

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

57TH Sitting

Wednesday, 21ST December, 2016

The Assembly convened at 10.08 a.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Presentation and First Readings

The following Bill was introduced and read for the first time:

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION AND AUDIT (AMENDMENT) BILL 2016–Bill No. 36/2016

A Bill intituled:

“AN ACT to amend the Financial Administration and Audit Act.” *[Minister of Finance]*

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT’S BUSINESS

MOTIONS

MOTION BY THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

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 2017 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2016-11-28.

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 thirty billion, three hundred and forty nine million and seventy nine thousand dollars (\$230,349,079,000), excluding nineteen billion and seven hundred and seventy four million, and eighty seven thousand dollars (\$19,774,087,000) 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*]

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: We will now proceed, Hon. Members, in accordance with the Schedule of the Sub-Committee's Resolution.

Agency: 40 – Ministry of Education

Current Expenditure

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I will allow you the opportunity to have your staff together.

Ms. Manickchand: Thank you.

Your Honour, I am told that the Ministers are ready. Apparently, there is a division of labour or so. My question is under line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I have not proposed anything to the House nor have I said anything in relation to that except to allow the Ministers an opportunity to put themselves and their staff...

Ms. Manickchand: The Ministers said that they were ready.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, are you ready to proceed now?

Minister of Education [Mr. Roopnarine]: Yes. We are ready, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister.

Programme: 401 – Policy Development and Administration – \$1,792,246,000

Ms. Manickchand: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: I see a remarkable, almost 100%, increase from last year to this year. Could the Hon. Minister kindly explain this?

Minister within the Ministry of Education [Ms. Henry]: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Hon. Member, for your question. The reason for the increase in 2017 has to do with, first of all, in 2016, there were a number of vehicles that were under repairs and therefore they did not use the fuel. In 2017, given that these vehicles are serviceable, we anticipate using them. Therefore, the usage of fuel will be increased in 2017. And so this provision caters for that increase.

Ms. Manickchand: Your Honour, I would also like to say thank you very much to the staff who are here which I should have said earlier but Your Honour made me nervous by shutting down my question early. Good morning, Ministry of Education. Thank you very much for coming and thank you for your years of dedicated service.

Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: I see a marked increase under electricity. Could we get an explanation for that, please, from the Minister?

Ms. Henry: The increase caters for telephone charges of all administrative offices. In 2016, the allocation was insufficient to cater for all these telephone bills. As a result, there was need for us

to even have a virement and so to adequately cater for the telephone charges in 2017, we have requested and have been granted additional sums.

Ms. Manickchand: But that is odd. I have a follow-up question. There was a Budget for \$91.230 million. The Hon. Member is saying to this House that that was inadequate except that it was revised and they did not spend that; they spent \$81.224 million. And I am asking now, why under line item 6272 – Electricity Charges... The Minister may be looking at a wrong line item.

Ms. Henry: I am looking at line item 6271 – Telephone Charges. I can respond to line item 6272 – Electricity Charges - also.

Ms. Manickchand: I did not ask any questions under line item 6271 – Telephone Charges - but I am happy for the answer. Could we get an answer for line item 6272 – Electricity Charges - please?

Ms. Henry: As it relates to line item 6272 – Electricity Charges - in 2016, the allocation was reduced as a result of the funds that we had transferred to line item 6284 – Other - and that was to facilitate payment of the ministerial tender board members and evaluators.

Also, when it comes to line item 6211 – Expenses Specific to the Agency - we had payments for rates and taxes. These two were not previously budgeted for by the Ministry. And, based on the 2016 expenditure, the reduced sum has proven to be sufficient and, therefore, we have advocated for similar sums in 2017.

Ms. Manickchand: A follow-up again: Does the Ministry owe the telephone company?

Ms. Henry: No. There are no outstanding payments for electricity, as we speak.

Ms. Manickchand: Then the question remains unanswered. If \$81.224 million was spent in 2016 and you were able to vire to take care of other things that you owed and was able to anticipate, why do you now need \$90 million? Who is spending more on telephones?

Ms. Henry: We are projecting and preparing to have more calls in 2017. Therefore, additional sums will be needed and had to be budgeted for in 2017.

In addition to that, as you know, there will be an increase for electricity because of the value-added tax (VAT). So I think that would take care of the additional cost that will arise out of that.

Ms. Manickchand: You think, Minister...

Ms. Henry: Well, I have to think.

Ms. Manickchand: That is a dangerous thing.

Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): I see an amount budgeted here for \$80.118 million. Could the Hon. Minister kindly tell us what training and/or scholarship is intended to be awarded under this head?

Ms. Henry: This increase is due to the need for training and that is to cater for the new treasurers and cooks that we will have because we have expanded the School Feeding Programme in Regions 1, 2, 7, 8 and 9. There is \$24 million allocated for that additional training. The line item also caters for the Statistical Unit - \$30 million. There is an annual school based training that we will do. There is also technical support through head teachers that is catered for under this line item and the head teachers are expected to work in record-keeping and data management. And there is also training for senior administrators, which is also catered for in this department. There is one other training and it is related to monitoring and evaluation. These will take care of the sum that is allocated there.

Ms. Manickchand: A more direct question: Are there any scholarships to be awarded under this programme - Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) or master's degree?

Ms. Henry: No. There are no scholarships to be awarded – PhD or master's degree - under this line item but I can provide ...

Ms. Manickchand: We do not know what the application is for.

Ms. Henry: For the purpose of public records, I can provide you with a list of those who would have done PhDs and master's level prior to 2005 and that list, of course, will include former Minister Robert Persaud who was granted scholarships to do first and second degrees and I could go on and on.

[Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we are dealing with 2016 and 2017. Let us try to remain focused on that.

Ms. Manickchand: The Minister is a national asset, Sir; we should protect her; we should not hassle her too much today.

10.23 p.m.

Ms. Manickchand: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I see a 51-person reduction in contracted employees. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to tell us why?

Ms. Henry: Thank you, Hon. Member. Mr. Chairman, there is a 51-person reduction as is reflected here. Thirty-six persons were moved to line item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support. That is in keeping with the goal to reduce contracted employees. Five persons were moved to line item 6115 – Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled - and the contracts of 10 persons were not renewed in 2016. If you add those numbers, you would get 51.

Ms. Manickchand: Your Honour, could we have an example, perhaps, not a list as yet, of what offices comprise this list of contracted employees? There seems to be a policy shift towards moving away from contracted employees although we still see in the newspapers persons being employed on contract all across the Government. I just need an example of who comprise this list of contacted employees.

Ms. Henry: Mr. Chairman, an example would be in the case of the former Chief Education Officer (CEO) who was on contract. He would be one of the 10. Currently, on contract, we have the Chief Education Officer, the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, the Administrative Officer, a Driver, an Accounts Clerk, Telephone Operators, Typists, Office Assistants and Cleaners. It is cross-cutting, from senior to junior officers.

Ms. Manickchand: One last follow-up on this: I know the Chief Education Officer has been fired. When one is replaced, rehired or whatever process the Ministry is going to use to get a new Chief Education Officer, is that person going to be a contracted employee under this line item? The question initially was who comprise contractual employees under this line item. The Hon.

Minister said one person who does not is the CEO who was fired. My question is: when we hire a new one, is he or she going to be hired as a contracted employee or not?

Ms. Henry: Thank you, Hon. Member. Mr. Chairman, in the case of the Chief Education Officer, what I should point out here is that the person would be a fixed term employee. Having said that, I would need to provide some clarification. The only reason why that was a contracted position is because the former Chief Education Officer, under your watch, was granted a fixed term employment and he opted to have a contract because the situation allowed for that option at that point in time. We are not going to allow people to exercise that option. We are going to put them on a fixed term. The position was already advertised in the newspapers and we are in the process of looking at the applicants. When I say we, I am talking about the Public Service Commission.

Mr. G. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, line item 6311 – Rates and Taxes: There is a 150% increase in terms of the 2016/2017 allocation. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to give us an explanation as to the recipient of the rates and taxes and why there was the increase?

Ms. Henry: Thank you, Hon. Member, for your question. Mr. Chairman, yes, there is an increase and the reason is that the building of the Department of Culture, Youth and Sport of the Ministry of Education, on Main Street, was not catered for under this line item in the past. It is going to be catered for under this line item moving forward. The provision now is to cater for the building which is included in this line item.

Ms. Manickchand: This is the last question for me on this head, Sir. The Hon. Minister was saying that the CEO is going to be hired under the fixed establishment. I know we have had some confusion over the years about what that means. Is the Hon. Member saying definitely to this House that the new CEO is going to be hired as a pensionable person and not as a contracted employee? That is one who does not get a pension and gratuity within the contract but is on the fixed establishment and gets a gratuity and pension at the end of his or her tenure.

Ms. Henry: Thank you, Hon. Member, for seeking that clarification. When I said “fixed”, I was speaking in terms of the mechanism that is in place. A fixed term means that, at the end of service when one retires or resigns, the gratuity or pension will be given or benefits in keeping

with that. This is not a case of contracted employees who get gratuity every six months, as we understand it.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, line item 6264 – Vehicle Spares and Services: I notice \$22 million was spent in 2016 and now the sum of \$21.8 million is sought. Could the Minister lay over through the Clerk the number of vehicles and tell us where they are attached?

Ms. Henry: Thank you, Hon. Member, for your question. What I can tell you is that we have a fleet of 51 vehicles in the administrative pool. That involves the Ministry of Education, mainstream, and the Department of Culture, Youth and Sport. I can give you a breakdown of that. The reason we are projecting for less is due to the maintenance that was done in 2016 and the fact that we have acquired new vehicles and expect that maintenance cost should be reduced in 2017.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, line item 6301 - Education Subventions and Grants: I notice that, in 2015, it was \$39.3 million; in 2016, it was \$187.5 million, but there is a substantial increase to \$206.8 million in 2017. Could the Hon. Minister give us a breakdown and tell us who will be the beneficiaries of the subventions?

Ms. Henry: Thank you, Hon. Member, for your question. Mr. Chairman, this increase is primarily due to the fact that the National Accreditation Council, which is a subvention agency, is now catered for under this line item. In the past, that was not the case. This line item will also attract payment for six new staff members for the National Accreditation Council. We are also strengthening the Council in addition to putting it under this line item. That takes care of the additional cost.

The other subvention agencies which existed in the past, the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) and the Guyana Teachers Union, would also benefit from a grant of \$5 million which is catered for under this line item.

Mr. G. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, I have two questions and, with your permission, I would put them together. Line item 6273 – Water Charges: I note that, in 2016, the sum was \$9,772,000 and the same amount is requested in 2017. I am wondering whether the Ministry is aware that we will have to pay value-added tax (VAT) on our water charges for 2017.

Line item 6281 – Security Services: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to share with us the name of the security provider, the date when the security provider was engaged, when the contract or agreement will come to an end and the charge per hour?

Ms. Henry: Thank you, Hon. Member, for both questions. Mr. Chairman, as it relates to the water, yes, we are aware of VAT and that will be catered for.

When it comes to the second question on line item 6281, yes, there is an increase. The increase has to do with the previous contract which expired. We have renewed the contract and the rates have increased. The rate was \$285 per hour but now it is \$450 per hour in some instances. In other instances, the rate was \$300 but now it is \$540 per hour. The name of the security company is Integrated Security Service which provides security for the Head Office at Main Street, the Department of Culture, Youth and Sport, the Annex buildings, the Carifesta Sports Complex on Carifesta Avenue and the Andrew “Six Head” Lewis Gym. There is another company called Massey Security Company which covers the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) building, the Book Distribution Unit and the bond of the Ministry of Education. There is also the Special Constabulary which provides security for the Basic Education Access and Management Support (BEAMS) building, the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) office and the Unity/Lancaster building. There is the Integrated Security Service which provides security for the Ministry’s Sport Complex. Then there is Clinton’s Security Service which covers the Volunteer Service Oversees (VSO) building. There is Integrated Security Service which covers Lots 21, 26, and 68 Brickdam, the Examinations Division and the Allied Arts Unit.

Mr. Bharrat: Good morning, everyone. Mr. Chairman, line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence: In 2015, the budgetary allocation was \$37.7 million; in 2016, it was \$84 million; and, in 2017, there is a massive increase of \$36 million. Could the Hon. Minister say what accounts for this increase in 2017?

Ms. Henry: Thank you, Hon. Member, for your question. Mr. Chairman, the reason for the increase is to cater for the expansion of the National School Feeding Programme. We are going to be expanding by 46 new schools. Of the 46 schools, nine will be for the breakfast programme and the others will be for the hot meal programme. The other costs will be absorbed by

monitoring of the Book Distribution Unit. In addition to that, there would be routine travel which will incur additional cost because we are going to increase travel. There will also be sustainability of some of the activities that were previously carried out. For instance, there would be the continued implementation of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) software which would incur a cost to the tune of \$1.36 million. We would also provide continued monitoring visits by the Schools Welfare Department to the tune of \$1.5 million and monitoring and verification visits by the Inspectorate Unit to the tune of \$4.1 million. We also have plans for the Ministry of Education's Department of Culture, Youth and Sport, visits throughout the country.

10. 38 p.m.

There will be stakeholders' consultations and that will be to the tune of \$6.3 million. We anticipate having monitoring visits to departments and schools, we also cater for attendance at meetings, Parent Teachers' Associations (PTAs) and otherwise, attendances at Speech Day Ceremonies, there are open days, special events and consultations. That will be to the tune of \$3 million and \$2.3 million, respectively.

Finally, to execute verification checks at all of the Ministry's locations throughout the country by the Field Audit Unit, that sum would cater for the Ministry doing that. In addition to the mainstream education, the Department of Culture, Youth and Sport will also be involved in those visits and we anticipate about \$700,000 for that. So that will take care of the sum allocated.

Mr. Dharamlall: Line item 6261, Local Travel and Subsistence: Hon. Minister, could you please state what is the daily subsistence rates provided to staff in 2016 versus the budgeted amounts in 2017?

Ms. Henry: The rates will remain the same as per the Department of Public Service's guidance. I can share or refer you to the Department of Public Service document.

Mr. Dharamlall: Follow up: Hon. Minister, under your monitoring, could you please state whether you are aware that the teachers of Region 9 have not been paid as yet for December and state why?

Ms. Henry: Have they not been paid travelling or subsistence? What is the Hon. Member speaking about? Can he please be more specific?

Mr. Dharamlall: I will accede to the Hon. Member, Ms. Manickchand.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Dharamlall, I have given you the floor.

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you. I was asking the Hon. Minister, as part of monitoring, which is covered under Local Travel and Subsistence, whether she is aware that the teachers of Region 9 have not been paid salaries for December, as of today.

Ms. Henry: This line item caters for travelling and subsistence. As far as I know, salaries would not be covered under this line item.

Ms. Manickchand: Under line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships), the Hon. Minister told the House that \$30 million catered for training and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). What is done with M&E is that the Ministry monitors and evaluate. Has the Ministry, in its monitoring and evaluation, discovered, as yet, that the teachers in Region 9 have not been paid as of 21st December? I make this representation based on a message which I just received that was posted 45 minutes ago on social media, which states that teachers in Region 9 have not yet been paid. Is the Ministry aware of that fact?

Ms. Henry: I wish to point out that, when I spoke about monitoring and evaluation, I was speaking about programmatic performance and that will not be captured under monitoring and evaluation. Here the Ministry is monitoring its indicators and the payment of salaries is not an indicator, as the Hon. Member would know, when it comes to monitoring and evaluation.

In addition to that, I want to point out that, if the teachers have not been paid at this point in time, it therefore means that there is a delay in the payment and that the Ministry of Education, as the Hon. Member would know, is not the agency that is responsible for the payment of salaries to people who reside in the regions. I do not think that that question was well positioned for the Ministry of Education to respond.

Ms. Manickchand: It is one Government and it would have been refreshing and very comforting for the teachers to hear...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms. Manickchand, please.

Ms. Manickchand: Sir, as far as I understand, this is a policy issue and I am addressing a policy matter. The Minister was asked a direct question and instead of saying that the Government was unaware that the teachers were not paid, but that it would ensure that they are paid, even though the Ministry of Education is not supposed to pay them, but the Local Government. That would have been something that would have comforted not only the teachers and their children, on this 21st of December, in Region 9, but the nation. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are now in a realm of political presentations. Hon. Member, if you have a question, ask it, sit and yield it to the floor.

Ms. Manickchand: Sir, the Minister was allowed to speak as a result of which she said probably more than her staff would be happy with. Based on what the Minister said, I have a question. The Minister said that monitoring and evaluation looks at outcomes and that it does not consider salaries linked to outcomes. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

There is a direct question based on what the Minister said under line item 6302. The Minister said to this House that the payment of salaries is not linked with outcomes. Does the Minister genuinely hold that view? If the Ministry do not pay salaries, how is it going to get its outcomes? It is in the *Hansard* and we can check it.

Ms. Henry: Thank you Mr. Chairman and thank you Hon. Member for expounding on that. There are two things I wish to say. I wish to repeat that the monitoring and evaluation tool, used by the Ministry of Education, is specific to indicators. I am saying to this House that the payment of salaries is not an indicator and it, therefore, cannot be used as a performance measurement.

In addition to that, I wish to point out that what the Hon. Member just mentioned is more a matter of form. She anticipated, and she would have hoped, that I would have given a different response. When it comes to substance I can answer on the basis that I see the need to answer.

Ms. Manickchand: Sir, this is a speech. One person can be allowed to make speech, but when I respond it is an issue.

Ms. Henry: I am allowed to answer you.

Ms. Manickchand: You do not have any calibre to speak to me, speak to the Chair.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the comments must be addressed to the Chairman and that applies to all speakers in this House. Hon. Minister, are you finished?

Ms. Henry: Thank you, I have concluded my comments as they relate to this line item.

Programme: 401 – Policy Development and Administration - \$1,792,246,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 401 – Policy Development and Administration - \$129,678,000

Ms. Manickchand: Project code 1215000, Administrative Buildings: There is a \$55 million allocation, I have two questions. Firstly, what comprises the buildings that will be rehabilitated and or constructed and secondly, does the 14% VAT apply to the services here that would be expended?

Ms. Henry: First of all, I wish to say that the buildings are as follows: The completion of the Ministry of Education's main boardroom at Lot 26 Brickdam, Georgetown, \$2.9 million; there is a consultancy fee attached to that work to the tune of \$1.4 million; the new buildings will be the construction of an office at Lot 21 Brickdam, Georgetown, to house the Buildings Unit, the Stores, the Expenditure Planning and Management Unit and the Procurement Unit, \$30 million; reconstruction work of the sports complex on Carifesta Avenue to the tune of \$21 million. If those figures were to be added the total would be \$55.3 million, as is reflected here in Volume 1.

Ms. Manickchand: Project code 2406600, Land Transport: The sum allocated here, is it for one vehicle and if so, for whom?

Ms. Henry: The allocation caters for two vehicles, the first would be a 4x4 for the administration pool of the Department of Culture, Youth and Sport and the Ministry is projecting a cost of \$5 million. The second is for a double cab vehicle for Lot 21 Brickdam, Georgetown, also for the administrative pool, to the tune of \$6.2 million. The two sums would give the sum as is reflected here.

Programme 401: Policy Development and Administration - \$129,678,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

10.53 a.m.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 402 – Training and Development - \$2,003,768,000

Ms. Manickchand: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): Are there any scholarships included under this line item?

Ms. Henry: There are no scholarships, just training.

Ms. Manickchand: Line item 6117 – Temporary Employees: There is a remarkable jump in the number of temporary employees. Could the Hon. Minister explain why?

Ms. Henry: Yes, there is a significant jump. The number is actually 56 and that is to support the National Centre for Educational Resource Development (NCERD) and the Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE). The 20 employees are for CPCE and the remainder is for NCERD. The reason the temporary employees are needed is because they will be working on the production of tool kits for nursery education, mathematics intervention and for literary tool kits. They anticipate that this is the required number of persons in human resource that will be needed to do that type of work. The employees are temporary not fulltime as the House would see, so it is to fill a need.

Ms. Manickchand: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Have there been any new persons added to this list of contracted employees? The list has the number of employees that have been contracted, but has there been any new persons added to this list?

Ms. Henry: No. We have not added any new employee to the list. The list would have been decreased by 23 employees and I could give a breakdown of that, if there is need for that.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, Staffing Details, 6116 – Contracted Employees: This allocation has been reduced from 124 to 101 in 2017. However, I notice in salaries that the

budgeted allocation is \$252,479,000 for 2016 and only \$198,000,000 was spent. Could the Minister give an explanation as to what happen to the remaining money?

Ms. Henry: I wish to point out that the moneys that are unspent will be returned to the Consolidated Fund. So that is what will happen to the moneys that are not spent.

Ms. Manickchand: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: While there is a reduction in the number of contracted employees that the Ministry expects to engage with in this New Year, there is an increase in the allocation for these employees. Could the Minister explain why?

Ms. Henry: The increase in the sum allocated is to cater for the increase in salaries to be given to public servants during that period.

Ms. Manickchand: There has been a determination that public servants will get an increase during that period? Clearly, if there is a figure here then there is a determination about how much that will be.

Ms. Henry: I certainly would not be able to speak to any projected increases, but I can certainly speak for the increases that occurred in 2016, which were 5, 6 and 10%, respectively, based on the GS scale of the employees.

Ms. Manickchand: Mr. Chairman could the Minister give an example of the persons who make up this list because there is a reduction of 23 persons, but an increase in the salaries. Even with the 5, 1 and 2 % increases and so on, there is an increase in the allocation for salaries in 2017, even with a 23 persons' reduction. Could the Minister give an example of the employees who make up this list?

Ms. Henry: My understanding and information is that this list would be made up of persons such as lecturers at the Cyril Potter College of Education. That is the category of employees that would be catered for under this line item.

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6117 – Temporary Employees: In 2016, 19 employees and in 2017 75 employees. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to explain the increase and the category of persons who are temporary employees? Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to lay over that list of designations, emoluments and dates of appointments? Thank you.

Ms. Henry: I answered that question a few questions before. But in addition to that, these persons are temporary employees so they will not be given long term... As the need arise, when there is work to be done, for example, toolkits to be made, they would come on and when there are no toolkits to be made they are off. So they are seasonal more or less, or periodic. I could give the Hon. Member a list of the names of the persons from the pool from which the employees are pulled from time to time. If that would be helpful to the Hon. Member, I would be happy to provide that list. I do not have that list in my possession this morning, but I could make that available to the Hon. Member, if it is needed.

Programme: 402 – Training and Development - \$2,003,768,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 402 – Training and Development - \$ 150,804,000

Ms. Manickchand: Sir, could I just confirm the page?

Mr. Chairman: Page 633.

Ms. Manickchand: Thank you very much.

Programme: 402 – Training and Development – \$150,804,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 403 – Nursery Education - \$1,720,899,000

Ms. Manickchand: Line item 6224 – Print and Non-Print Materials: There has been a remarkable projected increase from \$14 million to \$64 million. Could the Hon. Minister tell the House why?

Ms. Henry: This increase is to cater for the procurement of workbooks for the nursery level. The workbooks would be procured to the tune of \$59.5 million. The allocation also caters for the printing of supplies, which would be supplementary registers and lesson plans. That would be for 31 nursery schools in Georgetown and should be to the tune of \$2.8 million. Of course, the usual

such as newspapers, *et cetera*, but those are the big ticket items under line item 6224. The additional workbook is what is new and what is different.

Mr. Gill: A follow-up to that question. Could the Hon. Minister advise whether...

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

Mr. Gill: Line item 6224: Could the Hon. Minister advise whether the printing of the textbooks, which she just mentioned, would include the *Roraima Readers* and if not why not?

Ms. Henry: Yes, it would include the *Roraima Readers* from Serial A–H. We are anticipating procuring 5000 sets of those books. I could give the Hon. Member a copy of that list.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, line item 6112 – Senior Technical: In 2016, there were 129 employees and in 2017, there are 123. Could the Minister tell the House the names of those six persons who were removed?

Ms. Henry: Thank you Hon. Member for your question. I would give the House the designations of those persons as against the names. In 2016, we saw that three of those persons were transferred to Region 3, so they are no longer reflected here and that is why there would be a decrease of three. We had one person resigned and we have had one person retired. We also had one person whose services were terminated because of a late notification and that was categorised as termination. The categories of persons would be one graduate Senior Assistant Mistress who was terminated for inadequate notice; we had one graduate Senior Assistant Mistress who was in the transferred category; there were two non-graduate Senior Assistants who were transferred; one non-graduate Senior Assistant who resigned; and there was one non-graduate Senior Assistant Mistress who retired. That caters for the six persons so indicated here.

11.08 a.m.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, line item 6112 – Senior Technical: I notice that the budgeted sum was \$139.5 million, but that the Ministry spent \$141.8 million. Could the Minister tell the House where did that extra money come from?

Ms. Henry: I will give the Hon. Member the exact line item where it was vying from before the end of today.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, as a follow-up: I notice that although the Ministry has six less workers in 2017, it would have budgeted for approximately \$8 million more under the same line item. Could the Minister give an explanation for this?

Ms. Henry: The Ministry is hopeful that it would be able to fill the vacancies come 2017 and so it has made provision. In addition to that, I wish to point out that, in 2016, they would have received increases of 6% and that is catered for.

Ms. Manickchand: Mr. Chairman, we were told before in the House and I have learnt this myself, while as a Minister, that one does not budget for vacancies. Any money that is to be paid to some vacancies that are going to be filled comes from the Ministry of Finance, so that answer is wrong.

Ms. Henry: Yes and you are correct. The second answer stands.

Mr. Bharrat: Going back to line item 6224 – Print and Non-Print Materials: Could the Hon. Minister state whether the workbooks would be for all nursery schools, inclusive of Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9 and what timeframe is there for the distribution? Thank you.

Ms. Henry: Yes, the workbooks will spread from Regions 1 to 10 and the timeframe would be according to the work plan in the Ministry and it is expected to be done in 2017.

Mr. Bharrat: Just a as a follow-up or a point of clarification: Minister, we are looking at the beginning of the September 2017 school year.

Ms. Henry: Thank you Hon. Member for bringing that to my attention and I am aware of that.

Programme: 403 – Nursery Education - \$1,720,899,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 403 – Nursery Education - \$169,525,000

Ms. Manickchand: Project code 1215300 – Nursery Schools: “Completion of schools and repayment of retention”. Could the Hon. Minister state which schools we are talking about here?

Ms. Henry: The retention would be for the Smyth Street Nursery School to the tune of \$5.3 million, the others would be for new construction works and that would be Carmelita Nursery School in Georgetown - \$24.3 million; Mocha Nursery School, obviously in Mocha, - \$22.8 million; the extension of the Turkeyen Nursery School - \$23.9 million; and this would give the grand total of \$76.3 million.

Ms. Manickchand: I keep hearing this would give the grand total of and we are happy for the calculation, but I am not hearing about the 14% Value Added Tax (VAT). This is because the Hon. Minister of Finance has announced in this House and I believe has laid bills in this House that states that goods and services, which would include the construction of buildings and so on, would now attract the 14% VAT. So, when the Hon. Minister states a school would cost \$20 million, does that mean inclusive of VAT?

Ms. Henry: Well, thank you for that question. I thought it was implied because, if the total cost would be that amount, then the VAT would be included in that. In some instances, where VAT is being paid, it has actually been reduced from 16% to 14% and, therefore, it is catered...

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Please proceed Minister.

Ms. Henry: As I was saying, in some instances the rate would have reduced, so it is catered for. I did not want to specify for example, "This plus VAT", because I thought that it was pretty much self-explanatory.

Ms. Manickchand: A follow-up Sir because it is clearly not self-explanatory. Goods and services for budget agencies never attracted VAT before. That is just a matter of fact.

Bishop Edghill: Project code 1215300 – Nursery Schools: In 2016, this programme underperformed by \$33 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House what was not done that was budgeted?

Ms. Henry: The South Road Nursery School which was slated to be done in 2016 was not done, so that had resulted in a change of programme.

Bishop Edghill: A follow-up Sir: Earlier, when the Minister indicated the expenditure for the \$76 million, South Road Nursery School was not named. Could I ask the Hon. Minister whether we are going ahead with the building of the South Road Nursery School?

Ms. Henry: The Ministry is not going ahead with the South Road Nursery School. That is no longer to be done; it is no longer on the radar, so to speak.

Programme: 403 – Nursery Education - \$169,525,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 404 – Primary Education - \$3,151,508,000

Mr. Gill: Line item 6224 – Print and Non-Print Materials: There is a massive increase from \$181.9 million to \$336.8 million. Could the Hon. Minister state whether this sum includes the printing of the *Atlantic Readers* and if not, why not?

Ms. Henry: The increase is to cater for the mathematics intervention. As the Hon. Member probably would be aware of by now, there is an intervention to strengthen the mathematics programme across primary schools, given the continued poor performance in mathematics. Therefore, the intervention covers three line items and this is one of the three line items, under “Primary Education”, that the intervention will cater for. So, that is what will take care of the increase. I also want to point out that they will be using selected textbooks and other related materials for the intervention and this is across all regions and that would be to the tune of \$147.9 million.

This allocation will also cater for the purchase of textbooks and exercise books for primary schools countrywide and that should be to the tune of \$180 million. Under this line item, the Ministry has also catered for materials such as fliers, if there are printed documents to be done, if there are weekly reports, obviously there will be planning review resource materials and lesson plans. So, that is what this caters for.

Mr. Gill: A follow-up to that: The textbooks you referred to Hon. Minister, are they the *Atlantic Readers*?

Ms. Henry: Yes, the textbooks that I am referring to, one of the books certainly will be the *Atlantic Readers*, which the Hon. Member is referring to.

Programme: 404 – Primary Education - \$3,151,508,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 404 – Primary Education - \$184,963,000

Ms. Manickchand: Project code 1215400 – Primary Schools: There is an allocation of a budget proposal of \$99 million. Could the Hon. Minister state which schools and or laboratories would be built and or constructed?

Ms. Henry: The \$99.6 million will cater for retention, which is for the teaching block at the Parfaite Harmonie Primary School and that is in Region 3, to the tune of \$2.6 million. In addition to that, that work would require a consultancy fee of \$2 million and for new construction, it will be the Saint Stephen's Primary School's Annex and that is for \$45 million. There are rehabilitation works for new Information technology (IT) labs in Georgetown which will be to the tune of \$50 million. There are 10 such IT labs and the schools identified are not all in Georgetown and are as follows: In Region 1, we have Mabaruma, which has Grade C schools; in Region 2, we have Queenstown, which has a Grade C school; in Region 3, we have in Windsor Forest, a Grade A school; in Region 4, in Helena, a Grade A school; in Region 4 we would also be doing the Paradise Primary School; in Region, 5, the Latchman Singh Primary School and Region 6, St. Theresa Primary School, and, Region 10, Wismar Hill Primary. That will give you the ten schools that we are doing.

11.23 a.m.

Ms. Manickchand: The Hon. Minister spoke about consultancy and it should be linked to the payment of retention. It could not be so. I must have misinterpreted that. What is the consultancy for?

Ms. Henry: The consultancy would be for the supervision work as the project is concluded and that would be to the first one I spoke about which is the role and retention and that is La Parfaite Harmonie Primary School in Region 3. The consultancy fees are tied to that work.

Ms. Manickchand: What was the full cost of that consultancy?

Ms. Henry: The consultancy, I am being advised, as is reflected here, on my sheet, is \$2.051 million.

Ms. Manickchand: I am still slightly unclear. The Hon. Member said that there is a retention fee to be paid which usually means - I am sure that there is experts in this Assembly who could explain it better - that we are waiting to see if anything will happen before we pay out this money, because if anything happens we will use this money to fix it, and that there is a \$2 million consultation fee which is the full consultation fee to be paid. What is the supervision? I would assume that the consultation was to supervise the construction of the teaching block, or whatever it was.

Ms. Henry: My understanding is that the consultancy fee will be paid at the end of the defects and liability period and therefore the consultancy fee has to do with the retention works at La Parfait Harmonie Primary School.

Bishop Edghill: Project 1215400, Primary Schools: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this Assembly what was the full contract sum for the construction work at La Parfaite Harmonie and what was the full supervisory consultancy sum for that project?

Ms. Henry: I am advised that the construction sum, the entire sum, was Guy\$52.222 million. The full consultancy, I am advised, is that we will have to supply that later.

Bishop Edghill: I am seeking to establish from the Hon. Minister, if at the beginning of this construction, the supervisory consultant paid any moneys.

Ms. Henry: As I pointed out in my previous answer, and I wish to say again, I will provide you with the breakdown of moneys paid for consultancy. My understanding is that the supervisory fee is \$2.051 million. I need to confirm that number with my staff and, therefore, I will give you it in writing after I come off the floor, as if there is any difference as to what is reflected here.

My understanding is that this is the entire sum. As I am saying to you, I will go back to my staff and verify and if there is any information that is different from what I am presenting here that will be so noted on what will be presented.

Bishop Edghill: Just to clarify. The amount of \$2 million is paid to the consultant should not be considered as the final figure.

Ms. Henry: That would be the final figure definitely.

Bishop Edghill: Do we know who we paid before?

Ms. Henry: Let me say this: I do not know what is confusing, but it is pretty straightforward. I am saying to this Assembly that the sum of \$2 million is allocated for consultancy for the La Parfaite Harmonie Primary School. My advice is that it is the final and the complete payment. There are couple of questions that have been coming back and forth, saying if I am sure that there is no payments prior to I have consulted with my staff and they could not verify that. I am saying that I will be verify with my staff subsequent to my presentation here on the floor to determine if what I am saying here about this \$2 million represent the total amount. My understanding, at this point in time, based on the information I have, is that it does represent the complete amount, but I want to do due process to go back, double-check and to provide with information that is accurate. It is only out of an abundance of caution that I am saying here that I will provide it subsequently in writing.

Programme: 404 - Primary Education - \$184,963,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 405 - Secondary Education - \$3,299,960,000

Mr. Bharrat: Line item 6113, Other Technical and Craft Skilled: The staffing details, there is a reduction by 66 staff members as projected for 2017. Could the Minister say if the reduction in staffing is having a toll on the Ministry's truancy campaign?

Ms. Henry: While I could not make a connection between the truancy campaign and the numbers, what I can say to you is that decrease is due to the fact that there were 31 retirees who were under this categories who are no longer on board, and so that reflects the reduction by 31.

Mr. Bharrat: Could the Hon. Minister say if the truancy campaign is ongoing?

Ms. Henry: While it does not related to any particular item, I would like to say that yes, that campaign is ongoing and we anticipate that it will go on for a very long time.

Mr. Bharrat: Could the Hon. Minister say when last was there a campaign on the East Bank of Demerara, more in particular Grove/ Diamond?

Ms. Henry: Could I be guided by the line item please?

Mr. Bharat: It was a follow-up, based on the staffing details.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, there is a line item that you could...

Mr. Bharat: The line item is 6113, Other Technical and Craft Skilled.

Ms. Henry: The question is outside the scope of this line item 6113, Other Technical and Craft Skilled.

Programme: 405 - Secondary Education - \$3,299,960,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 405 - Secondary Education - \$1,184,969,000

Ms. Manickchand: Project 1215500, Secondary Schools: Four hundred and sixty-five million dollars budgetary allocation proposed: Could we be told for which schools or where would this money be spent?

Ms. Henry: I have a list here of schools where this money would be spent. The first school would be rehabilitation of the ground at the North Ruimveldt Secondary School, in Region 4, here in Georgetown, and it is to the tune of \$6.5 million. We also have the Kato Secondary School which is under this and we are looking at \$61.7 million. We also would be looking at

construction of a cafeteria and a multi-purpose complex at Queen's College, in Region 4 and that is \$34.8 million. There is also an extension of the Bishops' High School, in Region 4, for \$4.3 million. There is work to be done at St. Rose's High School which is for \$100 million. The Vrymens Erven Secondary School, we are looking at the science laboratory for \$3.3 million. We are looking at Canje Secondary School science laboratory which is another \$3.3 million. We are looking at extension of North Ruimveldt Secondary School for \$34.4 million, West Demerara Secondary School - \$1.9 million, the Corentyne Comprehensive Secondary School - \$462,000, St. Winefride's Secondary School, in Region 4, is \$1.2 million.

11.38 p.m.

Woodley Park Secondary School - \$7.5 million, Number 8 Secondary School, that is in Region 5 - \$7.5 million, Johanna Cecelia Secondary School, that is in Region 2 - \$7.5 million. We would also be looking at some guidance and counselling rooms, which would be across some regions, and it is \$10.9 million. There is a construction of a pavilion and levelling of a playing field and fence to be repaired and that is the South Ruimveldt Secondary School and that is \$18.9 million. That would give you the total of \$465 million as indicated.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same project 1215500, Secondary Schools, this programme underperformed by \$270 plus million in 2016. Could the Hon. Minister tell this Assembly what should have been done that was not done?

Ms. Henry: The reason why we have not able to spend, it primarily, had to do with Kato Secondary School. As you probably are aware, we have had to seek legal guidance to resolve that matter and that is still outstanding. We are planning to have that situation rectify in 2017. Yes, \$66 million could not have been expended due to the issues that we have had at Kato Secondary School.

We also not have been able to complete the extension work of the North Ruimveldt Multilateral Secondary School. There were some challenges with St. Rose's High School, which resulted in us not being able to complete. The Bishops' High School also we were not able to complete. Certainly the construction of the cafeteria in the multi-purpose complex at Queen's College was not completed. Those were the ones which were reflected.

Ms. Manickchand: A follow-up question on the same project, please. Regarding the Kato Secondary School that needs repairs, are in the retention period for that contract?

Ms. Henry: We are not in the retention period. Actually this contract was stopped based on the poor quality of work that was being done for this project. Before it could have got to this stage where we get into the conclusion and retention phase, we had to stop it prior to that. As I pointed out a few minutes ago, this is currently engaging the attention of the legal minds.

Ms. Manickchand: A follow-up question again. Was the construction of the Kato Secondary School supervised by a consultancy?

Ms. Henry: It certainly was supervised and is coming out of the supervision, I believed, the defects were noted.

Ms. Manickchand: Could the Hon. Member tell this Assembly if the award for the project for Kato Secondary School was done in accordance with the Public Procurement Act?

Ms. Henry: It is an interesting question because it was done under your watch. My understanding is that it was done in accordance with that.

Ms. Manickchand: Your understanding is correct. Could the Hon. Minister say if the procurement of the services for the consultancy, the supervisory person, the person who was going to supervise the project, was done in accordance of the Public Procurement Act?

Ms. Henry: It is interesting that I am speaking about what happened under the Member's watch and my understanding, again, is that it is yes. It was done in keeping with what I believe would have been the prescribed rules and regulations.

Ms. Manickchand: The Minister has been speaking about I am preaching so far that this was done under my watch, that part was interested too, nothing new has been done. To continue under this, it is a follow-up question on the Kato Secondary School. I heard from the Hon. Minister who said very categorical that this has been engaging legal minds, and we know. We have seen the sensational sound, it is in the newspapers, but this has been going on for a while. My question: Is there any danger of the people of this country, this Assembly, of their retention

period, contractual period, expiring before we finally get the legal minds to conclude on this matter?

Ms. Henry: There is no such danger likely to occur, notwithstanding, that the matter engaging in the minds of the legal persons. I have been in receipt of a correspondence from the contracted firm, Kares Engineering Inc. It has indicated an interest in undertaking the work. Notwithstanding, all the sensational issues, which you spoke about, there are still some cordial relations that exist and we do not anticipate any danger.

Bishop Edghill: Project 2607500, Secondary Education Improvement Project: We are asked to appropriate \$400 million in 2017, but this project was budgeted and approved \$520 million in 2016 and it massively underperformed by only expending \$163 million in 2016. Could the Hon. Minister tell this Assembly what is the reason for the massive underperformance in this programme.

Ms. Henry: We were not able to conclude the works that we had planned for 2016 and this had to do primarily with the discussions that we were having for the civil works which require the construction of two secondary schools. In 2017, we anticipate that we would be able to move forward with these two schools.

Ms. Manickchand: A follow- up questions. Last year we were told that the schools, which were identified to be built, were one on the East Bank Demerara, one in Region 3, one on the East Coast Demerara and one I think in Georgetown. Which schools, because the Hon. Minister is speaking of two schools, are going to be built under this programme where moneys was sought, procured and acquired prior to the Hon. Minister's ascension to office?

Ms. Henry: The two secondary schools would be the La Parfaite Harmonie Secondary School and the Good Hope Secondary School.

Ms. Manickchand: A follow- up questions. Have we abandoned as a nation the building of the school on the upper East Bank Demerara? It is the first follow-up.

Ms. Henry: For this budget period, we are looking at these schools. We certainly have not abandoned any ideas, but there only so much that you could do in any particular budget period and these are the two schools that we would be looking at in this budget period.

Ms. Manickchand: A follow-up questions. Under this World Bank's secondary education improvement, which schools would be built? It is straight answer - which schools are going to be built?

Mr. Chairman: You mean straight question. The Minister must be left to do it by herself.

Ms. Henry: The two schools, which would be built, are the La Parfaite Harmonie Secondary School and the Good Hope Secondary School. I will repeat it as often as it is needed.

Ms. Manickchand: Your Honour, there is a follow-up question and that is not and that is not...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Priya Manickchand, you rise on a Point of Order. What is it that we are doing here? The Minister is answering the question.

Ms. Manickchand: I am asking questions, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Minister is answering the question. Would you let her complete that question that she is answering? Please take your seat.

Ms. Manickchand: Sir, throughout the morning when the Minister sat I assumed she finished answering her questions.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister.

Ms. Henry: The two schools I said, which would be done, are La Parfaite Harmonie Secondary School and Good Hope Secondary School. Based on the funding provided, it could only do for two schools and these are the two schools. **[Bishop Edghill:** That is not so.] Well,

these are the two schools, if you know different then I ask you to...

Mr. Chairman: Are you through with your answer, Hon. Minister? The Hon. Minister completes her answer.

Ms. Henry: Sure, I would be happy to complete. As I was saying these are the two schools that we would be building under the project and I would say it as many times as I am required to say it.

Mr. Manickchand: Your Honour, this project anticipated the bringing of universal secondary education to more regions in our country. Region 3 with the building of the La Parfaite Harmonie Secondary School would have reached the standard of the universal secondary education. On the East Coast of Demerara the building of the Lusignan Secondary School would have reached...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you are asking a question.

Ms. Manickchand: Your Honour, the Hon. Minister is being allowed, with the greatest of respect to say and repeat the same thing. I need to ask questions on behalf of the people of this country. I am asking kindly to be allowed to ask my questions.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Priya Manickchand, what is the question? Please ask your question.

Ms. Manickchand: Sir, this is ridiculous.

Opposition Chief Whip [Ms. Teixeira]: Standing Order 75(2) is very clear. You are allowed to ask on policy, Sir. This is not a technical House, we are not... She is allowed to ask policy, Standing Orders 75(2).

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Teixeira, when I bang this gavel and I address you, you would stop talking and take your seat.

Ms. Manickchand: It is because she is five years old.

Mr. Chairman: Do you have a question, Ms. Manickchand?

Ms. Manickchand: Sir, I have a question, in accordance with the Standing Orders that allows me to discuss policy. It was the policy of the Ministry of Education that we would be moving this country, having attained universal primary education, towards universal secondary education as a result of which US\$10 million was acquired from the World Bank, three schools were slated to be built, one... [Ms. Henry: It is two.] Sir, are you going to address that interruption?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please continue, you are asking a question.

Ms. Manickchand: Three schools were slated to build, one on the East Coast Demerara, one on the East Bank Demerara and one at La Parfaite Harmonie.

11.53 a.m.

I am asking if this new Government, this not-so new Government, has considered and abandoned the building of three schools. I am not speaking of what is budgeted for this year. I am asking whether as a matter of policy we are building only two schools with the money we received from the World Bank. That is a question.

Ms. Henry: First of all, I want to say that the decision to build two schools was not only based on policy but availability of funding. At the time, when the money was allocated, the construction per school was under estimated. Given the amount of money that we have, we can only build two schools. These are the two schools that we will be using that funding to build. It will be La Parfaite Harmonie Secondary School and Good Hope Secondary because that is the money that we have.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same project, 2607500, Secondary Education Improvement Project, if I refer you to page 149 of Volume 3 of the Estimates, this is a \$2,080,000,000 multi-year project. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this Assembly how much money from this \$2 billion project would be spent in construction of schools, how many would be assigned to strengthening capacity of secondary school, mathematics teachers and how much will be spent on institutional strengthening? I have another question, Sir.

Ms. Henry: Let me give you the breakdown here. With regard to the strengthening capacity of secondary school teachers, for mathematics, we will expend \$96 million in 2017. As it relates to the construction of secondary schools, we will expend \$247 million. There is a third component which has to do with the institutional capacity building and project management and we will expend \$56.8 million. That will give us back the ballpark figure.

Bishop Edghill: For the purpose of clarity, the Minister has only given us the figures for the \$400 million sought in 2017. I asked the Minister specifically, based upon Volume 3, page 149, about these projects a \$2,080,000,000 multi-year. How much money will be spent on

construction of schools? How much money will be spent on strengthening capacity for secondary school mathematics teachers? How much will be spent on institutional strengthening that will give us a total of \$2,080,000,000?

Ms. Henry: I just presented the numbers for 2017. I will give you for the subsequent years, a compilation subsequent to my presentation on the floor which will bring you back to the \$2,080,000,000 that is listed here in the volume.

Bishop Edghill: A new project 2607400, School Furniture and Equipment, an allocation of \$253,586,000 is being sought. I have two questions for the Minister on this. The furniture, which is being acquired, is for all of the region's secondary schools. Question one: Would this be a central contract or one contract or would this contract be given to contractors in the various regions?

Ms. Henry: My understanding is that the current thinking is that it will be centrally done.

Bishop Edghill: Second question: Would it be cost effective and value for money to have a contract at a central point to make furniture and then to have them deliver it to the regions when there are contractors in the regions who can do the same job?

Ms. Henry: I wish to point out that these schools are in Georgetown and that the Ministry of Communities usually deals with the regions. There is no need for us to analyse whether it is more cost effective, or so forth, because the Ministry of Communities will be dealing with the regions.

Programme: 405 - Secondary Education - \$1,184,969,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 406 – Post- Secondary/Tertiary Education - \$4,021,962,000

Programme: 406 – Post-Secondary/Tertiary Education - \$4,021,962,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 406 – Post-Secondary/Tertiary Education - \$1,304,992,000

Bishop Edghill: Project 1216000, University of Guyana – Turkeyen, a provision of \$202 million is being sought. Last year a \$173 million was appropriated and \$157 million was spent. Could the Minister indicate what should have been done last year that was not done at the University of Guyana and what the \$202 million is expected to be expended on this year?

Ms. Henry: I will begin with the second part of the question first and that is what the \$202 million will be doing. As it relates to rollover we will be doing construction of a new administrative building at the University of Guyana, Turkeyen for \$6.5 million and a consultancy for the administrative building would be \$140,000; construction of a lecture theatre, which is rollover - \$5 million, consultancy of \$200,000, rewiring of the library - \$1.5 million. For new projects, we will do the construction of the students teaching and learning complex for science and mathematics at the University of Guyana, Turkeyen Campus, for \$69 million. We will also be installing a 3-volt regulator at Turkeyen for \$24 million. The rehabilitation of the building at Pere Street for \$12.5 million. There will also be a new maintenance building for \$37.8 million; a generator on campus will cost \$24 million and a tractor with slasher - \$22 million, which will bring us to the \$202 million.

As it relates to work to be done that was not completed in 2016 that will be construction of the new administrative building, which will be a rollover project and the consultancy fees associated with that building. The construction of the lecture theatre, as I pointed out, will be a rollover it was not able to be completed in 2016 and there is also a consultancy fee that is attached to that. The third thing is the rewiring of the library, which is also a rollover.

Programme: 406 – Post Secondary/Tertiary Education - \$1,304,992,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 407 – Cultural Preservation and Conservation –\$493,385,000

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, \$151,650,000, it includes allocation for National Trust, Rupununi Weavers Association, Castellani House and Theatre Guild. Could the Hon. Minister say - now that National Trust has

been moved out of the building – if the allocation for National Trust includes a new venue from which it can operate as it has been emptied out of its building with the Integrity Commission?

Ms. Henry: The National Trust is still housed in the same building and there is no allocation here for the movement of National Trust.

Ms. Teixeira: I notice that there is no allocation for the Walter Roth Museum, however under 6242 Maintenance of Buildings, there is \$29 million there. Could you say how much has been allocated in 2016, under the Budget 2016, for repairs I see being done to the Walter Roth Museum? Is that for the museum or in preparation for the Ministry of the Presidency? Which one?

12.08 p.m.

Ms. Henry: That is for the Walter Roth Museum and not the Ministry of the Presidency. The Ministry of the Presidency is not covered under the Ministry of Education.

Ms. Teixeira: The \$2.57 million that was used under line item 6242 in 2016 - when you pass, you see the construction work going on at the Walter Roth Museum... Therefore, has the Government recanted on its position to remove the Walter Roth Museum?

Ms. Henry: The money is being used on the building where the Walter Roth Museum is currently housed.

Ms. Teixeira: Will you move it then?

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There were 49 in 2016 and 50 in 2017. Could the Hon. Minister please tell us what the designation is and emoluments are for this person?

Ms. Henry: The new appointee is a Cleaner.

Mr. Neendkumar: Could the Hon. Minister tell us what the position of the Director of Culture is? I understand that he is no longer there.

Ms. Henry: I would have preferred to be guided by a line item but I would nonetheless attempt to answer your question. The position of Director of Culture is usually catered for under line

item 6131. It is for a position and not necessarily a person. Whoever is filling the chair will be paid.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6131 – Other Direct Labour Costs: I see you only have \$180,000. Could this pay the Director?

Ms. Henry: That would be for the allowances for that position and for two other positions.

Mr. Dharamlall: Could the Hon. Minister please state whether the Government has a cultural preservation and conservation plan?

Ms. Henry: I would like to be guided by which line item you are referring to.

Mr. Dharamlall: As advised consistently by the Hon. Minister of Finance, I am allowed to ask on a Programme. Under Programme 407 – Cultural Preservation and Conservation - I am asking, does the Government of Guyana have a cultural preservation and conservation plan?

Ms. Henry: The answer would be yes.

Mr. Dharamlall: A follow-up: Could the Hon. Minister please make it available to the National Assembly as soon as possible?

Ms. Henry: I can present my Department's Work Plan because, as you know, culture spans preservation and conservation and the schools that we have under our watch. I can give you the Work Plan because there is where it will take care of that.

Mr. Dharamlall: I just want a clarification. The Hon. Minister said that we have a Cultural Preservation and Conservation Plan but the Hon. Minister is now stating that, specifically, there is no such plan. Is that so? I would like to see the Plan.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are you through with your question?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I would like the Plan to be laid over in the Parliament.

Programme 407: Cultural Preservation and Conservation - \$493,385,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme 407: Cultural Preservation and Conservation - \$166,000,000

Mr. Neendkumar: Project code 1218000 – Institute for Creative Arts: I notice \$52.620 million here but it is for provision for design and construction of the Institute, upgrading of facilities, furniture and equipment - MEXICO. My question is: how much of this money will be spent to design and construct the Institute for Creative Arts?

Ms. Henry: The entire sum allocated will be used for that purpose.

Mr. Neendkumar: I would like to know the location. When the Minister speaks of the entire sum, is she saying that the \$52.620 million would be for that one facility?

Ms. Henry: Could you please repeat that question?

Mr. Neendkumar: I would like to know whether the entire sum would be going towards this facility and where it would be located.

Ms. Henry: The entire sum would be going towards the facility. Currently, we are exploring two options for its location. One option would be close to the University of Guyana and the other is at Mocha, given the specifications of having five acres of land available for the construction of this building.

Mr. Neendkumar: This project code 1218000 would be a total of \$420 million. I would like to know how much of this money will be spent on the Institute for Creative Arts, upgrading of facilities, furniture and equipment?

Ms. Henry: One hundred per cent of this sum allocated would be spent on the Institute for Creative Arts.

Mr. Neendkumar: This money is coming from a Mexican loan. We need to get all the details of this in print. Where is the Mexican agreement? Was it laid before this House?

Ms. Henry: The Mexican agreement was not laid in this House. If I may add to that, there is currently no agreement.

Mr. Neendkumar: Where would these things get funding from if there is no relationship with the Mexican? It will cost a total of \$420 million.

Ms. Henry: I recognise the difficulty. I said that we do not have an agreement to lay in the House. What I did not say is that there is no arrangement with Mexico. As is stated here, the funding would come through Mexican Government funding. While there is no written agreement to lay in this House, I want to say to this House that we are getting this funding through the bilateral arrangements with the Mexican Government.

Mr. Neendkumar: Under the Legend, there are three areas: design and construction of Institute for Creative Arts, which the Minister said will come from the \$52 million; upgrading of facilities – National School of Music; equipment, including String bands, surveillance systems, computers, projectors, photocopiers, printers, camera, air conditioning unit, water dispensers, *et cetera*... The total under this is \$420 million and we are told that it would come from the Mexican Government. I am asking a straight question here. I would like to know the details in respect to the Mexican Agreement. The nation is looking and they need to know whatever it is and it must be laid before the House.

Ms. Henry: We are currently pursuing having that agreement. That is why it is mentioned here. Prior to us actually getting funding from the Mexican Government, there are preliminary works that will be done and that would be supported by the Government of Guyana funding. That is what is included here.

I also wish to point out that the construction of the Institute for Creative Arts would take much longer than one year. Therefore, it will not only be reflected in 2017 but as many years as it is required to have that building completed. It will so be reflected in the budgets accordingly.

Bishop Edghill: Project code 1218000: Local funding for this project is \$22.620 million. Foreign funding is \$30 million. Could the Hon. Minister confirm to this House whether this is a technical co-operation or is it a loan?

Ms. Henry: It is technical co-operation.

Bishop Edghill: If it is a technical co-operation, could the Hon. Minister tell this House what is the sum total of this technical co-operation between Guyana and Mexico?

Ms. Henry: It is currently undefined as I pointed out a few minutes ago. We are pursuing that agreement with the Mexican Government.

Programme 407: Cultural Preservation and Conservation - \$166,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

12.23 p.m.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 408 – Youth – \$220,791,000

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: In 2016, there were 24 persons; now, in 2017, there are 25. Can the Minister tell us who the additional person is, the designation and emoluments?

Ms. Henry: The designation is Office Assistant and this is to the Youth Empowerment Department.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I see the amount for last year, 2016, was \$37.188 million and it has moved to \$45.201 million. Is the Office Assistant working for all of this money?

Ms. Henry: This money will also cater for the increases in the salaries of the persons who will be there – the 24 and the additional one. They still have to get an increase. So, that is what it is for.

Mr. Bharrat: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): Can the Hon. Minister say what training will be done and who will be the beneficiaries?

Ms. Henry: This training will be primarily for the Youth Empowerment Department and they will train over 400 young persons and the other trainings will be for the President's Youth Award Republic of Guyana (PYARG) Programme and there are also workshops and camps that will come under this line item. The department of youth usually hosts those, particularly during the August vacation.

Mr. Bharrat: Can the Hon. Minister say what mechanism or system will be used to recruit the 400 youths mentioned?

Ms. Henry: We used the same mechanism we have used for over a decade and that would be the placement of an advertisement. Interested persons are encouraged to apply and, based on the application, there is a screening mechanism and the most eligible candidates are selected for the training.

Mr. Bharrat: I have another follow-up under the same line item. Minister, will this be limited to the coastland or extended to the hinterland regions as well?

Ms. Henry: It covers Regions 1 to 10.

Mr. Dharamlall: As a follow-up, Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister please state what public advertising mechanism will be done in the hinterland regions, specifically Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9, to attract youths to this Programme?

Ms. Henry: We will continue to employ the same mechanisms as we did in the past and that will be through print and other media. Perhaps we can use the *Guyana Times* which is widely read in those Regions – also as one of the print medium of doing it.

Mr. Dharamlall: As a follow-up, I do not like the condescendence of the Hon. Minister, Mr. Chairman. I was specifically asking, for Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9, how will the Ministry advertise to attract young people – the hinterland youths – to this Programme? There are no proper newspapers, and virtual or information technology services in many of those regions. So, how will the Ministry be advertising to attract young people to this Programme as well as sensitise them?

Ms. Henry: There are several ways we have used in the past and we will continue to use. Some of those are as I pointed out earlier. In addition to that, we do work in collaboration with other Ministries, as you may know. The Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs has a direct reach in those regions and we will leverage those existing relations. So, just like you were able to recruit, prior to 2015, we will continue those mechanisms.

Mr. Dharamlall: As a follow-up, could the Hon. Minister please state what will be the demographic spread in the allocation of the 400 spaces?

Ms. Henry: What I can say, as I pointed out, is that we will cover Regions 1 to 9 and it is dependent on the applications received. I do not know how many people will apply from Regions 1, 7, 8 or 9 and I cannot stand here and just guess a number and give it to you.

Mr. Chairman: This is your last question, Mr. Dharamlall.

Mr. Dharamlall: I would just like to offer the Minister an advice that it should be done...

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Member.

Programme: 408 – Youth – \$220,791,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 408 – Youth – \$244,379,000

Mr. Neendkumar: Project code 1800300 – Youth – \$164.379 million - provision for vehicle, training centres, *et cetera*: I would like the Hon. Minister to tell us how much money will be available for the provision of facilities at Coldingen and how much for the Training Centre at Sophia?

Secondly, upgrading of facilities: We would appreciate it if she could lay over to this House how much will be spent at Den Amstel, Madewini and Kurukuru, and how much will be spent on the purchasing of tools, furniture *et cetera*. And also, how much will be spent to purchase the vehicle for Kuru Kuru Training Centre?

Ms. Henry: I think it will be better use of your time if I were to lay this over but I would still like to point out that it is a 30-seater mini bus for the Kuru Kuru Training Centre and that will be \$16 million. There is a list of tools and equipment which I do not think will be good use of your time, and the completion of the Sophia Training Centre would be to the tune of \$20 million. There is a list of items for the New Opportunity Corps (NOC) which I do not think you would want me to go through at this point in time. Smithfield Youth Administration, Coldingen – \$20 million and renovation of building at Kurukuru \$10 million; upgrading of building at Den Amstel - \$20 million. I can lay this information over; it has the details.

Programme: 408 – Youth – \$244,379,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 409 – Sport – \$441,201,000

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I noticed, in 2016, we had 13 employees and now, in 2017, there are 23. Can the Hon. Minister give us an idea of who the additional 10 persons are, along with their designations and emoluments?

Ms. Henry: As it relates to the 10 additional persons, this was in keeping with a Cabinet paper that was signed on the 27th January, 2015 by Dr. Roger Luncheon who provided permission to create and fill 10 positions for the Synthetic Athletic Track.

The positions are as follows: one Operations Manager and that person will get \$107,000 per month; one Chief Maintenance Engineer - \$88,000; Head Coach - \$72,000; Administrative Assistant - \$63,000; Football Coach - \$48,000; Storekeeper - \$48,000; Security Supervisor - \$46,000; Stores Clerk - \$43,000; two Handymen - \$39,000; two Labourers - \$39,000; and one Lane Marker - \$39,000.

Mr. Neendkumar: Several workers from the National Sports Commission – contracted workers – were forced to leave the job in one way or the other. If these 10 are being replaced, what has become of those other workers?

Ms. Henry: May I be guided by which line item we are speaking about?

Mr. Neendkumar: It is line item 6116 – Contracted Employees. I am saying that several contracted workers left the job so I am asking the Hon. Minister to tell us what has become of them because the 10 have been replaced with different persons and they were not involved in the athletic track.

Ms. Henry: I am certainly not in a position to say what would have become of them, and so I would not be able to answer that question.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, my concern in asking this question about contracted employees is because I am concerned about workers who were forced to leave and they are complaining bitterly about it. *[Laughter]* And while Ms. Ally can laugh, it is concerning people's interests.

Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: I noticed that it has moved from \$178.699 million to \$215 million. Can the Hon. Minister say why this increase?

Ms. Henry: The increase is due to two main reasons: to offset the expenses that we would have incurred as a result of the increase in salaries and that would be the 5%, 6% and 10% respectively. In addition to that, we were able to employ 17 sports organisers and there is also an expectation to increase the amount expended for daily and operational costs. As you know, the National Sports Commission is a subvention agency and so it would handle that.

12.38 p.m.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – has nothing to do with salaries and so on. It has to do with subsidies and contributions to local organisations.

Programme: 409 – Sport - \$441,201,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, I did not get an answer to my last question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I regret that you did not get an answer. We can ask the Minister for the answer, but we will not be able to entertain more questions. We are well past the time allotted to us.

Hon. Minister, would you answer the last question the Hon. Member asked?

Ms. Henry: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that salaries for subvention agencies are covered under that line item. That is the information I provided previously. I am guided by that and stand by that information.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 409 – Sport - \$536,979,000

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, project code 4503500 – National Sports Commission: I see a total of \$536,979,000 allocated there. In the profile, I see it is for the payment of retention. I would like to know how much payment would be for retention and for what. I would like to know how much would be spent for the rehabilitation of the roof of the National Stadium.

Ms. Henry: Mr. Chairman, I have a list here of the works to be done. I will start first with the retention work - the roof of the Cliff Anderson Sports Hall; the extension of the squash court; and the construction of the fence and electrical works to be done at the synthetic track. That total is \$3.6 million.

The new projects are the rehabilitation of the roof of the National Stadium; installation of a reservoir, upgrading of septic tank, purchase of pump and septic tank, construction of warm-up track, construction of storage bond, construction of concrete strips in front of stands, purchase of one canter truck, purchase of one John Deere lawn mower, installation of 250 bucket seats, construction of driveway and generator house, construction of a concrete slab and purchase of a trailer, all for the National Track and Field Centre.

There would be the construction of a pressurised water supply system, the upgrading of very important person (VIP) washroom and the rehabilitation of the female washroom for the Cliff Anderson Sports Complex.

There would be the installation of floodlights, the reconstruction of the washroom and the reconstruction of western fence, all at the Colgrain Pool.

There would be the construction of washrooms, including a changing room, at the National Racquet Centre.

There would be the upgrading of facility and installation of cool air venting system at the National Gymnasium.

There would be the construction of a security building, the installation of floodlights and the purchase of pool cleaners for the National Aquatic Centre.

There would be the ground enhancement project; we will advertise and get the grounds we will do.

For the National Sports Commission, there would be the purchase of sports gear, the purchase of gymnasium equipment, the construction of a synthetic track, the construction of a multipurpose facility, the purchase of a wagon and the installation of a pressurised water system.

That brings the amount to \$536 million. I can certainly lay the document over.

Mr. Bharrat: Mr. Chairman, project code 4503500 – National Sports Commission: Could the Hon. Minister say how much of this money is allocated to grounds and, based on the allocation, how many grounds are we catering for in 2017?

Ms. Henry: Thank you, Hon. Member. Mr. Chairman, \$150 million is allocated for grounds to be done in 2017. In 2016, we completed more than 100 grounds. It is anticipated that, based on the need, we will do more than 100 grounds in 2017.

Mr. Bharrat: Could the Hon. Minister say, with reference to the allocation for the grounds, if the same procedure used in 2016 would again be used in 2017?

Ms. Henry: Mr. Chairman, the answer is yes.

Programme: 409 – Sport - \$536,979,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: We will now take the suspension and we will return at 1.45 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 12.47 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 1.50 p.m.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: We will continue consideration of the Estimates in accordance with the Schedule of the Business Sub-Committee of Supply.

Agency: 03 Ministry of Finance

Current Expenditure

Programme: 031 – Policy and Administration - \$13,295,330,000

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: When one looks at page 595, the bulk of the increase is going to the Guyana Revenue Authority

(GRA) and the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU). Could the Hon. Minister say for what specific purposes the increases were allocated?

Minister of Finance [Mr. Jordan]: Mr. Chairman, in relation to the Financial Intelligence Unit, as you know, we only recently appointed the Director and Deputy Director in addition to a number of other staff. They have been offered what may be called a competitive package. This increase is reflecting additional staff in the form of the Director, Deputy Director, Lawyer, Accountant and so on, covering the entire staffing and increased activities, now that the FIU is in place.

In relation to the Guyana Revenue Authority, I think you would have noticed from statements I have made that the GRA is getting a makeover, in terms of systems, capacity building, equipment and new locations – Morawhanna and a number of other places have been mentioned. This sum is to cater for that in addition to the whole issue of the upgrade of the information technology system.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, a follow-up on line item 6321: Could the Hon. Minister say whether the additional resources identified for the FIU would bring that Unit in full compliance with the law with regard to the positions that are to be filled? Could the Minister be kind enough to share with us, at a subsequent time, the organisational chart in relation to the various positions created?

Second, I know you spoke of a new location for the headquarters of GRA. Has any budgetary allocation been made under this allocation to cater for initial works to commence the movement to a new location that you spoke of?

Mr. Jordan: I thank the Hon. Member for the questions. In relation to the latter question, the FIU is the only agency that prevailed on the Minister of Finance and the Budget Office to give it the allocation it requested. This is the amount requested and the amount received. I know it will cover all the positions on the chart. The chart can be given to you later on. Yes, this amount will cover all the positions. With respect to the GRA headquarters, this is under consideration.

2.03 p.m.

No moneys are in the budget as yet because the Ministry still needs to identify a site. I know that in the newspapers it was suggested that a site has been identified, but other people have their

eyes on that and we are not sure whether the land belongs to the Government. So, a site needs to first be identified. I know that there are indicative drawings that are around, but, in this budget, there is no conclusive allocation for them. However, if developments take place during the year, we will so come back to the House.

I must say that it is a pressing matter. The building that is currently being occupied has its difficulties and I am a Minister who tries to look after my staff because, thereafter, the staff would have look after what is given to them. So this is at the top of my agenda and, hopefully, during this year, some progress will be made towards identifying a plot of land and, thereafter, having some moneys to do the drawings and the site surveys and so on.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, last year the proposed capital expenditure for the GRA was \$500 million and only \$350 million was spent...

Mr. Jordan: Are we considering capital or current expenditure?

Bishop Edghill: We are at line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, where a subsidy is being allocated for the GRA and GRA's subsidies comprise employment, capital, current and everything in one.

Mr. Jordan: No. The capital expenditure for GRA is not included under this line item. It is included under the capital expenditure for the Ministry of Finance.

Programme: 031 – Policy and Administration – \$13,295,330,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 031 –Police and Administration - \$3,195,532,000

Mr. Ali: Project code 1701900, Minor Works: Could the Hon. Minister provide the details of works to be undertaken under this project code?

Mr. Jordan: As the Hon. Member is aware, being a former Member of the Ministry, the allocation is for a poverty driven minor works programme. It is not something that we say

offhand, it comes up during the year, but I can avail him of the projects that were attempted during 2016, if he is so minded.

Mr. Ali: Project code 2401300, Land Transport: Could the Hon. Minister say where the vehicle will be assigned?

Mr. Jordan: This vehicle will be assigned to the Valuation Division. As I had indicated in my budget speech and more recently, the Valuation Division, which seemed to have been a stepchild in the Ministry of Finance, is being remade. It is very important and there is Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) technical assistance that was approved for US\$700,000 for the Valuation Division, to redo the systems, the valuation properties and so forth. This vehicle is to allow the division to carry out part of its work, so that it can go further afield. At the moment no vehicle is assigned to the division and I believe that for a very long time the division has not been in charge of a vehicle.

Mr. Ali: Project code 3401000, Low Carbon Development Programme (LCDS): In 2016, there was a budgetary allocation of \$1,120,000,000, but in the latest estimate, there is \$600 million. Could you say to the House what caused such a poor implementation pace or record in terms of the LCDS, what were the factors that contributed to such a poor performance in implementation and what are the plans, projects and programmes for the \$750 million allocated for 2017?

Mr. Jordan: Perhaps I could answer the last question first. The plans to spend \$750 million are as follows: In terms of institutional strengthening, \$149 million; Amerindian Development Fund, \$121 million; Amerindian Land Titling, \$66 million; Micro and small enterprise, \$63 million; adaptation project, Cunha rehabilitation canal, \$88 million; ICT access and e-services for hinterland poor and remote communities, \$132 million; sustainable land management and development, \$59 million; green state economy development strategy, \$62 million and the trustee administration fee, \$10 million.

In respect of the \$600 million, I can give the assurance that, once the revised statement is brought, which I promise will be given sometime in the first quarter or first half of next year, this figure, I believe, will change significantly. The difficulty sometimes with putting the latest estimate is that it is based on what is presented and, subsequently, it is found to be more than the amount which was spent and that is what I found out. I do not want to give a figure until I see

real numbers and can verify. I will ask my Colleague to await that revised statement which I had promised for the first half of next year.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Could the Hon. Minister share with this House why such a low amount was allocated for Amerindian Land Titling? This beats all because, even when there were no LCDS funds available to us, we were able to provide much more than \$66 million.

The second part of the question is what villages are earmarked for titling under this programme and how many villages will be demarcated with the \$66 million?

Mr. Jordan: I would like to indicate to the Hon. Member that the \$66 million is an indicative allocation based on immediate past progress. If progress can be accelerated, because there are more funds under this fund, then it will be expended. All that the Ministry needs to do is to return for a supplementary allocation. This is not a restriction on the funding, the funds are there and if more can be spent it will be made available.

In terms of the villages, we do have them here and we can layover the list as soon as the Sitting is over. There are all kinds of villages and lest some names are called and some are not, I will layover the entire list.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Follow up: Of the \$66 million, could the Hon. Minister say what will be the amount for salaries and remuneration?

Mr. Jordan: Yes, salaries *et cetera* are captured under the institutional strengthening aspect which is \$148.67 million.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Similarly, there is \$121 million allocated for the Amerindian Development Fund for the village economy, could the Hon. Minister tell the House which villages will benefit in 2017 and what are the economic activities to be funded?

Mr. Jordan: This list also, again, will be laid over because I do not want to call some names and leave others. The information is here and will be given to the Member after the Sitting.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same project code, the Minister indicated that there is a sum set aside for the green economy development strategy, could he indicate if this sum is for consultancies and if it is, how many and what would be the particular aspect of these consultancies?

Mr. Jordan: Yes, the allocation is principally for consultancy unit. The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) will be partnering under this framework to develop the green strategy. They did field a mission between 13th and 15th December for discussions on developing the framework.

Ms. Ali: Project code 4502400, Technical Assistance, I see there is an allocation for procurement and financial management. Now that the no-objection role of Cabinet has been removed in relation to public procurement, we know that with the Public Procurement Commission (PPC) coming into formulation, the no-objection role of Cabinet has been completely removed. Has the Minister made any provisions for the strengthening of the PPC, which will now take on that new role?

Mr. Jordan: It is a very interesting question. I do not know whether it was meant to trap me, but I wish to reiterate that the PPC is a constitutional agency, it is independent, so any training and capacity building as it relates to the PPC has to be catered for by the PPC. This amount here, for technical assistance, had been approved by the Inter-American Development Bank about two years ago, which means that this technical assistance was approved while the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) was in Government. It was really to strengthen the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) and its components and to provide e-procurement, development of the website and so on.

2.18 p.m.

Those have been on-going, in fact, I think that it was up to last week there was some training or workshop that was held as it relates to this for this year.

Mr. Ali: First of all, let me thank the Minister for acknowledging the People's Progressive Party's (PPP's) efforts to strengthen the procurement system and to upgrade the procurement system.

Project code 4502400 – Technical Assistance: Could the Hon. Minister say to the House whether, in the future, allocations in relation to the training or strengthening of the tender boards would be made directly to the constitutional agency, which is the Public Procurement Commission (PPC), instead of Ministry of Finance. This is because part of the mandate of the

PPC is to develop training programmes to train and equipped the Regional and National Tender Board to function effectively?

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to say that, at this stage, the Ministry of Finance, as the agency that has responsibility for procuring and mobilising resources from international agencies, to that extent we will still remain a key stakeholder in mobilising funds for the tender board and the other procurement agencies. But it will all depend on what the PPC submits to us and the programme like any other that we do with the constitutional agencies that they can recommend and defend, essentially. Other than that, I do not see the Ministry of Finance having any great input into training and capacity building in the PPC or the central tender board, but the Ministry do maintain, as a key stakeholder, a very real interest in procurement.

Mr. Ali: Project code – 4503000 – Contribution to International Organisations: Hon. Minister, I see there is an allocation of \$36,660,000 for the Islamic Development Bank (IDB). Could the Minister say what is the progress in terms of membership and secondly, are there any new loans being negotiated with this bank and for what purpose?

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, we were a member of the Islamic Development Bank with effect from May 2016. The Islamic Development Bank fielded a high level mission in November of this year with their Vice-President. We spoke extensively, there were a lot of interactions and a number of projects were put to them. They suggested that there may be one or two that they could run with immediately. So we are engaged in discussions on those one or two projects. Those one or two have not identified the specific projects nor the specific areas. We await the bank's correspondence as it relates to which of the two projects, in the context of their social priority and so on, could be considered for immediate attention. There and onwards they are to send a programming mission that will deal with developing a country strategy and then putting together some projects for long term financing.

I must admit that Islamic banking is new to Guyana and so it has its issues that we are still learning. In January, the bank is holding a major seminar for the Central Bankers in Suriname of which five persons from Guyana will be going to. As I have said, it is all trying to quickly learn how to access resources from the wide array of institutions that come under the Islamic Development Bank.

Programme: 031 – Policy Administration - \$3,195,532,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 032 – Public Financial Management - \$8,310,489,000

Programme: 032 – Policy Financial Management - \$8,310,489,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 032 – Policy Financial Management - \$139,551,000

Programme: 032 – Policy Financial Management - \$139,551,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we have now concluded consideration of the Estimates of agencies.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Speaker, I have to report that the Committee of Supply considered the Estimates of Expenditure for the Financial Year 2017 and approved of them as printed.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS NOS. 13(N) AND 54

First Vice-President and Prime Minister [Mr. Nagamootoo]: Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I move that Standing Orders No. 13 (n) and 54 be suspended to enable the Appropriation Bill 2016 – No. 24 of 2016 to be introduced at this stage.

Question put, and agreed to.

Standing Orders suspended.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Speaker, in accordance to paragraph (2), article 171 of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended the Appropriation Bill 2016, Bill No. 24 of 2016, for consideration by the National Assembly. I now present the Bill to the Assembly and move that it be read the first time.

INTRODUCTION OF BILL AND FIRST READING

The following Bill was introduced and read for the first time:

APPROPRIATION BILL 2016 – BILL No. 24 of 2016

A Bill Intituled

“AN ACT to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2016, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.” *[Minister of Finance]*

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read for the first time.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Appropriation Bill (2016), Bill No.24 of 2016, be read a second time.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT’S BUSINESS

BILL – SECOND AND THIRD READINGS

APPROPRIATION BILL 2016 – BILL No. 24 of 2016

A Bill Intituled

“AN ACT to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2016, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.” *[Minister of Finance]*

2.35 p.m.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read for a second time.

Assembly in Committee.

Bill considered and approved.

Assembly resumed.

Bill reported without amendments, read the third time and passed as printed.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, this concludes our consideration of the Estimates and the Appropriation Bill. This brings an end to our work for today. Hon. Prime Minister you can now take the adjournment.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, if you would permit me, before I move the motion for the adjournment of this House, to wish you, yours and your family a peaceful Christmas and a *contentful* New Year.

Sir, I know that this has been the first full year that I sat on this side as Leader of Government's Business of the House. I know that you have had to use the Speaker's gavel more often than I have heard or seen any other Speaker used. In your own inimitable style and your adherence to the precept, *soft word turneth away wrath*, you have seen us through many difficult moments in this House and, of course, sometimes it appeared that your gavel was used as an enthusiastic

drummer boy. You have brought the choir within your command, as you should as Speaker of the National Assembly.

Sir, I want to also take the opportunity to wish Members of the Government, Ministers and Parliamentarians, the Leader of the Opposition, the Government's Chief Whip, Opposition Chief Whip and all other Members of the Opposition, a Merry Christmas, happy holidays and hoping to see you here in the New Year, *ism or no ism*. I have brought a red tie to give to the Leader of the Opposition, as I believe that ism is not over. Patriotism and nationalism would kindle our relationship in the next year, so that we can build closer bonds and work together for the good of Guyana.

This year Sir, if I may say, at the conclusion of the second Budget Debate and the approval of the Appropriation Bill, they have seen the Hon. Mr. Winston Jordan taking us to *the River of Jordan* twice in this year. I know he has beckoned us to the good life and I think that this year he has also beckoned us to cross the bridge that saw us experiencing Local Government Elections (LGE) and entering into that Golden Jubilee of our 50th Independence Anniversary celebrations. I think it is a good occasion that we end this year's Sitting on his second budget, presented during this year, and I hope that, as we go to that *River of Jordan* this year that the baptism would be with less water, but as he said we will have more gold.

So, Sir I want to take this opportunity to wish the staff of the National Assembly, the Clerk of the National Assembly, the Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly and members of the media, for having stayed with us through the long marathon and unprecedented sessions in this House and informing the Guyanese public of what is happening in this lively Assembly and what is being done for the people by their representatives, all representatives, so that we can be able to build a better country.

So, I want to take this opportunity, once again, to wish all Members, all my Colleagues, Friends and Comrades, all the best for the New Year and I now move that the House be adjourned to 5th January, 2017. [*Applause*]

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo and all of our Members of Parliament (MPs) on this side of the House, the People's Progressive Party/Civic and all of our supporters countrywide, to extend to you, Sir, the staff of

the Parliament Office and to our Colleagues on the other side of the House, the media and by extension all of Guyana, Merry Christmas.

Sir, Christmas is a very special time and with all of the additions and the embellishments that it has received over the many years, the core message remains the same and that core message is bringing hope to a lost mankind. We on this side of the House, continually commit ourselves to work in that spirit to ensure that we keep hope alive in our nation, that our people would not ever be left without representation, that their voices will be heard, wherever it needs to be heard, and that we will continue to work in their best interest to ensure that their sufferings are alleviated and the difficulties that they experience are addressed and their lives become better.

Sir, in this season of Christmas, where there is a lot of celebration, we on this side of the House also pause to think about the many Guyanese who would have liked to be celebrating, but because of their present circumstances, there is no real joy around the table on Christmas day. We empathise with them and we would like assure them that we will not let them down. It is just a matter of time because this also will come to past and, at the appropriate time, there will be joy and singing again in the streets of Georgetown.

We also recognise that in the true spirit of Christmas, the message of peace is one that is relevant and very pertinent. We commit ourselves, that as we approach 2017, we will work uncompromisingly to ensure the safety of our sovereign nation from any threat and external forces, and we will also work, assiduously, to ensure peace within our villages and in our communities, by ensuring that mature and responsible actions are taken at every stage of the way.

We are grateful for the opportunity that we have to share with our brothers and sisters in this spirit of Christmas. So, once again to you, to the entire staff and to all of Guyana, from all of us on this side of the House, especially the Leader of the Opposition, Merry Christmas. *[Applause]*

Mr. Speaker: Let me thank Hon. Members for their good wishes on whichever side of the House. My own appreciation of Christmas is that it is a time for giving and loving, a time for togetherness, not separation. It is a time for appreciating what we have, giving thanks for it and being willing to share it with others. That is my humble appreciation of Christmas and so I wish that for all of us. I thank you. *[Applause]*

The House stands adjourned until the 5th January, 2017.

Adjourned accordingly at 2.50 p.m.