*. We must resolve ourselves into Committee of Supply for this purpose.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: As I had proposed to Hon. Members yesterday, we commence this afternoon’s consideration of the Estimates with a consideration of Agency: 04 Ministry of Foreign Affairs. When we are through with the consideration of this Agency, we will return to our consideration of the Agencies under the Ministry of Communities.

Vice-President and Minister of Foreign Affairs [Mr. Greenidge]: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Would you please allow me half of a minute for staff to be positioned to render assistance?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Minister.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we would allow the Minister of Foreign Affairs a few minutes to have his team join him.

Agency: 04 Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Current Expenditure

Programme: 041 - Development of Foreign Policy - \$1,353,643,000

Opposition Chief Whip [Ms. Teixeira]: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker and Hon. Members of the House.

Hon. Minister Greenidge, I am very concerned about the numbers in your budget, more because I believe that, in some areas, the reduction in your numbers... In some cases, the unspent from last year worries me because I believe your Ministry is the window of our country and it plays a critical role in establishing our sovereignty, our nationality and our national interests. Therefore, I have some concerns when I look at some of your line items. Why do you seem to have suffered some reductions or some very miniscule increases? I am concerned not for you, personally, obviously, my dear Friend, but for the Ministry and the country.

I used the Volume 2 to guide me on what the three programmes entail, what their indicators are and so on. I hope I am right in using that in advising me. When we look at your staffing details and if we go to line item 6116 - Contracted Employees - which is a favourite one, as you know, the number of contracted workers has declined by 11. In fact, your overall staffing has declined by seven. You have added seven people and lost seven people. Because of the wording in the Volume 2, I just want to be clear.

Let me ask the first question: in the decline in line item 6116 - Contracted Employees - does this figure include Ambassadors and High Commissioners or is it strictly administrative staff and not consular staff? Before I go in a wrong direction, could you just clarify that for me?

Mr. Greenidge: May I, first of all, thank our distinguished and honourable Colleague for the expressions of concern? At this stage, I say to her that there is no need for the concern she expressed. As we go along, things will become clear. The simple answer to the question regarding the apparent reduction is that this pertains to administrative staff.

Ms. Teixeira: I noticed that line item 6261 - Local Travel and Subsistence - started out as \$20,857,000 in 2014 then became \$97,695,000 in 2015. Seventeen million, eight hundred and sixty-nine dollars was spent and now you are at \$40 million for 2016. Is it not a little bit unusual for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to have so much local travel? Could the Minister advise me

how it went up to an astronomical figure of \$97,695,000 but only \$17,869,000 was used? You underspent and then the amount has gone up to \$40 million. Could you advise me what this is for?

Mr. Greenidge: May I just again reassure my Colleague that the line item is showing the changes that it is because it pertains to the movement and the posting of staff. This item covers airfare, excess baggage and so forth. What has happened is that we planned to make the appointments and, therefore, to have the staff move during the course of 2015. What has actually happened is that we are only now starting to be in a position to move the staff. I am saying this primarily because, having requested the *agremos* for candidate heads of missions. At the end of December, we had not received the *agremos* for those persons and, therefore, they could not be posted. The process will be remedied in 2016 and that is why the Ministry of Finance agreed to put back, substantially, the amounts that had been there before but were apparently unused. They could not have been utilised prior to the end of the year.

Ms. Teixeira: I am sure, Hon. Member, that the Minister of Finance must be happy to see money returned; all Ministers of Finance like to accumulate. This issue is that this figure did not include then the return of the Ambassadors and High Commissioners who were recalled. Does it only deal with administrative staff? It is a follow-up question on the line item 6261- Local Travel and Subsistence.

Mr. Greenidge: The amount is a net amount. It includes those that had to be funded to come back or to be sent to the places that they had identified, those who would have to be posted anew and cross-postings.

Ms. Teixeira: I apologise, Hon. Member. I read from line item 6262 instead of line item 6261 when I quoted the figures on local travel.

Mr. Greenidge: I suspected.

Ms. Teixeira: On the issue of line item 6284 – Other - the amount has sizably increased. It was \$166,166,000 in 2015, went down to \$76,493,000 and now it is back up to \$200 million. This is for other goods and services purchased. Does this include hiring consultants or legal consultants to assist the Government in relation to the Guyana-Venezuela border issue?

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, again, our Colleague is quite correct as regards this one. The increase here is determined almost exclusively by the cost of retaining international lawyers to assist us in this exercise together with the need to also retain lawyers and advisors locally. As you know, the cost is denominated in United States (US) dollars and British pounds and, therefore, the amounts involved are pretty substantial. These probably would not cover the cost of the entire exercise. Thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6294 - Other: It was \$49,138,000, was put up to \$84,140,000 last year. The amount of \$41,198,000 was spent and \$84,140,000 is budgeted. Could you advise what this entails and is any of this going to be used in terms of national events? You have a figure for national events, which is very small for a Ministry of Foreign Affairs, so I am looking at the next figure on the next page which is a little better. I would assume that line item 6291 - National and Other Events - deals with local functions. Does line item 6294 – Other - include overseas jubilee committees that will be holding activities for the 50th anniversary? Or is this just for anything the Ministry wants? Could you clarify that?

Mr. Greenidge: The item here includes transport, in particular for visiting delegations. We expect an increase in these, some of which would be triggered by the arrangements for the 50th anniversary. It would also include hospitality and expenses associated with being the host of that activity and a number of others, including Caribbean Community (CARICOM) related activities. Thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6281 - Security Services: We have been hearing about these overseas commemoration jubilee committees.

1.23 p.m.

Would any of the funds under line item 6294 – Other be given to that group to hold activities for the 50th anniversary?

Mr. Greenidge: If I understand it correctly, Mdm. Teixeira is asking whether this item includes funding of the 50th celebration activities *per se*? The answer is no, but we do normally provide supporting services, so, when an activity like that increases, where we would normally be required to provide supporting services such as transport, for example, or hospitality, it will be

affected. But the direct cost of the 50th anniversary celebrations are not to be met from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' budget.

Ms. Teixeira: I have been trying and I may be in the wrong place but I was going back to line item 6294 because I noticed, in the write up on this programme, it deals with remigrants and the Diaspora Unit. I am not quite sure how to phrase the question. Is it under this figure or in the general... I cannot find the right slot for the number of remigrants that has been processed in 2015. Where would that be in the programme? Also, in terms of indicators in the Programme, the number of issues...the Diaspora Unit in the Ministry: is that to your satisfaction? Maybe I should go to staffing for that one. Under line item 6111 – Administrative - I guess, do you have enough staff in your Ministry dealing with the Diaspora issues?

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, line item 6294 does not cover, at all, the cost of remigrants. We do not have, except for the overheads associated with the officer, costs associated with that particular activity. The employment costs associated with the Diaspora Unit are met under programme one, but it is not line item 6294, and we have two officers working on this area. There is a consultant's report which examines the strategy for the Diaspora Programme and, as you know, there have been a number of policy reassignments amongst Ministers, and that means that some of the work with the Diaspora is to be undertaken by other Ministries. Part of that exercise of retaining the consultants will involve recommendations about the rationalisation of functions amongst the Ministries, and, in that regard, one would expect that the main function of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs here would be to coordinate the activities and do the main interface with the Diaspora in the context of our work. Thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6322 – Subsidies and Contributions to International Organisations: We saw that you spent the money for the contributions to international organisations last year, which is very good, but the figure has gone up to \$611,239,000. I have gone to page 584. What are the new contributions or increasing contributions to reflect this increase? Have we joined any new body? Did the quota system or the fees increase for Guyana? I know there is set standard for each

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, happily, and you, no doubt, will be pleased to note that the Minister of Finance is not very keen on having us join new entities that have heavy financial

burdens. Therefore, the increase you see reflected here is an increase arising from the partial liquidation of fairly substantial arrears that had accumulated over the past five or six years and the largest one amongst these is the CARICOM Competition Commission, where part of the arrears that was accumulated needs to be liquidated to the tune of nearly \$60 million. As you know, this is a pretty important institution in the context of regional integration. Therefore, Cabinet has approved the payment of those particular areas.

Ms. Teixeira: I know that most Cabinets and most Ministers of Finance are loath to increased new organisations and new arrangements to increase the cost. It may be generic to the post. However, with the Competition Commission, in what way do we benefit? Was there not a way that we could have done a kind of scheduled debt payment so that it would not have such an impact on the Budget?

Under the same head, I see that we have increased our funding for the United Nations (UN) local office cost from what was \$4.9 million to \$16.7 million. Could you just say why there is the increase, in 2015, from \$4.9 million to \$16 million and then the continuation in 2016?

Mr. Greenidge: With regard to the Competition Commission, Mr. Chairman, I believe that our Colleague will be aware that part of the CARICOM strategy for helping small states, such as ours, survive in a world that is increasingly competitive and constantly subject to change, the question, first of all, of ensuring fair competition between the commercial and industrial entities and also, if you like, a level playing field between the countries, in the area of trade...it is important that there is a predictable framework in which the rule of law operates in the commercial context. I think the region, at all levels, has agreed that the Competition Commission is exceedingly important. Whilst it is true that where arrears have accumulated, it is possible to reschedule them in a phased basis - and we have tried to do that in most instances - sometimes the entity suffers from the liquidity crunch that arises from one particular State, which may be significant, not paying. That is why you will find that the payments, actually, of these arrears are not necessarily even. Sometimes you pay off three-quarters to one entity and you maintain it to another and then, in another case, you just reduce the arrears gradually over time.

With regards to the other entity that you mentioned, the United Nations local office, part of the reason for the increase in the actual payment arises from the assessment of our contribution, in

2016, arising from the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increase that we have experienced. As you know, the United Nations formula is partially based upon the GDP. Therefore, that had to be adjusted upwards.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Hon. Member. I want to close off on this. Do we have any cases before the Competition Commission at CARICOM? Have we benefited from issues we have raised with the Commission?

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, I am embarrassed to tell you that I cannot remember off-hand whether there is one there but, perhaps, I might be allowed to consult with the Chairman and then come back to you at a time after we have taken the break. He is a recent Member, as you will know, of the Competition Commission, so he is probably better to answer than I am at this stage.

Ms. Teixeira: Now, I have a follow-up on that. In another Ministry, the Ministry of Business, we dealt with the Competition Commission. What is the relationship between what that body does and the CARICOM body? Is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs just the clearing house, the post office, or is it an active participant in both?

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, the National Competition Commissions have responsibilities pertaining to the environment within which the activities of the various entities and issues pertaining to consumer protection and so forth take place at a national level. In that regard, as far as I am concerned, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has no specific responsibility. That is almost exclusively the Ministry of Business, except and in so far as it may sometimes affect a foreign entity. As regards the region's Competition Commission, since the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has specific responsibility for trade matters, regional trade, when, for example, a problem arises between two States or between the entities of two States, then the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be called upon. For example, in the context of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED), first of all, there is, a complaint right now from a local operator, a local producer, and that producer has a complaint against a CARICOM country and an allegation that it is dumping commodities here. That, first of all, will come to us; they will write to us but it requires us, first, to establish that that case is proven locally before you can go further. So, in that

regard, we act like a sieve to ensure that matters are not unnecessarily carried to the CARICOM level and we will relate to the other trade entities and try to facilitate where it is possible.

Mr. Ali: First of all, I want to thank the Minister for the information that he is giving on the Competition Commission. It is very important for us, nationally. Could I ask, in the context of the Value Added Tax (VAT) for agriculture, in terms of plantain chips, for example, whether we are pursuing this interest in relation to the dumping of extra regional goods on our market, even here in Guyana, packaged plantain?

The second question relates to the poultry industry, in relation to the standards, for example, the Trinidad market requires of the local market and whether we are treated fairly. I know there is an active case also where farmers, who produce lemons and limes, are having great difficulty in exporting that product to the Trinidad market. Does the system provide for an appeal directly to the CARICOM Competition Commission or does it have to be heard at the Local Commission first?

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, this is, I think, correctly portrayed as a very important issue in terms of the regional survival. As regards the entities, yes, there are, I think at any one time, a number of complaints and queries.

1.38 p.m.

It is something that is always active. At the moment, as far as I am aware, there is no major case as regards to the setting of standards and the asymmetry in standards between the countries. In truth, I think all of the national entities are in their relative infancy and the emphasis given to these things vary very much, especially, I think, as regards to standards. We have a long way to go in that regard before we can say definitively there is an accepted standard across the members of Caribbean Community (CARICOM). In the absence of that there are always allegations and queries. In the case of poultry, this is an especially difficult area.

As regards to the process that our colleague Mr. Ali has raised, the process requires that in the first instance we try and handle the matter locally. We must be satisfied that a law or regulation is being broken before we would encourage them to go forward because it would arise at the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED), for example. If you expect the

Government to make a sensible case on your behalf, the Government has to be persuaded that the laws are infringed. There are a number of cases, and I think a lot of toing and froing is involved. What I have seen is that often we face a handicap. In the case of dumping, which you raised, the local legislation as regards to dumping is actually not complete or not even properly in existence. We have to go by another route to pursue that particular line. It means that COTED and CARICOM cannot be satisfied, in the first instance, that the laws, which are there, are being broken. There is a way, perhaps, to attenuate that problem, but as it stands the legislation needs attention. That is my understanding.

Mr. Ali: It is just one follow-up on this, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank the Minister. Is there any plan to have an interagency task force in tackling this issue? There is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Business and the Ministry of Agriculture, in our case, which play a key role. The first question is whether there are plans to have an interagency task force in tackling this issue.

Second, competition law is a different kettle of fish. It is whether there is any technical assistance for local manufactures and producers who may want to pursue a case and who may need the expertise of competition lawyers or specifically trained persons in that area.

Mr. Greenidge: As regards to the question of technical assistance, the economic partnership agreement between the European Union (EU) and CARIFORUM does allow for support to the Competition Commission entities especially by way of technical assistance in the event it is needed. I am not aware that, at this point in time, Guyana has sought such assistance at the level of individual enterprises. As the Member has mentioned it, it is something we can look at and check properly so I can inform myself. There is a facility available under the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture. (IICA)

As regards to the inter-agency task force, in reality, I suppose many people are unsure of some of these problems when they arise. I can say specifically one matter, which has been handled between December and now, did involve us establishing - it was not called a task force - the competition agency between the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and specifically the Ministry of Business, to examine a particular complaint. One agency gave a legal interpretation then the lawyers got back again and back and forth. In effect, there is a *de facto*

recognition that such an arrangement has to be in place for it to work. It has not really been formalised. We have now identified the agencies and the sections within them where that formal arrangement needs to be in place.

Ms. Teixeira: My last question on this head. I am again repeating my concern that the numbers are declining under this programme, line items 6111 to 6117. The totality in figure show that in 2012 it was 108; it went up to 115 in 2014; it went up to 117 in 2015 and now it is down to 110. I, therefore, want to ask the Minister on what efforts have been made by the Ministry to fill the gaps. Or are these vacancies redundant and not required by his Ministry?

Mr. Greenidge: I believe that the explanation and the reassurance is that although the numbers may not appear to be in the direction that is consistent with a greater intensity, but what happened here is simply that a number of employees were transferred from Programme 1 to Programme 2. When we go to Programme 2 you will see there has been an increase there. It is internal movement that accounts for those figures, the sign that the Member is worried about.

Programme: 041 – Development of Foreign Policy – \$1,353,643,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 042 – Foreign Policy Promotion – \$2,284,151,000

Ms. Teixeira: Based on my last question, which I asked on the other programme, I am a bit confused now because the number has fallen under this programme. If a switch was done, it still has not shifted the numbers. The numbers are still down. Anyway, let us get on with it.

At line item 6116, the numbers for contracted employees dropped from \$298 million to \$123 million with 10 persons being released, fired, retired or whatever. Is this reduction because of the recall of Ambassadors, High Commissioners, vacancies in consuls of Consul General and Honorary Consuls? That is the first question. If I can tie that to line item 6133, Benefits & Allowances, in the column for 2016 it is at \$345 million but last year it was \$356 million. Do these figures deal with handling the benefits and allowances that the former Ambassadors and High Commissioners would have been entitled to on recall or severance, whichever the Minister would prefer to use? I am just trying to find out because there is this huge amount of money in

this particular programme, benefits and allowances. It is whether it takes care of the Ambassadors and High Commissioners who have been recalled?

Mr. Greenidge: The first question is on line item 6116 which shows contracted employees, the cost thereof falling, from \$298 to \$123 million. The second question, as regards to line item 6113, let me start with the benefits and allowances. This is as a result of the Head of Mission in Barbados retiring and therefore that reduction reflects that situation.

As regards line item 6116, the reduction reflects the staff who are currently in post. The Member would be aware, as she indicated, that a number of them would have retired or their contracts would have come to an end and therefore the reduction reflects that.

Let me just say, in respect of benefits, notwithstanding the fact, especially as regards to Heads of Missions, they were contracted specifically, if you like, on the understanding that as non-career diplomats the contracts would have to come to an end when the term of the Government came to an end. All of them were retained beyond the Government's transfer. I think, almost on all instances, where their retirements did not arise they were kept at least until the end of December, 2015.

As regards to other benefits or benefits that may be anticipated by some of those Heads of Missions who did not retire and whose contracts were not renewed, if there were specific areas of concern I can answer, but basically the position is that where a contract came to an end in most instances it would not have been renewed. This is as to regards Heads of Missions only. Some persons retired and those who, for example, might have had contracts written within a period very close to or after the election, then those contracts would not have been regarded as valid contracts beyond 11th May. Nonetheless, nobody was sent home overnight.

Ms. Teixeira: There are 13 missions and there are only three Ambassadors in place. Has the Ambassador for Venezuela been accredited as yet? Or is she still waiting? My concern is that there are 13 missions, ten are without heads, *Charge d' affaires*, High Commissioners, or whatever the Minister wants to call them. There is a situation where Government changes. The Minister is referring to a new policy, contractual issues.

1.53 p.m.

I know some of the people who are involved and who were recalled as you may be well aware and therefore I know that they received phone calls telling them to come home and they could continue their contract in some cases. The issue is that if a new Government comes in and brings a new policy, it cannot retrofit it. It has to be for the future and therefore their contractual arrangements, which may still be outstanding for some of these persons who, in all honesty serve this country well – I do not think any of them had a bad mark against them, they all serve this country diligently - should be honoured. When the new contracts are done for the new Ambassadors then there is the right as a new Government to build in its own policies.

Therefore the benefits or what are part of their contractual arrangements, which some of these Ambassadors and High Commissioners were owed, I am asking, have these all been addressed as of today? In a sense that, there may be delays at the Ministry of Finance, have the contractual entitlements of the persons whose contract came to an end? Or they have been told to come home early and finish their contract or whatever was the arrangement. The question: Were there contractual obligations honoured by the Government? That is what I am trying to get to and that is why I am trying to explain the increase of this large amount for benefits and allowances.

Mr. Greenidge: First of all, as regards to the first question: Is Ambassador Myles accredited by the Government of Venezuela? As of today, I think yesterday afternoon at 4.15 p.m., she presented her documents to the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Venezuela. I do not want to say anything more on that for the moment but that fulfils an obligation that President Maduro had made since September of last year.

As regards to the other agencies without heads, let me say that whilst it is true that the other missions may not all have Ambassadors heading them, for the most part the request for *agremos* have been submitted to the host countries on the other side and for reasons that I think have more to do with the preoccupation of many of our bilateral partners – preoccupation with terrorism and investigating and examining everybody's background. This process has taken an unprecedented length of time. Up to this week I was speaking to one of the Ambassadors, asking what was going on and he assured me that he had found, for example, the application had been properly received, it was perhaps just temporarily parks and placed and he had moved it on.

Also amongst these is the arrangement for a new mission in Geneva, dealing with World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the Swiss and Trinidad and Tobago. The idea is to upgrade the consulate there and in those two cases it is a two-step process rather than one, and therefore that adds to the length of time. I can assure the Member that my own side of the Assembly is concerned about the length of time this is taking but it is not for a lack of appreciation of the importance of this matter. We are working on it as assiduously as we can. I hope that within the course of the next two weeks we will be in a position to indicate to you that a significant proportion of those would have been approved by the partners on the other side.

On the questions of benefits, or outstanding benefits, and whether these have been addressed, can I assure our colleague, Ms. Teixeira, that these have been examined very carefully? In some instances they arose or what may recently been claims of either non-payment or refusal to respond. Some of those arose from perhaps a mistaken impression as to what the obligations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are and the Government as opposed...For example, in one case, which I know, was the question to sort out the arrangements with the Parliament Office. Not that Parliament Office was at fault, but the communication was being done with the wrong agency. I think that is now being resolved and the former Ambassador has, himself, said that he was satisfied with that.

I think there are two or three others who are anticipating benefits but as I was trying to explain where a contract expires we do not regard that. We have been advised that the Government has no obligation to pay benefits other than those that are set out in the staff regulations for those Heads of Mission.

Well, the other one was where people retired the Government is not obliged either to extend it, although it has done so in a couple of cases. In the cases of those whose contracts entitled them or they thought that if the contract is renewed they are entitled to six months of salary, we do not recognise that as being part of the staff regulations and therefore in those cases you may well find that they are disputing those matters. The Cabinet is going to review those decisions by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I am satisfied and our lawyers are satisfied that we have not infringed the rights of any of the members of the Heads of Mission.

Ms. Teixeira: I am sure, Hon. Member, that matter will end up in court because I think it is unthinkable to think that people signed contracts, in all honesty, served our country and then because of a change of Government those contracts and obligations are not being honoured. I am sure that will end up in court. The issue, as I said, when we looked at the aggregate figures and the figures for line item 6115, Semi - Skilled Operatives and Unskilled, the figure has declined from what was \$95 million to \$70 million. In the Staffing Details, it is stated that there is a decline from 48 to 36. That is a decline of 12 persons. We understand that there were about six or seven people from the New York Consul General Office who were terminated. I should ask how many were terminated and how many were retired – if they were retired because they would fit into this figure at line item 6115. They are not Ambassadors; they are not at the high technical level. They were staff in the New York Consul General Office and six or seven were fired. Did that contribute to the number of 12 that is shown in this figure?

Mr. Greenidge: On the question of the New York Consul General Office the answer is that the contracts of four staff members were not renewed - I will come back to that in a second - and one officer resigned. As regards to the four officers, let me say this was done on the basis of a review. We specifically had an officer, as would happen from time to time, to do an audit on the work being done by the missions, the number of staff they have and whether the two things matched. The recommendation made and accepted by the Ministry was to reduce the number of staff, including, for example, drivers. In a case where there were more than two drivers, the contract of one was not renewed. Let me put it that way, because the contracts came to an end and does contracts were not renewed. There is not an obligation to automatically renew every person's contract and that right was exercised here by the Government.

Ms. Teixeira: Every time I hear of the reduction, it is sad, because I know that office and the volume of Guyanese who go there to get service of all kinds, from passports to stamping the documents and all sorts of things. When they do not know where to find anything they would end up there. It is a good thing that our people in the diaspora have a home, where the largest concentration of Guyanese is, in New York. When the staff is cut by such large amount I am disturbed because the Guyanese there look to the Consul General for service. I know Ambassador Talbot, the United Nations (UN) mission is a different office. I am very deeply saddened to hear, because I know the Guyanese flock there if they want things done, they have

complaints, they need guidance, and so on. If the Government tries to develop this diaspora unit, the relations with the diaspora, I hope, will be treated seriously.

Line item 6241, Rental of Buildings: It has increased from \$5.999 million to \$6.840 million. This again is quite a sizeable increase. Are these going to be new properties that the Ministry is going to be renting for the new Ambassadors and High Commissioners? Or are these just rental increases of the present properties, which are there, in our overseas missions, whether mission offices or Ambassador's residences?

Mr. Greenidge: Before I turn to the second question posed by our honourable colleague, it is just to say that I agree. I do not think anyone over this side denies the importance of New York as a political...if you like an important part of the general polity of Guyana in the context of the diaspora and the quality of service, of course, matters. I am sure that our colleague would be aware that whilst New York is the most important consulate office, it is also the mission for which there are probably the most complaints and the most dissatisfaction. That is really why a senior officer was asked, extensive experience, to go and have a look at what was taking place there.

Sometimes it is useful to hear. I hear my colleague from the back heckling as regards the quality, the nature, the characteristics of the persons fired. Let me say that I would be happy to show him the list of 19 employees, who existed, who were in New York and those who were sent home. I assure the Member that the balance has not changed to any significant extent. At the moment, there are 15 officers in New York. There were 19 and we believe that was too many for what they did.

When we finished the exercise of examining exactly what services would be delivered, as part of diaspora policy, then we would also have to decide on whether the mix with the 15 is right. The numbers may be modified but basically that is the object of the exercise. Let me make it clear. We try to operate in Guyana sometimes without saying things, at least not saying them out loud but saying them *sotto voce*.

2.08 p.m.

The contention of everyone, who has their contract terminated, is always going to be discrimination. This is an empirical issue. In other words, when we look at the numbers the Member can establish whether that has happened. I assure the Member that it has not happened.

As regards to the question of rental, as a result of the changes in a number of missions, to have new rental arrangements. As correctly pointed out, yes we are speaking here of rental in London, Pretoria, Trinidad and Tobago, Boa Vista and Brussels. These are the areas where property will have to be rented for new Heads of Missions because they do not have one at the moment, or the one that is currently held will have to be relinquished.

Ms. Teixeira: I do not know who was heckling what. I am asking the question, so I am not aware of that. It is if other people are heckling on your side. The issue is that my concern is the question, which I am asking, has to do with Guyana's window to the world. That is what the Ministry of Foreign is to me. It is the window of the world. It represents us as a people in all our diversity; it represents our beauty and it represents our calibre. How do we try to represent that? You and I, Sir, have had our own little discussion about filling the Ambassadors and High Commissioners, as quickly as possible. There has been a lot of speculation, including in the newspapers in which names are popping up and I am not sure if that is rumour, or it is persons who are linked into the Government quarters who are putting forward those names, or whether it is actually a formal name coming up. I would sincerely hope, Sir, that, as soon as, your Government can get its act together, that we will have a confirmed list of who the Government is putting forward. I am not saying *agremo* or accreditation, yet. Stop the rumours because we are still not certain who is going to London; who is going to China; who is going to India; who is going to Kuwait; who is going to Pretoria; who is going to Canada; who is going to Belgium. You know the conversation. My concern is that we need our Ambassadors and High Commissioners to be in place. We hope that the process adopted by the Government will be one that is recognising that we are a diverse nation. Diverse in many ways and that the best people are put forward to represent our country. By the way, I hope that there are young people Sir, because you know why. How can we go to world with people in their 80s and late 70s, Sir? I do not mean any disrespect to you, Sir. **[Mr. Greenidge: You cannot.]** Thank you. I do not discriminate against people on age but this is a young world; it is a new electronic information

world. We need to have young people come up and be out there representing our nation with all the energy they can.

Line item 6284, Other, it is under, the heading “Other Goods and Services Purchased”, it increased from \$42 million to \$43 million. The Ministry actually overspent money on this one. The Ministry went from \$33 million to \$42 million last year, it went \$10 million over but it got back the same amount of money. Under the line item Other, what is this going to entail because it is other services, and so on purchased? It is not the legal people that the Ministry is going to hire now in the first programme.

Mr. Greenidge: Might I perhaps take the opportunity, Mr. Chairman, to say to colleagues on the other side that we would like to think that we, more than you, this is not intended rudely, appreciate the importance of the Ministry and the Ministry’s offices, in portraying Guyana to the world and we therefore ascribe the highest importance to the choice of the best candidates available. I think that when you see the list of candidates, you will agree both upon the diversity and the quality of persons chosen. As regards to the question of age, let me just take the opportunity to address this because I cannot give the undertaking in the way that the Member asked it. The point is this - I am not saying this to be contentious - that we have found ourselves with a set of Ambassadors, the bulk of whom have been in office for considerable periods of time, some for as long as 21 or 22 years. Now, if it has been taken into account that this is a country with only 13 missions then you move... [Ms. Teixeira: We were going good but go down that road.] Yes. Well, I am saying that when you remove that top layer, you find that there are people underneath who would not have been posted, although they might have been in the Ministry for eight, ten or sometimes, at least in one case, 18 years. The question of simply appointing young people, let us say as Ambassadors, poses many challenges... [Ms. Teixeira: Let us put younger than 70 years old.] Please listen to me carefully. What I am saying, normally when a Head of Mission is appointed, if that Head of Mission is inexperienced then it can be compensated by having someone on the leave or a set of people on the leave who themselves are experienced in that arena. Now, what I am saying is that that option is not available to us. Many of those, who are younger, will now be serving as the number two and three in these agencies often for the first time. We have already made that move, moved a number of them to those positions, South Africa, London, and elsewhere. I have recommended to

Cabinet, in the light of that, that we ensure, as it is seen in the case of Venezuela, that there is ... Whether they are old or not, it does not matter, it is the experienced and competent Ambassadors who can help to bring the others on in a manner that does not jeopardise our foreign policy. It means that for many of those who are younger, it will take some time. We are looking at two or three years before they will hold such senior positions, but they will be given a chance to be tutored into that position. That is the logic. I hope that our colleagues on the other side will understand that.

Ms. Teixeira: The Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge and I will debate for many a year the issue of calibre, experience and youth to come because I have been around long enough to see people who have the degrees and the education and they cannot work, and they cannot fit into the jobs they are given. They are what you call square pegs in round holes. When we talk about certain things do not let us get academic, but we will continue that debate I am sure. We will be here with you arguing for a while.

I asked about line item 6284, Other, and as I know the Minister is going to get up to answer that one. Line item 6294, Other, under heading "Other Operating Expenses", it has gone up to \$55 million. As I said, line item 6284, Other, under the heading "Other Goods and Services Purchased", has gone up to \$70 million. Could the Minister advise us on what these moneys will be used for and in what way will they help to promote Guyana, overseas and at the bilateral level?

Mr. Greenidge: We will continue on the other matter but I hope that our colleague, on the other side, whilst recognising that a degree does not make one an expert, is not suggesting that we should only employ non degree persons. I know she is not saying that. Why I am just saying it, there is a big gap between those two. We can, of course, debate on the quality of the individual recruits, but there should be some objective criteria for recruiting. We are trying to use that. As regards to the question of line item 6284, this amount includes consultancy services where we have employed, for example, a person, and we have done that in two or three cases, to look at, what the French would call, an administrative audit. It is the question of whether people are working in accordance with the mandate of the entity and also bank charges are in there. There are two elements in there that account for the increases.

Mr. Rohee: I would like to ask the distinguished Minister of Foreign a question on policy with your permission, Mr. Chairman. In keeping with the Government's stated policy of a fresh approach... I would expect that the "fresh approach" manifests itself through all of the Government's agencies and departments, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I would anticipate, that the Hon. Member would not say, in advance of answering the question, that we did not do that, or why did you not do that. The question is whether the Government, through the Ministry of Foreign, following the "fresh approach" would want to consider bipartisan approvals and interviews of Ambassadors, Heads of Missions, in future, as is practised in many other democracies, and in keeping with the whole interest of transparency and accountability. It is because this person will be representing the state of Guyana, not necessarily the ruling party, but the state of Guyana. Since the state of Guyana is made up of a number of key players, it is whether the Government would not want to consider a fresh approach by adopting the bipartisan approach to the appointment of Heads of Missions in future.

Mr. Greenidge: I thank the distinguished Member Clement Rohee for putting this question to us. As it regards this initiative, or feeler, that the distinguished colleague is putting out, I would say that it depends. I would not rule out anything at this stage, but, in all honesty, I would think that it may be difficult to do something as far-reaching as that without the context in which it is being carried out, being better than it is today. Am I making sense? In the sense that this is one very important initiative, but the saleability of it will depend on how we move forward together. I suspect that my colleagues will get very jealous if the Minister of Foreign Affairs were to be seen to be the only Minister with whom such collaboration could take place. It might be fruitful to look at it in its wider context. Let me make two other points.

As regards to the policy, which there is at the moment, it is to avoid announcing. In a sense, let me try and tie in the question raised by the distinguished Member Hon. Ms. Gail Teixeira, that we try to avoid a situation in which we put out a name as an Ambassador-designate and then find ourselves at loggerheads. It would not happen, but, as it is known, it has happened in the past where someone was named publicly, the *agremo* was not got and then the person is embarrassed because of the dialogue that would have gone on over that.

2.23 p.m.

Even on this side, we have moved forward very cautiously. The names that would have been exposed in the newspapers and elsewhere are, by and large, speculations; some of those may be completely inaccurate and some were never considered.

As regards the question of trying to ensure that there is a consensus across the divide, as it were, I can see the virtue of the proposal that you are making, but it has to be the product of a more consistent political initiative. This would be my answer. I do not know whether I missed anything else that was raised.

Mr. Rohee: A follow-up question: Has the distinguished Minister of Foreign Affairs and his Ministry considered the length of period in respect of rotation to the Heads of Missions? What do they anticipate would be the rotation period for moving from bilateral to multilateral, or being re-posted to home and outwards as well?

Mr. Greenidge: The Ministry has a *rule of thumb* as regards the length of postings. This is something I believe my colleagues in the Cabinet may want to have a say in. Do not take what I say as being established policy for the moment.

Basically, I think we are looking, in this very first phase, at periods of two to four years, maximum, in the appointments. The Cabinet may have a different view. For the time being, that is the length of time we are looking at.

As regards shifting from bilateral to multilateral, I do not think that we want to commit ourselves in that regard. I think that should be allowed to be a product of need at any particular point in time and of the capacity of the Heads of Missions.

Some people enjoy a multilateral forum in which there are a set of new issues, such as the structure of the United Nations (UN), *et cetera*. That sort of environment does not find favour with everyone for an extended period of time. They do not mind going for a two-week session or maybe for a few months, but they do not want to have a career that is largely of that.

We have not really given much thought to that rotation, but as the rotations go, we would not like to have too many officers posted any place for more than four years, and certainly not in this initial phase.

Ms. Teixeira: Two short last questions. I know that the Minister has a plane to catch, but I do have questions on the other items too.

Line item 6291 - National and Other Events - \$7.5 million. In this Jubilee year, is that all that is there that has to be shared with all the Missions for any activity regarding the anniversary? It seems to be awfully small for 13 Missions, especially as we are trying to promote our anniversary.

The second issue has to deal with line item 6331 - Refunds of Revenues. I am not sure if this has to do with the issuance of visas, where money is collected in some cases depending on the country, the issue of passports, *et cetera*. There is \$500,000 which is a small amount of money. Is this figure in the wrong place? Is it from the revenue that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs collects from all the visas and the other services that it offers. Where is that refund reflected? Is it here, does it go directly to the Ministry of Finance or does it go to the Ministry of Citizenship, if it is collected from passports? I know that a number of the Missions sometimes have quite a lot of money every year.

Mr. Greenidge: Line item 6331 - Refund of Revenues, pertains to situations in which people apply specifically for passports and then have a change of mind before it is actually issued. So we have to refund the money to those persons. This is something that we are reflecting on because I do not think that this is a facility available in other countries. If one pays for a United States of America (USA) or a United Kingdom (UK) passport and it is not processed, he/she loses his/her money. We will look at that one. The moneys collected for passports that are not refunded will come as a revenue item. It is not shown here.

The question under line item 6291 - National and Other Events. This cost is also met under line item 6294. The truth is that we have been squeezed very tightly on this one, and we have asked the missions not to expect the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to fund many of these activities. They must try and mobilise funds in the capitals in which they are located. It is harsh, but that, I think, is reflecting the situation facing the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Ramson: In relation to the statement that the Hon. Minister made a moment ago about young people not being qualified or ready for positions in the Diplomatic Corps, could the Hon. Minister explain or *explaciate*, what was the recruitment process used, especially *viv-a-vis* - local

and international - for Guyanese nationals or Guyanese national heritage? Could the Hon. Minister say whether any methods of heuristic application or affirmative methods of application has been used in that process? Finally, would the Minister agree with me that judgement is sometimes clouded by the lens of the judge?

Mr. Greenidge: As regards the last question, unless one would be using a machine or a computer, obviously the choice of any applicant has to be informed by the judge. The purpose of having a panel, for example, is that they exercise their judgement. It is obvious that has to occur. The question is not whether the judge is clouded in any way, but whether the criteria that they use are acceptable.

As regards the recruitment process, the question to me has nothing to do with youth. Let me just say that, other than ambassadors, in terms of recruitment, there are almost 100% of persons that have already been recruited. It is a question of promotion and not of recruitment.

In other words, when we are speaking to the diplomatic officers being posted to missions abroad, we are speaking of those who are being transferred from other postings or from Georgetown. Practically, no one would have been recruited into the system and then transferred or newly recruited for transfer abroad.

Mr. Ramson: Follow-up: Given the response by the Hon. Minister, would he then not agree with me that having a restrictive approach or having used that methodology to find young people who may be potentially capable of proceeding or advancing in that particular career, that limited approach of search, also limits the outcomes. Would it not make more sense to expend a little more in the search for young people to be recruited in that sector?

Mr. Greenidge: All I would say at this stage is that the extensive recruitment, which our Colleague might have in mind, is not one that we have gone through. At this point in time, we are making do with staff that we have inherited, except at the level of Heads of Missions. These are essentially staff that have been at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for years. We will come to that down the line.

The recruitment of staff into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at this point in time, is largely predetermined by the Public Service Commission (PSC). The recent staff that would have come

into the Ministry, I am fairly sure for the most part, are those that would have been inherited and would have passed through the Public Service Commission.

Programme: 042 - Foreign Policy Promotion - \$2,284,151,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 043 - Development of Foreign Trade Policy - \$34,580,000

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6116: There are six Contracted Employees and there are some Technical and Administrative staff with only one each under those headings. I am really concerned. Is this a policy shift of the Government in terms of Foreign Trade?

Not only does the Ministry of Foreign Affairs only have six staff now, but its overall budget has declined. What was \$39.8 million went to \$36.8 million in 2015 and is now \$34.5 million. I do not know if it is a policy shift in Foreign Trade or if it is being done somewhere else.

I am quoting from the late Member, Mrs. Deborah Backer's speech of 12th April, 2012, where she pointed out that the Foreign Trade was down to 19 out of a total of 258 staff at that time which was 7.3 % of the Ministry's staff.

When I do my figures, in 2012, there were 19 members; in 2014 there were 12 members; in 2015 there were 9 members and in 2016 there are 6 members. That is 2.1%. I told you that I am not sure if the Minister is giving you the money that you need, or whether there is a policy shift in the Government to move away from the Foreign Trade.

The Minister still talks about the issues of CARICOM (Caribbean Community) Competition, the Competition Commission, the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the African/Caribbean/Pacific countries (ACP) and all the things that I know Foreign Trade deals with. I am now concerned. The staff at Foreign Trade is 2.1% of the entire staff and the entire staff has dropped from 294, in 2015 to 274 in 2016.

2.38 p.m.

Is there any intention to hire more people? Is the Minister changing the direction of the Foreign Trade Policy of the Government or is it shifting more somewhere else? Have people in your

Ministry been moved to the Ministry of Business? I am just trying to understand where we are going in 2016 with Foreign Trade.

Mr. Greenidge: The answer is yes and no, if I may. The specific decline this year is a reflection of the fact that the Director of the unit has been transferred to the Ministry of Business. Associated with that is the fact that the vocational allowances that would be associated with the position are now no longer charged to that.

May I say also, and I think that I am right in saying this, we have an arrangement or there has been for some time, that if there is a need for additional staff, we cannot write that into the budget for the year for which we are requesting funds. That is done retroactively. In other words, if we are anticipating to recruit 15 staff for a particular department or within ministry, it cannot be shown here as an increase in the budget. What I am trying to say to the Hon. Member is that, whilst it is true that there has been this continuous decline over the years, the intention is to strengthen that work because the demands are actually greater than it had been for quite a while.

Programme: 043 Development of Foreign Trade Policy - \$34,580,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 041- Development of Foreign Policy- \$71,000,000

Ms. Teixeira: Hon. Member, under project code - 1200500- Buildings - \$56 million, there is under the Profiles in Volume 3, “1. Construction of building to house the Protocol and Consular Affairs Department and Foreign Service Institute. 2. Provision for a parking lot - \$56 million”. It has in the Profiles that the total project cost is \$114,119,000. So, I assume that, from this information, this is a two-year programme minimum. Are you taking down the present Foreign Service Institute (FSI) and building a new building or are you changing locations? This is a brand new building. The project is a two-year project because it is \$56 million and I guess the balance is for 2017. Is that correct? Do you have designs and are you going to make these public? Where is the parking lot going to be because there is no space on that street? Are you buying land for that purpose?

Mr. Greenidge: The answer to the question is that, the current Ramphal House seems to challenge the contractors/builders, in the sense that they are unable to deal with the flooding from the bottom of the building from the gutters around, as well as, and perhaps more importantly, from the roof. I inherited a set of recommendations that the building should be replaced. It is to be replaced on the same spot. I assume that they would use what they can of what is there, but, essentially, it is a new building. The parking lot will be in Charlotte Street, on the empty lot behind the Ministry.

Ms. Teixeira: Hon. Member, I hope that with the work you are doing with the building, Ramphal House has a lot of history to it, some of the architectural features will not be lost. I see heritage buildings and I really would like to maintain, even in a modern architectural way, some of that historical architecture of the buildings. So I am sure that the National Trust and other bodies can help in that way.

The other issue has to do with project code 2501100 –Office Equipment and Furniture, could we have a breakdown. This has to do with the purchase of equipment and furniture for the VIP Lounge and Head Office. I know that over the years, with different the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry always needed equipment and basic things. Sometimes there are shortages both in the Ministry’s Head Office, and I see that you are dealing with the VIP Lounge at the Cheddie Jagan International Airport. Could we get a break down on how this \$15 million will be split because the VIP Lounge at the Cheddie Jagan International Airport is important for dignitaries, diplomatic corps and our designated officials passing through.

Mr. Greenidge: The plan is to split the \$15 million by apportioning \$10 million to the VIP Lounge and the rest to the equipment for the Headquarters. It is true that there are extensive needs in the main building, in terms of all sorts of equipment and facilities, such as windows and so forth. I think, we recognise that the VIP Lounge is itself in need of reconceptualisation. The state of the bathrooms and furniture for example, leaves a lot to be desired, but that is the amount that is available to us for the moment. We will try and make the best we can with that. In the longer term, one would want to look at perhaps maybe switching the rooms or some such thing. I am saying, in essence, that I realise that a lot more needs to be done, than can be done with \$15 million.

Programme: 041 – Development of Foreign Policy - \$71,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 042 - Foreign Policy Promotion- \$79,000,000

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 2400300 - Land Transport: I see that the Ministry underspent in 2015 by approximately \$7 million and the allocation has decreased, but there is \$24 million for the purchase of vehicles. Could the Hon. Minister say for which missions or ambassadors is this purchase of vehicles for? Also, I assume that the vehicles are meant for person overseas, but I could be wrong. Could the Hon. Minister say who would benefit from the purchase of these vehicles, how many, and which missions or designated posts in Guyana?

Mr. Greenidge: The vehicles are intended for the Heads of Missions in Pretoria and Geneva. It is only two vehicles.

Ms. Teixeira: Those vehicles seem to be cheaper than some of the vehicles being purchased by some Ministries, but the point is noted. Project code 1200500 – Buildings - \$30 million: It does say in the Profiles that the allocation is for the roofs of the Embassies in Washington, Paramaribo, Guyana High Commission in London and security system at Curacaos. It seems again to be a relatively small amount to do some of the works that are outlined here, especially when the labour costs would be higher in these countries, which the Ministry would have to purchase. If our new Ambassador to Venezuelan is going to Venezuela, will there be new housing for that or is the security system here for the Embassy? Is there a request for new housing for the new Ambassador?

Mr. Greenidge: The residence used by the Ambassador in Caracas is the same residence as Guyana had before. The security system will be upgraded to that which applies to the residence. This is the first time that we are going to have security system. There was none there before.

Ms. Teixeira: On the last one, project code 2501000- Office Equipment and Furniture - \$25 million, and again, a slight under spending in 2015. However, \$25 million for furniture and equipment for overseas missions. Could the Hon. Member say which missions would benefit? Will the Ministry use this as an opportunity when it is buying furniture for our overseas missions to send Guyanese furniture or Guyanese manufactured furniture, or are we going to buy just

foreign stuff? At least, in my mind, the missions should at least have pieces of furniture or pieces of Guyana there in the missions to showcase what we produce. Even when we are talking about the Cheddie Jagan International Airport's VIP Lounge and it not being up to standard, I know what you are talking about, but, at the same time, the furniture that is there is Guyanese made and you would want to showcase our country.

I hope that when we we are doing these things, we are not just buying everything that is mass produced and which does not give us an opportunity to showcase. I know that there are household things that have to be purchased that are standard, but wherever in the missions we have an opportunity to showcase what we produce, whether it is furniture or other things, that that be done and therefore also provide economic activities here in Guyana.

Mr. Greenidge: As with the buildings and the need to preserve some kind of distinctive Georgetown architecture, in particular, the distinguish Colleague on the other side share a preoccupation that I have as well. I think the truth is, as regards the furniture, as far as I am advised, it had only occurred once before in recent times. The reason for that is probably two-fold.

2.53 p.m.

I remember when I was a student visiting the High Commission in London and had seen what had become of the wooden furniture there, as the humidity in London seemed more than the treatment that the wood could managed. I do not think that there is an - in principle - objection to that. Some of the missions actually have quite attractive wooden furniture, as the distinguished Colleague knows. But there is no plan in the Budget to buy furniture locally and transfer it, but it is something I think we could keep our eyes on, where that opportunity arises.

Programme: 042 – Foreign Policy Promotion – \$79,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 043 – Development of Foreign Trade Policy - \$126,000

Programme: 043 – Development of Foreign Trade Policy – \$126,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members this brings an end to our consideration of the agency, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I thank the Hon. Minister and his team for their consideration and I thank Hon. Members for their involvement.

Ms. Teixeira: Could I thank the Hon. Minister for the discussion on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I just want to say, and I did not know how to do it, but a lot of information was promised to us yesterday. We have gotten some things, but some of the key questions asked on the Ministry itself have not been provided up to now.

We are getting one or two regions in the dribbles, but some major issues were asked of the previous day, not yesterday, on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and we still have not gotten that information. So Mr. Chairman, could you please encourage the Members who are making promises here. We have no choice but to accept what they are saying, but then some Members are not living up to their promises.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member for drawing it to the attention of the Chairman. Hon. Members, if reminding is needed, I do not believe that it is needed, but if it is needed, then I am reminding Hon. Members of the commitments they made to the House to provide information. It is a living commitment until it is fulfilled. I would ask Members to maintain the basis on which those commitments were given, and that is the strong belief in the Members of the Opposition, that such information would be provided to the House in a timely manner, I suspect.

Agency: 78 – Region 8 – Potaro/Sipruni

Current Expenditure

Programme: 781 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$101,710,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6211 – Expenses Specific to the Agency: There is an increased allocation of \$5 million. Firstly, could the Hon. Minister provide a breakdown as to how the projected expenses would be incurred and what is the additional \$5 million for.

Minister of Communities [Mr. Bulkan]: This line item is to ensure the payments of stipends to 15 village captains in the region, villages Tshaos as well of Deputy Tshaos, at the monthly sums of \$30,000 for the Tshaos, \$15,000 for the Deputy Tshaos, five Senior Councillors at a

sum of \$20,000; 113 Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs) Councillors at the sums of \$10,000 each; and it is to allow for meetings of the RDC, as well as for airfares to facilitate meetings, meals, accommodations for RDC members, travelling expenses for the Regional Chairperson and the Regional Vice-Chairperson; it is also for the purchase of fuel, stationery and janitorial supplies for the office of the Regional Chairperson and the Regional Vice-Chairperson.

Mr. Croal: As a follow-up question, I heard the Hon. Minister mention 113, I think that is a mistake. Having said that, how many RDC meetings are budgeted for? Secondly, is it catered for to ensure that they are being held in the Mahdia Sub-Districts 1 and 2?

Mr. Bulkan: I apologise for the lapse, the Hon. Member is correct. It is 13 Councillors and not 113 Councillors, as incorrectly stated. It is anticipated that five RDC meetings would be held in the year 2016. And, as is customary, these meetings are alternated between Sub-Region One, Kato and Sub-Region 2, where the Regional Administration is based in Mahdia.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Am I hearing correctly that there are going to be five RDC meetings catered for under this line item 6211 – Expenses Specific to the Agency? I would wish to ask the Minister whether he has not acceded to the request for an increased level of meetings since Region 8 is a very vast region. Despite the vastness, I believe that there is a need for much monitoring of the projects and other developmental works taking place in the region. Why is it that there would only be five meetings, even though there has been advocacy for an increase.

Mr. Bulkan: I thank the Hon. Member for the observation, which has considerable merit and validity. It is the desire of the Central Government to have more meetings of the RDC, particularly in Region 8. It is something that Hon. Members may recall that I had lamented, the lack of frequency of these meetings. But it is the case that we are moving from an average of three RDC meetings in the past, so we are increasing that number. The consideration of the Hon. Member is noted and it is a desire of the Administration to have a greater frequency of meetings of the RDC.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, could you please state whether, under line item 6263 – Postage, Telex and Cablegrams or under line item 6265 – Other Transport, Travel and Postage, transportation is provided for the movement of the Geographic Members of Parliament (MPs).

Mr. Bulkan: I would like to thank the Hon. Member for his question, which is one that has engaged the attention of the Ministry. It is actually a gap or I believe the lawyers would refer to it as a *lacuna* in the arrangements, whereby sufficient financial resources are not afforded to the Regional MPs, to enable them to discharge their responsibility.

Under line item 6263 – Postage, Telex and Cablegrams: I do not think any allowance would be made under that line item. Under line item 6265 – Other Transport, Travel and Postage: No provision has been made for support to the Regional MPs under this heading, but it is a consideration that has engaged the attention of the Ministry, one that we hope to rectify sooner rather than later.

Mr. Dharamlall: As a follow-up: Could the Hon. Minister state whether MPs from the People's Progressive Party (PPP) are also under consideration for this type of support.

Mr. Bulkan: I would like to reassure the Hon. Member that this Administration is not one that engages in or practices discrimination. Hon. Members of this House come from both sides and they will be treated with equal respect and accorded such respect.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I would like to ask the Minister whether \$4,500,000 for Fuel and Lubricants is adequate for the Region 8 Administration, knowing very well that many of the communities, particularly in Sub-Region 2, have continuously complained about not seeing the Administration Officer in dealing with some of the matters that are very critical to their development.

Mr. Bulkan: Once again, I would like to thank the Hon. Member for what is indeed a valid consideration. It is the case, however, that the budgetary allocation in 2016 had been increased by some \$600,000 and it represents the step in the right direction. But nonetheless, as I believe, all Hon. Members in this House are aware that Region 8 has its own peculiar challenges, as far as the logistics and the geography are concerned. But nonetheless, budgetary exercise is always a balancing act between how many resources are available and how much could be allocated or expedited in a particular area. The concern is noted, but the provision that we are dealing with is an increase over the year 2015.

3.08 p.m.

Mr. Dharamlall: Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: Could the Hon. Minister state whether the Administration will be providing support to the North Pakaraimas Expo, in 2016, since it has been receiving support since it was established in 2014?

Mr. Bulkan: Subject to correction and to the best of my knowledge, the central Government does provide budgetary and financial support. Did you say the North Pakaraimas Expo, Hon. Member?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes.

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, but I believe that support for that particular activity, traditionally, comes from the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs and not the RDC of Region 8. Such support, I believe, will continue to be offered.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Supplemental: Why is it that the Minister has not tried to bring equity with respect to this event in support? In other areas, like Region 9, the Rodeo is supported by the Government, though many of the Ministries. I find it very unfair that the Ministry of Communities and the RDC of Region 8 are not lending support to this very important cultural event related to Indigenous development.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, it is not a logical deduction to say that, if the regional administration is not providing a direct budgetary subvention, it means it is not providing support to that activity. There are other forms in which such support can be afforded. Nonetheless, it is the case where our 10 regions have their own unique characteristics. It is not one size that fits all. What may be appropriate or applicable in the case of Region 9 or Region 1 may not necessarily be the same for Region 8. I would not like to believe that the Hon. Member is suggesting that the regional administration is not supporting an activity such as this because nothing could be further from the truth.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I am not quite clear. Could the Minister indicate to this House what level of support the Government is prepared to give to the North Pakaraimas Cultural Exposition?

Mr. Bulkan: In keeping with the principle of decentralisation and empowerment, the detail and level of that support would be a decision that would be more properly made at the level of the RDC with support from the centre.

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to tell us what the kilowatt per hour charge is and say whether Programme 781, Regional Administration and Finance, is indebted to the Mahdia Power and Light Company?

Mr. Bulkan: I thank the Hon. Member for the question. I believe that the tariffs in Mahdia are \$100 per kilowatt hour. If I can digress, I think, in the Budget debate, the Minister of Public Infrastructure did allude to the fact that it is expected that, perhaps, by the end of this year or early next year, the Tumatumari Hydro facility is expected to be rehabilitated and made functional with considerable support from the central Government. This development will allow for renewable, reliable, continuous and affordable energy for the residents of Mahdia and Tumatumari. This will considerably reduce the tariff for the benefit of the residents and will bring about development in that subregion of Region 8. I am advised that there is no liability as it relates to the supply of electricity at the Mahdia regional administration.

Mr. G. Persaud: Let me thank the Hon. Minister for his response. With the decrease in the cost for fuel, could the Hon. Minister say whether the residents of Region 8, particularly Mahdia, can expect a reduction in the charge per kilowatt hour for electricity?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the immediate priority, on the part of the Administration, is to increase the number of hours of supply of electricity that residents of Mahdia receive. There is not an immediate short-term consideration to reduce the tariffs. However, as I outlined a moment ago, the plan is a long-term one to provide accessible, continuous and affordable electricity at considerably lower rates than which the residents of Mahdia currently pay.

Mr. Dharamlall: Under line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants - could the Minister please state the unit rate or per litre rate for the gasoline in the North Pakaraimas? I know that there is an administrative office there. I think the public would love to hear that.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure that I understand the line of questioning but the RDC is not in the business of selling fuel. This allocation is to enable the purchase of fuel to be used throughout the Region, in both subregions.

Mr. Dharamlall: Follow-up: To further qualify the question, there is a budgetary allocation of \$4.5 million and there is a subregional office in Kato so, to arrive at this figure, there must be a plan as to how fuel is distributed.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you must ask the question.

Mr. Dharamlall: Sorry, Sir. In the movement of the officials of the subregional office...

Mr. Chairman: Hon Member, what is the question? Please let us not do this this afternoon.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I am trying to simplify the question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, do you want to resume your seat and then ask your question later because...? So, please.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I will go on to another question.

Mr. Chairman: Would you like to address the question?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Do you have the question ready?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Then please put it.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Vice-President and Minister of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs spoke extensively about the Hinterland Education Youth Scheme. It was also mentioned for Region 8...

Mr. Chairman: Do you have a line item, Hon. Member?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, Sir. Under line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships) – I would like to ask the Hon. Minister whether the region has supported the HEYS, to what extent and what activities have been conducted as part of the HEYS so far, and in what villages?

Mr. Bulkan: The allocation under line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships) - does not cater for the HEYS Programme which is a programme that is being administered under the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, as the Hon. Member stated.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Line item 6321 – Fuel and Lubricants: Could the Hon. Minister tell us, in this House, what amount of the \$9 million budgeted for fuel will be assigned to the subregion of North Pakaraimas and what unit cost was used to calculate with respect to the budgetary amount at that line item?

Mr. Bulkan: I believe that the Hon. Member may wish to relook at the figures. It is not the figure that she has stated; I believe that is \$4.5 million.

Mrs. Sukhai- Campbell: Yes, sorry, I was looking at public works.

Mr. Bulkan: The split is roughly 50/50 for subregions 1 and 2 but the landed costs in subregion 1 would be higher as a result of the transportation cost. Even though the acquisition cost, at source, would be common as a result of the transportation cost, the 50/50 would result in a slightly lower volume to subregion 1 than would be received or delivered at subregion 2.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence - \$ 4.4 million: Could the Hon. Minister say whether he will be using sums from this line item to transport fuel into the North Pakaraimas?

Mr. Bulkan: No, Mr. Chairman. Those transportation costs under this line item are for transportation of staff and not materials or fuel.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Could the Hon. Minister then explain to this House how the fuel is expected to arrive at the subdistrict office in Kato and under which line item the expenditure for such expenses is?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I need to be guided by you. I prefer to answer questions against a specific line item.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, would you tell us the line item under which you...?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, I am speaking about the transportation and I gave the line item. I am saying if the Hon. Minister is not...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, it will be helpful if you mention the line item again. The Hon. Minister was making a request. Would you mention the line item so that we can proceed?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I mentioned line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence – enquiring whether expenses from this line item will be used to transport fuel to Kato at the regional subdistrict office. The response was no, so I am seeking, from the Hon. Minister, to explain to this House under which line item he is expected to find the financial resources to transport the fuel to the North Pakaraimas, if it is not under this head.

Mr. Bulkan: That would be under line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations.

3.23 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, do you wish to have the floor again?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: You have the floor, ma'am.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, line item 6264 - Vehicle Spares and Service: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House or provide to this House a listing of the vehicles that will be utilising this line item and which locations will need vehicle spares?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I ask to provide this information, in a short while, to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: Is this under line item 6284 – Vehicle Spares and Service - Hon. Member?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: No, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Is that the number you called?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I asked a question under that line item and the answer is going to come later so I am standing again to gain your attention to ask another question under another line item.

Mr. Chairman: The Chairman wanted to simply bring to the attention of the Hon. Members that his reading of line item 6264 - is Vehicle Spares and Service and not Vehicles, Spares and Service. I just brought that to the attention of Hon. Members but please proceed.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, do I have the floor?

Mr. Chairman: Please, you have the floor, ma'am.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Under line item 6265 - Other Transport, Travel and Postage - I would like to ask the Hon. Minister if the expenditures here will include ensuring that the officers in the subregion will be adequately reimbursed for traveling expenses when they have to attend meetings and do other aspects of their work because this has been a complaint where, sometimes, in the subregion, there is no fuel and they have to use their own resources to get from one place to the next, and the reimbursement policy has been very difficult for them.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that the phenomenon that has just been outlined is not present at this moment; there are no outstanding claims for reimbursement.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6242 - Maintenance of Buildings: There has been an increase. Could the Hon. Minister identify the buildings to be repaired and the occupants of those buildings?

Mr. Bulkan: The buildings that would be maintained under this line item would be the regional administrative buildings. The main building is located at Mahdia. It would include, as well, repairs to the Campbelltown guesthouse, the caretakers quarters, the Mahdia guesthouse, as I said, general repairs to the administrative office including plumbing, repairs to the Assistant Regional Executive Officer (AREO) quarters as well as the District Development Officer (DDO) quarters. It would include, as well, repairs to the fence at the Kato administrative bond, repairs to the walkway and concrete drain at the Kato administrative office as well as the water trestle at the Kato administrative office.

Mr. Croal: Similarly, line item 6255 - Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Could the Hon. Minister provide the information?

Mr. Bulkan: The activities to be funded under this line item are: general repairs to a chain-link fence at the Kato administrative bond... I am sorry; the earlier list that I had read had included line item 6242 - Maintenance of Buildings, the last three items, which are actually the repairs to the chain-link fence at Kato administrative bond. The walkway and the concrete drain at the Kato administrative office and the trestle were under the line item 6255 - Maintenance of Other Infrastructure. I apologise for that.

Programme: 781 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$101,710,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 782 – Public Works - \$149,593,000

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To save time, under line items 6251 -Maintenance of Roads, 6252 - Maintenance of Bridges, 6253 - Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works, 6254 - Maintenance of Sea and River Defenses and 6255 - Maintenance of other Infrastructure, could the Hon. Minister say if any projects are going to be executed in the North Pakaraimas and, if so, could the Hon. Minister please provide the lists for the respective line items? Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, in the interest of time, I do have this information in written form and I undertake to provide it in writing to the Hon. Member, if that is acceptable.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Under line item 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants - could the Minister indicate to this House what levels of activities are going to be conducted to utilise \$9 million in fuel under Public Works?

Mr. Bulkan: This provision is to cater for an enhanced programme for public works in the region. It caters for an increase over the 2015 allocation and is for the provision of fuel to enable increased visits to villages and projects across both subregions of Region 8.

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6264 - Vehicle Spares and Service: Could the Hon. Minister say how many vehicles would be serviced and maintained, to whom these vehicles are assigned and the dates of acquisition of these vehicles by the regional administration?

Mr. Bulkan: The approximate size of the fleet is 12 vehicles and these would be for all of the Programmes - Health, Public Works and Regional Administration. The dates of acquisition are not available at this time but this could be provided subsequently for the benefit of Hon. Members.

Mr. G. Persaud: I thank the Hon. Minister for his response. Mr. Chairman, a follow-up: Under all the Programmes here, from 781 to 785, there are allocations for vehicle spares and maintenance under line item 6264 - Vehicle Spares and Service. I am wondering if the Hon. Minister would want to reconsider the answer he just provided to the question asked.

Mr. Bulkan: Under line item 6264 - Vehicle Spares and Service - the budgetary allocation would be for the Public Works vehicles, including excavators and tractors. It would include, as well, the acquisition of a new tractor and a 4x4 vehicle in 2016.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Under line item 6251 - Maintenance of Roads - could the Minister kindly tell this House whether the roads from Waipa to Paramakatoi are included. This is the road which, I believe, everyone was hoping could be maintained. If not, could he provide to the House a listing of the cost with respect to the roads that will be maintained under this line item?

Mr. Bulkan: The roads which will be maintained under this line item would be the roads from Kato to Cheong Mouth, from Moruca to Monkey Mountain, from Paramakatoi to Kato, from Tuzeneng to Monkey Mountain, from Waipa to Kaibarupai Junction, the trail from Yawong to the PK Junction and from Kopinang to Maikwak. Those will be in the subregion 1 in the North Pakaraimas. In addition, for the benefit of the Hon. Member, under the Capital Estimates, when we get there, are additional provisions for the construction of roads from Chenapau to Maikwak and from Maikwak to Kamana.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, as a follow-up, could the Hon. Minister state, for those roads outlined a few moments ago, whether contracts will be issued to the village councils to execute them?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, Mr. Chairman, that is a practice that has already started under the current RDC, and it is one that will continue. In fact, the expectation is to accelerate progress in that direction.

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you, Hon. Minister. Just to inform you, that practice has been historical under the PPP.

Under line item 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants - could the Hon. Minister please state whether the practice will also involve providing fuel to village councils in case they need fuel from the RDC to execute some of their work?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I believe the Hon. Member is also aware that that is a customary practice and one which will certainly be continued.

3.38 p.m.

Mr. G. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister has been very generous with his information this afternoon and I must commend him, although sometimes he goes farer ahead than what is asked. Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: In the year 2015, \$1 million was allocated under. Three hundred and forty-three thousand dollars was utilised. We are requesting, in 2016, \$1 million. Will the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say why the full allocation was not utilised in 2015 and why it is he is requesting \$1 million for 2016? How will this be utilised?

Mr. Bulkan: The budgetary proposal of \$1 million is expected to be adequate for the supply of electricity under this Programme and it is an increased supply in the year 2016.

Mr. G. Persaud: A follow-up: Maybe I asked that question too fast, Sir. The Hon. Minister has not explained why we only spent \$343,000, in the year 2015, from an allocation of \$1 million?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the anticipation is that a greater volume of printing will be required for contracts relating to the activities, and that activity would be at a greater level in 2016 - use of photocopiers and air conditioners - and that is responsible for the increased allocation in 2016 as opposed to a lower level of usage in 2015.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There was an increase of six contracted employees. Could the Minister provide to the House a list of all the contracted employees and their emoluments?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, as the legend identifies, there are 14 employees under this heading. These are mainly Labourers, three Equipment Operators, four Engineers, four Service Men and one Caretaker. In the case of the Engineer, the salary is \$180,000. For the operators, it varies in the range of approximately \$70,000. It is \$50,000 in the case of the Labourers.

Mr. Croal: As a follow-up to this very line item, could the Hon. Minister indicate the locations of the Engineers?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the Engineers are based at Mahdia and they travel to subregion 1.

Programme: 782 – Public Works - \$149,593,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 783 – Education Delivery - \$670,754,000

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, thank you. Could the Hon Minister state, under line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants, what has led to this massive increase?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the increase in the budgetary allocation caters for the opening of the Kato Secondary School, which is a new facility in the region, and for increase support for transportation to children across the region but, in particular, in the North Pakaraimas, in subregion 1, to get to and from school.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, as a follow-up, could the Hon. Minister please state how much or give a breakdown of the fuel and lubricants, specifically how much will be going to the Kato Secondary School?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, that level of detail is not available at this moment but the general principle has been outlined.

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6111 – Administrative - and line item 6112 – Senior Technical: At line item 6111, there are 14 staff members as against 16 in 2015, and, at line item 6112, there are

39 staff members as against 34 in 2015. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to, under line item 6111, say to us the designations of the two persons who are no longer there and whether all the persons under line items 6111 and 6112 are trained teachers?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the two employees, the reduction of staffing by two under line item 6111, are one head teacher and one graduate headmaster. At line item 6112, the new appointments are assistant masters, temporary teachers and one acting teacher.

Mr. G. Persaud: Sir, a follow-up: The acting teachers and temporary teachers cannot be reflected under line items 6111 or 6112. The question that I ask was if the 14 persons under line item 6111 and the 39 persons under line item 6112, both sets of persons, are holders of the trained teachers certificate.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, that is correct. There are five additional trained teachers.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, this is the last question. Go ahead.

Mr. Dharamlall: Could the Hon. Minister please state the breakdown under line item 6292 – Dietary? How much is going to be provided to each school and the dormitory and how many students are being catered for in the respective schools?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, this allocation is to cater for the provision of meals for 300 resident students at the Kato dormitories at an estimated cost of \$1,851 per student per day, as well as for provision of meals at the Mahdia dormitories.

Programme: 783 – Education Delivery - \$670,754,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 784 – Health Services - \$242,709,000

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, under line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants, could the Minister say why a mere \$7 million is allocated to this line item with respect to health and its activities and services in the Region, when education jumped from \$10 million to \$30 million, including line item 6265 – Other Transport, Travel and Postage - and under Education another \$18 million, and these are basically for fuel? Mr. Chairman, I would also like an explanation on

such a disparity, when health is an important issue with respect to the people's life and well-being in both subregions.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the Hon. Member for the question. First of all, there is an increase in the budgetary allocation from \$4,551,000 to \$7 million. A significant reason that is responsible for the fact that this figure has not gone up higher is as a result of the availability of doctors in villages being greater than had obtained in the past, resulting in a reduced and less need for travelling within the villages to seek medical attention.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House how many doctors are deployed in the subregion of the North Pakaraimas and at which locations and whether, in every village, there is a doctor because the villages are very far apart?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, unfortunately, there are not doctors in every village but there are doctors now in Kopinang, Paramakatoi and Kato.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: A follow-up: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister state how he is going to dispense the fuel with respect to villagers travelling to these three locations where doctors are now deployed?

3.53 p.m.

Mr. Bulkan: The system allows for support by the regional administration for residents to access health care. This is done on a needs basis.

Mr. Dharamlall: Could the Hon. Minister please state under line item 6221, Drugs and Medical Supplies, for \$30.672 million whether the procurement of drugs and supplies will be done directly by the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) or will it be warranted through the Ministry of Health?

Mr. Bulkan: I thought we had addressed this issue satisfactorily. I am surprised it is reappearing here again. I did say that the policy is consistent for all ten of the regions and the explanation has already been provided on more than one occasion yesterday.

Mr. Dharamlall: Line item 6292, Dietary: Could the Hon. Minister please state the breakdown of the \$10.543 million and what is the unit cost per meal per day?

Mr. Bulkan: It is to cater for meals at the Mahdia District Hospital. The average cost per meal is \$1,000.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I will allow two other questions.

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6242, Maintenance of Buildings: Will the Hon. Minister give us the building location and sum that will be spent on each building in the year 2016? Sir, did you say two questions?

Mr. Chairman: You have one question, Sir. Hon. Member Ms. Campbell-Sukhai has the last question.

Mr. Bulkan: The buildings to be maintained under that line item are the Maraikobai Health Centre, budgeted repairs to the sum of \$3 million, the Mahdia District Hospital Mortuary - \$3.6 million, the Kopinang Medic Quarters - \$6 million, the Kopinang Doctor's Quarters - \$1 million, electrical installation at the medic quarters in Kopinang, approximately \$1.2 million, repairs to the El Paso Health Hut - \$1.2 million, repairs to the Kurukabaru Health Post - \$1.8 million, electrical repairs at the Mahdia District Hospital - \$6.5 million, repair to the Itabac Medic Quarters - \$1.3 million and ancillary purchasing of building materials for the sum of \$1.2 million.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Under line item 6116, Contracted Employees: Could the Hon. Minister say whether any of the increased employment under this category will be deployed at the Mountain Foot Health Centre which is in dire need of personnel? If not, would it be under line item, 6113, Other Technical and Craft Skilled workers? If not, when does he intend to outfit that health centre with personnel?

Mr. Bulkan: Hon. Member, the temporary arrangements are for the medic stationed at Paramakatoi to provide services at the Yawong or Mountain Foot Health Clinic until permanent staff can be recruited later on to be based at that location.

Programme: 784 – Health Services – \$242,709,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 785 – Agriculture – \$16,401,000

Mr. G. Persaud: Would the Hon. Minister answer this question because I cannot direct it to any specific line item except to say line items 6111, 6112, 6113, 6114, 6115, 6116 and 6117? Who will execute and implement this programme? The reason is that there is no staffing under this programme.

Mr. Bulkan: This is a new programme being developed by the RDC of Region 8. It is to allow for the utilisation of the agricultural potential of the region. There are two officers currently based at Kato under the Ministry of Agriculture and the budgetary allocation is to provide for support to this programme, to enable the cultivation of agriculture produce, to reduce the amount of agricultural products brought into the region from out of the region.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I am very happy that finally the region is moving to execute an agricultural initiative. However, I wish to correct the Minister...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: ...that agricultural produce...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: ...that sub- region is the backbone of the agricultural region.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, when the Chairman is speaking Hon. Members would take their seats. You cannot form a practice of speaking over the voice of the Chairman. If you have a line item then please present your question.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: This is a new initiative and I am complimenting the Minister for introducing such an initiative in the region. As a Member of this Assembly, as a representative of the people, particularly those located in hinterland regions...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: ...I do think that I have that right in this Assembly to compliment the Minister on any new initiative that will bring positive impact on people's lives. What I will like to ask is whether, under line items 6111 to 6117, there will be the consideration of employment of young Indigenous females and males within this programme, or as is the case, if employees

will be imported from outside who, as far as I and the Regional Executive Officer (REO) know, have done no justice to the agriculture sector with respect to the development of agriculture in the North Pakaraima.

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

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, I crave your indulgence and I will ask my colleague to wait a while because I would like a response...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you have the floor. If you do not wish the floor I will put the question.

Mr. Dharamlall: I will like to commend the RDC on this initiative, this new programme. My question is under line item 6253, Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works. Could the Hon. Minister state in which village or villages and what type of drainage and irrigation works will be executed?

Mr. Bulkan: The provision is to enable the adequate supply of irrigation water to villages particularly in the North Pakaraima.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, it is a follow-up. Could the Hon. Minister state which villages?

Mr. Bulkan: It would be several villages across subregion 1, ranging from Monkey Mountain in the south to Paramakatoi as well as Kato, subregion 2, Campbelltown and other villages such as Chenapau and Maikwak.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Minister. I will permit one other question.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, I seek your indulgence for two questions. Line item 6264, Vehicle Spares and Service, there is an allocation of \$900,000 but this is a new programme. Could the Hon. Minister indicate what is this catering for?

Secondly, line item 6281, Security Services: What are the locations in which the security services will be provided and the amount of hours at those locations?

Mr. Bulkan: The provision under line item 6264 would be for the acoushi ants eradication programme. Line item 6281, the location for security services will be at the shade house locations initially which will be at Kopinang, Kato and Mahdia.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, this is not a new question but it is a follow-up. The Hon. Minister indicated the acoushi ants eradication programme. Could he explain further what expense is entailed there?

Mr. Bulkan: It is for the vehicles that are used in support of that programme.

Programme: 785 – Agriculture – \$16,401,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

4.08 p.m.

Assembly resumed

Assembly suspended at 4.09 p.m.

Assembly resumed at 5.27 p.m.

In Committee of Supply

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 781 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$21,187,000

Mr. Dharamlall: Project 1209000, Buildings – Administration, as well as project 1209100, Furniture and Equipment Administration: Could the Hon. Minister please state to whom these quarters would be allotted and to which offices the furniture and equipment be allotted?

Mr. Bulkan: Project 1209000, Buildings – Administration, the budgeted sum of \$15 million is for staff quarters at the Assistant Regional Executive Officer (AREO) in Kato and the other project code – furniture and equipment would be for Mahdia and Kato, beds, dining sets, fridges and suites.

Programme: 781 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$ 21,187,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 782 – Public Works - \$53,764,000

Mr. Croal: Project 1100800, Bridges: Could the Hon. Minister indicate the bridge to be constructed and a brief description.

Mr. Bulkan: The budgeted sum of \$18 million is for a solitary bride at Itabac, a bridge that is expected to be approximately a 180 feet long.

Mr. Croal: Project 1401200, Roads: It is the roads to be constructed, similarly the description of the roads and the length of the road and where the roads will be constructed.

Mr. Bulkan: The two sections of roadway would be in the first instance from Chenapau to Maikwak an approximate distance of 30 miles and the second stretch is from Maikwak to Kamana, also an approximate distance of the same 30 miles.

Mr. Dharamlall: Could the Hon. Minister please state under projects 1100800 and 1401200, Bridges and Roads, if those contracts would be allocated to the village councils as use to be done in the previous administration?

Mr. Bulkan: The activities under the recurrent, the current expectation is that the village councils will be responsible for the execution of those projects. However, in the case of these capital projects the may be a capacity issue. While the village councils and persons from the villages will be engaged and involved they will not necessarily be the contractors that will be awarded these contracts, but they will get a piece of the pie.

Mr. Croal: Project 2402200, Land and Water Transport: Could the Hon. Minister indicate the vehicle as well as the tractor and trailer where it would be located and to whom?

Mr. Bulkan: Both pieces of equipment are for use at Mahdia. The vehicle is a 4x4 Double Cab pickup and the tractor as well is to be located at Mahdia.

Mr. Croal: As a follow-up on the same project, could the Hon. Minister indicate whether there is an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) available, under the programme Public Works, for the North Pakaraima for them to do similar inspection in central projects and how many, if there is?

Mr. Bulkan: I am informed that there two ATVs that are currently operational for use in the North Pakaraima and that there is an additional three that are catered for to be repaired and to be put in use during the course of this year.

Programme: 782 – Public Works - \$53,764,000 agreed to and ordered to stand pat of the Estimates.

Programme: 783 – Education Delivery - \$70,664,000

Mr. Dharamlall: Project 1204400, Buildings – Education: Could the Minister please provide the Assembly with a breakdown of the buildings and the estimated cost attached to each one?

Mr. Bulkan: A breakdown and the complete details of all of the activities under the capital programme, a list of those, have been supplied via the Clerk for Hon. Members, but if you would allow me, Mr. Chairman, there are five activities. These are, firstly, a rollover project which is for the construction of the Maraikobai Nursery School, a budgeted sum in 2016 of \$13.3 million, rehabilitation of the kitchen at the Paramakatoi Secondary School dorms - \$4.8 million, rehabilitation of the Paramakatoi Industrial Arts - \$4.5 million, the rehabilitation of the sanitary block at the Paramakatoi Secondary School, approximately - \$5 million and the District Education Officer (DEO) quarters at Paramakatoi for approximately \$9 million.

Mr. Dharamlall: It is a follow-up on education again. If you permit me, Sir, could the Hon. Minister state any outside date when the facility at Kato will be officially opened?

Mr. Bulkan: I am actually surprised that the Hon. Member, who seems to be very well informed about activities in the region, would want to draw attention to this complex at Kato which is plagued with problems. Right now, that facility is not in a condition that it can be used for the intended purpose. A detailed assessment is being done now by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and we are awaiting the findings of those investigations to be able to make a determination as to when that facility can be used for the benefit of the education programme and delivery in Region 8.

Ms. Manickchand: It is on the same project dealing with the Kato complex.

Mr. Chairman: Which project is that?

Ms. Manickchand: A follow-up to the question that was asked before, Sir. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to tell us if the contractual period for the construction of Kato is over?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure, do you have the answer?

5.41 p.m.

Minister of Public Infrastructure [Mr. Patterson]: Sir, the contractual period is up on June, 2016. There are independent auditors right now, as we speak, in with the contractor and the consultant. There were several severe defects. As the Member asked, 60% of the test done on the concrete failed, a further 30% was just borderline and only 10% passed. That was done independently. The independent consultants, contractor and the Ministry of Education are up there, right now, to see what rectifications can be done.

Ms. Manickchand: It is a follow-up to the follow-up. It would be a two-part question. If indeed the independent auditors find that there have been breaches either by the contractor and or consultant, is the Government prepared to take the necessary steps to recover whatever the state would have lost under the contract?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I thank you for the question. Hon. Minister, will the Minister of Public Infrastructure answer?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes Sir.

Mr. Patterson: The Government has already commenced in taking the necessary steps and we will continue to ensure that the residents of Kato and Region 8 have a building which they feel safe to occupy, and it is of some value to the people of Guyana.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Minister of Public Infrastructure.

Ms. Manickchand: Your Honour, we want to say that we are supportive of any action that would realise our vision for a secondary school in Region 8, that would allow the region to have universal secondary education, including if it is found necessary. We do not want to judge anybody here, to take whatever action is necessary against any defaulting party in the building and construction of the Kato Secondary School.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member. Well, I do not know if the Hon. Minister has a comment on it, but it was not a question.

Mr. Bulkan: It is just a final brief comment. I actually visited this facility on three occasions, twice when I was a Member on the opposite side, and then more recently, the first week of 2016. In fact, New Year's Day of this year, I was in Monkey Mountain, and then three days after that I visited the Kato Secondary School complex. The defects of that facility go beyond the mere issues relating to the building itself. There are actually other design flaws, which the contractor alone would not be responsible for. The administration, as we have just heard, is engaged in doing an investigation to determine the physical integrity of the structure. Some of the design flaws, regrettably we will not be in a position to correct those. It is unfortunate, because this is a massive investment and it is going to cost almost \$1 billion from the national treasury, but we have to ensure that structurally this building is safe for the use of our children. That is what the repair job is that we are engaged in now.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member. Hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure, do you want to comment?

Mr. Patterson: I would just like to close on this in 30 seconds, Sir. It is just to state that as a matter of policy that actually the sad affairs around Kato Secondary School is what gave rise to Cabinet instructing myself to establish an inspectorate division, Sir. Just for the Hon. Member to know, it is because of that situation.

Mr. Dharamlall: In the current programme education, the RDC had prepared a budget, a dietary budget, and part of the dietary budget towards Kato Secondary School. I asked the Hon. Minister what the outside date is of the opening of the school, and the Hon. Minister went ahead to prepare a budget for dietary for the school, but now is unable to say when the school will be opened. I am a bit confused. I would be grateful for some clarification on that, Sir.

Mr. Bulkan: In the event that the building is used, the provision is made for the provision of dietary resources from September.

Programme: 783 – Education Delivery – \$70,664,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 784 – Health Services – \$59,385,000

Mr. Dharamlall: Project 2402200, Land and Water Transport: Could the Minister please advise on what type of ambulance and where it would be located?

Mr. Bulkan: Once again it is with great reluctance that I make this comment. It is because the Hon. Member would have been advised by his colleagues that in the year, I believe, 2012, an ambulance at the sum of \$12 million was procured and sent into Mahdia. An ambulance that received wide publicity in the media, and photographs of it was in the *Stabroek News* newspaper. The ambulance made one solitary trip when it went in there and it was of no use, another such like the water cannon. This is for a replacement for that ambulance, which was sent into Mahdia, that never worked and never served the region. This \$12 million is budgeted under this capital programme for an ambulance to be based at Mahdia.

Mr. Dharamlall: Project 2504800, Furniture and Equipment – Health: Could the Hon. Minister please provide a breakdown of the \$13,670,000 and the allotment of the different types of equipment?

Mr. Bulkan: As I had said earlier, the complete details of all of the capital expenditure has been provided for the benefit of Hon. Members. All of the items, under this programme, have been supplied but basically it is medical equipment for the Mahdia District Hospital.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, as a follow-up. Could I ask the Hon. Minister, maybe it slipped me, Sir, when will equipment for the Yawong Health Centre be procured or if they have been procured already?

Mr. Bulkan: I thank the Hon. Member for that follow-up question. Some of the equipment on the list that the Hon. Member will receive is for villages in the North Pakaraima and some of that will be for the Yawong Health Centre.

Mr. Hamilton: I am dealing with the purchase of the ambulance. That is project 2402200, Land and Water Transport: Could Minister indicate the type of ambulance to be procured?

Mr. Bulkan: The specifications, which the Hon. Member is seeking, will be provided subsequently.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, if you will allow me. My brief stint at the Ministry of Health, I have always argued and sought to say to Regions 1, 7, 8, 9 and 10 that the mistake that we continue to make is to procure ambulances that are basically coastal ambulances. I would just proffer to the Minister and his team that consideration for ambulances in Regions 1, 7, 8, 9 and 10 should be 4 x 4 land rover type ambulances and not the minibus type of ambulances.

Mr. Bulkan: I thank the Hon. Member for his suggestion.

Mr. Gill: As a follow-up, perhaps the Hon. Minister can consider standardising these ambulances so that parts could be brought for all of them, in general, as opposed to buying parts for different models.

Mr. Bulkan: Of course, what the Hon. Member is recommending is some variance to the advice just given, save and except that he is probably referring to ambulances for hinterland regions, Hon. Member.

Mr. Gill: That is correct.

Programme: 784 – Health Services– \$59,385,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 785– Agriculture – \$17,000,000

Mr. Dharamlall: Project 1217700, Buildings – Agriculture: The legend states Mahdia, Kopinang and Paramakatoi will receive greenhouses. Could the Hon. Minister please state how the cost will be allocated to each greenhouse and what are the dimensions of each greenhouse, and what types of crops will be cultivated in the different greenhouses?

5.56 p.m.

Mr. Bulkan: The approximate cost for each of these green houses is \$1.3 million. The dimensions are 24ftx18ft. The crops that would be cultivated in these green houses are vegetables and lettuce.

At the Kopinang location, strawberries have been successfully grown and this will continue. The produce would be sold and utilised in the Dietary Programmes that the Government spends

hundreds of millions of dollars on. As I said earlier, a lot of the produce have been brought in, on some occasions, from outside of the region. It is all part of the new initiative on the path to self-reliance and the concept of teaching the individuals to fish rather than continue to supply fishes.

Mr. Dharamlall: A follow-up: Could I also recommend to the Hon. Minister that the Kato Secondary School compound also receive a green house?

Project Code 1702000 - Agricultural Development: Could the Hon. Minister please state what type of tools would be procured and to whom they would be provided?

Mr Bulkan: It is an assortment of tools to support that very programme and includes chain saws, fogging machine, pumps for irrigation, brushcutter, planting materials, files, axes, spraycans, rakes, shovels and buckets.

Mr. Dharamlall: Under the Agricultural Programme: Could the Hon. Minister please advise or share what the sustainability plan is to ensure that this programme continues and becomes viable and successful?

Mr. Bulkan: This initiative is starting at a very modest scale and it is hoped that this programme will take root and get much stronger, comprehensive, and that it will be replicated and taken to more locations, not only in Region 8, but to other hinterland regions.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I will allow two more questions after, Mr. Dharamlall.

Mr. Dharamlall: Could the Hon. Minister please state whether the village councils would be responsible for the management of these green houses or whether it would be private individuals. What type of training has already been provided to those individuals on the management of green houses?

Mr. Bulkan: What is envisaged, and what is taking place, is a partnership of the RDC, the village councils and persons in the village, under the guidance of the village council.

I am also pleased to inform the Hon. Member that the Deputy Regional Executive Officer (DREO) of Region 8, who is here with us, Mr. Gavin Gunga, is a trained Agriculturalist with years of experience. He is one of the persons who is providing support to this programme.

Programme: 785 - Agriculture - \$17,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Agency: 79 Region 9: Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo

Current Expenditure

Programme: 791 - Regional Administration and Finance - \$147,487,000

Mr. Charlie: Line item 6211 - Expenses Specific to the Agency - \$30.549 million: Could the Hon. Minister explain, specifically, the purpose of the expenditures and the sum that makes up the budgetary allocation?

Mr. Bulkan: This allocation provides for stipends to 32 Toshaos in the region at a monthly sum of \$30,000 each; 35 Deputy Toshaos - \$15,000 each; 22 Senior Councillors - \$20,00 each; 13 Regional Councillors at \$10,000 each; and expenses relating to the managing of the Office of the Regional Chairman.

Mr. Charlie: A follow-up: From a quick calculation, the stipends for Toshaos, Deputy Toshaos and Senior Councillors amounts to \$23.6 million, the statutory meeting of the RDC totals \$4.9 million and the stipends for Regional Councillors totals \$1.5 million. To that point, it is \$30.1 million and the budgetary allocation for line item 6211 is \$30,549.

I would like the Hon. Minister to say if this budgetary allocation for Region 9, at line item 6211, is adequate?

Mr. Bulkan: The sum of \$30.549 million is the provision that has been made, it is the budgetary allocation, as was explained when the question was posed. There is always the likelihood that, perhaps, some of the activities cannot be undertaken to the full scope and that the programme is expected to work within the budgetary allocation.

Mr. Dharamlall: Line item 6211: I have received reports from Lethem that the police had met with the villages that own mini-buses which were provided by the Government. They were told that they had to park in a central area and then find transportation to move across Lethem and elsewhere. They have complained that that is expensive for them; they are very poor people. I am asking if the Hon. Minister is aware of what taking place regarding that matter?

Mr. Bulkan: That issue would not be catered for under this budgetary allocation.

Ms. Teixeira: Going back to line item 6211, the question that was asked by my Colleague was whether this money would be sufficient. Sir, are you aware that there was a virement under this by the region in order to allow for the additional costs that were involved because the money was not enough?

I understand, and I am informed, that this request for additional moneys was made to the Permanent Secretary, through the Regional Chairman, Mr. Brian Allicock, the brother of the Vice-President. Furthermore, there is even a request so *[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman, I am appealing to you. We are trying to think that we have notes and all these big books. We are asking questions and there is a *tra la la* gang over there interrupting us all the time. I am asking a serious question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the Standing Orders should have a meaning for all of us, not only when it is convenient for us. In the House, the Standing Orders should always guide us. Members who are on their feet are not to be interrupted. The Standing Orders say that Members should listen in silence. Please proceed, Hon. Member.

Ms Teixeira: The \$30.5 million is exactly the same as last year. I understand that there was an appeal to your Ministry to increase the amount of money, even before the year ended because the RDC was running out of money for meetings, *et cetera*.

I think the region eventually did a virement from somewhere and they were able to have a meeting in December. By putting back the same amount of money, knowing that there had to be a virement last year for an additionality, is unfortunate that the line item did not include at least the virement. This region, as Members know, is a big region, and meeting twice every two months is really impossible for them to function. In fact, I believe that Minister Allicock had proposed to the Ministry of communities that Toshaos and the Deputy Toshaos could be placed under a different head or under the RDC. That was just an idea they had and I do not think it is workable.

Could we ask the Minister, if with the same amount of money as last year, knowing that the Ministry had run out of money, he would be prepared to come with a supplementary allocation to

allow this region to do its work, with adequate funds, under this head.

Mr. Bulkan: The question, as I understand it is that the Hon. Member is saying that there was a request on the part of officials in the RDC of Region 9 for additional allocations to be made to this programme. The Hon. Member is citing an instance where a request was made in December for additional supplementary resources. It was not a virement, it was a request for additional resources.

I believe that the appropriated expenses under this Budget is roughly about \$213 million. I am sure that if we were to enquire from the Minister of Finance or the members of his team, that the request would have been received from all of the agencies, ministries and RDCs, that the sum total of those requests would have, perhaps, been four or five times the \$213 billion that represent the appropriated expenses under this budget.

6.11 p.m.

Resources are finite, as we understand it, and not all of the requests can be accommodated, but the sum of \$30.54 million is provided to the RDC of Region 9 for those activities that have been outlined.

Ms. Teixeira: I do not want to beat a dead horse, in the sense that, line item 6211- Expenses Specific to the Agency, when we check the other interior regions of Regions 1, 7, 8, 9 and 10, which have Amerindian villages, this is the only region where the allocation is exactly the same as 2015. Let us just flip the page to Region 10 just because it is the other region coming and we would see that it has increased from \$28 million to \$34 million and that region does not have to pay Toshias and Deputy Toshias for all of those villages.

So that is what I am saying, they have some, but it is not like the villages that are in Region 9. Region 9 has the largest number of Amerindian villages in the whole country, so do not compare it with Region 10.

I am using the allocation at line item 6211. I am saying that I understand that the Ministers of Finance are always inundated. I have been there. We know that. We are always begging them for more money, but this is an issue where the region that has the largest Amerindian village population has had the exact allocation for line item 6211. Even if it is a minimum increase or a

little increase. This region is exactly the same and that is the point I am making. I am not begging the Minister for \$10 million or \$20 million more. I am just asking for the Minister to please relook at this figure and do some examination to see how this region, under this particular heading, can be allowed to have more in it to allow the region to function, such as the RDC, Toshaos, and everybody. That is all I am saying.

Mr. Bulkan: I thank the Hon. Member for the observation and for her comments.

Mr. Dharamlall: On the advice given last year by the Hon. Minister of Finance, I would like to invoke programme budgeting 791- Regional Administration and Finance. As was discussed, Region 9 is extremely huge. When our residents travel to Lethem, almost 100 miles in some cases and then have to pay expenses to move from a central point to other areas, I would like to find out from the Hon. Minister whether he has been advised of that meeting that the police had with those mini-bus operators, and whether the Hon. Minister would be amenable... [Ms. Ally: Which line item...] It is called programme budgeting. Whether the Hon. Minister would be amenable to having that proposal put down in the mean time?

Mr. Bulkan: Our local democratic organs are empowered under our Constitution to be responsible for practically all areas relating to daily activities, including public safety and security. So, now that I am aware of the concern, I would certainly seek, upon confirmation, to have a fuller discussion as to the rational and necessity that would have led to such a decision.

Mr. Charlie: Line item 6264 - Vehicle Spares and Services: Could the Hon. Minister kindly indicate to the House if repairs to the vehicle used by the Regional Chairman is catered for under this line item?

Mr. Bulkan: Repairs to the vehicle being used by the Regional Chairman are not catered for under that line item, but under the previous line item 6211- Expenses Specific to the Agency that was discussed.

Mr. Charlie: Line item 6312 - Subvention to Local Authorities - \$4,136,000: Could the Hon. Minister explain the increased budgetary allocations, what it entails, and the sum attached?

Mr. Bulkan: As the Hon. Member is aware, the status of Lethem has been upgraded to that of a municipality and it now the recipient and beneficiary of an increased subvention, in keeping with that status.

Mr. Dharamlall: As a follow-up, could the Hon. Minister state how long after Local Government Elections (LGE) would the town of Lethem become rateable?

Mr. Bulkan: There is not a specific time table or a date, but those discussions would commence at an early stage.

Ms. Teixeira: Just a follow up to the Hon. Member under line item 6312. Right now, we have a bit of anomaly in that the National Democratic Council (NDC) still exist and the Government has declared a township. When is the Government going to bring the Orders to repeal the NDC so that it would not have parallel things in law. That is number one and that needs to be done.

Secondly, will this money be disbursed after the election on 18th March or will it be disbursed before? The reason why I am asking is because, right now, there is an NDC and a municipality by Order, but it does not exist. When is the NDC going to be repealed to not have this anomaly of having two local authorities existing simultaneously?

Mr. Bulkan: The regulations, naming the area of Lethem as a town, were already laid and that status obtains. So, even though there is an existing NDC or rather it is a management council, an Interim Management Committee (IMC) that is in place, the elections that are to be held on 18th March, 2016 will be for a municipality so that the council that will come into being will be a municipality. But for the township of Lethem, those regulations had already been laid in 2015.

Ms. Teixeira: I think the Member misunderstood me, in that there is an NDC in existence now with NDC members, now called IMC. In law, there is an MCC by Order. The Order was distributed in this House, so, I know about it, I am well aware of it, but, the Government did not repeal, at the same time, the areas that are NDCs. So, because the Government has created an MCC, it does not mean it automatically dissolves the NDC. It has to be repealed, and it needs to be done for Lethem, Bartica and Mabaruma, which were all NDCs. So that there are simultaneous things. The Orders are right in terms of how the Government did the MCCs, but they have to correct the repealing. The NDCs have to be repealed in law.

Mr. Bulkan: The advice by the Attorney General Chambers is that, by the naming of a township, in legal language I believe *ipso facto* that it is self-evident that two statuses cannot be enjoyed at the same time. So, what obtains is that it is not necessary to repeal the original status because it is taken care of by itself, under the regulations, naming it, according it to higher status.

Mr. Chairman: I would allow three more questions Hon. Members.

Mr. Dharamlall: As a follow-up, under line item 6312: Could the Hon. Minister please state whether it is the intention of his Government to make Lethem rateable and when.

Mr. Bulkan: The Hon. Member may recall that the Hon. Minister of Finance, when he spoke in his wrap up of the Budget, among other things, had alluded to the necessity that funding for local government organs are expected to be generated from within their jurisdictions. So, the broader principle is that it does apply, that financing and funding for local authority areas, a certain portion or percentage of that is to be generated by way of rates. I am not sure if any area was going to be excluded from that general principle or framework.

Mr. Charlie: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: There is an increase of five contracted employees in 2016. Could the Hon. Minister indicate the designations, remuneration, and other emoluments?

Mr. Bulkan: The five addition employees under this category are three Drivers at an average monthly salary of \$50,000 each and two Cleaners at the same salary scale.

Programme: 791 - Regional Administration and Finance - \$147,487,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 792 - Agriculture- \$35,458,000

Mr. Dharamlall: Programme budgeting 792 – Agriculture: Could the Hon. Minister state whether beyond the intervention of the Community Development Council (CDC), the RDC would be providing support to farmers who have been affected by the long drought that had ravished the agriculture in Region 9?

Mr. Bulkan: The main emergency interventions that are being provided to affected villages and persons in Region 9 are being provided via the Community Development Council, but with active support from the RDC.

Mr. Charlie: Line item 6231- Fuels and Lubricants: I have seen a decrease in the budgetary allocation in 2016, could the Hon. Minister explain the decrease?

6.26 p.m.

Mr. Bulkan: There is a reduction in the amount of vehicles that are being used under this programme. I am advised that, instead of the three vehicles that were available under this programme, there is only one that is serviceable at this stage.

Mr. Dharamlall: Again, under line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence, could the Hon. Minister state, as part of the monitoring of agriculture in Region 9, what is the approximate cost of the devastation cause by the drought. Secondly, why is it that the Administration is requesting villages, based on reports that I have received, to make contact with the Administration in terms of receiving support from the Administration rather than going out to provide support to our villages and people?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I would need your guidance, but I would venture to suggest that the reports that are being provided by the Hon. Member constitute hearsay.

Mr. Charlie: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings - \$8 million: Could the Hon, Minister kindly indicate the number of buildings that would undergo maintenance, the sum for the buildings and their locations.

Mr. Bulkan: There are three interventions that are being funded under this allocation. The first is to rehabilitate the Foot and Mouth Facility - the dip at Annai, the budgeted sum is \$3 million. The second is for repairs to living quarters in Lethem, building number R 47, the budgeted sum is \$4 million. And repairs to living quarters at Mickey's Landing, in the South Pakarima for the budgeted sum of \$1 million.

Mr. Dharamlall: This is not a question, but a follow-up to remind the Hon. Minister I had asked earlier if the region had...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you said that it is not a question?

Mr. Dharamlall: The Hon. Minister did not answer a part of a question that I asked so I am just restating the question. I had asked the Hon. Minister the quantum of devastation caused by the drought in Region 9 and whether the RDC was able to put it together and if not, why?

Mr. Bulkan: The Regional Chairperson and the Regional Vice-Chairperson, together with the RDC, are assessing and evaluating the extent of how affected villages and residents are as a result of this phenomenon.

Mr. Charlie: Line item 6282 – Equipment Maintenance: Could the Hon. Minister give the House a list of equipment that would undergo maintenance under this budgetary allocation.

Mr. Bulkan: The equipment would be fogging machines, land tillers, water pumps and brush cutters that are used under that programme.

Programme: 792 – Agriculture – \$35,458,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 793 – Public Works – \$151,830,000

Mr. Charlie: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister indicate the buildings, the sums attached and the locations of the buildings that would undergo maintenance under this budgetary allocation.

Mr. Bulkan: There are three buildings that would undergo repairs. The first is the old Guest House in Lethem, building number four, for a budgeted sum of \$9 million. This is to allow for servicing of the entire electrical system, doors, windows, painting, repairs to the roof, floor, ceiling as well as servicing the entire plumbing system.

The second is for repairs to three apartments at the Beverly Hill's compound in Lethem at a total budgeted sum of \$18 million. It is to enhance the conditions of those buildings, which are used as living quarters for Government officers.

The third activity is for repairs to the office and living quarters which houses the District Development Officer at Sand Creek. The size of the building is 24ftx60ft, it is the eight House and it is for a budgeted sum of \$8 million.

Mr. Charlie: A follow-up question on the building that would undergo maintenance in Sand Creek. We have a DDO from Sand Creek, who is from Sand Creek and is stationed in Sand Creek. How could we be maintaining or renovating a building, when our DDO is from that sub-district?

Mr. Bulkan: Firstly, I would need to be advised if there is prohibition that if an officer is appointed to his usual place of residence, if he would not be entitled to provision of Government quarters. But it is the case that, in this instance, that that officer is no longer there, he has resigned from that position.

Mr. Charlie: Was it today?

Mr. Bulkan: No, a week ago.

Mr. Charlie: Line item 6281 – Maintenance of Roads: Could the Hon. Minister say how many roads would be maintained, the kilometer of roads and the sums attached as per road.

Mr. Bulkan: The Budgetary allocation is to allow for repairs to roads at Surama, at a budgeted sum of \$4 million. The actual figure for the lengths of the roads is not available at this stage, but the budgetary allocation is \$4 million. Secondly, repairs would be to sections of the road in Culvert City, Lethem for a budgeted sum of \$14 million for that activity. It will benefit approximately 2,500 residents. Thirdly, it is for repairs to sections of the road in Saint Ignatius, for a budgeted sum of \$12 million. Fourthly, for repairs to a road at Quatamang in the North Rupununi, for a budgetary allocation of \$4 million. Finally, repairs to a road in Central Lethem for a budgetary allocation of \$6 million. A total \$40 million.

Mr. Dharamlall: As a quick follow-up question on the roads, could the Hon. Minister please state whether the excavator that was provided by the last Administration to Region 9, that was in the North Rupununi, what is the status of the accounts, and for the excavator. I think the Hon. Vice-President may have an idea of that.

To move forward quickly, could the Hon. Minister please provide the similar breakdown, as well as the locations of the bridges under line item 6252 – Maintenance of Bridges and the other infrastructure under line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure?

Mr. Bulkan: To the best of my knowledge, I believed that the excavator that the Hon. Member is referring to was actually provided to the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs and on the occasion, when I last interacted with my Colleague, the Hon Vice-President, I was advised that the Ministry was looking into re-commissioning that piece of equipment, which I believe has not been functioning for the past three years.

Under line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure, the activities to be funded would be repairs to the Aishalton bridge - budgeted sum of \$5 million; a bridge at Karaudanawa, which is known as the Rupununi Crossing – \$10 million; Surama bridge No. 3 – \$5 million; repairs to bridge at Awarewaunau also \$5 million. The fifth activity would be repairs to a bridge at Maruranau - budgeted sum of \$5 million.

Mr. Dharamlall: Just a follow-up regarding the bridge at Aishalton. I noticed in the capital programme that there is the construction of a bridge Kabanawau, could the Hon. Minister state which bridge in Aishalton is going to be...

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that for this activity, the budgeted sum of \$5 million for the Aishalton bridge is for Kabanawau, and that under the capital programme is for Chowkanau.

Mr. Dharamlall: Under line item 6281 – Security Services: Could the Hon. Minister please state whether the increase is as a result of more buildings, more security or higher rates.

6.41 p.m.

Mr. Bulkan: The increased provision is mainly as a result of higher rates as well as longer hours.

Programme: 793 – Public Works - \$151,830,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 794 – Education Delivery -\$861,078,000

Mr. Charlie: Line item 6292 – Dietary: I have seen an increase in the budgetary allocation. Could the Hon. Minister indicate, to this House, the sum allocated for the four dormitories in Region 9?

Mr. Bulkan: The entire provision is to be catered for the four dormitories for the increase in enrolment by 160 students. Is there an additional component of the question, Hon. Member?

Mr. Charlie: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I think my question was specific. I asked for the amount as per dormitory.

Mr. Bulkan: The provision is for dietary to the four dormitories in Region 9. In addition to the increased enrolment of 160 students, it is also to provide for an additional snack after dinner.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Dharamlall, you have the last question.

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings - and line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure – could the Hon. Minister please provide us with the list of those buildings, the approximate estimates for each and whether the village councils or residents in the villages will be contracted to provide services in maintenance?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, in the interest of time, could I crave the indulgence of the Hon. Member to provide this information, which is quite lengthy, in writing for both line items - all of the activities, the scope of works, the descriptions as well as the estimated costs?

Mr. Dharamlall: Follow-up: Could the Hon. Minister confirm that the villagers or village councils would be provided the maintenance contracts, or would it be outsourced?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer to that question is yes.

Programme: 794 – Education Delivery - \$861,078,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 795 – Health Services - \$353,583,000

Mr. Charlie: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings - and line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other infrastructure: Could the Hon. Minister list the buildings and other infrastructure that will undergo works, the sum as per each project and its location?

Mr. Bulkan: The provision is for the repairs to six buildings and, the other infrastructure, a further three. Could I ask of the Hon. Member if this information could be given to him in writing? It lists the location, the description as well as the budgeted sum for each activity.

Mr. Charlie: That would be welcomed if the entire House receives a copy.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, it seems that your suggestion is acceptable.

Mr. Dharamlall: Under line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supply – could the Hon. Minister please state whether the hospital at Lethem has rapid test kits, specifically for dengue fever?

Mr. Bulkan: That is provided for under this allocation.

Mr. Dharamlall: Follow-up: Just to inform the Hon. Minister, I received a report from a patient yesterday at the Lethem Hospital stating that there are no rapid test kits to test for dengue fever.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, have you stated what you had to state or is there another question?

Mr. Dharamlall: I will cede to Comrade Gail Teixeira.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: I have two questions under this line item. I have not seen your list and I am looking forward to seeing it, but the nurses' hostel which should have been constructed... A building was allocated, I understand, to build a nurses' hostel, which is always necessary in the interior regions because there is never enough space. But the building has been converted into a guest house for dignitaries. Could the Minister say what building has been allocated for additional accommodation for the nurses who come from outside of Lethem to work at Lethem Regional Hospital?

Line item 6292 – Dietary: I notice that this, in relation to health services, has gone up from \$8.999 million to \$ 9 million. Again, this is the interior; people come from far away and are

patients at the Lethem Regional Hospital where dietary has to be provided, and the allocation has gone up by \$1. It is like the one vote in Region 8 that there could not have been a recount for. The question is, under dietary, why was the allocation increased by only \$1?

Mr. Bulkan: The first question: The sum of \$8 million is budgeted for repairs to the nurses' hostel in Lethem.

The second question: The sum budgeted for dietary, under this Programme, was \$9 million in 2015, all of which was not spent. There was no justification given as to why the money was not spent for it to be increased. The sum has returned to the original higher budgeted sum of \$9 million in 2016.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, this is banal, seriously, my Hon. Member Mr. Bulkan...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please.

Ms. Teixeira: I did not say that he is banal; I said that it is banal.

Mr. Chairman: I am asking you, do you have a question?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, Sir. Line item 6292 – Dietary: The Hon. Member said that, because moneys were returned, the allocation, for this year, was not increased. However, it was \$8 million and the Region got \$9 million. It spent \$8,999,000. Therefore, it returned \$1,000. This is... I do not want to say the word, Mr. Chairman, because it may not be acceptable and be unparliamentary. I have seen all of the other Regions which returned moneys and got increases so, why did we give this Region \$1,000 more? Mr. Chairman, I do not comprehend.

The Hon. Minister has told this House that, because the region did not spend the entire allocation, it is not going to receive anymore.

Mr. Bulkan: Additionally and as was the case in the region that was addressed before, there are more doctors in the outlying villages so there is less need for persons to commute to the main hospital at Lethem. This is why the budgetary provision is considered to be adequate for the [inaudible].

Ms. Teixeira: Follow-up: Based on what the Hon. Member said, has the Region completed the fixing of the old buildings at the side of the hospital, which was the old hospital buildings, for the vector control and other clinics so that those bodies will stop using the maternity waiting unit that allows for women coming from the far-flung areas to wait in that unit before labour actually starts? It was discussed under one of the other Regions. Right now, other clinical activities are going on because the construction of the other clinics is not finished. Obviously, you want doctors all over the place but there are cases that end up in hospital no matter how many doctors are placed in a village. If all of the equipment and specialised materials are not available, then they have to go to the hospital...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, could you address the question, please?

Ms. Teixeira: When will the buildings in the old section of the hospital be completed so that the women who are coming from the interior will have a place to wait until their labour begins, which is what that unit was specifically built for? It is a beautiful area but it cannot be used right now.

Mr. Bulkan: I am aware that the Hon. Member is a regular, if not frequent, visitor to the Region and, I believe, in anticipation of the upcoming municipality elections that will be held, there were heightened visits by the Hon. Member which, I believe, were unsuccessful in trying to field a slate of candidates. Nonetheless, I am advised that the Lethem Regional Hospital has a new maternity wing and repairs have been done to the old hospital.

6.56 p.m.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I was talking about the new maternity wing but the Hon. Member is so caught up in trying to prove his point that he was not listening to what I was saying. I said a new maternity waiting unit and explained what a waiting maternity unit is. He is a man so he may not be able to understand. I am a woman and I have had children. I think the women on this side of the House understand what I am talking about. It is brand new; it was created and it cannot be used up to a month ago because the other buildings are being constructed so those places are using those facilities to carry out their clinics. My simple question to the Minister is: when will the construction of that old section be completed so that the waiting maternity unit for

women coming from far out, with complications, can be used and be operational again? It was built before; it is not being built now.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member. Hon. Minister, is there a comment you can make on this?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I am not in a position to provide any further details.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Minister. I will now put the question.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman...

Mr. Chairman: I will now put the question.

Programme: 795 – Health Services - \$353,583,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 791 - Regional Administration and Finance - \$14,231,000

Mr. Charlie: Project code 1204900 – Buildings – Administration: Could the Hon. Minister say who will occupy this living quarter that will be constructed and what per cent of this budgetary allocation is for the payment of retention?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, of the budgetary allocation of \$8,031,000, \$1 million represents retention for two projects, namely the upgrading of the building in Lethem R37A and the installation of security grills at the Lethem Port Complex for a total of \$1 million retention and the capital intervention is a sum of \$7 million provided for the construction of caretakers' quarters at the Lethem Amerindian Hostel.

Mr. Charlie: Just a follow-up, Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Minister alluded to Government building R37A and it is up for retention apart from this budgetary allocation. Could the Hon. Minister say who the occupant of R37A is at this time?

Mr. Bulkan: That would be the Regional Executive Officer.

Mr. Dharamlall: Project code 2504900 – Furniture - Staff Quarters: Could the Hon. Minister please confirm which building will receive beds, dining sets, suites, stoves, television and refrigerators?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, as was the case with all of the previous regions, the complete details of all of the activities under the Capital Programme will be provided for the benefit of Members of the Opposition but the furniture that will be acquired under this item would be for use at the Lethem Amerindian Hostel. The majority of it would cater for items such as single beds, double beds, mattresses, dinette sets, living room suites, one refrigerator and one television, the specifications of which I do not have.

Mr. Charlie: Project code 2402400 - Water Transport: There is a budgetary allocation of \$2 million under this line item. Last year, it was the same. Could the Hon. Minister tell this House how many boats and engines will be purchased under this budgetary allocation and where they will be assigned?

Mr. Bulkan: It is for the purchase of one aluminium boat as well as an engine for use at Karasabai.

Mr. Charlie: Could the Hon. Minister say where the boat and engine that were purchased last year were assigned?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the answer to that is also Karasabai.

Programme: 791 - Regional Administration and Finance - \$14,231,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 792 – Agriculture - \$34,620,000

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Project code 1701400 - Agricultural Development: I have one question in many parts. Concerning the procurement of the all-terrain vehicle (ATV), who will it be assigned to? How many pastures will be constructed and where? Provide the location of those pastures and the size of each if there is more than one. What standards will the abattoirs that will be constructed have? What are the sizes of the shade houses and the villages in which they will be constructed?

Mr. Bulkan: The ATV is to be used by the Extension Officer in Annai; the new pasturage that will be provided for a sum of \$4.5 million each would be at Annai in North Rupununi and Shulinab in South Central to improve the pasturage. There are five shade houses that will be constructed under this initiative at a size of 40x20 each at the locations in St. Ignatius, Karasabai, Annai, Sand Creek and Aishalton as part of the school programme. I am advised that the abattoir has already been constructed.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Minister. Are you through Hon. Minister?

Mr. Bulkan: The Budgetary provision is for repairs to existing abattoirs in each sub-district.

Mr. Dharamlall: As a follow-up, what percentage or how much of the \$34,620,000 will go towards retention?

Mr. Bulkan: It is 10% for two activities which would have been a fence at Aishalton and living quarters in St. Ignatius. The percentage of the current total allocation would be about... Mr. Chairman I will, give the gross sum. For the percentage, we can do the Math. It is a total of approximately \$600,000 of the \$34.6 million which is the budgetary allocation.

Mr. Dharamlall: This is the final question: are the two pastures exactly in Annai village and what type of grass or types of grass would be grown and how will it be managed - the pastures as well as the shade houses?

Mr. Bulkan: The location of the new pasturage in Annai will be the area that is north of the Administration Hill. With regard to the agricultural or horticultural qualities of the grass that will be cultivated there, that information can be provided later for the benefit of the Hon. Member.

Programme: 792 – Agriculture - \$34,620,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 793 – Public Works - \$139,611,000

Mr. Charlie: Project code 1902300 - Infrastructure Development: Could the Hon. Minister state how many culverts and bridge approaches will be constructed, the sums attached and the locations? In the same breath, what per cent makes up the retention of this budgetary allocation?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the allocation is to cater for the construction of two culverts and two bridge approaches.

7.11 p.m.

The retention is about \$1.4 million of the total budgetary allocation of \$30.150 million.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, project code 2800400 – Water Supply: Regarding Taushida, could the Hon. Minister state whether this project will be in Taushida central or in Kakshibai?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, that would be Taushida central.

Mr. Charlie: Project code 1100900 – Bridges: Hon. Minister, could you state how many bridges will be constructed, the sum allotted to a bridge project and the location? And, out of this budgetary allocation, what is the percentage of the retention to be paid?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the total for the retention is \$1.8 million out of the total budgetary allocation of \$31 million and the bridges to be constructed would be the completion of the bridge at Sand Creek for a budgetary allocation of approximately \$12.5 million; construction of a bridge at the Aishalton Access Road at Churikadnau, which was mentioned earlier at a budgeted sum of \$8,351,000; and the construction of a reinforced concrete (RC) and wood bridge, 60 feet by 15 feet, at Bashaidran in deep south for a budgetary sum of \$8,351,000.

Mr. Dharamlall: Project code 1401300 – Roads: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister please state whether the road from Karasabai to Paipang or through Tiger Pond will be constructed using the resources of the Karasabai Village Council or whether it will be externally tendered?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, yes, part of the budgetary allocation is for the upgrading of the road from Karasabai to Tiger Pond, via, Paipang. There are two sections with a budgetary allocation of approximately \$16 million of the \$38.7 million, and the intention is that the residents from the villages will be able to benefit from this construction activity.

Mr. Charlie: Mr. Chairman, a follow-up: Could the Hon. Minister indicate what nature of road work will be undertaken as it pertains to the capital?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, it will be an upgrading of the quality of the service of the road to make it more durable and usable.

Mr. Charlie: Mr. Chairman, in terms of durable, is the Minister talking about these roads being upgraded from laterite to Double Bitumen Surface Treatment (DBST) roads?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the last time that I travelled from Karasabai to Taushida, via Tiger Pond and Paipang, those roads were not laterite roads. They were slushy and muddy roads, so the expectation is to upgrade these roads to laterite roads.

Programme: 793 – Public Works - \$139,611,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 794 – Education Delivery - \$110,105,000

Mr. Charlie: Project code 1204700 – Buildings - Education: Could the Hon. Minister list the buildings that will be constructed and the budgetary estimates as per building?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, there is construction of an annex at Paipang to cater for the children who previously would have had to travel to Tiger Pond, and, as a result of the inadequate condition of the road, it posed great hardship to those students. The budgetary allocation is for \$18 million; it is a building that is 90 feet by 30 feet. The allocation is also for the construction of an annex at Bashaidran, also 90 feet by 30 feet, a similar amount of \$18 million; construction of the Tabatinga Nursery School, a building that is 120 feet by 30 feet, a budgeted sum of \$20.385 million; construction of sanitary blocks at Surama, Kwatata, Aishalton and a water trestle and tanks at Woweta Nursery School for budgeted sums of \$4.5 million and \$4 million respectively. One other construction would be apartment quarters at the Sand Creek Secondary School to cater for accommodation for the headmaster and the staff at a budgetary cost of \$20 million.

Mr. Charlie: I must say thanks for the timely intervention for the construction of the annexes in Paipang, Bashaidran and I must say thank you very much to the RDC of Region 9 for its intervention and representation.

Mr. Bulkan: It does not require an answer but I appreciate the sentiments of the Hon. Member, Mr. Chairman, and the Minister of Finance is right here. He is having a ringside.

Programme: 794 – Education Delivery - \$110,105,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 795 – Health Services - \$70,839,000

Mr. Dharamlall: Project code 2402300 – Land Transport: Could the Hon. Minister please state what type of ambulance will be procured under this project code?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, it is a four-wheel drive land cruiser that is being acquired and retrofitted for the purposes to be used as an ambulance.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister please confirm whether the sanitary blocks in Karana, Toka, Sawariwau, Achiwuib and Yupukari will all be constructed by skills from within the villages or would they be outsourced?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, where the skills and the expertise are available, they will be given first preference.

Programme: 795 – Health Services - \$70,839,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: We have five minutes more. We can take the suspension now and return five minutes earlier than we otherwise would. If Hon. Members prefer, we can do that.

Hon. Members: Yes.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: We will take the suspension.

Sitting suspended at 7.25 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 8.09 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: We will continue, Hon. Members, our consideration of the Estimates of Expenditure.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply

Agency: 80 Region 10: Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice

Current Expenditure

Programme: 801 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$189,586,000

8.11 p.m.

Mr. Neendkumar: At line item 6312, Subventions to Local Authorities, I see \$9.9 million. Could the Minister tell us which local authorities will be receiving the subventions?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, before I answer the Hon. Member, it is if you will please permit me to respond to a comment made at the beginning of today's session by the Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira advising the Assembly with respect to some information the Ministry had undertaken to provide relating to the pickup points for the two school buses, David 'G' 1 and 2, as well as details pertaining to the Community Infrastructure Improvement Project (CIIP). The complete information has been provided to Hon. Members on the Opposition.

At line item 6312, the allocation of \$9.9 million is to cater for subventions to the Ituni sub office as well as to facilitate the upkeep of the community library and for community development works and the support to the Kwakwani and Ituni Neighbourhood Democratic Council (NDC) office.

Mr. Neendkumar: A follow-up. Could the Hon. Minister tell us how much will be given to Kwakwani and how much to Ituni?

Mr. Bulkan: The approximate split is 60% would be allocated to Kwakwani and 40% to Ituni.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6225, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: I see \$3.3 million. Could the Hon Minister tell us which infrastructure and how much will be allotted?

Mr. Bulkan: The sum of \$1.5 million is allocated for maintenance and landscaping to be done at four Government's quarters - the Ituni Guest House, buildings 28 and 29 in Retrieve, Linden, \$600,000 at Yuraballi Street, Retrieve, Linden, building number 18 also in Retrieve, Linden, an additional sum of \$600,000.

Mr. Neendkumar: At line item 6242, Maintenance of Buildings: I see \$2 million. Could the Hon. Minister tell use which buildings and how much will be allocated?

Mr. Bulkan: That sum will be for two buildings which are used by the Assistant REO and the Probation Officer's quarters in Linden.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6211, Expenses Specific to the Agency: It is \$34.2 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain how this money will be spent, to which agency and how much?

Mr. Bulkan: It is to cater for the payment of monthly stipends to Amerindian village councils, Toshaos who are now receiving an increased monthly sum of \$30,000 from \$20,000, Deputy Toshaos of whom there are twenty in total, a sum of \$15,000 each, as well funding activities of the Regional Chairman, Regional Vice-Chairman and other members of the council, travelling and visits.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6211, Expenses Specific to the Agency: From the answer the Minister gave, it would appear that this relates to stipends for the attendance at meetings as well. I am just clarifying.

Mr. Bulkan: Yes Mr. Chairman. It is for attending the RDC meetings.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister tell this Assembly why the committees of the region have not been meeting?

Mr. Bulkan: It is not fair to say that these committees are not meeting. They are meeting but it is as well that they are afflicted by certain challenges from time to time. It is not fair to suggest that no meetings of these committees are being held.

Bishop Edghill: It is the same line item. Could the Hon. Minister provide the Assembly with a copy of the schedule of the meetings held for 2015 and the proposed schedule of meetings for 2016?

Mr. Bulkan: With regard to the 2016 budgetary allocation, which is under consideration, the schedule of those meetings I hereby undertake to lay over and provide in writing to the Hon. Members and other Members of the Assembly who are desirous of receiving same.

Bishop Edghill: Thank for the for the Minister's undertaking, but I would think there is no problem since the Minister is disputing that meetings were not held so that he could provide the schedule for the meetings held in 2015.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, what you are asking the Minister to do is to provide a schedule of meetings for 2014 and 2015.

Bishop Edghill: It is for 2015 and 2016. He made an undertaking for 2016 but not for 2015. I am asking him to lay over, which is easier, a schedule of meetings held for 2015.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I will have to be guided by you because my understanding is that we are dealing with 2016 and not 2015.

Bishop Edghill: If we are asking for an increase of \$6 million under line item 6211, could the Hon. Minister give justification of why there is an increase even though the amount of meetings scheduled for 2015 for the various committees were not held.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I did say, when I provided an answer earlier, that the stipends for Toshaos and Deputy Toshaos have been increased. I believe that the Hon. Member has answered his question himself when he pointed out, and it was admitted, that there were challenges with regard to the frequency of the committee meetings. It is projected that the full schedule of meetings will be held in 2016 and that is why the provision is made.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, it is just a follow-up. I would just like to confirm that the Minister is indicating that the reason why the meetings were not held in 2015 was because the sums allocated were not sufficient.

Mr. Bulkan: My recollection is that I referred to certain challenges, but I did not identify financial challenges to be one of those.

Programme: 801 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$189,586,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 802 – Public Works - \$175,715,000

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6272, Electricity Charges: I notice that in 2015 a mere \$21,000 was spent but in 2016 the region is asking for \$600,000. Could the Minister please explain this?

Mr. Bulkan: There is provision which is being made for three additional locations to be supplied with electricity. These are the agriculture building, the Amerindian hostel and the multi-purpose building at Block 22.

Bishop Edghill: It is the same line item, line item 6272. The pattern of cost of electricity in this document shows that \$35,000 was spent in 2014 but \$600,000 was budgeted in 2015 and an actual \$21,000 was spent. We are asked to appropriate \$600,000. With three additional buildings could the Minister give justification?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that for one of the three new locations, namely Block 22, the multi-purpose building, that previously the electricity charges were paid for under the education department but now it is under the programme Public Works.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6251, Maintenance of Roads: I see a total of \$54 million. Could the Hon. Minister tell us which roads, how much will be spent on each road and what type of road will be built?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, in the interest of time and in accordance with your caution, would it be sufficient for the Hon. Member if this information is provided in writing?

8.26 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: It is if the Hon. Member is agreeable to that suggestion, I am sure that he would find it agreeable.

Mr. Neendkumar: Yes Minister, it is okay. Line item 6252, Maintenance of Bridges: I see there is \$10 million. Could the Minister tell us the bridges and how much money will be put to maintain them?

Mr. Bulkan: The number of bridges to be maintained, the list is considerably shorter. In fact, there are only four bridges. These are one at Baroda Oval in Retrieve, Hipania Oval in Retrieve, Nottinghamshire and Silvertown, Wismar, a total budgeted sum of \$10 million.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6253, Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works: I see there is \$30 million. Could the Hon. Minister tell us which area this money will be spent?

Mr. Bulkan: The areas are in Mackenzie, multiple locations, four locations, Blue Berry Hill and two locations in Wismar.

Mr. Neendkumar: As a follow-up, could the Minister tell us in which area the Government is trying to develop agricultural sector in which to give drainage? Is it at the back of Watooka?

Mr. Bulkan: The programme, which we are addressing, is programme 802, Public Works. Perhaps that question could be posed subsequently.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6255, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Could the Minister tell us how this \$14 million will be spent?

Mr. Bulkan: The very list, which I have undertaken to provide for the benefit of the Hon. Member, contains all of the details for this line item as well because there are quite a number of locations. In the interest of time, I will ask if this could be provided in writing to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Neendkumar has signalled his readiness to have the information provided at a later time.

Programme: 802 - Public Works - \$175,715,000 agreed to and ordered to stand pat of the Estimates.

Programme: 803 – Education Delivery - \$1,717,083,000

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6284, Other: I notice that in 2014 \$22 million was spent, in 2015 the budgeted for \$23 million and now I see that there is a total of \$42 million. Could the Minister tell us where and what this money will be spent for?

Mr. Bulkan: The provision is to ensure the integrity of the examination process and it is to provide for increase number of invigilators for the Grades 2, 4, 6, 9, the Caribbean Secondary Education Certification (CSEC), the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations (CAPE), Guyana Technical Education Examination (GTEE) and Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE) examination which entail the usage of 89 centres and the services of 71 supervisors and 251 invigilators. It caters as well for the payment of 110 Cleaners and janitorial staff at a rate of \$312 per hour. The increase is also attributable to the fact for the increase minimum wage that became applicable.

Mr. Neendkumar: As a follow-up, I understand that the Ministry of Education will not be pursuing with Grade 2 examination for National Grade Six Assessment. Could the Minister explain what he will do with that extra money?

Mr. Bulkan: These are for the invigilators for the examination.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6116, Contracted Employees: I see that there were 52 contracted employees and it has reduced to 51. When I look at the money to be spent, I see it has moved from \$45.7 million to \$49.4 million. Could the Minister justify this and give us a list of the names, designations and emoluments of these 51 contracted workers.

Mr. Bulkan: The increase in the budgetary provision is to cater for the annualisation of the increases that would have been given to the 51 employees under this category. The designation of the 51 employees is not available at this moment, but this information could be provided to the Hon. Member subsequently.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6242, Maintenance of Buildings: A \$100 million is asked to be appropriated, up from \$65 million from last year. Could we have a list of the buildings to be maintained and the cost per building?

Mr. Bulkan: The number of buildings is approximately 60 and in the interest of time I would like to ask the Hon. Member if he would receive this information in writing.

Bishop Edghill: I think the practice is for it to be provided to the Assembly. I will get a copy when it is provided to the Assembly.

Line item 6291, Dietary: The figures here are unchanged. I am assuming that this is provisions for the hostels at both Linden and Kwakwani. If this is the provision for the hostels at both Linden and Kwakwani, could the Hon. Minister say how this unchanged sum will correct the problems of shortages that have been complained of at both hostels?

Mr. Bulkan: I do not want to cast aspersions on the information or the integrity of information that is being offered by the Hon. Member, but the RDC assures that there are no complaints about inadequacy in the provision of dietary. The answer is yes, it is for the Amelia's Ward in Linden and the dorms at Kwakwani.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6281, Security Services: I notice that in 2014 it was \$89 million, in 2015 it was budgeted for \$150 million but it was \$111 million. I notice in 2016 a \$150 million. Could the Hon. Minister tell us the name of the service that is providing and the areas and locations?

Mr. Bulkan: The security provider is the Home Safe Security Company. The provision is to cater for security for all of the education buildings in the region. It is to allow for 365 days security as well as for increased hours at all of the locations that the security firm will be providing.

Mr. Neendkumar: I heard the Hon. Minister was saying that it is for all the schools in Region 10. Could he confirm to me that all the schools in Region 10 will have security?

Mr. Bulkan: The information being sought is yes. It is a total of 63 schools. The breakdown being that it is for 24 nursery schools, seven secondary schools and 32 primary schools.

Mr. Neendkumar: Are the schools in the Berbice River receiving security?

Mr. Bulkan: Security is being provided for in schools in the Berbice River that are part of Region 10.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item, just seeking the Minister's clarification, line item 6281, Security Services, a \$150 million was budgeted last year but the actual sum that was spent was \$111 million, \$39 million or less, but we are being asked to appropriate \$150 million. The Minister has told this Assembly that it is for all the schools in Region 10 for 365 days. Are there

more schools now as against last year, because last year only a \$111 million was spent or is there an increase of the rates? If there is an increase of the rates, what was the process that was used for the increase of the rates?

Mr. Bulkan: The information, which is being provided to me, is that a number of the locations were only receiving security 12 hours a day and some of them were receiving 24 hours a day. The provision for 2016 caters for 24 hours across all of the locations.

8.41 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6261, Local Travel and Subsistence: Sir, I see a sum of \$5 million. Could the Hon. Minister tell this Assembly if this is adequate for the level of monitoring and evaluation that needs to take place in the region, as it relates to the delivery of education, especially in light of the complaints that have been received from various schools?

Mr. Bulkan: This line item, and the provision, is to take care of expenses associated with the out of district schools, particularly supervision related to youth and sports activities. The areas, which are being targeted, are areas in the Muritaro, Malali, 58 Miles and Mabura Hill.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, if we go to the programme of budgeting, I would like the Hon. Minister to explain under which heading there will be provision for travel for supervision, for monitoring and evaluation, to achieve the necessary outputs, as stated in the programme budget.

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that under line item 6265, Other Transport, Travel and Postage, provision is made for monitoring activities, as asked for by the Hon. Member.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6255, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Could the Hon. Minister tell us what will this \$45 million be spent on, specifically on the various infrastructures? Could he name them and tell us the amounts?

Mr. Bulkan: The budgeted sum is for maintenance work to be done on sanitary and recreational facilities across the region, the 24 nursery schools, 31 primary schools and seven secondary schools. That is a total of 63 schools across the region. The specific locations would be schools in Linden, South Amelia's Ward, Republic Avenue and Burnham Drive, and in Kwakwani,

Mabura, Araima, Wismar, Mackenzie, Watooka, Sand Hills, and Kimbia Primary. It is just to name a few.

Mr. Chairman: I will allow three more questions.

Mr. Neendkumar: When I raised the question earlier on drainage and irrigation, the Minister referred me to agriculture. I am not seeing any money under the programme of agriculture. Could he tell me something about the agriculture programme? He referred me to that, but I am not seeing anything.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, it will be helpful if there is a line item to which you can refer.

Mr. Neendkumar: Under project programme Minister, I referred to it when I was raising the question of drainage and irrigation. He told me agriculture but it is not there. I asked him specifically.

Mr. Bulkan: The question being asked was drainage and irrigation for agriculture. The drainage and irrigation provision is under the programme of Public Works. There is no agriculture programme for Region 10.

Mr. Neendkumar: Could the Hon. Minister be fair to the people in Region 10 and tell us under the [*Inaudible*]...what will be allocated for the agriculture?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, no gratuitous barbs, no punches, just let us refrain ourselves about being 'fair and unfair'.

Mr. Neendkumar: He told me agriculture, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Let us keep it low. Let us do that. Is there a question? The Hon. Minister, you do not wish to have it answered. I thank the Hon. Member. I will now put the question.

Programme: 803 – Education Delivery – \$ 1,717,083,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 804– Health Services – \$532,603,000

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6221, Drugs and Medical Supplies: I see in 2014, a mere \$7.1 million. In 2015, \$98 million was allocated and all the moneys were spent. I want to firstly ask whether this is true, that all the moneys were spent. The \$141 million that is budgeted for 2016, I would like to know: How much will be spent on drugs and how much will be spent on medical supplies?

Mr. Bulkan: I can essay a response to the last part of the questions, as to what percentage of the allocation will be for drugs and what percentage will be for medical supplies, and to say that that information will be provided subsequently. The first part of the question, as to what percentage of the 2015 allocation, for how many drugs were supplied, if it was the entire value, that issue has been addressed. I was under the impression that it was laid to rest. I am surprised that it has been resurrected because an explanation was provided and it does not differ in the case of Region 10, as in the earlier regions. The percentage split between drugs and medical supplies this would be provided subsequently.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6221, Drugs and Medical Supplies: I would like for the Hon. Minister to tell the Assembly if the sums, which are asked for, will be adequate to cover the entire regional programme, especially, in light of all three regional Members of Parliament (MPs) who sit in this Assembly, from Region 10, at the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), complained of shortages in Region 10?

Mr. Bulkan: The budgetary allocation for this year is up by some 42%. It is catered to address that very concern that is being identified by the Hon. Member.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6281, Security Services: I notice in 2015, \$42.6 million was spent and this year the region is asking for \$64.6 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain this spending, which are the areas, where are the locations and how much will be anticipated to be spent and also the name of the service?

Mr. Bulkan: The provider is Home Safe Security Company. The budgetary allocation is to provide a 24-hour service across 21 locations as well as for increased hours.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Neendkumar, you have the last question.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, I have many more questions. Crime has increased, so that there will be full-time security service. I would like to know the locations – health huts, hospitals. Where security will be really be given to?

Mr. Bulkan: There are two hospitals, ten health centres, 16 health posts and three private health facilities.

Mr. Neendkumar: Yes. The private entities, which private entities? Could the Minister give us the three names?

Mr. Bulkan: My apologies Mr. Chairman. It is two hospitals, ten health centres and 16 health posts.

Mr. Chairman: You would wish a last question.

Mr. Neendkumar: I have many more questions.

Mr. Chairman: You have it, Hon. Member.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6255, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: I see that there is \$23 million to be spent. Could the Minister explain to us the other infrastructure, the location and how much money will be spent on each?

Mr. Bulkan: The list is also quite long and I will ask the Hon. Member, if he is agreeable to receiving the complete breakdown in writing which will be done very shortly.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Neendkumar, you are agreeable.

Programme: 804 – Health Services – \$532,603,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 801– Regional Administration and Finance – \$34,000,000

Mr. Ali: Project 2505500, Furniture and Equipment – Administration: Could the Hon. Minister say to us how much of this allocation will be utilised to upgrade the office of the Regional Chairman?

8.56 p.m.

Mr. Bulkan: Of the total budgeted sum of \$12 million, I see here a very small percentage of that, perhaps less than \$3 million.

Bishop Edghill: Project Code 1205100 - Buildings – Administration - \$22 million –“Provision of electrical systems and buildings”, could the Hon. Minister give us a break-down of how much would be spent on electrical system, how much would be spent on building and on which building?

Mr. Bulkan: The sum of \$12 million is budgeted for completion of the re-wiring to the existing RDC’s Main Building. The sum of \$10 million is allocated for consultancy work for a new RDC building.

Mr. Neendkumar: As a follow-up: In the Legend there is the “Upgrading of electrical system at regional administration building” and “Provision for new regional administration building”. The Minister is saying consultancy. I would like to know what it is really.

Mr. Bulkan: The consultancy work is to cater for the designs of the building, as well as for other activities such as soil testing, *et cetera*.

Programme: 801 - Regional Administration and Finance - \$34,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 802 - Public Works - \$208,744,000

Mr. Ali: Project Code 1902200 - Agricultural Development: I see a sum in excess of \$22 million to improve the infrastructure for agricultural development. Could the Hon. Minister say how much land would be made available for the breadfruit plantation for Region 10, as announced by His Excellency?

Mr. Bulkan: The budgetary allocation is to support the construction of farm to market roads, revetment/erosion control in Mackenzie and the first activity in Wismar. There is no dedicated programme for the activity, as described by the Hon. Member. There is nothing to preclude individual farmers from engaging in that kind of cultivation.

Mr. Ali: Given the fact that this is a new economic initiative, I would like to ask the Hon. Minister about this visionary approach of having a breadfruit plantation, whether he is making any provision under Agricultural Development to enable the farmers to commence work on this plantation. Breadfruit takes time.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the Chairman is this way. You should ask a question.

Mr. Ali: I am asking a question.

Mr. Chairman: Have you asked the question already?

Mr. Ali: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Bulkan: I am not suggesting that the Hon. Member is seeking to denigrate that particular activity. But allow me please to say this. From a very early age, I was taught, in fact it was instilled in me, that there is dignity in labour.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, allow me to address the Minister before you speak.

Mr. Ali: Let me be very clear, I am not denigrating anything. I am in support of the plantation.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, is there a follow-up question?

Mr. Ali: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Please ask it.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister say whether any incentive is given under the Agricultural Development Programme to help farmers in Region 10 to start the production of this economic approach of breadfruit plantations.

Mr. Bulkan: The answer, in broad terms, is yes. The availability of more farm to market roads would make it easier for persons engaged in cultivation of a wide variety of crops, to be able to have easier access to the farms and access as well to the markets.

Mr. Neendkumar: Under the same Project Code – 1902200, the Legend is telling us something else. The Legend is saying “Payment of Retention”. Could the Minister tell us how much is allocated for that? It also has “Provision for roads and revetment, sructures and desilting of

creeks at Wismar, Hymara/Cockarata and Old England”. Could the Minister tell us how much would be spent in these areas?

Mr. Bulkan: The percentage for the retention is approximately 4.5 % of the total budgetary provision.

Mr. Neendkumar: I would like to know the contractual sum and for which project.

Mr. Bulkan: The full list and the complete details of all the capital interventions have been provided to the Clerk for forwarding to all of Hon. Members.

The three retentions are for excavation and desilting activities in MacKenzie. The retention sum of \$404,000 would be approximately 10% of the original contract sum, I am sure the Hon. Member can do the computation.

Secondly, excavation and desilting of a creek in Block 22 - the retention is approximately \$380,000 and the excavation and desilting of the channel in Silverballi, MacKenzie at a retention sum of approximately \$216,000.

Mr. Ali: Project code 2404800 - Land and Water Transport: Could the Hon. Minister say what brand of vehicle he would be acquiring under this Head?

Mr. Bulkan: It is not a single vehicle. There are two types of vehicles. One is a grader, to be used for public works at a budgeted sum of \$20 million. The specifications do not identify the brand, but rather the technical specifications, such as the horsepower and the capacity. There is a provision for a double-cab 4x4 pick-up, at a budgeted sum of \$6.4 million. The brand would not be specified in the tender documents.

Bishop Edghill: Programme budgeting: 802 - Public Works, there are specific indicators there that this entire programme has under-performed. For example, \$28 million was budgeted for in 2015 for Land and Water Transport at project code 2404800, but nothing was spent.

For Agricultural Development - \$10 million was budgeted, but \$8.6 million was spent; Infrastructural Development - \$20 million was budgeted, but \$19 million was spent. And it goes on. For the entire total of \$96,257,000 for 2015, only \$62 million was spent. We are now having a whopping sum, moving from \$62 million to \$208,744,000.

Could the Hon. Minister tell this House what mechanisms are in place to improve under-performance and to solve this deficit, as it relates to the performance of this programme?

Mr. Bulkan: The main reason that would be responsible for the improved performance in 2016 would be the fact that this Budget was laid in the first month of this year and would be passed in a few days' time, which would allow for a full year's implementation.

With regards to the shortfall in the 2015 budgetary allocation, from \$96 million to \$62 million, the bulk of that shortfall was under "Land and Water Transport". The Grader valued \$20 million as well as the pick-up totalled \$26 million, fell victim to the bottlenecks in the tender process, the reasons for which I need not go into once more at this time.

Mr. Neendkumar: Project code 19017000 – Infrastructural Development: I see we have \$45.6 million for "Construction and upgrading of drainage systems and payment of retention". In the Legend, there is "Payment of retention". I would like to know which retention is the payment for, how much money is being pay and for which project?

Secondly, "Upgrading of drainage systems at Pine Street, Damon and at Independence Avenue."

Thirdly, "Provision for survey of drainage systems at Block 22, Wismar", the People's Progressive Party/Civic Government had put systems in place to develop agriculture in Region 10. I would like an explanation for this, specifically how much.

Mr. Bulkan: The retention payment is for three activities, firstly, the emergency landing at the Linden Hospital Complex, at a retention value of approximately \$671,000; secondly, upgrading of the drainage system at Campton Ross Avenue, MacKenzie, at a retention value of approximately \$606,000 and thirdly, revetment at the Wismar Market river side, retention value of \$400,000.

9.11 p.m.

The upgrade of the drainage system at Pine Street, the budgeted sum is \$8 million; the upgrading of the drainage system at Damon Avenue, the budgetary provision is approximately \$12.3 million; the one that is at Independence Avenue, the budgetary provision is the sum of \$6.8

million and provision is being made for the survey of the drainage system at Block 22, at a budgeted sum of \$3 million.

Programme: 802 –Public Works - \$208,744,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 803 – Education Delivery- \$87,683,000

Ms. Manickchand: Project code 1205200-Buildings – Education: Could the Hon. Member be kind enough to tell us what is included in this construction and rehabilitation of schools?

Mr. Bulkan: There are a number of roll-over projects, some minor ones: Repairs to fence at Mackenzie High School; the same activity at the Christianburg Wismar; construction of outdoor equipment - Mackenzie nursery school and construction of concrete trestle at Ituni.

The 2016 projects: Construction of a water trestle at the One Mile Primary School – Wismar, budgeted sum of \$5 million; completion of the rehabilitation to the Mackenzie High School, a budgeted sum of \$15 million; completion to the rehabilitation to the Christianburg and Wismar Secondary Schools, a budgeted sum of \$18.5 million and rehabilitation to the Linden Foundation Secondary, a budgeted provision of \$25 million.

Ms. Manickchand: Is this expected to complete the construction at the One Mile Primary School?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the activity described, which is the construction of the water trestle, is the only remaining activity to be completed under school facility.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, do you wish to continue?

Ms. Manickchand: Yes. Project code 2505400- Furniture and Equipment - Education: There is a provision of \$15 million for the purchase of furniture and equipment for schools. Would this be furniture for the classrooms?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes. The majority of it would be for desk, benches, and combination chairs. The entire sum is not exclusively for classrooms because it includes, as well for the teachers quarters,

furniture, refrigerator, freezer, tables and chairs for use by the teachers. So, it is both for the classrooms, as well as for the teachers.

Mr. Neendkumar: Project Code 1205200: I see in the Legend, "Payment of retention". I would like to know which project and how much money? I did not see anything here about any nursery school or Ituni, but the Minister spoke about that. So, I would like to know if it is outside of this Legend.

Mr. Bulkan: What was described as the rollovers were actually the retention payments. One of the retention payments was for one of the locations in Ituni.

Bishop Edghill: Programme budgeting: 803 - Education Delivery: Last year a sum of \$69,600,000 was appropriated and the expenditure only totalled \$38,000,213, now \$87,000,683 is being sought. It is clear that this programme has underperformed.

Under project code 2404300 - Land and Water Transport: Could the Minister tell us, in 2015, what was procured and what was not procured because out of the \$15 million \$9 million was spent and they are seeking the \$6 million now?

Mr. Bulkan: In the budgetary allocation for 2016, the sum of \$6 million is for an enclosed canter truck that was identified to be acquired last year, but efforts were unsuccessful. That equipment is going to be acquired this year at a budgeted sum \$6 million.

Bishop Edghill: It would appear that there is a procurement problem with the underperformance in this region. Could the Hon. Minister please tell this House the composition of his tender board - the Chairman and Members of the Tender Board in Region 10?

Mr. Bulkan: We are going forward and the anticipation is that the execution and the delivery of activities, under the 2016 budgetary allocations, are expected to be more efficient.

Bishop Edghill: I asked a specific question about the composition of the tender board. If things are being tendered, the financial regulations require that there be a tender board. The Minister has said to this House that there seems to be a problem with procurement and bottle necks. I would like to have the names of the Chairman and other Members of the Tender Board in Region 10.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I am unclear as to if I am required to provide names of persons or the information that is being requested by the Hon. Member.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, with your guidance Sir, tender boards are public entities that exist based upon statute and law. There is nothing secret or private about a tender board. All the programmes in Region 10 have underperformed. Earlier I asked the question concerning meetings, if the various committees have been meeting and we had a hopscotch answer. I am now speaking specifically to tendering now sir.

Mr. Chairman: Let us keep it...

Mr. Bulkan: The information would be provided in writing to the Hon. Member at a earliest subsequent opportunity.

Ms. Manickchand: Project Code 25054000 - Furniture and Equipment: Minister, there was a policy that there would be a saturation of all the furniture needed in schools for children, after which there would be an attempt to saturate all the furniture that are needed for teachers and staff. Is that policy still in place and is this provision to satisfy that policy because some thing seem odd here? Representatives of Region 10 had told us in 2014 that they had satisfied all the furniture needs of children. Now they will be some...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you have asked the question. Can you give the Minister a chance to answer. If he does not answer to your satisfaction, you may ask a supplementary.

Mr. Bulkan: Can I ask that the Hon. Member actually complete the question. I believe that the question was not completely put?

Ms. Manickchand: That is what I was attempting to do. It would be impossible to just ask...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, just deal with it now.

Ms. Manickchand: Is the policy still in place that there would be first a saturation of furniture needs for children in classrooms? If yes, is this money going towards meeting that need or is it going towards completing the policy and meeting the need of saturation for furniture for teachers and staff?

Mr. Bulkan: When the Hon. Member was first posing the question, she had also proffered a partial answer which is that, in 2014, perhaps she was aware that the full complement of furniture for the students was a situation that was in place and that now it has been identified, that some of the budgetary allocations, under this budget would be for furniture for the children. Then the logical deduction is that in the period between 2014 to present, as result as attrition and damages, some of those furniture would have had to be replaced. That is my understanding from the comments that were made by the Hon. Member, that in 2014, the furniture complement for the schools in Region 4 were, by and large or more or less, in place.

Mr. Chairman: I would allow two more questions after Hon. Mr. Neendkumar.

Mr. Neendkumar: In respect to the One Mile Primary School, all of us know that a substantial amount of money was collected by the region for the rebuilding of that school. However, Hon. Minister Manickchand, at that time, had started to build a school. I would like to know what happened to the millions of dollars that was collected.

Mr. Bulkan: It would have gone towards the building of the school.

9.26 p.m.

Mr. Neendkumar: The Minister must tell us how much of that money was put into the construction of that building or else I would raise it with the people of Region 10.

Mr. Bulkan: I was dealing with the budgetary allocations that would have used toward the building of the school.

Mr. Neendkumar: It is really regrettable that millions of dollars was collected and we cannot account for it.

Mr. Chairman: Is there a comment that the Hon. Minister wishes to make or is there a question that needs to be answer?

Mr. Bulkan: No, Mr. Chairman.

Programme: 803 – Education Delivery – \$87,683,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 804 – Health Services – \$82,514,000

Bishop Edghill: Project budgeting, agency code 80, last year the entire capital budget was \$240 million, close to a \$100 million was returned to the Treasury that could not have been spent. Last year, under this programme: 804 - project code 1205300 – Buildings – Health, \$18 million was appropriated and \$8,404,000 was spent, but this year \$55,814,000 is being sought. Under project code 2403500 – Water and Land Transport – Health, \$8 million was allocated, zero was spent and \$6.4 million is being sought. Under project code 2505600 – Furniture and Equipment – Health, \$19,886,000 was spent and an additional \$20,300,000 is being sought. The question is, in the light of the underperformance of these programmes, and more particular th health programme, what would be different to see these huge amounts appropriated under these various headings.

Mr. Bulkan: The answer would be a more efficient execution and delivery of the programme

Bishop Edghill: I am just seeking to confirm that, by that answer, the Minister is indicating to this House that last year, there was inefficient execution of the programmes.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I had said earlier that there were some bottlenecks in regard to the public procurement process.

Programme: 804 – Health Services – \$82,514,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 22 – Ministry of Tourism

Current Expenditure

Programme: 221 – Policy Development and Administration – \$16,924,000

Ms. Persaud: Line item 6112 – Senior Technical, 6113 – Other Technical and Crafted Skill and 6116 – Contracted Employee: There is a total staffing of 39, an increase from 13 staff from 2015. Could the Hon. Minister provide the positions, salaries, allowances and the dates of appointment for these persons?

Minister of Public Telecommunications [Ms. Hugh]: The increase is actually of 10 staff. We went from 26 staff who came from the old Ministry over to 36. Those 10 individuals would be three new officers: Expenditure Planning Management Analyst, the date for that appointment would have been the 2nd November, 2015 and the salary is \$112,859. The second individuals would have been an Assistant Accountant and the Personnel Officer, both were transfer from the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce and the date would have been the 1st September, 2015. And Assistant accountant, salary - \$84,927 and Personnel Officer, salary - \$65,565.

The contracted employees are: A Director Ggeneral, 1st September, 2015 - \$450,000; a Public Relations Officer, 1st September, 2015 - \$184,542; Special Project Officer, 1st June, 2015 - \$151,549. In the Permanent Secretary's (PS) Office, one Permanent Secretary, also transferred from Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce - \$621,991; a Clerk II (General) - \$57,484, I do not have the date of appointment for that one. Administrative staff - one Cleaner, 13th July - \$50,000 and a Permanent Secretary Junior (PSJ) again, transferred from the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce and effective from the 1st September, 2015 - \$198,090 and a Secretary - \$292,196 and that was on the 2nd November, 2015.

The three new officers at the Arthur Chung Convention Centre are a Driver/Mechanic appointed on the 13th July, 2015 - \$50,358; one Driver/Mechanic, 2nd of November, 2015 - \$50,358 and a Labourer, 22nd October, 2015 - \$50,000.

Ministry of Finance [Mr. Jordan]: On a point of clarification. I am wondering whether we could, in the interest of time, quickly pass this item because it is only for two months, and rather deal with the substantive matter, Tourism Development under Public Telecommunications. I suspect that we are going to ask the same questions under Public Telecommunications. It is just for the first two months, January and February or we could do them together.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Minister for his suggestion. Hon. Members, do we proceed as we have been doing or do we adopt a different course which allows us to combined the two and proceed in that way.

Mr. Ali: ...the Hon. Minister is *[inaudible]* if we actually do the current together; the Ministry of Tourism and Public Telecommunications.

Mr. Chairman: If Hon. Members are in agreement with that, I would then repeat the information which would enable Members to follow and ask questions.

Agency: 33 – Ministry of Public Telecommunications

Current Expenditure

Programme: 331 – Policy Development and Administration – \$243,379,000

Mr. Chairman: Just to remind Members that the earlier reference was to Agency 22 – Ministry of Tourism, Programme: 221 – Policy Development and Administration. Members would recall that I have already proposed the question in relation to Agency 22.

9.41 p.m.

Ms. Persaud: Line item 6291 - National and Other Events: There is a budgeted sum of \$38,850,000 at Programme 331. Could the Hon. Minister lay over the list of events and the sums that will be allotted to each event?

Ms. Hughes: Yes, we would be happy to lay that information over.

Ms. Persaud: Could the Hon. Minister briefly tell this honourable House if the sums for the Orealla Regatta, the Diwali Motorcade and the annual Christmas tree light up...

Ms. Hughes: Yes, those were included.

Ms. Persaud: I am kindly asking the Hon. Minister to state, briefly, for the House, the sums allotted to those three events.

Ms. Hughes: Mr. Chairman, I would be happy to provide that a little later.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I will interrupt the consideration of the Estimates to simply announce that the Hon. Minister, Dr. Roopnarine, has lost his phone. He was in the outer room and in the Members of Parliament Lounge. He wonders if, by chance, any Hon. Member may have seen it and would wish to make it available by placing it on the Clerk's table. He would be grateful.

We now return to the consideration of the Estimates.

Programme: 221 – Policy Development and Administration - \$16,924,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 331 – Policy Development and Administration - \$243,379,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 222 – Tourism Development - \$12,016,000

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we can safely include the similar provision for the other agency.

Programme: 333 – Tourism Development - \$232,984,000

Ms. Selman: Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: Could the Hon. Minister provide, in writing, the list of the national and other events being provided for utilising this budgetary provision?

Ms. Hughes: Yes, we would be happy to do that.

Mr. Ali: Line item 6291 – National and Other Events – Programme 333 – Tourism Development: There is an allocation of \$30 million and, in the earlier allocation, there was an additional sum. What are the additional national and other events catered for under this?

Secondly, under line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – could the Hon. Minister state what the key targets and key programmes are that will benefit from this allocation to the Guyana Tourism Authority (GTA)

Ms. Hughes: For the national and other events, we are catering for the jubilee festival which is the Ministry's event for the 50th Anniversary and that, of course, is a four-day festival from the 19th to the 22nd May, 2016. The cost is for that purpose, solely.

Could you repeat the second question?

Mr. Ali: Just before I repeat the second question, I have a follow-up on the first question. The Minister of Finance announced a block figure for the jubilee celebration. Is the \$30 million in addition to the amount announced by the Minister of Finance?

Ms. Hughes: Yes, it is. That is the Ministry's specific event.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you said that you had a second question.

Mr. Ali: Yes, I am going to ask it now. Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: There is an allocation of \$202 million for the GTA. Could the Hon. Minister outline her key targets and key programmes? Secondly, would any resources out of this allocation be utilised for the jubilee celebration also?

Ms. Hughes: There is an employment cost that is included in the allocation, that is \$500.6 million. Then, in terms of the actual event, all of our Familiarisation (FAM) trips, where we get travel writers and companies visiting to see what we have, come from this allocation. Also, our representation at international trade fairs and different parts that connect to our niche markets, for example the adventure show that we will attend this weekend and the world travel market that we plan to attend and a range of international trade fairs, are also included under this allocation. The attendance cost, which includes the design of the booth and those kinds of cost, are also included. It also includes advertising in some of our specific niche markets, advertisements in the Zing Magazine, the Caribbean Beat and the Bird Watcher magazine. It really is all of the...

Mr. Ali: Is there anything for the jubilee celebration?

Ms. Hughes: No. The jubilee celebration is not included there. This is just our international marketing programme. It also caters for all of the other charges in terms of rental and maintenance of buildings, fuel and lubricants, office supplies and equipment supplies, which all fall under the GTA.

Mr. Ali: Follow-up: Could the Hon. Minister say whether any resources, in this allocation, will be utilised to fulfil her policy pronouncement in moving the office of the GTA to a more central and accessible location that is more tourism friendly?

Ms. Hughes: No. It is not included.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we will treat with Programme 222 – Tourism Development - in Agency 22 and Programme 333 – Tourism Development - in Agency 33.

Programme: 222 – Tourism Development - \$12,016,000 - and Programme: 333 – Tourism Development - \$232,984,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are approaching the 10 o'clock hour. The Assembly will now be resumed to receive, from the Prime Minister, the adjournment. We are pretty close to concluding two of the agencies, the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Public Telecommunications. Thereafter, there is the Ministry of Public Security. If we can conclude that, then we would have concluded our work for today.

Assembly resumed.

Suspension of Standing Order No. 10

First Vice-President and Prime Minister [Mr. Nagamootoo]: Mr. Speaker, I move that this House continues sitting until 10.30 p.m.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Speaker, for clarification, is the Hon. Prime Minister proposing that we continue up to 10.30 p.m. to conclude the work for tonight - the two Ministries?

9.56 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: I would hope that, with the cooperation of Hon. Members, we will conclude today's work by that time. But please do not let us fritter away the time, even if we cannot finish.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Speaker, I begged, from a very early stage, to seek your guidance here. There is no way we can complete the Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of Public Telecommunications in this time. It is unreasonable for such a proposal.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, there is a miscommunication, I must tell you. The considerations of the Estimates do not conclude today. We have days; the next day, as we understand, is Monday. We understand that. Is there a concern that you have even though you know that?

Mr. Ali: My concern, Mr. Speaker, is whether we are contemplating finishing the Ministry of Public Security tonight. **[Mr. William:** When it is 10.30 p.m., we will stop wherever we are.]

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Attorney General for that, but what I am saying is that we will work as best we can and we would achieve as much as we can by 10.30 p.m. I am sure that the Hon. Member, Mr. Ali, is at one with what the Speaker is saying, but he seems puzzled and I do not know why.

Mr. Ali: I am puzzled.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, we are going to lose five minutes but tell me what exactly your puzzlement is.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Speaker, with full respect to you...

Mr. Speaker: That is always a dangerous thing.

Mr. Ali: You said that we will complete today's programme by 10.30 p.m. That, in my interpretation, means the completion of everything that is scheduled for today and I am humbly suggesting that that is an impossible task.

Mr. Speaker: I note the Hon. Member's statement, but allow me to be optimistic. Thank you. Sergeant at Arms, I believe you should return. The Hon. Gail Teixeira wants to make a point and we are going to let the time go. Yes ma'am, you have the floor.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, as we did last night, go until 11.30 p.m., could we not extend the time to finish between 11.30 p.m. or maximum to 12.00 a.m.? [Hon. Members: What?] Well, at least, we can work until 11.30 p.m. It is now 10 o'clock. The other option, Mr. Speaker, is if you agree that we move consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Public Security to Monday because it is too important a sector to not have a chance to be examined.

I am putting two options to you, Sir. Let us work to 11.30 p.m. to finish the day or we can continue on Monday whatever we have not finished today at one o'clock. We will start at one o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, that was always the option. I think we are not communicating with each other. Can we proceed?

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, I am not saying that the motion that I moved has no amendment to it but it is exactly what I moved that we continue until 10.30 p.m. and that the work would continue on the other days that have been agreed upon. The Business Sub-Committee of Supply had agreed, which was announced in this House, that we conclude our work at 10.00 p.m. Extending it to 10.30 p.m. is a concession for us to continue working. I ask that the question be put, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we have frittered away about seven minutes and we are no nearer to understanding one another. This is not a good sign. What is the question to be put?

Mr. Nagamootoo: ...until 10.30 this evening.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Prime Minister. The question is put, Hon. Members. Are we all in agreement with that?

Question put, and agreed to.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply

Programme: 223 – Consumer Protection - \$6,677,000

Mr. Chairman hit gavel.

Mr. Chairman: I know Hon. Members are not trying to obstruct the Chairman in what he is seeking to do, so let us work together. I noticed that Members on the front bench on either side of this aisle seem pretty taken up with one another, but could it happen after we are finished here tonight?

Programme: 223 – Consumer Protection - \$6,677,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 332 - Public Telecommunications - \$309,247,000

Mr. Ali: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Could the Hon. Minister say whether the local organisation is revenue generating?

Ms. Hughes: Yes, it is.

Mr. Ali: A follow-up: Could the Hon. Minister say whether the agency runs a separate account?

Ms. Hughes: Yes, that agency does.

Mr. Ali: A follow-up: Could the Hon. Minister say what is in the balance of that account and why was it not transferred to the Consolidated Fund?

Ms. Hughes: I will have to get that information for you. I do not have it with me right now.

Mr. Ali: A follow-up: Could the Hon. Minister say whether she has any intention in ensuring this amount is transferred to the Consolidated Fund as directed by my Friend, the Hon. Minister of Finance?

Ms. Hughes: Absolutely, Mr. Chairman, we have no problem with ensuring that is done.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister give us a time frame when this transfer will be done?

Ms. Hughes: Mr. Chairman, we would be happy to look into it this coming week.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister say whether any resources will be used, from this account, in any of the operations of this agency?

Ms. Hughes: Of course, the agency is the National Data Management Authority and the only funds that are used are, in fact, at line item 6223 - Office Materials and Supplies. The rest is for employment costs and that is roughly about \$1,275,000.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, I am speaking specifically about the revenue that is collected by the agency. Are any resources utilised, from that revenue, in the operations of the entity?

Mr. Chairman: As a point of clarification, is that right, Hon. Minister?

Ms. Hughes: Yes, Mr. Chairman. The agency gets a subvention and some of the operating costs are utilised from the revenues.

Mr. Ali: Is there any intention to make this agency sustainable?

Ms. Hughes: In the reorganising of the agency, that is definitely our intention.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister give us a time frame when this provision, as she would like to see, will come into effect?

Ms. Hughes: I would expect that it would probably be within the next three months.

Mr. Ali: If this organisation will break even or will be self-sustaining in three months, then I am sure the subsidy that is requested here would not be needed for the entire year.

Ms. Hughes: Mr. Chairman, I think the Hon. Member is putting words in my mouth. I did not say “self-sustaining”; we said “reorganised” within three months.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, let me be specific with the question then.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, let us try to complete this.

10.11 p.m.

Mr. Ali: Hon. Minister, when do you expect this agency to be self-sustained?

Ms. Hughes: I would say within the next two years.

Mr. Ali: Thank you, Hon. Minister. I think the Minister of Finance will be very happy hearing that too.

Hon. Minister, line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There are 86 employees. Are these all new employees or employees that were transferred from various agencies to this new Ministry, and, if so, which agencies were they transferred from, what number was transferred from those agencies and what amount constitutes new employees?

Ms. Hughes: Mr. Chairman, this entity, actually, in 2012/2013, had 180 employees. We are now down to 87 employees and, out of the current stock of 87 employees, five have come over from the old entity, E-Government Project (E-Gov), 16 employees have come over from the One Laptop Per Family (OLPF) project and about 20 employees are new.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, are you through?

Ms. Hughes: Actually, I need to make a clarification. It is actually 60.

Mr. Ali: Hon. Minister, what is 60?

Ms. Hughes: Sixty are the new employees and I explained where the others came from.

Mr. Ali: Thank you, and you did mention One Laptop Per Family (OLPF) project?

Ms. Hughes: Yes.

Mr. Ali: Is that programme still continuing?

Ms. Hughes: That programme has been reorganised and the focus, of course, is now on ensuring that we give laptops to teachers and to students. So, it is a slight change in the focus.

Mr. Ali: Thank you for that information, Hon. Minister. Could you say to us how many teachers would have benefited to date, how much are projected to benefit and the process used in identifying the teachers?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we will need to move on. I will allow two more questions.

Ms. Hughes: Mr. Chairman, we are working on that in collaboration with the Ministry of Education.

Mr. Ali: So, Hon. Minister, none has been distributed as yet.

Ms. Hughes: No. The laptops actually arrived only last week.

Mr. Ali: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to tell us how many have arrived last week?

Ms. Hughes: Nine thousand, six hundred and three laptops have arrived.

Mr. Ali: Through you, Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister say whether any public pronouncement or advertisement will be made on the criteria in terms of the distribution of these laptops?

Ms. Hughes: The main criterion is teachers.

Mr. Chairman: Do you have another question? Hon. Member, are we employing the Parkinson's principle here? [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Ali: Definitely not. The only principle here is the people's principle.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, be careful; the people might object.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, based on my last check, there are just over 12,000 teachers in the system. There are 9,000 plus computers. You must come up with the criteria, either by regional distribution...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please ask the question.

Mr. Ali: Could you say what are the criteria? Is there an allocation per Regions, for example?

Ms. Hughes: I understand your question, Hon. Member. The criterion that we are starting off with is teachers who are in training, and, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, we will decide the additional and how the laptops are allocated.

Ms. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, the Hon Minister stated that, out of the staff complement, 16 persons were transferred from the One Laptop Per Family project. Could the Hon. Minister state how that process took place? I am fully aware that the services of staff from the One Laptop Per Family project were terminated and there were not 16 persons left there working.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member for that observation.

Ms. Hughes: Mr. Chairman, we are more than happy to provide the names but there were, in fact, technicians that were kept on.

Ms. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, there were no such 16 persons as technicians who were still in the employment of the One Laptop Per Family project and I can state that because I was a manager there.

Ms. Hughes: Mr. Chairman, we are more than happy to provide the names. They are real people.

Mr. Ramson: Comrade Chairman, could the Hon. Minister answer, in relation to Programme 333, line item 6291 – National and Other Events... There is \$30 million allocated there for National and Other Events.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Programme 333 has already been passed.

Programme: 332 – Public Telecommunications - \$309,247,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 331 – Policy Development and Administration - \$16,835,000

Mr. Ali: Project code 1217200 – Arthur Chung Conference Centre: Could the Hon. Minister say whether this Centre generates revenue?

Ms. Hughes: Yes, that entity does generate an income.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister say how much is in the coffers of that entity?

Ms. Hughes: Mr. Chairman, it is close to \$100 million which will be transferred to the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Ali: Just to correct the Hon. Minister, it was supposed to be transferred to the Consolidated Fund at the end of December. However, I am going to ask, now that it is confirmed that it has not yet been transferred, when do you intend to transfer this amount?

Ms. Hughes: Mr. Chairman, by next month...

Mr. Ali: Do I hear next month, Hon. Minister?

Ms. Hughes: That is what I said.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister say what percentage of the revenue generated is used in the operational expense of the Centre?

Ms. Hughes: Mr. Chairman, I would want to be accurate and, therefore, I would ask that I provide that information.

Mr. Ali: Thank you, Hon. Minister.

Project code 2406500 – Land Transport: Could the Hon. Minister say to us, firstly, who is this vehicle being acquired for? Secondly, what brand of vehicle will you be acquiring?

Ms. Hughes: The vehicle is acquired for the position of the Minister and it is a Prado.

Mr. Ali: Thank you, Hon. Minister. Minister, are you aware that the Procurement Act does not allow for the naming of a brand in procuring vehicles or anything? Mr. Chairman, it only allows for specifications not brand.

Ms. Hughes: Mr. Chairman, I told the Hon. Member because I knew he would ask.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, I am asking my dear Hon. Minister whether she is aware that the Procurement Act does not provide for the naming of a brand, but it allows for the specification of the vehicle to be outlined.

Ms. Hughes: Mr. Chairman, a specific question was asked and I answered. In terms of the specification, it is a 4x4 vehicle. It will allow the Ministry to go into the Rupununi and several out of town areas in Guyana, and I am sure that the Members, on the other side, know that the current vehicle is a welding of both a Prado and a Land Cruiser, and you will know the challenges with that vehicle, based on how it was treated.

Mr. Ali: Hon. Chairman, I have great respect and admiration for this Hon. Member and my only position that I am putting to the Minister is that the naming of a brand is not provided for in the Procurement Act and, again, I ask the Hon. Minister whether she is aware of this. That is all I want to know.

Ms. Hughes: Noted.

Programme: 331 – Policy Development and Administration - \$16,835,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

10.26 p.m.

Programme: 332 – Public Telecommunications - \$10,000,000

Programme: 332 – Public Telecommunications - \$10,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 333 – Tourism Development - \$9,240,000

Ms. Selman: Project 4100300, Tourism Development: Could the Hon. Minister provide in writing an estimated breakdown of the disbursement of the budgetary allocation to purchase the vehicle, the printer and the racks.

Ms. Hughes: The printer costs \$700,000.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, the request is for the breakdown to be in writing.

Ms. Hughes: My apologies. I will be more than happy to do that.

Programme: 333 – Tourism Development - \$9,240,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we have concluded the consideration of both the Ministry of Tourism, Agency 23, and the Ministry of Public Communications, Agency 33.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: It is now 10.30 p.m. Hon. Members, in light of the progress we have made, I do not know whether Members are minded to seek an extension to 11.30 p.m.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, in light of the progress that we have made to conclude, I move... [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I am certain that we can all express dissent other than in this manner.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, in light of the protestation by the Members of the Opposition that they do not want to work any further, I move that this House be adjourned.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Prime Minister. I should say Hon. Members yes, there has been backwards and forwards, and I agree that we would stop at 10.30 p.m. If Members wish to remain wedded to that time then, certainly, we will stop at 10.30 p.m.

Prime Minister, would you move the adjournment please?

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Nagamootoo: Sir, I respectfully move that this House be adjourned until Monday, 22nd February, at 1.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Prime Minister. The House will stand adjourned until 22nd February at 1.00 p.m.

Adjourned accordingly at 10.35 p.m.