

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2012-2014) OF THE TENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

79TH Sitting

Wednesday, 9TH April, 2014

The Assembly convened at 3.48 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS

MOTION TO APPROVE THE ESTIMATS OF EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER, 2014

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

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

AND WHEREAS Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of Guyana for the financial year 2014 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 24th March, 2014;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2014, of a total sum of two hundred and five billion, three hundred and seventy million, five hundred and eighteen thousand dollars (\$205,370,518,000), excluding fourteen billion, and six hundred and seventy six million, one hundred and forty three thousand dollars (\$14,676,143,000) which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the under-mentioned schedule, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to make further provision in respect of finance.”

[Minister of Finance]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we have arrived at that stage on our agenda when we will resolve ourselves into Committee of Supply. But before we do so, I will like to say that yesterday afternoon I received a motion, submitted by Mr. Carl Greenidge and seconded by Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan, seeking to have adjustments made to the format in which the Estimates were submitted. I indicated to the mover and the seconder of the motion that we would consider that motion today rather than last evening. After some discussions held today in my Chambers, a course of action was agreed to, and that course of action requires that Mr. Greenidge makes a statement that will be followed by a statement by the Hon. Minister of Finance. I trust that these statements will reflect what was discussed. I know that Mr. Ramjattan will stand by as a third party to give clarity if needed.

I also wish to state that just before we were scheduled to commence the Sitting, I received a letter, under the hand of the learned Attorney General, pertaining to the very motion. I will make a copy of that letter available for all Members and, perhaps, for the members of the press as well. It is what we will call, colloquially, “a lawyer’s letter”, addressed to the Speaker, expressing the Government’s concerns about some aspects of the motion submitted by Mr. Greenidge. I believe that that letter and the concerns raised were also sufficiently addressed in the meeting we held. So without any ado, I invite Mr. Carl Greenidge to address the House.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wish to acknowledge the assistance you rendered in trying to move this rather difficult matter forward. Of course, colleagues will be aware that a motion was sent to you, Mr. Speaker, the substance of which had been signalled in my response to the Minister’s Budget Speech, and which, in March or April of last year, was contained in a letter sent to you and on which you gave a ruling. It is in that regard that I am

making the following comments which need to be seen in the context of the discussions to which you made reference.

As colleagues are aware, a number of bodies charged with protecting our fundamental rights have been treated, for the longest while, as budgetary agencies, which limits their independence and certainly not only in the financial sphere. However, article 222A of the Constitution, which is intitled an overarching clause in financial autonomy, states that in order to assure the independence of the entities listed in the Third Schedule, the expenditure of each of the entities shall be framed as a direct charge on the Consolidated Fund, determined as a lump sum by way of an annual subvention approved by the National Assembly after review, and approval of the entities' annual budget as part of the process of the determination of the national budget. These are the key elements in there.

I had also in my letter to you, Mr. Speaker, cited a number of other articles covering other entities, but I do not propose to address those now. What I want to indicate is that in the motion to you, Mr. Speaker, we had proposed that each of the bodies – and I will name the bodies in a while – should have their budgets reflected in the Estimates as lump sums approved by the Assembly and not subject to the exercise of discretion by the Executive. This is the important thing. The agencies in question and listed in the motion are those listed in the Third Schedule. They are, quickly, the Ethnic Relations Commission, the Human Rights Commission, the Women and Gender Equality Commission, the Indigenous People's Commission, the Rights of the Child Commission, the Judiciary as well as the Office of the Auditor General.

The Office of the Auditor General was remedied by way of an Order, in 2012, following a motion, but not necessarily as a consequence of a motion that we had brought to this House. But the Judiciary, the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) and the Service Commissions were not treated in that manner, although they are required, as I indicated, to be independent. So the motion, therefore, added or sought to add the Elections Commission, the Judicial Service Commission, the Public Service Commission, the Teaching Service Commission and the Police Service Commission to that arrangement. But in view of the consultations held among the three parties this afternoon, we are prepared to consider the proposals which the Minister of Finance will announce, and which should provide a framework for moving forward on this matter.

In view of the commitment by the parties to work towards mechanisms of dispute management and further consultations, we propose that this matter be referred without delay to the Constitutional Commission's Subcommittee for resolution and, in light of this, we would consider withdrawing the motion.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Very good, Mr. Greenidge. I call on the Hon. Minister of Finance to make his statement.

Minister of Finance [Dr. Singh]: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In response to the motion moved or that was intended to be moved by the Hon. Mr. Greenidge and seconded by Mr. Ramjattan, and pursuant to the discussions held earlier today and to which you refer, and, furthermore, recognising the fact that article 222A and the Third Schedule to the Constitution of Guyana refer to the following entities – the Ethnic Relations Commission, the Human Rights Commission, the Women and Gender Equality Commission, the Indigenous People's Commission, the Rights of the Child Commission, the Judiciary and the Office of the Auditor General, recognising further that this Government has already, in the national Estimates, reflected the budget allocations for the various aforementioned Rights Commissions, and the Office of the Auditor General as a lump sum, as contemplated by article 222A, I wish to indicate that I will be moving, at the appropriate time in the Committee of Supply, a motion in relation to the Estimates of Expenditure of the Judiciary in order to bring those Estimates in alignment with the Estimates of the other entities listed in the Third Schedule of the Constitution and which entities already receive a lump sum allocation, as proposed by Government.

I trust, Sir, that the moving of this motion, at the appropriate time in the Committee of Supply, will ensure withdrawal of the Opposition's motion to which Mr. Greenidge just referred, will avoid delay in consideration of the Estimates for 2014, and will ensure timely proceeding with and smooth passage of those Estimates.

I thank you very much, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Minister. To the Members who participated in the meeting, I would just like to say thank you very much. Today is a historic day because the Judiciary of Guyana has now been accorded a right that has been sought. I would like to single out Mr.

Greenidge for pursuing what I believe is a matter that should have been pursued, and I know that the Chancellor of the Judiciary has been speaking to for some time.

I would like to thank the Hon. Minister of Finance and the Hon. Attorney General for also having the foresight to see the wisdom of taking the step we did. Members, we are committed to referring the other matters to the Constitution Review Committee of the National Assembly with a view, of course, to resolving them. This is, in a sense, testament to the fact that all things can be resolved if we put our minds to do so.

Members, before we resolve into Committee of Supply, I wish to make a statement. It pertains to the manner in which we will address the Estimates, having regard to the Chief Justice's Ruling on the 29th January. It is a bit long but I believe it is important that I read it. So I ask Members for their attention and patience. It is an opinion and not a ruling so it is entitled, *Opinion and Guidelines on the Procedure to be Adopted by the National Assembly to Propose Amendments to the 2014 Estimates of Expenditure*.

“Following on the decision by the Hon. Mr. Justice Ian Chang, C.C.H, S.C. – Chief Justice (ag.) on the 29th January, 2014 in the case of **Attorney General versus Raphael Trotman, No. 216-W of 2012 Demerara**, it has become necessary to provide directives through which the National Assembly will proceed to consider the Estimates of Expenditure for 2014 in the Committee of Supply.

As an important arm of the tripartite governance structure of the State of Guyana, the National Assembly cannot be unmindful of the views and opinions of the High Court of the Supreme Court of Judicature, another important arm of the State, when it pronounces on matters that directly, or indirectly, affect the National Assembly. Every effort will be made always to respect the High Court's opinions; provided that the independence of the National Assembly is not impinged.

In a previous Ruling (No. 3 of 2013), it was stated that there is no “burden or duty” placed on the National Assembly to adopt or enforce rulings of the High Court. This position was essentially repeated in Ruling No. 4 of 2013. However, given the doctrine of comity (mutual respect by one branch of State for another), the National Assembly is always respectful of, and grateful for, opinions and interpretations provided by the High

Court from time to time. This is so even in light of the fact that an appeal has been filed in the Court of Appeal against the decision on February 25, 2014. It is of paramount importance that the three branches of State – the Executive, the Legislative and the Judicial, respect each other’s authority and decisions derived therefrom. Anarchy would be the outcome if the custodians of these branches exhibit open disrespect for and hostility towards each other. The citizenry must be spared and protected from this. In the circumstances, and without prejudice to the National Assembly’s right to pursue the appeal and to define its own procedures, every reasonable effort will be made to respect and implement the decision of the High Court.

It should be noted that no stay of execution of the High Court’s decision has been applied for. This is simply because I am of the considered opinion that the National Assembly cannot recognise a right in the High Court to fetter or restrict its activities. Implicit in an application for a stay of execution is the belief that the Court’s orders and directions are binding on the National Assembly. As such an application for a stay of execution would be unsound and harmful as it would admit to a jurisdiction that is non-existent.

Much care and attention has been exercised in scrutinising the Hon. Chief Justice’s decision. It is my considered opinion that despite the views and opinions of the High Court, the decision does not, and indeed cannot, do harm to the National Assembly’s procedures for treating with the Estimates of Expenditure. This is so because Article 165 (1) of the Constitution is pellucid in its intention as it states:

“Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the National Assembly may regulate its own procedure and may make rules for that purpose.”

No court can interfere with or fetter this right. This right has been universally recognised and upheld even in the High Court of Guyana in the 1963 case of Jagan et al -v- Gajraj. For this reason I utterly reject the notion that the National Assembly can act unlawfully in the exercise of its functions as prescribed above.

In furtherance of this bestowed right the National Assembly has promulgated its own rules and procedures that are known as “**Standing Orders**.” These Standing Orders regulate the practices and procedures to be applied and adhered to for all matters coming

before the National Assembly; including of course the review and approval of the Estimates of Expenditure.

Procedures For Budget Appropriation, Approval and Control

Procedurally, the manner in which moneys are approved for withdrawal from the Consolidated Fund is regulated by the Constitution, the Financial Management and Accountability Act, and the Standing Orders of the National Assembly.

Articles 216 and 217 of the Constitution mandate that there shall be a Consolidated Fund into which all revenues shall be deposited, and from which all withdrawals for public expenditure shall be made, and for what purposes.

Section 16 of the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act (FMAA) reinforces these requirements in this manner:

“There shall be no expenditure of public moneys except in accordance with Article 217 of the Constitution.”

Further, Article 218 of the Constitution states that:

“The Minister responsible for Finance or any other Minister designated by the President shall cause to be prepared and laid before the National Assembly before or within ninety days after the commencement of each financial year estimates of the revenues and expenditure of Guyana for that year.”

These estimates are presented to the National Assembly through a Motion introduced by the Hon. Minister of Finance on behalf of the Executive, and the National Assembly, in turn, on receipt of the estimates, applies its given rules and procedures for the processing of same.

These rules and procedures have come through the annals of centuries of time; have crystallised; and have been codified in the Independence Constitution of 1966 and every Constitution thereafter.

The time honoured procedure for the handling of the financial estimates of revenues and expenditures (the National Budget) is as follows:

1. The Hon. Minister of Finance submits to the National Assembly the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for a given financial year in satisfaction of Article 218 of the Constitution. This presentation is made in the form of a Motion.
2. The Hon. Minister, on presentation of the estimates, makes a “budget speech” detailing the policy framework within which the estimates of the financial year are being presented. At the end of this speech, the Hon. Minister formally proposes the Motion for the National Assembly to approve the estimates and a debate ensues.
3. This debate is expected to last for a minimum, of five (5) days and is confined to “the financial and economic state of the country and the general principles of Government policy and administration.” (S.O. 71 (2))
4. The National Assembly, from time immemorial, has determined that at the end of the debate, a special committee comprising all members of the House will convene to consider the details of the estimates. This Committee is known as the Committee of Supply. The Committee of Supply is not to be confused with the constitutional body known as the National Assembly.
5. Standing Order 72 establishes the purpose of this Committee as being “to consider the Estimates and Supplementary Estimates of Expenditure submitted to the National Assembly.”
6. The Committee of Supply considers each head of Expenditure, and at this stage, Members are permitted to **propose** amendments to the estimates for their increase or reduction. The right to introduce amendments to increase expenditures is restricted to Ministers acting with Cabinet’s consent. This is in recognition of the strict injunction contained in Article 171 of the Constitution. All proposals for amendments to reduce estimates for expenditure however, can be proposed by any Member of the Assembly. (See S.O. 76)

7. At the end of the consideration of the estimates, the Hon. Minister of Finance reports to the National Assembly that the estimates have been considered in Committee of Supply and approved by the Committee, with or without amendments being proposed, or not approved at all.

It is in the final stage of the procedure set out above that constitutes the nub of the differences between the opposition/majority side of the House, and the Government. The National Assembly relies on Standing Orders 75 and 76 to guide it in the review and approval process of the estimates of expenditure; Standing Orders that have been recognised as legal instruments since the birth of the nation. It should be noted that the right of the National Assembly to “amend” the estimates of Expenditure was highlighted in **Speaker’s Ruling Nos. 2 and 5 of 2012, and No. 4 of 2013 (No. 1)**.

On the other hand the Government relies on and endorses the High Court’s decision as set out in the several salient aspects of the decision below:”

I will only read one:

- ***““In the circumstances, the court sees it fit to declare that the National Assembly through the Committee of Supply has acted unlawfully and unconstitutionally in purporting to reduce or cut the Estimates of Expenditure of the Minister of Finance...” (p. 20)***

In the main, it is not difficult to grasp the reasoning and intentions of the Hon. Chief Justice. However, there are a number of points of departure with his reasoning. The principal disagreement with the Hon. Chief Justice’s observations, is in the strong belief that it is for the National Assembly, and the National Assembly alone, to determine how it will handle any matter it is seized of. The National Assembly must be allowed to settle its own procedure in keeping with the constitutional mandate contained in Article 165, and the protection from interference guaranteed in Article 172 of the Constitution. The National Assembly has determined that a Committee of Supply shall be the means through which it analyses the Estimates of expenditure. This is in keeping with its right to formulate its own procedure in accordance with the provisions of Article 165 of the Constitution.

The Hon. Minister of Finance submits the Estimates for consideration to the Committee of Supply, and the Committee of Supply, when finished, hands them back to the Hon. Minister. It is at these “hand-over/take-over” stages that our difficulty in interpretation arises.

When the Committee of Supply is finished with the Estimates they are handled back to the Hon. Minister of Finance, he then reports to the National Assembly that the Estimates have been scrutinised and:

- a) wholly approved; or
- b) approved (with proposals for amendments resulting from line items being reduced or not approved); or
- c) wholly disapproved

Without a doubt, the Estimates remain the Minister’s at all times.

It is critical to note that when the Committee of Supply considers the Estimates and “approves” of them whether after making “amendments”, (that is, through the process of proposing reductions of line items in accordance with Standing Order 76 or by the process of non-approvals of line items), or not, this function neither equates to, nor constitutes, the “approval” function required by the Constitution in Article 218. The approval is only given in the first instance by the Assembly when the Hon. Minister of Finance reports to the plenary of the National Assembly that the Committee of Supply has considered the Estimates and then goes on to ask the National Assembly to **approve** the report of the Committee. The form of words used is:

“Mr. Speaker, I beg to report that the Committee of Supply considered the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year...and approved them (or approved them as amended).”

The Speaker then responds:

“I will now put the motion which is that the National Assembly approves of the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year...” (Emphasis added)

It is at this stage, and at no other, that the National Assembly fulfils the constitutional function of **approving** the Estimates as provided for in Article 218. The approval of the Estimates by the Committee of Supply cannot be meant to be the approval contemplated by the Constitution because a Committee of the National Assembly has no power or authority to bind the National Assembly.

In view of the above, when the Committee of Supply makes “amendments” to the Estimates, there is, with the greatest of respect, nothing unlawful or unconstitutional about these actions. If indeed the Committee of Supply has made amendments (which are in essence proposals for changes to the Estimates) then it is the duty of the Hon. Minister of Finance to indicate to the National Assembly whether the Government wishes time to consider the “amendments” before the Speaker puts the Motion to the National Assembly for their adoption. The Government is also within its right to either accept the amendments or to reject them *en toto*.

In short, the functions of the Committee of Supply and the National Assembly, as against those of the Minister of Finance (representing the Executive), are not mutually exclusive; though it must be conceded that at times the lines of distinction have become blurred. The National Assembly is ever mindful of the fact that the separation of powers doctrine must be strictly adhered to. In this regard, the words of David G. McGee in his book The Budget Process: A Parliamentary Imperative are worth repeating:

“If a government assumes office it exercises executive power and is entitled to do so as long as it remains in office. If a legislature is dissatisfied with the policy being followed by the executive, it has constitutional power of dismissing it, but not of taking over executive power itself and imposing its own policy. Executives govern through legislatures; legislatures do not themselves govern.”¹

In the circumstances of the above, the guidelines proposed in Appendix A are recommended for your approval.

¹ David A. McGee, *The Budget Process: A Parliamentary Imperative*, (London, Pluto Press), 79

**PROPOSED GUIDELINES FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF THE 2014
ESTIMATES OF REVENUES AND EXPENDITURE FOR FINANCIAL YEAR
2014**

1. The National Assembly will resolve into the Committee of Supply to consider the Estimates. The procedures set out in Standing Orders 72 – 75 shall apply.
2. Where necessary Members will make proposals for amendments to the Estimates.
3. Where a Member(s) wishes to propose the non-approval of any aspect of the Estimates he/she will not be required to give Notice as required by Standing Order 76.
4. A sub-committee of the Committee of Supply will be constituted and which will have no less than seven (7) Members comprising, four members from the Opposition and three (3) Members from the Government, and to be chaired by the Speaker. The purpose of this Committee will be to examine proposals for amendments and to find consensus or agreement where possible, and thereafter to report to the Committee of Supply.
5. At the end of this exercise the Chairman of the Committee will put the question that the Estimates be reported to the National Assembly.
6. The Hon. Minister of Finance will report to the Assembly his Government's opinion on the Estimates if "amended".
7. Ultimately, the Appropriation Bill will be the Hon. Minister's Bill, and not the National Assembly's, and the complaint of the intrusion of the National Assembly into the Executive's domain will be obviated.²
8. The National Assembly will give its approval for the Appropriation Bill to be taken through the three stages that all Bills must journey.³

² Requirement of Article 218 (2) and Section 17 of the Financial Management and Accountability Act (FMAA)

³ This last authorising function of the National Assembly permits the Minister of Finance to make withdrawals from the Consolidated Fund for the sum necessary to meet the Expenditure approved in the Annual Estimates."(S.O.77)

I will circulate copies of it for Members to consider later on. We will resolve into Committee of Supply.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply.

4.18 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Members, if they have any questions they may rise. In other jurisdictions technical officers are also invited to speak if they so desire because sometimes the knowledge that is required to answer a question resides in them rather than in the Minister. Members or Ministers may wish to consider that proposal.

Agency: 21 Ministry of Agriculture

Current Expenditure

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration – \$9,755,009,000

Dr. Roopnarine: Looking at line item 6111, Administrative, I notice that the cost has risen from \$10,243,000 to \$13,515,000, which is a rise of some 30%. I am wondering if the Hon. Minister could shed some light on this increase in the administrative cost.

Minister of Agriculture [Dr. Ramsammy]: The number of staff here has increased by two additional employees. An Assistant Secretary General and an Accountant have been added. That is the explanation.

Dr. Roopnarine: Under line item 6116, Contracted Employees, the rise there of \$100 million brings the number of contracted employees to 86.25% of the employment cost of the Ministry. Is that correct?

Dr. Ramsammy: Under line item 6116, a number of our young people who were on scholarships, particularly in Cuba and at the University of Guyana, have been graduated and

assigned to various Ministries. Thirty-nine of them were assigned to the Ministry of Agriculture. That sum represents the additional salaries being incurred.

Dr. Roopnarine: It is noticeable that, of the \$9,755,009,000 of the total expenditure of the Ministry, 95.16% seems to be going to the sugar industry and some other areas and less than 5% is going to the routine operations of the Ministry. Is that correct?

Dr. Ramsammy: Overtime, a number of departments, which function under the Ministry of Agriculture, such as crops, livestock, have been devolved into agencies. Therefore the Ministry of Agriculture is now made up, not just of those of us at what is called the Ministry of Agriculture, with a number of agencies which would have previously been departments over the years. Under the heading Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, the Member would see budgets allocated to, what would have been the Ministry of Agriculture's budget, different programmes.

Dr. Roopnarine: I am glad you brought us to the heading Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, Mr. Minister, and that would have been my next question. We must look immediately at the \$6 billion that is proposed to be allocated to Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo). My suspicion is that it may well be one of the matters that we need to refer to the Sub-Committee of this Committee of Supply because I suspect we are going to have some considerable disagreements on this particular subsidy.

I just want to say, as far as we are concerned, we would really like some cast iron assurances about the industry. We had called previously for the reconstitution of the board and what I would like to ask, in relations to the board, and this is important, I think, is what is going to be the criteria for the selection of members of the board. What kind of board members are we looking at? We want to be assured, in relations to this \$6 billion subsidy, that we are presented here, in this National Assembly, with a credible programme for the resuscitation and revitalisation of the industry. I know I have the support of some of my former colleagues with great experience in industry, such as the likes of Hon. Members Komal Chand and Dr. Gopaul.

We believe, and I think that the evidence is compelling, that throughout the industry, at all levels of management, there requires some really serious reforms within GuySuCo. We need also to be looking at the whole issue of husbandry in the fields because a lot is happening there that is

unsatisfactory. I have called for a careful examination of the whole issue of migration, migration away from the fields. Has this been the subject of a study? Do we know why this is happening? Do we know what we can do to reverse this from happening?

What essentially we are looking for, in relation to this subsidy, is, as I have said, some ironclad assurances and whether or not that will satisfy all Members of this side, I do not know. My feeling is that more reassurance, serious reassurance, about a plan on the way forward is what we need. I, myself, have had a chance, as I am sure you would know, to look at the latest strategic plan and I cannot tell you that I have been very convinced by some of the arithmetic in the strategic plan. The more we can hear from the Minister in relations to this, the better off we will be. I have said that I do not know if this is going to be one of the areas within this debate that we may need to refer to the special Sub-Committee which the Minister made mention of.

Dr. Ramsammy: I do hope that in fact, the allocation that we are seeking for GuySuCo will be approved by the National Assembly. I believe that the sugar industry requires that injection and deserves our support.

One of the issues, at hand, is the appointment of the new board. I believe that the present board, as we all now, was extended last year to the 30th June and a new board is being appointed. A number of recommendations have been made for membership to the new board. I am aware that there are radical changes being proposed for the new board to be appointed as of the 1st July.

The President of Guyana, or I should say the Cabinet, is engaged in talking to various people who have been recommended to be part of the board. I want to assure my colleague, the Hon. Member Dr. Roopnarine, and our colleagues in general, that we are looking for persons who will bring experience with the industry and experience in business and marketing to the industry. It is persons with experience in agronomy and mechanisation because these are the issues we have to face.

I am prepared to engage the Members in some of these discussions. It is one reason why the President did not proceed to appoint the board right away because he is discussing with many other people all of the options that we have. I do know that some of the names being proposed and have been generally agreed on are people who will find favour with both sides.

In terms of other details and the strategic plans, I guess it will evolve in the afternoon, unless the Member intended for me to go on to all of that.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: A follow-up please. Could the Hon. Minister state specifically what this sum of money is going to be applied to?

Dr. Ramsammy: It is to address a number of the challenges that we face, in terms of mechanisation. It is to address some of the issues in the strategic plan. For example, in terms of mechanisation, there is land conversion, preparing land to be compatible with mechanised operations – harvesting, loading and tillage.

For land conversion in 2014, which is also a part of the European Union indicator, we are planning to have 2,500 hectares of land converted to be suitable for mechanisation. That would entail an expenditure of \$1.1 billion. I think I mentioned that in my budget address. In addition to that, we are planning to have 9,600 hectares of land under tillage and a replanting programme that would entail replanting 9,224 hectares in 2014. Both of these are consistent with improving the cane production yield and also the specific objective of eliminating ratoon five plus, which is all the ratoons greater than five, by 2017. That is the strategy and it will go a long way towards doing that. One billion dollar is intended to be spent on that.

The various factories upgrading, not just the Skeldon Sugar Factory, but a number of the estates, we will be spending \$2 billion on that particular aspect. This includes projects such as the replacement of the centrifugal units at Rose Hall, Canje, the upgrade of broilers and replacement of mill auxiliary drives at Uitvlugt, the further improvement of factory automation at Albion, the replacement of building structure and installation of molasses storage capacity at Blairmont, installation of reverse rotation knives assemble at Wales and Enmore and working on the punt dumpers at various estates, including the Skeldon Sugar Factory.

In addition to that, various sums of moneys will be spent on field infrastructure in order to improve access to the factory and quicker movement of cane from the fields to the factory, and the purchasing of equipment - more excavators, tractors, harvesters, bell loaders and boom sprayers. That is where the \$6 billion have been budgeted for.

Dr. Ramayya: Listening to the Hon. Minister, I would like to ask a very specific question, seeing that there are so many problems at the Skeldon Estate with the \$6 billion. Could the Minister be specific as to what amount of that money he spent on the Skeldon Estate?

Dr. Ramsammy: A lot of work has been done at the Skeldon Estate. In terms of the \$6 billion, there will be work at the Skeldon Estate, both the factory and the field. I am not in a position to say that a particular amount of this \$6 billion will be spent at the Skeldon Estate. I did not have those disaggregated sums.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Chairman, may I ask a follow-up? This House has approved since 2011 \$11 billion in subsidies. The Minister will say if I am correct. I had called it “bail out” for GuySuCo. Now we are here, once again, asking for another \$6 billion subsidies and our bail out. I just want to, if you will permit me, to say that I am aware that some sugar workers were paid today to come to be on a picket line. I want to ask the Minister, as a follow-up, was there any money of the \$11 billion already allocated by this House that has gone to sugar workers to increase their remuneration and condition of work and if, so how much?

Dr. Ramsammy: I had said clearly in the House that because GuySuCo had utilised its own resources to address some of the investments in the industry for improving the factories it needed help in order to meet some of its operational costs, such as the paying of Annual Production Incentive (API). We all know that the amount of moneys, both in 2012 and 2013, in meeting the increase of the wage bill and in meeting the API payments, and so on, some of the resources were used to meet those costs. Exactly how much at this point I cannot say, but I will provide that for you.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Permit me, Mr. Chairman, as a follow-up. Some of this money has been used for operational costs that the Minister provided us with the figure. I understand the Minister to be saying that this is partially to meet shortfalls by GuySuCo. Could the Minister inform this Hon. House how much or what is the size of GuySuCo’s indebtedness? I suspect, and the Minister may tell me if I am wrong, that he will come back again for more subsidies. We want to know now, before we vote on this, what is the indebtedness of GuySuCo and whether in fact this \$6 billion will be all that will be required to meet the “bail out” of its recurring and other problems?

Dr. Ramsammy: Taking into consideration the high hopes and the confidence of management that we are going to be able to achieve a production of 216,000 tons in 2014, the budget provided to us and the request with a deficit of \$6 billion, the request that we are asking now.

Out of its own operation, it is expected to meet some of its payments to its creditors. Therefore I am hopeful that GuySuCo's ability to produce 216,000 tons would be one that will not require me to come and ask for more money, but we will have to wait and see. That is the budget. I am talking about the budget presented to us, right now.

Mr. Nagamootoo: If I may, Mr. Chairman. Minister, you said just now that GuySuCo will be able, out of its production if goes to the 214,000 tons, to pay some of its creditors. The question I am asking the competent Minister is: What is the indebtedness of GuySuCo? He is in charge; he must know the figures. Is it \$75 billion? Maybe that is too high. Is it \$50 billion?

Dr. Ramsammy: We all know that there is an amount of money that is owed as part of the investment of the Skeldon Estate, which the Government of Guyana has been... **[Hon. Members (Opposition):** We do not know.] I hear you talking all the time about \$150 billion and \$180 million. Outside of that, there is a sum of money that is owed to various creditors, some are on a long-term and others are on a short-term, which is taken care of by the operational costs. The exact amount, I will try to give you that before the end of this session.

Mr. Nagamootoo: It may be finally because I want to say this: Every time the Government had come here for a bail out, we granted it. We granted \$1 billion, \$5 billion and \$4 billion. We hear the story of GuySuCo in trouble. Always the excuse has been that the Opposition is blocking the subsidies and the Opposition is killing the industry. What I am asking the Hon. Minister is to tell us to what extent this industry is ailing and how much it owes because we cannot be accused of committing ethnic cleansing of Indian sugar workers while we are supplying money to the sugar industry to help those workers. We are concerned about the sugar workers and their welfare and that is why we gave the bail outs, but we do not know how deep the trouble is. Right now, I am asking the Minister to tell us. He said later.

What I want to ask finally is this: If part of the money, we have been voting for, has been going towards Skeldon Estate, the modernisation... The Minister will need to say if I am wrong. Forty-

four billion dollars had gone towards the Skeldon Estate. Could the Minister say to this Assembly if there is any plan to have a financial audit of how the \$44 billion was spent?

Dr. Ramsammy: As a public corporation, GuySuCo's finances are audited. There are annual audits of GuySuCo's books and they are submitted to this Assembly.

Mr. Nagamootoo: We do not have financial statements for 2012/2013 in this House, so we are not in a position to answer the question and that is why we are asking the question whether there should be a forensic audit of the Skeldon Estate itself because we need to tell our people whether the \$44 billion was well spent or whether it was mismanaged. That is the issue we are asking. It is not the audited report that comes here. This is a specific millstone around the necks of the Guyanese on which \$44 billion had been spent. We want to ask: Are there plans to have a forensic, a Commission of Inquiry into the Skeldon Sugar Factory?

Mr. Chairman: One second Hon. Minister. Mr. Nagamootoo, you have asked three things. One, it is the financial audit; second, a forensic audit and thirdly, a Commission of Inquiry. I think, in fairness to the Minister, which one are you asking?

Mr. Nagamootoo: I am asking for a forensic audit. I am sorry if I said that. It would have been an avenue, if there was a Commission of Inquiry, that one of its references would have been to have a forensic audit.

Mr. Chairman: There is also something known as a Value for Money Audit.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Whatever it is, but I am asking now for a forensic audit. Please, I do not want to stretch this too much, but we are very concerned that this money has been watered down and poured on duck's back.

4.48 p.m.

Dr. Ramsammy: As I stated, GuySuCo has been audited and I was under the impression that the 2012 report was presented. I know that it is available and I will make sure, if it not yet in the House,... but I am of the view that it was.

In terms of a forensic audit or a Commission of Inquiry, that is not something that we had put in place. In fact, I had offered last year for GuySuCo to come before the Parliamentary Sectoral

Committee. The Parliamentary Sectoral Committee had first invited GuySuCo and then deferred it and it is on standby to come to be scrutinised, in which some of the detailed questions can, in fact, be asked.

In terms of a Commission of Inquiry, I believe that that will be a decision that the Cabinet will have to address.

Mr. Ramjattan: Could the Minister be in a position to itemise that which he had given us, where the \$6 billion is going to go in statement form as to what will be the cost of factory rehabilitation at Rose Hall Estate? What will the factory rehabilitation at Uitvlugt, Albion, Blairmont Estates, and so on, so that we can know how that \$2 billion say is going to be spent and at which factory?

What will be the cost for the field infrastructure and which field? I do not like these general answers to say it is going to factory rehabilitation, here, there and everywhere.

Dr. Ramsammy: I have itemised some of the things to be done in factories. The exact amount going to each one is not provided, but I am willing to have the sums, which I have here, broken down and distributed to you on each of the areas of expenditure and also broken down by estate and factory.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, can you say when these details will be provided?

Mr. Ramjattan: When could those be provided to me or to the Assembly?

Mr. Chairman: It is to all Members; it is not just to one.

Dr. Ramsammy: The Hon. Member Mr. Ramjattan, are you asking under the breakdown that I just talked about?

Mr. Ramjattan: Yes. That is what I am talking about.

Dr. Ramsammy: Tomorrow.

Mr. Ramjattan: Is the arrangement for management here, for the industry, involved a company out of India with certain experts coming to manage GuySuCo now?

Dr. Ramsammy: No Mr. Chairman. There has been an agreement with a number of partners to provide technical support for GuySuCo. As part of an arrangement with India, there are a number of technical persons who are being assigned to various estates and also for specific functions. A number of them are presently working at Skeldon, at Enmore and at different sugar estates around the country.

Dr. Ramayya: The Hon. Minister is very optimistic as to the production for 2014. Could the dear Minister tell this House at what percentage at the capacity that Skeldon Estate is operating as of today, in terms of production?

Dr. Ramsammy: A number of things were done last year and those things have led to an improvement in the functioning of the Skeldon Sugar Factory. At this time, the factory efficiency for the first crop, I believe that is what the Member wants to know, is at 89%. In terms of cane per hour, which it manages... As it is known, when it was designed, that by 2016 production will be somewhere about 100. It was designed to handle 350 tons of cane per hour.

Last year it was averaging around 160 tons per hour. This year, so far, it has been between 220 tons and 282 tons with an average of over 230 tons per hour, clearly an improvement. We are hoping that by the end of 2014, according to 2013/2017 plan, we wanted to be around an average of 250 tons per hour and achieving 300 tons or greater by 2017.

In terms of its tons cane to tons sugar (TCTS) we were hoping that for 2014, the average TCTS will be between 12 and 13. The TCTS has fluctuated between 11 and 14 for this year. At the beginning it was around 14 because we were using carry-over cane. The crop cane which is now being utilised at Skeldon is seeing TCTS at around 11 and 12. This is where we are at this time.

Dr. Ramayya: The 216,000 tons, which the Minister was talking about, what percentage of sugar...? Seeing that we have spent so much money on the Skeldon Estate and the Minister is talking about the amount of canes and how many tons per hour the estate can utilise to produce sugar, I was thinking about the 216,000 tons that we should have got from the Skeldon Estate. However, I would like the Minister to indicate to this House that out of the 216,000 tons of sugar for this year, how much of that sugar will be produced by the Skeldon Estate?

Dr. Ramsammy: Approximately it is 18%.

Mr. Greenidge: The Minister made reference earlier to the fact that the sectoral committee did invite GuySuCo to submit its plan and also to attend a meeting for the purposes of doing an examination of GuySuCo's performance, but I hope he was not suggesting, and he seemed to be pointing in that direction, that the work of the Committee of the House could be a substitute for an indebt examination of the kind that was being requested, either a forensic audit or an inquiry of some sort.

The sugar industry, if we both agree, is, in terms of employment, the most significant and most important in this country, in terms of numbers employed, families directly affected, and so forth. It is for that reason that we need to show seriousness in the way that we approach fixing the difficulties that it faces. It is a concern about the failure to do that, that I think has us asking questions on this for so long.

Let me start off by saying that certainly, on the APNU's side, whatever it is that the Minister envisages will occur. In relation to the work by the Committee, we would expect that GuySuCo would make arrangements to ensure, first of all, as mentioned already, that the board of directors is not merely replaced, but replaced with a board with the skills and experience which are relevant to the problem that it faces, a problem, as we have indicated before, compounded by, essentially, a politicised board. I think that we would like to see GuySuCo moves away from that. It is a professional board, a board with management skills, a board that can give proper policy directions to managers and in turn ensure that managers are not only competent but also fearless in carrying out their work because that is a difficulty that they face now due to the intervention that they have to cater with at the political level. I just want to make that point clear. I hope the Minister does not see the work of the Committee of this House as a substitute for an in-depth examination of a very important industry. If it was that important, it requires the director the directions of resources commensurate of a very important industry. If it is that important, it requires the direction of resources commensurate with that importance.

The second point is that in the response to the Committee's request GuySuCo sent us a draft 2013/2017 plan. The plan had anticipated a certain level of output in both 2013 and 2014. That output clearly has not been achieved. What has GuySuCo done, in terms of the plan, to ensure that the problems encounter, which cause the shortfall, will fix the difficulties faced by it?

Dr. Ramsammy: I was not suggesting that. In fact, the appearance before the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee would substitute for a more in-depth study of the industry and of Skeldon Estate. Indeed, there were a number of assessments of the industry and of Skeldon Estate, itself, in 2011, 2012, 2013 and some of the things we did in 2013 were out of those assessments.

We have tried to put together a professional board. I am not going to argue about a political board or not. I do believe that GuySuCo needs and should always have a professional board. One of the things I have tried, as Minister, and I hope that I could influence that process, is to improve those professionals who are on the board and I do believe that we would see that. I would engage, if they are prepared to, the two agriculture spokespersons, Shadow Ministers, both Dr. Roopnarine and Mr. Ramjattan, before we finalise those boards.

The assessments, which were done, led to certain things and I agree that the 2013/2017 strategy goes for 2013. The targets established were not achieved. We all know that. The 2014 targets have been modified but the overall targets have not changed to 2017. Some of the things, through the assessments, which have to be done are, for example, the modification and upgrade of cane preparation equipment at Skeldon Estate. This is specifically for Skeldon Estate but that also applied to other factories and those were done; the redesigning of the bagasse ploughs at Skeldon Estate; the installation of additional condensate storage capacity at Skeldon Estate; the installation of desuper heater system at Skeldon; the replacement of the bagasse scratcher and the insulation of pipe support for high pressure steam lines which were part of the original design that had to be changed. These are the original designs that were supervised by Booker Tate Ltd. and Tate & Lyle and, constructed in accordance with those designs, had to be changed. The assessment demonstrated the part of the problems we had, which were those design flaws, and those were done in 2013.

Some of the improvements, which we are seeing, right now, are related to both. One of the problems faced in 2013 was with the weather and also with these things. With good weather last year, at that time there was good weather,... In the first crop there was poor weather at the beginning and the crop early had to be terminated and instead of the 13-week crop, which was planned, we ended up with less than six. In the second crop, when there was a good period of weather, also the grinding season had to be terminated in late November, instead of going to Christmas, as was planned. There was a production of approximately 140,000 tons at average

weekly production that is reminiscent of those times when productions are good. In so far we have been to an average of over 8,000 tons and for most of the weeks we have averaged over 9,000 tons. Those were the kinds of averages we were getting when production was between 280,000 and 300,000 tons. It demonstrates that weather is of great importance but we also saw that there were other things to be done, some of which I have talked about – the flood fallowing, the legume fallowing, and so on, that are all parts of the plan that is there.

We have to accelerate the mechanisation process and we are doing this. Mechanisation will not be done in such a way to displace any jobs. In fact, mechanisation is about 63% in Skeldon Estate and we believe that the labour pool can allow us to have effective operations, that is, a labour pool that will allow us to manage about 35% of manual operation. At Enmore Estate, where it is about 75%, it balances off with the labour pool that is there. Mechanisation has to be accelerated at Uitvlugt Estate because the labour pool cannot take off the canes as fast as it is needed for the factories. Those are some examples of things that we are doing. I am confident that because of these things the 2014 target will be met. At the moment, we hope to end this week with a production with approximately 60,000 tons. I fully expect that we will end this first grinding season in excess of 70,000 tons.

Mr. Greenidge: I must say that we are in danger of being killed by affection as regards the Minister's presentation because he provided us with such a wealth of details that sometimes it is difficult to really follow the significance of a number of the points that he was making.

Let me say that what I was asking really was not for the details of all the things or the bulk of things being done. I am asking, in terms of an overall strategy, if the sector encounters a problem what are the broad difficulties he faces and how is it that he is proposing to deal with them. Now most of the answers were devoted to Skeldon Estate. It is an opportunity for the Ministry to indicate what proportion of GuySuCo's loss, for example, in the course of 2013, was attributable to Skeldon Estate? I would like that answer since the Minister has devoted so much of the answers to Skeldon Estate.

The question, which I really wanted to have an answer, is this: The plan anticipated a number of steps and the targets, which the Minister has identified, in terms of output, have had to be adjusted, but what are the broad areas he recognised...? For example, when he listed a number of

specific things that were done in factories it does not really tell us whether he had and whether he ought to have anticipated those programmes. Let me put it in another way. A number of the issues he raised seemed to be simply managerial issues and perhaps failure at the factory or the field level, in terms of the management of the enterprise but what, in broad terms, was the Minister anticipating and what it is that he is now going to do to fix? If there were managerial problems, has the Minister strengthened or is he seeking to strengthen management so that these problems could be anticipated?

Let me just say something to you, Mr. Minister, which I am sure you know. The sugar industry has existed as a major exporter for over two centuries and the weather could never be, and should never be, something that you are saying is the source of the problem. It is agriculture and the bulk of the sugar industry's work is associated with field operations and if that fails then everything else will fail. That is not telling us very much. You can anticipate weather within certain limits and therefore the question is whether your infrastructure is inadequate, if it is inadequate for drainage purposes, then what is it you anticipated and what are you doing? All of the details are welcomed. It is very interesting to hear them but they do not really satisfy the questions that I would like answered. I put the question again you, Minister.

Dr. Ramsammy: For the Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge, I did try to answer, in my own way, and I agree that the weather is a part of our lives and the truth is that we have had a change in weather patterns for the industry. That is something that we have to grapple with, not to use it as an excuse, but we do need to grapple with it. How successful the industry has been up to this point is one in which we all can agree that it has not, with the change, fully grappled with problem. That is exactly what I am trying to do, in the broad ways that we are addressing it. I did not mean to focus on Skeldon Estate though I give some examples, but I could have gone on to say that boilers were replaced at Wales Estate. I could have done that.

The broad areas, because of a number of things, the labour pool and the change in the weather pattern, certain things have to be done. Mechanisation must be accelerated. Overall the amount of mechanisation, which has to be done by 2017, we need to get, I believe - do not hold me exactly to the number - is 22,000 hectares of conversion for mechanisation, land conversion.

Fourteen thousand has been completed thus far and we expect to do 2,500 and therefore reach the goal by 2017. That means that we have to invest moneys, not only in the land conversion, but in obtaining harvesters, tillage machines and boom sprayers. That is part of the mechanisation, the field mechanisation. That is one of the broad strategic areas that we need to address. That is why when I went in to talk about 63% mechanisation of the field operation in Skeldon Estate and 75% at Enmore Estate, the East Demerara Sugar Estate, about 65% of our cane loading from field is presently done through bell loaders and that has to be increased. This is a form of mechanisation that I am talking about. Harvesting cane, because of the shorter periods that we have due to the weather patterns, we need to move cane more rapidly, move it out of the fields more rapidly, but, at the same time, do not displace employment and that is how we are doing this. Clearly, at this time, the need for more field mechanisation at Uitvlugt, at Albion, at Blairmont, at Rose Hall Estates is now more acute and therefore mechanisation process has to be accelerated. That is addressing the overall areas of field operation.

There was a shift in operation and the flood fallow and legume fallow, in terms of land preparation and improving our yield, is something that should be paid more attention to over the years and we have now restored that and amplifying or accelerating what we do in those areas.

The replanting, which is the original strategy - this is the one that was called the turnaround plan, I believe 2010 - had required that 20% replanting to be done, so that we go to a maximum of five ratoons.

5.18 p.m.

For a maximum of five ratoons, it means that at least 20% replanting must be done, which was one of the areas where the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) did not succeed. That is another area where we are focusing on. To improve our access to the factories, the drainage and irrigation for pump stations have been rehabilitated and new ones have been established, right now, for example, Number 66 and the Enterprise/Paradise Block. I have more details, but those are some of the examples, in general, of the field operation to ensure that cane is brought to the factories on time and in sufficient amounts.

There has to be improvement in factories and I have talked about the improvement in all seven factories. There was a point that Mr. Greenidge also talked about and that is management. We do

recognise that we need to improve management. Some of the technical persons who have now been brought in are going to work with the young managers in order to improve management in the industry. We have made some management changes overall in the industry. There are several other areas that we need to also talk about. Agronomy, for example, is something that we need to address.

I talked about drainage and irrigation and the improvement of the engineering aspects. These are some of the things that need to be done. They have been doing these but we have accelerated. These and the resources that we have been putting are helping to address those. At some point, I will answer a previous question that I think Mr. Nagamootoo had asked and for which I now have information.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, notwithstanding the fact that we began very late, I would still like us to go to the suspension because we need to address some of the issues, including one raised by Dr. Roopnarine earlier – the process through which we are going to review a matter and so forth.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the Minister for his answers to the question. There is a dimension of it I am not going to pursue because I do not think the answer was satisfactory. Perhaps, the Minister would like to bear this in mind for the future: you have a plan for 2013-2017. The first year and half or two years of that plan seem to have gone awry. That is not in dispute. I ask now: what adjustments are you going to make to the programme in order to get it back on track? What the Minister has explained to me is the whole programme. I am not interested in the entire programme. What adjustments are you going to make at the margin, in other words, to get it on track?

If, indeed, all of those things are to be done just to fix 2014 and to get it back to what was planned, then you cannot do it. It is impossible. All of those things that you mentioned, Mr. Minister, cannot be done before the end of 2014 and they probably cannot be done by 2017. That is really why I keep going back to this. I am not going to pursue it but I just want you to bear it in mind because, for me, that answer is one that would persuade us that the industry knows what it is going to do with the \$6 billion and it knows what it is doing. At this moment in time,

notwithstanding the sincerity and the great detail, the answers actually do not leave me with much comfort.

The other question that you did not answer was about the contribution of Skeldon Sugar Factory to the losses that GuySuCo currently face. What part of the burden is attributable to Skeldon Sugar Factory specifically in terms of the financial cost? Instead of asking you what portion of the \$6 billion goes to Skeldon Sugar Factory, since funds are fungible, that is really not too meaningful. What I would like to know is: what part of your overall loss is borne by Skeldon Sugar Factory? To what extent are you going to be able to fix Skeldon Sugar Factory? That will give us an idea of what can be done in terms of getting back on track to 2017.

Dr. Ramsammy: Mr. Greenidge, I am sorry I did not specifically answer the first part of your question which was how to address the 2013 deficit of the target. All of these things will also help because some of these had to do with that. One of the areas, for example, is in terms of timely application of fertiliser. In all of our heads, including those of us on this side, it would be that they did not have the fertiliser. It was not just procuring the fertiliser but the ability to apply it because of the shorter time period we have and also labour issues. That is one of the reasons why some of the money – the \$6 billion – is going towards acquiring equipment to be able to apply fertilisers on a more timely basis. What I was trying to do was address some of the overall issues, some of which led to the deficit last year.

In fact, we are doing both things – fixing the short-term problems and also the medium and long term issues – to take us to where we want to be by the end of 2017, which is 349,000 tonnes of sugar. In fact, as it relates to the question as to what percentage of the loss that GuySuCo encountered in 2013 can be attributed to the Skeldon Sugar Factory, the Skeldon Sugar Factory was a major part of not meeting the target last year but we are going to take the break just now so I will try to get that answer for you.

Regarding the question which was asked earlier by Dr. Ramayya and Mr. Nagamootoo about how much of the \$6 billion is likely to be spent at Skeldon Sugar Factory, specifically, I am informed that of the work planned \$500 million of the \$6 billion will be spent at Skeldon Sugar Factory. There was also a question about the total debt for GuySuCo. When the Budget for 2014 was prepared, it included all of the creditors and the operational cost with the projection for

revenues and it showed that they would be in deficit of \$11 billion, which includes all of the works that will be covered by the \$6 billion. These are all payments that do not all have to be met in 2014. That would have been the extent. [Mr. Nagamootoo: (inaudible.)] Not necessarily, Mr. Nagamootoo. I am just being open. Every bit of information I have, you have. I do not know if I have come closer to answering the question that you asked, Mr. Greenidge, but I am prepared to answer as many of the questions as possible.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I would like to take the suspension now.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we stand suspended. It would be abridged period. It would not be for the full hour because we have to get back to our work.

Sitting suspended at 5.29 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 6.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, in light of the proposals which were made, I had invited Members to say whether we should meet or whether or not there were counter proposals to be put. Dr. Roopnarine did raise the issue of how one line item, for example, would be handled. I am open to suggestions, remarks or comments if any Member wishes to say how we should proceed, whether we take a short adjournment or proceed with the Ministry of Agriculture as we were before.

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Nandlall]: I believe, Sir, it would be more convenient if we were to meet in Chamber for a few minutes.

Mr. Speaker: Any other view?

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Speaker, I have no difficulty with meeting in Chamber to try and resolve the matter. It is good if we could get it out of the way.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, while I am not opposed to meeting in your Chamber, my concern is that we started late this afternoon and there are representatives of agencies, including the

Ministries of Education, Health and Amerindian Affairs here. It is difficult to have all of the representatives sitting and waiting. I just hate the idea of us extending the time more and more.

Mr. Speaker: I see it a little differently. We achieved so much today by the delay that, in fact, could have led to delays for weeks. I personally apologise to every technical officer, every permanent secretary or anyone else who has been waiting, but, I believe, as I said, we accomplished a tremendous lot earlier by the delay. I would say a half an hour would not affect us. I did call us back before the one hour break. Members, we would take a half of an hour suspension. Again, my apologies, but I believe once we get through the first part, the rest would not be as difficult.

Sitting suspended at 6.23 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 7.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we will resume immediately into Committee of Supply.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply

In Committee of Supply

Mr. T. Williams: In light of the Hon. Minister enlightening us that there will be management changes at GuySuCo, my question is: would the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of GuySuCo be residing in Guyana?

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes.

Mr. T. Williams: Could the Hon. Minister tell us the salary and remuneration package and benefits for the new CEO?

Dr. Ramsammy: The CEO's package is the regular CEO package that GuySuCo's previous CEOs have received. The package can, in fact, be obtained. The Board is finalising that right now and I will present it to the Assembly.

Mr. T. Williams: Is the Minister willing to give us a timeline for when we will have this information?

Dr. Ramsammy: As soon as we have concluded it.

Mr. Ramjattan: Regarding the agreements in relation to the technical support from the partners out of India, could the Assembly obtain those technical agreements with those partners?

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes. We have had a number of these technical agreements in the past, such as those with Tatum Lyle and so on. The ones we have now with India, I can make those available to you – the list of people who are there and what the conditions of the technical support are.

Mr. Ramjattan: Is Surendra Engineering still providing factory spare parts to GuySuCo?

Dr. Ramsammy: As far as I am aware, they are not.

Mr. Ramjattan: I suppose that would also be in relation to pumps. Are they providing pumps to GuySuCo?

Dr. Ramsammy: Not for GuySuCo.

Mr. Ramjattan: Earlier, I had asked that you put the cost of each factory's rehabilitation. I am asking now for the additional aspect of how many excavators, tractors, harvesters, and bell loaders will be bought and what the prices are for them. Could we also get all of that in that list? Is it going to be coming tomorrow?

Dr. Ramsammy: For those that have already been procured under that category of equipment...

Mr. Ramjattan: The category is for equipment but it is coming from the \$6 billion.

Dr. Ramsammy: Some would have been procured earlier in the year because I do know they received 10 tractors yesterday. For those that will be bought now, I can only provide the projected cost for the equipment because these will be tendered and the final cost would be based on the tendered price.

Mr. Ramjattan: Is any of the \$6 billion going towards helping cane farmers in Skeldon, Bellevue or anywhere?

Dr. Ramsammy: The equipment that we buy is usually utilised by the private cane farmers. For example, harvesters, *et cetera*, are used on the cane farmers' farms in Skeldon. The cane farms on the West Demerara tend to be smaller farms and they utilise some of GuySuCo's equipment.

Mr. Ramjattan: Regarding the human resource training aspect of the plan that you have, would any of the \$6 billion be going towards that?

Dr. Ramsammy: No. That would be out of the regular operational budget of GuySuCo.

Mr. Greenidge: In view of the exchanges we had before the break – I do not want to go back – is the Minister prepared to give an undertaking and how soon would he be in a position if he is so willing to provide us with a revision of the plan which he himself has acknowledged is off track, at least as of 2014? It should take into account an analysis of why they have gone off and have some clear and specific proposals for getting them back on track.

Dr. Ramsammy: By June.

Mr. Greenidge: As regards the Board of Directors to which the Minister and the President, I think, made reference, is the Minister willing to commit himself to a discussion and agreement on the criteria – not necessarily the individuals – for recruiting those board members? It should include the professional backgrounds and experience in whatever area. This is something that might be useful to be discussed. Would he be willing?

Dr. Ramsammy: The answer is yes.

Mr. Greenidge: The Minister made reference to the problem of labour supply. Of course, everyone knows that has been an issue with GuySuCo, notwithstanding the fact that it is not always mentioned. The question I want to ask is: given that this is an issue, what exactly are the Minister's intentions for resolving the problem in the sense that part of the problem seems to be the movement of semi-skilled and unskilled labour into other avenues which are more rewarding, construction or gold, for example? This has implications for upgrading the skills in the sector and a better pay regime. Is that on the horizon?

Dr. Ramsammy: That, of course, is a complex question. However, I could say this: regarding my earlier reference, not just today but in the past, in talking about balancing the mechanisation

with manual labour, one of our priorities is to ensure that GuySuCo workers, at various levels, are also trained to become the operators of the mechanised production so that there will be opportunities for workers who are at a particular level to be trained to take up positions that are of a higher level. That is how we are managing the balance between mechanisation and the employment pool. As you rightly said, the pool gets smaller as people, such as cane harvesters, move out into other economic spheres. One way of keeping them in the industry is by creating additional opportunities at higher levels of pay and that is what we are doing.

Mr. Greenidge: The question is whether the Minister is in a position to provide us with that plan which speaks to moving from low income, low wage sugar work to a high wage sugar work, which is linked to improving the skills. It is one thing to say it is an intention, but where is the plan? Is that separate and is it one we can be provided with?

Dr. Ramsammy: In analysing the strategic plan - both the turnaround plan in 2010 and the new strategic plan – whilst human resource development was a priority area, the details were not in the plan. In the revision that we are undergoing now – it is coincidental that you brought that up... The reason I am telling you June is because there must be a human resource plan that is far more detailed with targets. Yes, that would be part of the plan that we would be issuing by June.

Dr. Ramayya: In listening to the Minister talk about all the expansion of land, I am just wondering where the unskilled workers to cultivate the land will come from. During the rainy season, it is difficult for machinery to work in the estate because of soil condition, which was not discussed. It is impossible to see now with the expansion planned that there will be enough workers to cultivate those lands.

Dr. Ramsammy: Throughout the discussion today and in the past, these are things we have been discussing. Weather is part of our life and this is why the strategy has to take that into consideration. It is not going to disappear. Part of the mechanisation, as I said, is in response to a labour pool that is not as large as it once was. The other part of the mechanisation is for us to do lots more in a shorter period so that we do not spill over our activities into the rainy period. At least, a lot of the field work must be done in a shorter period. If I were to use an example that in a particular area 10 tractors were enough in the past, it would not be enough today because much more work would have to be done in a shorter period. You and I grew up in a place where we

knew that the first crop would be 13 or 15 weeks long. Now, we know that if we get seven or eight weeks, we have a good crop. So, we have to do in seven or eight weeks what we used to do in 13 or 15 weeks.

7.36 p.m.

Therefore, part of the plan that we have, not necessarily with this \$6 billion, is to improve in terms of the mechanisation and in terms of our equipment and so on so that we can do lots more in a shorter period.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Cde. Chairman. Under this very line item, 6321, supplementary paper 3 of 2013 was tabled in the National Assembly and \$4 billion was actually approved for GuySuCo. Would the Hon. Minister state whether he would be in a position to provide the National Assembly with a breakdown as to what this \$4 billion actually did or was spent on? Thank you.

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Ferguson: Follow-up: can the Hon. Minister say when he would provide the information? Thank you.

Dr. Ramsammy: Some of the information that I have promised, like the list of the \$6 billion expenditure, I did promise the Member tomorrow and I will be able to do that because I have communicated already. It is late in the evening already and I will not promise tomorrow for that but some time during this week.

Dr. Roopnarine: Except if Mr. Ramjattan wants to continue on GuySuCo, I was going to move off to the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA).

Mr. Ramjattan: It is just this question. It is in connection with the very high expenses on fertiliser and in view of the fact that most of our fertilisers come from the Ukraine and with what is happening there with at 25% increase, almost, today, is there any plan for any substitute for that kind of fertiliser that they were talking about in some plan sometime and could we get that plan?

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes. Last year, part of the urea supply to GuySuCo came from Venezuela and, in fact, last week, we signed an agreement for 7,000 tonnes, 5,000 of which is for the rice industry and 2,000 tonnes for GuySuCo. We are also negotiating special agreements with other countries in this hemisphere and it is for two things: these agreements are to overcome what we believe are too high prices that we get presently out of the private sector. You will recall last year that we were able to save \$800 million in the rice industry by bringing in those fertilisers, and providing them at marginal mark up. It is a cost really.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have just a final point on GuySuCo, a small one. I apologise to my colleagues. In view of the Minister's reaction to my question about the revised plan as well as the question of labour and income of labour, would he give consideration to coming back to us for some portion of the \$6 billion rather than asking for it now when the plan is not yet complete and, surely, he cannot know the total amount that is needed?

Dr. Ramsammy: Much of what I have explained that the \$6 billion is for has to be expenditure that we now must incur. It is not the kind of thing that could be spread over 12 months. It is to put in place things that, in part, help us to address some of the problems we have and for the long term but it has to be done now.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Minister, you can always...

Dr. Ramsammy: There are certain things that have to be done. I might have to study this book for the year but I need to have the book now. That is the type of thing that we have to do so I would urge and I am willing because I did speak with the management team when we were on the break that we will provide quarterly reports to the Assembly on the expenditure of the \$6 billion and the impact that we are having but I would urge the House that we pass the \$6 billion that we are requesting because I think it is absolutely necessary that we make those investments now.

Mr. Scott: Mr. Minister, can you say to me what production level you are aiming at apart from the 216,000 tonnes which you said that you will have for this year? What production level have you set as a target for GuySuCo to break even? As a follow-up to that, when the time should have come when you will break even, will that bring to an end any further request for bailouts?

Dr. Ramsammy: Mr. Chairman, I did earlier talk about the milestones. Firstly, this year, our target is 216,000 tonnes and I am confident that we will meet and surpass that target. Our target for 2017 is 349,000/350,000 tonnes and our milestone towards that is to ensure that by 2016 we are at 300,000 tonnes. I have mentioned those milestones. In terms of coming back to the House, I think that throughout most of the history of GuySuCo – I am not talking about any particular period – or the sugar industry, they have not needed our support. There are periods...and this is one period. We are hopeful that as soon as possible... I do not want to say that this is the last year. We are working towards GuySuCo not requiring our help but we need to get GuySuCo towards those milestones.

Dr. Roopnarine: Yes, I want to, while we are on the issue of subsidies to local organisations, turn our attention to the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority which has the next largest amount - \$1,000,227,539. Turning to the budget of the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority on page 592, Appendix T, we note that there has been an increase in the employment cost as well as an increase in the fuel and lubricants.

As you must know, Hon. Minister, the Auditor General's Report of 2011 has raised some very important issues and delinquencies in the NDIA and I am wondering to what extent, once this money is voted, you were convinced that these delinquencies have been addressed. I am talking now about the failure to maintain historical records, log books for the pumps and bulldozers and aluminium boats and drag lines, the issue of fuel, quantities of fuel issued to contractors in the Region in bulk but no stock ledger maintained, and we are interested to know in the National Assembly whether or not these shortcomings and failures of the NDIA have been overcome.

Dr. Ramsammy: For the records that were deficient, we have been able to demonstrate, over time, that this is a weakness on our part. Whilst the records exist, because these records have been kept, at the time of auditing, they were not presented to the Auditor General. We have been working with the Auditor General's Office in order to ensure improved management from an accountability perspective. We have made significant progress in terms of accounting for our expenditure and accounting for our resources – the fuel, *et cetera*. Weaknesses that were identified: we have worked directly with the Auditor General's Office so that we could strengthen the department. Some of the areas, for example because of the split management of resources - we have talked in this House about the finances of being managed in part by the

Ministry of Agriculture - have now been remedied. We have worked with the Accountant General, the Auditor General's Office, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the NDIA to ensure that these provisions are in place and we will continue to strengthen the department in these areas.

Mrs. Lawrence: A follow-up, Mr. Chairman: Minister, you are aware that I have asked you several times over about the NDIA complying with Act 8 of 2004 which states quite clearly that the NDIA should have its own accounting department. You promised me in this House two years ago that that would happen; we are now in the third year. Could you kindly say why the Ministry is still doing the accounts and holding the moneys that are appropriated by this House for NDIA?

Dr. Ramsammy: I must say that it is an assumption. In fact, I was making that reference just now because I did make that promise and last year we have been working with the Accountant General and the Auditor General's Office for the NDIA to assume full responsibility of its resources, rather than it being managed with help from the Ministry of Agriculture. Towards the last quarter of last year, the NDIA took full responsibility so there is a full accounting department at the NDIA and they have taken responsibility for their accounting in 2014. The subsidy for the NDIA has been moved directly to the NDIA so its management through the accounting system of the Ministry of Agriculture is not there anymore.

Mr. Scott: Can you say from when it was no longer?

Dr. Ramsammy: The full responsibility was assumed in November, 2013.

Mr. Trotman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to direct the Minister's attention, under the same head, to the amount that was voted for the Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA). In 2013, an amount of \$366,359,000 was actually budgeted for and the same amount spent. I notice that in 2014, you are requesting an amount of \$393 million, almost \$27 million in excess of what was asked for and spent in 2013. Can you tell this House what necessitates the increase in the amount that you requested for 2014?

Dr. Ramsammy: The Guyana Livestock Development Authority is expanding both its mandate and ensuring the expansion of the industry, for example – I am not going to go through all of the details – the veterinary laboratory will be commissioned in a few days time, which is an additional expenditure; the improvements that we have talked about is also another programme;

we are establishing a dairy plant and a dairy herd is being imported into the country; we have introduced embryo transfer as a routine operation, not a once in a while operation. All of these activities necessitate an increase in budget for the GLDA and I am sure that the GLDA would want even more than that but this is what we have allocated to it. It has an increased mandate as of right now.

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. May I just go back to the NDIA? Minister, I note that this year you have received \$1.2 billion. Last year, \$1.1 billion was budgeted but you came back to us for \$300 million. I am asking you whether this \$1.2 billion is adequate enough to cover your work plan for NDIA.

Dr. Ramsammy: I would want to say yes and hopefully the weather stays like it is. If we do have an emergency, we may, depending on the emergency, need more money but, as of right now, I would say yes.

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Could we turn our attention to the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) now? I note that you have received some \$70 million in excess of what you got last year. Could you kindly tell this House what it is that the Guyanese can expect from this particular agency that it has not done last year?

Dr. Ramsammy: NARI is the agency that deals with our crops and it is also the lead research centre. This year, we are expanding our research mandate. We are also introducing a number of new commercial crops which we started from last year. For example, our intent is to ensure that between 25% and 50% of the corn imports into Guyana will be eliminated by 2020. We are starting commercial crops of corn and soya. These are used in large quantities. Forty thousand tonnes each are imported into the country for the stock feed industry. In Guyana and the Caribbean, our poultry industry and other livestock industries, because they depend on these imports for their feed stock which is about 70% of the cost of production, cannot be competitive with countries like the United States of America. With our own corn and so on, we will be able to do this. In addition, we are introducing the tissue culture laboratory, for example, which we will be commissioning very shortly, which will be producing 50,000 plantlets per year. Among that this year will be 10,000 black Sigatoka resistant plantain plantlets. We are going to be producing cassava and sweet potato plantlets. These are all new things, introducing new

technology, and new crops and, therefore, you will see an increase in funding, as we can afford it, for NARI as we expand and increase the contribution of the non-rice, non-sugar part of our agriculture. This is only a small addition compared to the activities of NARI.

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Could you kindly tell this House which year last was the audit laid for NARI in this House?

Dr. Ramsammy: I will verify the dates but I think 2010 and 2011 audits were completed and have been submitted.

Mr. Chairman: Mrs. Lawrence.

Mrs. Lawrence: I am finished, Sir.

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration – \$9,755,009,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration – \$3,578,190,000

Dr. Roopnarine: I would like to look at Volume 3, Reference no. 64, NDIA. We are looking at a description of the project. The project describes the completion of drainage structures at Profit, Buxton, Palmyra, Waterloo, Affiance, Belle Vue, Charity and Mara and the total project cost is \$11,391,415,000 and before 2014 \$8,989,415,000 was spent and the request is for \$1,922,000,000. The question for the Hon. Minister is: can you give the House, essentially, a status report on this project? You would appreciate that the geographical spread of this project is so wide that monitoring it becomes a bit of a problem. We would like to know whether these operations are near completion and what percentage of it remains to be done.

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes, Mr. Chairman. In fact, the activities under this are always a large list of projects and what is itemised in the profile is just some because one cannot go through all. In fact, I cannot really go through all of it for you but there are 113 activities under this. Sixty-seven of these in 2014 will rollover from 2013 at a cost of \$1,097,000,000, and they include, for example, construction of the sluice at Profit, construction of the sluice at Buxton... There are 67 of them so I do not want to go through them, but what I will do is distribute this list because it

will, for each one of the 67, tell you the percentage of completion. For example, the construction of the sluice at Profit is 95% completed. The one at Buxton is 45% completed. There are 46 new ones that are starting in 2014. Some will be completed in 2014, but some will go on, and this will be at a cost of \$824,419,000 and, as I said, these 46 are new for 2014. I will give you that list too, but it will include things like a pump station at Number 43, a pump station at Eversham, a pump station at Gangaram and a pump station at Lima. These are the examples of new ones, but there are 46 of them. I will give you that list.

Dr. Roopnarine: Thank you very much. You have anticipated me. I was going to go on to ask you about the location of the pump stations. In relation to the construction and rehabilitation of structures, revetments and so on at La Grange, Bagotville and so on, I would like a similar report, if possible.

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes, on all of these, you will get a detailed report in terms of the percentage completed and in terms of what the remaining amount of money to be paid off is.

Dr. Roopnarine: One quick question: in relation to the excavation of the outfall channels and the purchase of the tubes, can you tell us where these channels are?

Dr. Ramsammy: Outfall channels are along the coast – Region 2, Region 3, Region 4, Region 6 and also in Region 5.

Dr. Roopnarine: Okay.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, under the heading Drainage and Irrigation, the amount of \$878.464 million is to be spent on the provision for alternative outlet for drainage of East Demerara Water Conservancy (EDWC) and pumps. Could the Hon. Minister indicate, of the items to be purchased under this heading, what sum of the item or the service to be provided will be spent (i) on the completion of the alternative outlet at Hope, (ii) the acquisition of eight fixed drainage pumps and (iii) the technical support, spares and training? I have another question after that one.

Dr. Ramsammy: Just to make sure that I am answering the right one, this is Profile No. 65.

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

Dr. Ramsammy: Okay, the \$878,464,000 is divided into two areas.

8.06 p.m.

The first part which is \$578,464,000 is the work at the Hope Northern Relief Channel; \$300,000,000 is towards the final payment on the pumps through the India Exim Bank. I am probably giving you more than you asked for Mr. Harmon.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: You have not actually given me everything. There are three items here. There is one called Technical Support, Spares and Training. The two sums you have given basically deal with the \$878 million.

Dr. Ramsammy: I know. I was actually saying to you that I probably gave you more than you asked because I was going on. I am still answering you and that is why I said I was giving you more. In terms of the spares, those have been shipped to Guyana. The six mobile pumps that were part of that contract were shipped last year to Guyana and are being utilised in various parts of Guyana. The eight fixed-site pumps are composed of a number of components; all those coming out of India have been shipped from India and we have them in Guyana. There was an outsourcing of – I am going to call names – something called an impeller. I think those of us who are familiar with pumps will know that. It was outsourced to a company in Miami. Because our pump stations, some of which I just named, like at Lima et cetera, have not yet been constructed, we had asked for shipment of those to be held until we are ready. We have just given the go ahead for shipment of those. Once the pump stations are completed, and they will be completed at various times, for example, the pine ground should be finished before the end of June, we are also going to have the training and the technical support being done for these. That is the status right now.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Thank you. In relation to the Northern Relief Channel, you said \$578 million was allocated. Mr. Minister, in 2013, I believe it might have been October or November, when the Sectoral Committee visited the Northern Relief Channel, certain statements were made by Mr. Wordsworth in your presence. Mr. Wordsworth said that there was enough money to complete this project and we, therefore, did not need to go back to the National Assembly for any further sums. That is one.

Secondly, he had given a completion date for the work on the Canal in December and, I believe, that date was further extended to another period of time during 2014. Could you, Hon. Minister, say now why there is this delay, what is the projected time when this project will be completed and why you are now coming to the National Assembly for additional sums of money when the officer did say, in 2013, that there was enough?

Dr. Ramsammy: Mr. Chairman, we are not, in fact, coming for an additional sum. The original budget, which was for a rollover project, was \$3.6 billion. At the end of 2013, the amount expended was \$2,816,698,000. The expenditure as of 8th April, 2014 is \$3,039,255,000 and the \$578,000 will take us to just about \$3.6 billion. That is the first thing.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Minister, I do not know if I can just direct you to the specific page, reference 65, because it seems those figures do not agree with the figures you are actually giving to us. If you look at item 9.1, Total Project Cost and go straight across the line, those figures are not really matching up.

Dr. Ramsammy: Are you speaking about the \$4.42...?

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

Dr. Ramsammy: There are two components. The Hope Northern Relief Channel is \$3.6 billion and there is that sum that was also for the Exim Bank, the pump contract and the supplies.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, just to say that we are running four and more hours behind on the Ministry of Agriculture. The estimates the Business Subcommittee agreed on is for and one and a half hours. So I am going to have to apply the guillotine very, very shortly. I recognise Mr. Greenidge first then Dr. Roopnarine, and then I am going to have to apply the guillotine; I am sorry.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, the Minister has given my colleague an answer concerning the amounts spent on the project so far. My colleague is pointing out that those numbers do not confirm to the table before us in the capital as regards amounts spent to date. The Minister then explained that it was because one project was for \$3.6 billion and the other was an additional amount. The point is that it should be reflected in the table. In looking at profile 65, the total

project cost is \$4.42 billion. But in terms of total spent before 2014, the amount to Foreign is \$3.2 billion, Local is \$0 and the total is \$3.2 billion.

Dr. Ramsammy: My Math says it agrees.

Mr. Greenidge: You gave a figure of \$2.8 billion as being the amount spent to date; that is what I wrote down.

Dr. Ramsammy: My Math says that at the end of December. So if we add \$1.8, \$4.29, \$5.44, we will see what we get. Then \$5.78 is left and that is what we are spending this year.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I do not know if the Hon. Minister could answer the question on the contract and the time for the completion of the contract.

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes. As you know, Mr. Harmon, the bridge contract is now completed. For the head regulator, as of right now, the contractor has completed 95%. The rest of the work, unfortunately, is waiting on us to procure a wrench system which we had agreed we would take out of the contract and provide the contractor with. We have procured that and are awaiting its arrival. As soon as that is done, we will commission the head regulator.

The outer sluice is the limiting factor. We are still working towards a June operationalisation. The outer sluice is at about 75% right now. We have been working with the contractor on a tranche system and he has been delivering. We, therefore, expect that he will meet our deadline for the operationalisation of the Northern Relief Channel by June.

Mr. Chairman: Dr. Roopnarine, proceed please, then Mrs. Wade and that is it.

Dr. Roopnarine: I will be very short. I went through the list of these villages that would benefit from the installation of a fixed pump, and I have to say I was disappointed to find that Mocha is not there since my Friend, the Hon. Minister, knows that the people in Barnwell North are in a basin. Every time it rains, they are under water. And I think Mr. Wordsworth knows the zone quite well. We were really hoping that a pump would be installed at Mocha. I wonder if you can tell me if there is any prospect.

Dr. Ramsammy: The answer is that Mocha is not on this list because it is on the previous list. So when I give that to you tomorrow, you will find Mocha.

Dr. Roopnarine: Good.

Mrs. Wade: Mr. Chairman, project 1301800 - Drainage and Irrigation Support Project: Mr. Minister, I noticed that there is \$174 million allocated here for support to community drainage and irrigation projects, and I have noticed that Region 5 will benefit. I am wondering if you could provide a breakdown for the Region and also the budgetary amount for each project, because I know the list may be long for Region 5.

Dr. Ramsammy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mrs. Wade, this is in fact not projects; this is the Community Drainage and Irrigation Project that is coming to an end at the Ministry of Agriculture. The \$174 million, you will notice, is only up to April. If you look at the profile, it states that it ends in April. We would have expended, in Region 1 - \$9.9 million; in Region 2 - \$21.4 million; in Region 3 - \$11.1 million; in Region 4 - \$52.5 million; in Region 5 - \$32.2 million; in Region 6 - \$30.3 million and in Region 10 - \$35.1 million.

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration - \$3,578,190,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 213 – Fisheries – \$123,312,000

Programme: 213 – Fisheries – \$123,312,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 213 – Fisheries - \$15,000,000

Programme: 213 – Fisheries – \$15,000,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services – \$438,337,000

Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services – \$438,337,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services – \$27,933,000

Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services – \$27,933,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, that concludes our consideration of the Ministry of Agriculture. I would like to thank the Minister and his technical support staff. Minister, for your answers, at one time I was considering whether to cut you off. You gave very long answers, very thorough, but I think that is what the House needs. Many of our difficulties arise because we do not have enough information on which to make good and informed decisions. So I would like to compliment you and your staff.

Thank you very much.

Dr. Ramsammy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Agency: 41 Ministry of Education

Current Expenditure

Programme: 411 – Main Office - \$468,921,000

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, line item 6114 - Clerical and Office Support: this item has been reduced by one. May I ask the Hon. Minister what category of worker was that and what was the payment per month for this staff member?

Minister of Education [Ms. Manickchand]: The category was a Typist/Clerk and it was for \$41,000 per month.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: what are the four new appointments, Hon. Minister?

Ms. Manickchand: We have one Driver, one Administrative Officer, one Coordinator for Health and Family Life Education and one Public Relations Officer.

Ms. Ally: Thank you. Line item 6294 – Other: what expenses are catered for under this?

Ms. Manickchand: This line item addresses the needs of the Secretariat of the Minister, the Permanent Secretary and the Director General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Ms. Ally: Thank you, Mdm. Minister. Mr. Chairman, line item 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: I note three organisations will receive subsidies, with the largest chunk going to the National Library. Could the Hon. Minister indicate whether this amount is solidly for the Region 4, Georgetown National Library and if there is any consideration for any expansion to other regions?

Ms. Manickchand: Mr. Chairman, this is for the National Library. While we identify with the National Library in Georgetown, perhaps because of its beautiful building and its location centrally, the National Library has branches all over. So this amount would be for the National Library to use at its various branches.

Ms. Ally: Supplementary, Mr. Chairman: could the Hon. Minister say where these branches of the National Library can be found?

Ms. Manickchand: Linden, New Amsterdam, Anna Regina and Bartica.

Ms. Ally: Finally on this, are these libraries established in those locations for use by the general public?

Ms. Manickchand: Yes, Madam, they are. I am told there are also a lot of mobile libraries that travel around Guyana.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, line item 6301 - Education Subvention and Grants...

Mr. Greenidge has a question.

Mr. Chairman: If it pertains to the Library, go ahead.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you Mr. Chairman. I was asking in view of the Government's much vaunted initiative in relation to the Information Technology (IT) revolution, has the Ministry, in its discussions with the management of the National Library, given any consideration to providing funds for the modernisation of the library, primarily in the area of digitalisation of its stocks or giving it access to international sources of information and linking the Library, where facilities are available, to maybe some key schools and entities in the country? One of the things, for example, that might be useful - and I wonder whether consideration is given - is to see it as a source of providing information...

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Greenidge, my apologies. Could you speak into the microphone so we could record?

Mr. Greenidge: I am sorry. I was really trying to ask to what extent, apart from digitisation, they envisage linking the Library to other information sources on the business front, especially as regards providing access to youths to information that might be helpful in enhancing their skills.

Ms. Manickchand: Yes, we have thought about it. We are in discussion on how we can do that effectively, both as far as the rollout is concerned as well as how we could do it for as little expenditure as possible. Under the Guyana Improvement Teacher Education Project, we have discussed extensively and have as a plan the linking of the Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE) and the University of Guyana (UG) with the National Library. You would know that we had the most unfortunate break of the New Year with our Chief Librarian being killed in a road accident. Prior to her untimely death, she was collaborating with the National Centre for Resource Development so that we could further talk about how we can use technology to bring more resources to the library. The library is run by a board; its everyday business is managed by a board that has the authority to do that.

Mr. Greenidge: I have a follow-up question, Mr. Chairman. I thank the Minister for the explanation and, yes, I am aware of the unfortunate demise of the Librarian whom the newspapers indicated was working on some things. But in view of the fact that such discussions have taken place, when are we going to see the fruit of those discussions reflected in the amount to be made available to the National Library? I do not see very much by way of additional

resources being provided to them, and that is really what I am trying to ascertain. Would we see it next year?

Mr. Manickchand: Perhaps, if we finish early enough, we can come back with a supplementary and, hopefully, you would support it.

Mr. Greenidge: If it is good enough, Mr. Chairman, you know we would be happy to.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, line item 6301 - Education Subvention and Grants: in 2013, \$28.8 million was budgeted. In 2014, \$32.8 million is budgeted and in which I think the \$9 million subvention is included. My question is whether in 2013 there was occupancy of the Walter Rodney's Chair of History. Will this continue in 2014 and who is the nominee?

Ms. Manickchand: No one sat in the Walter Rodney's Chair of History in 2013. But as you would know, the University of Guyana is managed and run by a Council. There are Members of this House who sit on that Council. There is one standing right next to you, the distinguished Rupert Roopnarine.

8.36 pm

And we are advised by the University's Vice Chancellor that there is every intention that there will be a Chair of the Walter Rodney Chair in History, for 2014. That is the reason this amount was budgeted for that person.

Mr. Trotman: I would like to draw the Minister's attention to line item 6264, Vehicle Spares and Service. I have been passing on Croal Street fairly regular and I have seen a fleet of vehicles in the yard there. I got the impression that a lot of them were not working. I wonder if it is that you, the Minister, will agree to provide this Assembly with a list of all of the vehicles under your control and register also a list of the repairs that were done to each vehicle for 2012 and 2013, and the relevant costs.

Ms. Manickchand: It is a very relevant question. Thank you Sir. You are absolutely right. The vehicles, as seen here, many of them do not work. I am assuming you were using "you" very loosely when you said "under your control". I do not control vehicles. There are professional officers in the Ministry whose responsibility is to assign who uses a vehicle and when.

The Ministry of Education, though, has, I believe, and I have been arguing this with the Minister of Finance, the oldest fleet of vehicles. They are old, dilapidated and very expensive to maintain. We are happy to say that the Ministry of Finance, this year, is providing money under various heads so that it can provide its professional staff with vehicles to implement the Ministry's programmes.

In fact, I think we can do that now. We can tell you now that there are a Toyota wagon car that is 13 years old, a Suzuki jeep that is 18 years, a Nissan bus that is 22 years old, Toyota pickup...

Mr. Trotman: Madam Minister, I would prefer if it is that you can give me these details in writing so that I can really look at them and be able to have some...

Ms. Manickchand: Sure, we would be happy to lay them over.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, particularly to the Ministers, may I make an umbrella statement that where there are information such as to list roads and bridges which are to be done, it would do well if you share those, either just before you start, if you do not want to have to your thunder stolen, so to speak. They can be shared.

Ms. Manickchand: There is no problem with sharing it, Sir. I would not know what to share. When we get a question, such as this, we would be happy to send it out.

Mr. Chairman: Very well. Thank you very much.

Mr. Greenidge: Would the Minister be kind enough to have a look at line item 6281, Security Services, and venture an explanation as to why security services shows such a significant jump between the revised of 2013 and 2014 budgets? What is accounting for this?

Ms. Manickchand: You will recall Hon. Member, through the Chair, that by way of Order passed, beginning effective from the 1st July, there was an increase in the minimum wage. There was a universal minimum wage applied. For us to be compliant with that Order, which the Hon. Member Nanda Gopaul was responsible for, the Ministry had to increase what it usually paid to some security persons.

Mr. Greenidge: The percentage increase seems, if I am not mistaken, larger than most of the others. I am looking, even across the Ministry, and this increase surely is not only one of an increase in the rate. Can you confirm that?

Ms. Manickchand: As far as I am being advised, Mr. Greenidge, we are not increasing, significantly, the numbers of security personnel at any place. Our financial officer advises that this is simply because of the increase in the minimum wage. Perhaps we were paying far below what the minimum wage actually is.

Mr. Greenidge: In view of the quantum leap – the significant percentage increase – the Minister can verify that, if she gets the opportunity with her technical staff, to look at it and come back to us with some information.

Ms. Manickchand: Sure, we would be happy to.

Mr. Greenidge: In relation to the line item, Education Subventions and Training, which also shows a significant increase over the revised 2013,... It is line item 6301. The amount of the increase is quite significant and I am trying to find out why. Whilst you are looking at that you will notice that an amount of \$32.8 million was requested in 2013, you only spent \$23 million and yet you have come back for \$32 million or \$33 million. Why?

Ms. Manickchand: Again, the “you” directed at me is being used very loosely and I know you are using it loosely too. I believe that the University of Guyana intended to fill the Walter Rodney Chair in History. It did not. It has assured us that it would have filled it this year, so we are catering for it this year. The university told us that last year too and it did not.

The University of Guyana is run by a council and that council is determined by, at the Ministry of Education, about who fills a Chair and how it is filled. That is for the council and its business.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, we are in April. Has the post been filled as of now? If it has not been then the figure itself may be... anyway, I am just drawing that point to the attention of the Minister, Mr. Chairman.

Programme: 411 – Main Office - \$468,921,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 411 – Main Office - \$13,420,000

Ms. Ally: Project 1403300, Main Office, \$9 million is budgeted to purchase a vehicle. May I ask the Hon. Minister, what kind of vehicle will be purchased and to whom or which office will it be assigned?

Ms. Manickchand: Sir, I am not seeing a 140 project. I think we are talking about two different things. There is no 140 project on this line. Are you talking about project 2403300?

Ms. Ally: Yes. It is project 2403300. Sorry.

Ms. Manickchand: That is a vehicle that will be for the Minister's office. Her vehicle was overhauled twice and I am sure the Hon. Member would not want to endanger her life.

Programme: 411 – Main Office - \$13,420,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 412 – National Education Policy – Implementation and Supervision - \$228,663,000

Ms. Ally: Line item 6111, Administrative: In Budget 2013 \$2.6 million was budgeted and revised to \$3.7 million, now for 2014 \$5.2 million or \$6.8 million. In the details of the administrative staff there is an increase of one person. The difference is \$1.5 million. In 2013, what was the position of the one-member of staff and what is the additional position? How much is he or she being paid monthly?

Ms. Manickchand: Hon. Member, you would recall that during the debate, both from yourself and I, we recognised the importance of technical/vocational education and implementing a smooth programme, where we could prepare Guyana's young people for the world of work, the emerging economies not only here in Guyana, but across the world. An Assistant Chief Education Officer (Technical) has been appointed and that accounts for the one increase in staff. I am not sure, but we do have a tradition in the House not to say how much someone is paid.

Given that this person is identifiable, simply because it is one person, should we? I mean, I can share this with the Hon. Member, afterwards.

Ms. Ally: I was not asking for the name of the person anyhow, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Manickchand: It is only one person.

Ms. Ally: It is the position. Line item 6112, Senior Technical: There is a reduction from 16 to 15, the difference is \$2.3 million, a reduction by one staff, but a difference of over \$2 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain this?

Ms. Manickchand: Is the question “why is there a reduction in the one staff?”

Ms. Ally: No.

Ms. Manickchand: There is a promotion under that line from Assistant Chief Education Officer to Deputy Chief Education Officer (Development) which is a higher position, attracting a higher salary.

Ms. Ally: Line items 6222, 6223 and 6224, Field Materials and Supplies, Office Materials and Supplies and Print and Non-Print Materials, respectively, a total of over \$15 million is budgeted. May I ask the Hon. Minister what materials will be printed and in what quantity?

Ms. Manickchand: This head addresses the secretariats in offices of the Chief Education Officer, our chief professional in the Ministry, the Assistant Chief Education Officer (Nursery), Assistant Chief Education Officer (Primary), Assistant Chief Education Officer (Secondary), Assistant Chief Education Officer (Technical), Deputy Chief Education Officer (Administration) and Deputy Chief Education Officer (Development). Those field materials and supplies cater for monitoring and evaluation by all of the above named officers that I mentioned just now. It caters for the operation of the schools health and nutrition HIV Aids Unit, the Monitoring, Evaluation Research and Development (MERD) Unit, Schools Welfare Unit, School Board Secretariat and Technical Vocational Unit.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, I heard the Hon. Minister spoke of the MERD Unit, could the Hon. Minister say whether that unit is still functional?

Ms. Manickchand: The unit is still functional, alive and kicking and vibrant.

Ms. Ally: May I ask who is the head of that unit?

Ms. Manickchand: There is a newly promoted Deputy Chief Education Officer (Development). She is Ms. Doodmattie Singh and I offer congratulations. I believe this is the first time in the House for her since she got that position. I am sure we would all like to congratulate her here tonight.

Ms. Ally: Thank you Madam. Minister. I join with you in congratulating Ms. Singh.

Line items 6271 and 6272, 6273, Telephone Charges, Electricity Charges and Water Charges, respectively: Could the Hon. Minister explain why 2013 is the end of the budgeted sums for these utility charges?

Ms. Manickchand: I am told by the Chief Financial Officer, the Permanent Secretary, that this expense is now being catered for under programme three. You will not see it here, but you will see an increase there.

Mr. Greenidge: Would the Minister be good enough to tell us something about the line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships)? I notice that it increased significantly from last year's revised figure to \$30 million this year. I am specifically interested to know whether the Ministry has revised the criteria and if this increase is informed by any specific study or analysis. What is it that is accounting for the increase and what is the analysis underlying it?

Ms. Manickchand: It is because of the prohibitive costs of textbooks that prevented us, as a Parliament or as a Government, from giving a textbook to a child and thus, possibly limiting the learning that child could have. The Ministry has embarked on writing some of its own readers and texts. These are going to be new to the system. It is writing an entire nursery series called the *Roraima Readers*. It has finished it and we are testing it right now. It has readers, workbook, flashcards, wall charts. You name it and it has it. We expect to see results from it.

The Ministry is also writing the *Atlantic Readers*, which would be readers from Grades 1- 6. Those readers are closely aligned with not only the curriculum, but international literacy standards and guidelines. We believe that they will be the envy of the Caribbean, but we will

have to train our teachers and our various stakeholders about how we can use them and use them effectively. That is the training, which is catered for, under this line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships).

Mr. Greenidge: That was a helpful explanation.

Ms. Manickchand: That is part of the training, not all. We do other training under the line item.

Mr. Greenidge: But the increase, essentially, is accounted by the training of those who are to use the textbooks. Is that what you are saying?

Ms. Manickchand: Yes Sir.

Mr. Greenidge: I see, okay.

Programme: 412 – National Education Policy – Implementation and Supervision - \$228,663,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 412 – National Education Policy – Implementation and Supervision - \$22,500,000

Ms. Ally: Project 2403300, Land Transport, \$18.5 million, “purchase of vehicles”: Sir, the profile does not provide details and I would like to ask the Hon. Minister to tell us how many vehicles will be bought and where will these vehicles be placed?

Ms. Manickchand: I can tell you how many the Ministry has catered to buy. We might, if we can get more, want to buy more. It has catered for four vehicles; one motor vehicle for approximately \$3.5 million to enhance the capability of the Deputy Chief Education Officer, (Administration). It is the secretariat that monitors all the Regional Education Officers across the country. It also plans to buy a minibus, 14 or 16-seater, for the daily management of routine activities and the monitoring of schools by the Inspectorate Unit. The Hon. Member knows, and has discussed with me, how very important it is to get that unit running. The Ministry plans to buy to a 14 or 16-seater bus, another one, for the Assistant Chief Education Officer (ACEO), (Technical) to monitor the Practical Instruction Centres (PICs) and how the Secondary

Competence Certificate Programme (SCCP) is unfolding in schools, and another minibus, about a 15-seater, for the Guidance and Welfare Unit to allow it to reach problems and resolve those problems quicker.

Ms. Ally: Project 2603100, Other Equipment: I would like to ask the Hon. Minister, would there be a new office where these items will be put or is it that there is the refurbishment of an office?

Ms. Manickchand: The items, which are being bought under this line, are necessary for extant offices. For example, a desk has to be bought for the ACEO (Nursery) a photocopying machine and chair for the office ACEO (Primary), a fax machine for the office of the ACEO (Secondary). The Ministry plans to buy four heavy-duty fans for the Inspectorate Unit, it is very hot there. It plans to buy two heavy-duty fans for the School's Health and Nutrition, HIV Aids Unit, one refrigerator, two chairs, two desks, two workstations, one filing cabinet and some other things for the school's welfare services, two executive chairs, some typist chairs, and so on, for the National Accreditation Centre - places that exist already. I would be happy to share the list with the Hon. Member.

Programme: 412 – National Education Policy – Implementation and Supervision - \$22,500,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 413 – Ministry Administration – \$2,404,795,000

Ms. Ally: Line item 6116, Contracted Employees: There is an increase from 95 to 110. Could the Hon. Minister provide a list of these additional positions and the persons who are filling these positions?

Ms. Manickchand: Coordinator of the School Feeding Programme, the Procurement Officer, Civil Engineer, Expenditure and Planning and Management Analysis, Driver, Superintendents of Works II, Systems Support Officer, Accounts Clerk II, Clerk II, Assistant Secretary and Data Processing Officer.

Ms. Ally: Are these positions filled already or are they to come?

Ms. Manickchand: They are filled already.

Ms. Ally: Line item 6242, Maintenance of Buildings: May I ask the Hon. Minister what are the buildings earmarked for maintenance work?

Ms. Manickchand: The buildings, which would generally be catered for under this line item, would be the 2621 admin building and 68 Barima Avenue. We want to repair the buildings in Barima Avenue in Bel Air Park and the special projects building in Lyng and Evans Streets. It is the Book Distribution Unit (BDU).

Ms. Ally: Line item 6224, Print and Non-Print Materials: Could the Hon. Minister tell this Assembly what materials will be printed and the quantity of each? I see a large sum here of \$488.9 million.

Ms. Manickchand: This is the line under which we would provide exercise books to every single child in the country. This is the line under which procured textbooks would be purchased for the children also. What we want to do is to make sure, by this provision this year, every single primary schoolchild has the basic texts - mathematics, English, social studies, science and a reader. In secondary schools, every single child has the relevant mathematics, English, single sciences and some foreign languages texts.

Ms. Ally: Hon. Minister mentioned earlier the *Roraima Readers* and the *Atlantic Readers*, what additional text books will be produced and in what quantity?

Ms. Manickchand: We are producing, as in our local people, who have an enormous amount of talent and expertise. They are writing the *Roraima Readers* and the *Atlantic Readers*. Those will be the main readers. We will still be supporting those main readers with the *Rainbow Readers*, the *Timehri Readers* and the *Nelson West Indian Readers*. This line does not only cater for readers, it caters for our biology, science or Information Technology (IT) textbooks - all the textbooks. This is the line, under which, they are bought.

Ms. Ally: I quite understand that Hon. Minister, but I see this is a large sum of money and one would have hoped that in order to come up with a sum of money such as this, we would have had in our minds what exactly we want to produce and the Hon. Minister has not answered me to say what quantity of each.

Ms. Manickchand: Thank you very much Hon. Member. I was not asked what exactly we are going to procure. I believe the question that was posed to me, which would be on the record, is what other readers we have.

Let me say what we did last year. To reconcile where we are as a country, we had in all three, the nursery, primary and secondary sectors, reconciled across the country in every school, what textbooks they have and what quantity they had them in. We then came up with - that is, the Textbook Committee, which is made up of professionals - a recommended list of books that we should be using, the best books in each subject area. We then sent that list out to teachers across the country and said, "Look, this is what we think we should be using. In your experience, are you happy with these books or do you think there is something else that could be better?" They wrote back to us and the consultation resulted in a master list. It is from that master list that we are purchasing.

This year we plan to, as I said, to complete purchasing for all secondary aged students the relevant mathematics and English textbooks and the core texts in the primary sector – mathematics, English, social studies and science. We can provide to the Hon. Member, as soon as that is provided by the professionals in the Ministry of Education, which books we are procuring, from which publisher and how we are to negotiate cheaper prices and how much we are paying for each book, and so on. We will be happy to do that.

Ms. Ally: Just to emphasise, my original question was what materials will be printed and the quantity. Let us do not vacillate. I asked a direct question. I have it written, Sir: "What materials will be printed and what quantity?" I will move on.

Line items 6222 and 6223, Field Materials and Supplies and Office Materials and Supplies: Approximately \$20 million is budgeted for these supplies. May I respectfully ask the Hon. Minister to tell us what the materials are likely to be?

9.06 p.m.

Ms. Manickchand: We are finalising the coalition of the strategic plan, after which we will publish that. That will be published in enough quantities so that all of our stakeholders could have easy access to it. It is a document that will be relevant for the next five years. It is under

line item 6223, Other Materials and Supplies, that we will do this and I think the Hon. Member lumped two or three lines together.

Under line item 6222, Field Materials and Supplies, we anticipate more field visits and an additional staff will be going around monitoring how we implement our programmes.

That would be my answer, Sir.

Ms. Ally: I would have thought that when a sum of money is budgeted, strategic plan or no strategic plan, there must be the foresight of what will be in the strategic plan for the Ministry to print in order to deal with the question in schools – the list.

Line item 6264, Vehicle Spares and Services: Could the Hon. Minister explain what this \$15.7 million will be spent on? Is there any new vehicle budgeted for?

Ms. Manickchand: I think we have been going well so far and I do not want to get involved in a back and forth, but I did say in the budget debate that we had consulted widely and we do know what is going to be in the strategic plan, and we are finalising that for publication now. It is not as though we do not know that. How it is finalised would still depend on consultations that we are presently having. We intend to publish the first draft before long.

Mr. Chairman: The question is about vehicle spares and services. What vehicles, I think is the question, are being covered by this sum?

Ms. Manickchand: There are 12 vehicles that are not working. In fact, because of what I spoke of earlier, this dearth of transportation, we were simply not getting to carry out our duties. What we did with the compliance of everybody who is necessary – GRA and the Ministry of Finance, and so on – was that we went to GRA's bond and from those vehicles, which are not cleared by whoever brought them in, and we got 12 vehicles that the Ministry is going to repair to be able to use so that its professionals could work comfortably. Of those 12 vehicles, the Ministry has only been able to repair two or three from last year's budget, so there are a remaining eight or so parked up in garages waiting to be repaired.

Ms. Ally: Supplementary question. Could the Minister tell us how many vehicles are in the fleet of the Ministry under this head?

Ms. Manickchand: This head caters for 21 Brickdam and BDU. Under BDU there are six vehicles and at 21 Brickdam there are 14 vehicles. I do wish to reiterate that these vehicles are 21 years old, and so on, so vehicle may not be the kind of definition that we understand it to be.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Line item 6284, Other: Could the Minister kindly give details on this line item and explain the \$2 million increase required?

Ms. Manickchand: Under this line item invigilators would be paid. You would know that, for example, next week more than 15,000 of our boys and girls are going to be writing the National Grade Six Assessment Examination. At that examination, which is going to be held at several scores of centres all across this country, in every single region, far-flung places, that cannot be accessed within a day, there are invigilators. There was a strategic meeting that determined, this year, that there is need to improve the quality of training and the quality, generally, of the invigilators so that the integrity in our exams could be maintained. This \$2 million caters for a small increase for us to pay the invigilators across the country for very many national exams and international exams.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: There is another question. I am not too sure if this one was asked by Ms. Ally. Line item 6231, Fuel and Lubricants: Could the Hon. Minister say why there is a \$3 million increase for this year?

Ms. Manickchand: Mr. Chairman, you would recall that I said that we did get from the GRA 12 new vehicles and we are intending to purchase as many as the new allocations would allow us and so we need to buy more gas, buy more fuel, buy more gas oil, buy more fuel and lubricants.

Programme: 413 – Ministry Administration - \$2,404,795,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 413 – Ministry Administration - \$35,100,000

Ms. Ally: Project 2403300, Land Transport, \$30.5 million for the purchase of vehicles. The profile, at page 136, gives no details again, except it states purchase of vehicles. This does not smell good. I hope that these vehicles are not for electioneering purposes. I wish to ask the Hon.

Minister, how many vehicles will be purchased for the \$30.5 million, for what purpose and where would they be located?

Ms. Manickchand: If I am permitted, with your kind permission, Sir, to ignore the electioneering part then I would be happy to answer why we are purchasing these vehicles. Some time, a few years ago, the International Labour Organization (ILO)-funded a partnership between the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education to communities on the Soesdyke Highway – Kuru Kuru, Soesdyke/Dora Sand Hills area – so that we can provide transportation and meal for the children there who more likely to attend school. It was massively successful. The children were going to school. The funding has come to an end but this Government never leaves our people wanting and so we are providing for the transportation by purchasing two 29-seater buses to continue to take these children to school and we are going to continue to provide meals for them.

Secondly, David Rose Centre for the Handicap, which really needs to be renamed, Mrs. Volda Lawrence mentioned in her own speech how much, as a nation, we could take care of our disabled children and our people living with disabilities. Here is our tangible manifestation of our commitments to looking after children with special education needs. We are providing a bus for them because it is known that we still have work to do with our public transportation providers to make them kinder. The children, who have disabilities, have difficulties traversing on the public transportation system and so this is to alleviate some of those difficulties.

Then we plan to buy a double-door pickup to assist staffers of various units who are behind me to monitor in the Management Information System Unit (MISU) department because there are computer labs in every single secondary school and we hope to have in 50% of primary schools by the end of the new planned period and they will need to be able to go out and repair and service.

Then we plan to purchase one motor vehicle, at item 4, for the planning unit. It is a unit that collects statistics and produces a yearly digest so that we all, in this House, and indeed all across the nation, and even internationally, could be informed about where we are as an education sector. I recall in 1993 the World Bank was doing a report on us and one of the major recommendations was that we needed to get a planning unit in the Ministry of Education because

there were simply no statistics which could inform policy and this is a vehicle that will be purchased for that unit.

Programme: 413 – Ministry Administration - \$35,100,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 414 – Training and Development - \$1,141,842,000

Ms. Ally: Line item 6242, Maintenance of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister explain what the \$34 million will be spent on and could this Assembly have the listing of these buildings that is under consideration for maintenance.

Ms. Manickchand: This line item deals with the Cyril Potter College for Education (CPCE) and the National Centre for Educational Resource Development (NCERD). This is the nerve centre of the Ministry of Education. It is there that all of the policies and plans and textbooks and curriculum guides, and so on, are produced. We intend to spend \$15 million at NCERD for painting the building, internal and external walls, sanding, ceiling, refurbishing the floor of the auditorium, fixing some toilets - the Hon. Member did mention a lot of toilets in her speech - fixing the library, fixing the documentation centre.

At CPCE is planned to spend \$17 million there. We will be doing general repairs to the floors, doors, windows, walls, roofs, blocks A and B and some other areas. At Allied Arts Unit the Ministry will be spending \$2 million.

I would be happy to share this with the Hon. Member so she has the details of where we were told needs to be fixed.

Ms. Ally: Just for clarification, Sir, am I to understand that NCERD, CPCE and the Allied Arts Unit buildings are the three buildings that are under consideration for the maintenance?

Ms. Manickchand: It is not in the whole Ministry. This head deals with those three institutions so any questions under this head will be relating to those three. We plan to do works on other buildings under other head.

Ms. Ally: I am asking about this particular head and this particular amount of money that is budgeted. We are told NCERD, CPCE and Allied Arts Unit. Thank you Madam Minister.

Line item 6224, Print and Non-Print Materials, \$45 million: Could the Hon. Minister define to this National Assembly what the materials are and the quantities that will be produced?

Ms. Manickchand: NCERD is a centre that develops examinations and prints examinations paper and sends them out. We conduct three national examinations in the primary sector alone - Grades II, Grade IV and Grade VI. Then there is the Grade IX examination and the Guyana Technical Education Examination (GTEE). All of those have to be printed and that is costly.

The Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI) textbooks are printed, workbooks, curriculum guides, CDs. There is an interactive radio programme and there are workbooks that go with it. Teacher's guides, journals, periodicals, instructional manuals, registers are printed. It is the kinds of things that are printed by the Ministry of Education and sent out to our 1,000 school across the country. This is where we would do it, under this line.

At CPCE, examinations for our students, our teacher/student modules and curriculums are printed, along that line.

Ms. Ally: Sir, I would have thought that the printing of the IRI textbooks would have come under the other head where there was the printing of the various textbooks, so I do not know how they are so scattered.

Line item 6255, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure, \$11.1 million is budgeted for this. May I ask the Hon. Minister to provide this House with the details of what "Other Infrastructure" in this case pertains to?

Ms. Manickchand: It is \$11 million that is budgeted. For NCERD \$4 million will be used and I am going to read it directly – "General cleaning of solid waste from around the compounds, removing of creeping vines from them fences and maintenance of drains." That should cost about \$2.2 million. There is the plan to sanitise and repaint metal and concrete fences and that should cost about \$500, 000. There is the plan to raise the concrete in front of the yard which should be about \$800, 000 and maintain the sewage areas which should be about \$500, 000.

At CPCE the Ministry intends to spend about \$4.150 million to clear and weed all canals and perimeter fence, drains and gutters. It plans to landscape at about \$1.123 million; refurbish the driveway to 6th Street for about \$1.6 million; resurface the walkway from the dormitories to the main building for about \$1.427 million.

At Allied Arts Unit it plans to spend about \$3 million maintaining the fence, raising the concrete around the building and general upkeep of the surroundings which should be about \$2.5 million and the clearing of the alleyway behind the fence for about \$500,000.

Ms. Ally: Line item 6281, Security Services: For 2014, a sum of \$34.248 million is budgeted for security services. Could the Hon. Minister provide the list or the institutions that will benefit from this sum and its 24-hour service catered for?

Ms. Manickchand: Anything under this head Hon. Member, through the Hon. Chair, addresses CPCE, NCERD and Allied Arts Unit and so this would cater for security at these three institutions, how many buildings they have. The minute increase that is recorded here would be to cater for us to comply with the minimum wage order.

Ms. Ally: Is 24-hour service catered for, Madam Minister, through the Chair?

Ms. Manickchand: Yes, please, Your Honour. It is.

Ms. Ally: Line item 6284, Other: Could the Hon. Minister say what would this \$91.5 million be spent on?

Ms. Manickchand: This line item would mostly be spent from NCERD, in the multimedia unit, to broadcast the learning channel, to pay to National Communications Network (NCN) for Broadcast To School and Talking About Education programmes, the airing of the IRI programme.

At CPCE, it is for the invigilation and marking of examinations for the ADE programme, that is, the Associate Degree in Education programme; to prepare and mark CPCE examinations and for resit, to invigilate and have internet services.

At Allied Arts Unit, it is to hire persons to administer steel band and other musical programmes in schools.

Ms. Ally: Supplementary. Could the Hon. Minister tell us how much is being paid monthly for the services of the learning channel?

Ms. Manickchand: May I ask for a clarification, Sir? Which services and paid to whom and by whom?

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister said that inclusive in this \$91.5 million are payments for the learning channel. I would like to know to whom the payment is for and for what?

Ms. Manickchand: The learning channel in Guyana is this incredibly unique thing. It is the only of its kind in the Caribbean. [I am just noting, Sir, especially how we are in Committee and so on, that from over here they were asking me to apologise for calling names and all week they have been calling people's name over there.] In fact, we have been asked both through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as through the Ministry of Education about talking to our brother and sister nations to see how they could replicate in their lands.

To be able to effectively carry a programme we have to be able to not only downlink - I am using words here that I may not be able to explain further - but we have to be able to uplink.

When we want to show a teacher in a classroom locally, our Guyanese trained teacher teaching mathematics in a local classroom, we have to uplink that to a satellite and then downlink it to all of the various receiving channels that carry the learning channel. There was only one provider in the country, and it remains only provider in the country, that would allow us to both uplink and downlink and that is the Television Guyana (TVG).

There was a contract that was entered into with Television Guyana on the 14th of December, 2010 and it was for a five-year period. The contract that was entered into caters for the National Centre for Education Resource Development to pay to TVG the equivalent of US\$15,000 monthly plus value added tax (VAT).

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, I come from the country, I would like to know how much money is being paid per month for this service.

Mr. Chairman: I think it was just stated.

Ms. Ally: It was not by the Minister; it was heckled in.

Mr. Chairman: No. The sum was stated from the contract. I think it was US\$15,000 plus VAT. That is what I heard.

Ms. Manickchand: Thank you, Sir. That is correct. I did state it but I would be happy to state it again.

Ms. Ally: It is only to say that on the question of the learning channel I have made my points in the budget presentation and it is on record.

Line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships), \$205 million: May I ask the Hon. Minister to give some details for this training?

Ms. Manickchand: The National Centre for Educational Resource Development conducts daily training of teachers, family workers. The Ministry is always struggling for space to accommodate the kind of training that happens there. This money is really going to be dedicated towards training people to use the micro science kits. Now let me just tell the honourable House a bit of that. There is no need for an entire lab so the Ministry has been able to, in Region 9, allow the children to do single sciences because of the micro science kits. Guyana has been a flagship country. We have been celebrated in the world and recognised for using these kits and using them effectively. We have seen a 20% increase in the single sciences and we have maintained our excellent results over the years and so we want to expand these micro science kits into every single school but teachers and students and managers of schools have to be trained how to use them. That is the first thing we plan to do that I see recorded here. Of course, if we are going to train we also have to buy the kit. I see NCERD as being projected to spend \$157 million.

At the learning channel we want to train staff in script writing and local content workshop. Now, the Hon. Member Ms. Ally has said that we need some more local programming. We listened to her and we are training people...

Ms. Ally: Yes. Thank you.

Ms. Manickchand: ... to produce more local programming. We also would like to see increased literacy rates. We are without doubt doing the best we have ever done as a country, but we are

not happy with where we are at and so we will be training significantly and heavily in the area of literacy.

Curriculum development, the education management programme, to train head teachers and deputy heads so that they could be better managers in the schools. We plan to have training in Spanish and Portuguese. It is just a series of training to make sure that our teachers are capable of delivering curriculum, make sure that they stay relevant and modern, upgrade their training, to train our teachers in the ability to integrate children with special needs into the classroom. It is a series of training that is continuously going on at the National Centre for Educational Resource Development.

Programme: 414 – Training and Development - \$1,141,842,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 414 – Training and Development - \$42,500,000

9.36 p.m.

Ms. Ally: Project 12059000: the profile outlines some of the areas that will be absorbed under this head. My question to the Hon. Minister is a simple one. There is payment for retention, completion of One Mile Secondary School and Parfaite Harmonie, among others. I would like to have a breakdown of some...

Ms. Manickchand: Hon. Member, I think you are reading from somewhere else. You are reading the wrong thing.

Mr. Chairman: Mrs. Garrido-Lowe please go ahead with your question while Ms. Ally identifies hers....

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Project code 2403300 – Land Transport. There is \$6 million (\$9 million Est.) earmarked to purchase vehicles. Hon. Minister, could you say how many vehicles, what type of vehicles and where they will be purchased for?

Ms. Manickchand: We plan to purchase two vehicles at approximately \$3 million each to be used at the National Centre for Educational Resource Development (NCERD).

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Project code 2603100 – Other Equipment. There is \$1.8 million for purchase of furniture and equipment. Could the Hon. Minister state where this equipment will be placed?

Ms. Manickchand: We plan to buy for the Allied Arts Unit one high jump mat, one fax machine, 30 folding chairs and six folding tables. That should cost about \$1 million.

Programme: 414 – Training and Development – \$42,500,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 415 Education Delivery – \$7,442,992,000

Ms. Ally: Line item 6117 – Temporary Employees: could the Hon. Minister say what categories comprise this sector and what is the average salary or wage being paid to persons in each of the categories?

Ms. Manickchand: The categories would be part-time lecturers, part-time teachers, cleaners, printers, collators, and other part-time employees.

Ms. Ally: Is there any specific institution to which the part-time lecturers would be attached?

Ms. Manickchand: Presently, all of our technical and vocational institutions attract part-time persons who are willing to give back to our country and mould minds in those institutions, but also want to remain in their full-time employ in the private sector.

When there are examinations, someone has to print page one, someone has to print page two and then someone has to put them all together. That person is the part-time collator.

When teachers go off on maternity leave, we have to bring in teachers to make sure that children are not left without instruction. Sometimes when it gets busy, such as when it is the National Grade Six Assessment (NGSA) and Grade 2 and Grade 9 examinations, we need more staff to do

the work that is there to be done over a short period. It is really just part-time employees across the sectors.

Ms. Ally: Line item 6131 – Other Direct Labour Costs: could the Hon. Minister explain what this cost consists of?

Ms. Manickchand: This is the line item which takes care of acting allowances and responsibility allowances. In the Ministry of Education, because we want excellence for our children and excellent service, people may be willing to work, but they may not be perfect for the position. We have adopted an active policy on probation. These persons are asked to act so we can how they perform. If they do well, we are happy to appoint; if they do not do well, we are happy to move them to an area in which they can do well.

Ms. Ally: Line items 6222, 6223 and 6224 - Field Materials and Supplies, Office Materials and Supplies and Print and Non-Print Materials respectively: are these materials for our schools? Could you give some examples of these items? Do you consider them adequate?

Ms. Manickchand: Under these heads, the Georgetown schools, including the technical institutes, are addressed. It is to have drugs and medical supplies in the schools for emergencies and minor issues. Line items 6222 and 6223 deal with field materials and supplies, for example the provision of supplies such as crayons, play dough, rulers and charts to nursery schools.

The line items deal with repairing and maintaining tools and equipment for technical institutions. We had an Open Day at the Government Technical Institute (GTI) and I saw young ladies employed in doing machine work and repairing motor vehicles. It was an extremely enlightening and pleasing sight. We also cater for office support for the 98 schools in Georgetown and in the institutes. That would be catered for under line item 6223.

Do we think it is enough? It is a relative term. We would always like to have more but I think that is what a budget does. It apportions amounts to the various sectors that our country can afford so that everybody is happy and everybody can be served. If everything is put into education, then we would not be able to look after our children when they get sick. We would not be able to travel on good roads. We would not be able to build new buildings. We would not be able to look after our rice farmers and sugar workers. It is always relative. Is it enough? We

would like to say no. Is it enough given what our country has? We understand that we are part of a collective, we are part of a whole, and we would like to see our other sectors doing well too.

Ms. Ally: I heard the Minister say this is primarily for the Georgetown schools and institutes. Am I to understand that under education delivery, materials, equipment and supplies for the Regions will come in amounts budgeted for the Regions?

Ms. Manickchand: Yes, Ma'am; it would.

Ms. Ally: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: could the Hon. Minister identify the buildings for this purpose?

Ms. Manickchand: It is for routine maintenance of the 98 schools, five institutes, the Craft Production Unit, the Carnegie Schools of Home Economics and the Practical Instructional Centres (PICs) within Georgetown. If a window pane breaks, we try to fix it; if a piece of step falls off, we try to fix it; if a toilet handle breaks, we try to fix it. It is under this line that that would happen.

Ms. Ally: I would like to find out if these buildings have been identified. If they have been identified, could the Minister give us a written list? We find that many things are supposed to be done and they are never done. We want to check on it.

Ms. Manickchand: I would be happy to invite the Hon. Member to check on them. The thing about maintenance, though, is we cannot sit down in August, 2013 when we are asked to submit the budget and project that in June, 2014 a toilet at the St. Margaret's Primary School will break. We cannot do that. We do not have a list of where we would maintain. We do know of some places which might need repairs. There is a hole in the fence and we know that already. We would use money in this budget to fix it. I would say this without reservation: the Georgetown district has the best maintained schools. We do not have any major problems in Georgetown. In every single school in this country and, indeed, in every single school in the world, there will be a tap or a window that is broken. We are talking about children. We are talking about large numbers. So, there is going to be wear and tear.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, maybe it should have been stated that in 2013 you spent \$310 million and, therefore, that is the basis on which you can project \$311 million for this year.

Mr. Greenidge: I heard the Minister's answer to this question and I urge her to consult with her technicians and, if she needs to, consult with the Ministry of Public Works. In every other country where the maintenance of buildings and equipment is handled, there is a planned schedule. There is a programme. There is an approach towards maintenance. It is not a random thing. It depends on the stock of buildings, age, *et cetera*, and that is what informs a budget. It is true that taps leak but money is put aside in anticipation based upon the age of the stock that the ministry has. If they are not doing it and you, Mr. Chairman, were kind enough to point to the expenditure fluctuations, they ought to.

Ms. Manickchand: Thank you. Sir, I just want to say that is why I said there is no absolute list. We expect, as the year goes on, that we are going to get called and persons will say that a tap is not working or a trestle broke down. We have a list now and it is about 10 pages long. I could read it through.

Mr. Chairman: We do not want you to read it through but Ms. Ally would be more than grateful to receive it from you.

Ms. Manickchand: I would be happy to share it with the Hon. Members. We need this partnership. I would be happy to share this so that Hon. Members can check on the schools to make sure the schools are doing what we give them money to do.

Mr. Greenidge: It is the regime and an approach that we need, not the specific buildings.

Mrs. Lawrence: Minister, according to the Report of the Auditor General, between 2006 and 2011, some \$35.6 million were overpaid in salaries. Under line item 6112, what measures have been put in place to stem this consistent haemorrhage of salaries being paid to persons who, many times, would have left the institutions?

Ms. Manickchand: We did take note of that overpayment. It is something that we are very unhappy about. As you can see, it happened in the past. We are trying to make sure it does not happen again and we have put a series of measures in place to make sure it does not happen. Essentially, what happens is that a teacher leaves the job and we are notified three months later that the teacher is no longer on the job but a salary went into the bank. One would expect that human decency would dictate that that person returns the money but from the Report of the

Auditor General, you can see that we were let down as a country. We have written to these persons. Some of them have come back in and repaid the money and some have not. We are still pursuing that as a Ministry. We even considered, and we probably are not far off from it, printing a list in the newspapers of the persons who owe the Ministry of Education and ask them to bring the money back in. These are not people who are unaware of the fact that they were overpaid. We would like to see if we could work with them to get it back before we do that.

Mrs. Lawrence: What is even more alarming is that even if that happens, these persons come back after the period and collect moneys owed to them by the Ministry. They collect gratuity and these sorts of things and no deductions are made. That is alarming.

Mrs. Hughes: Line item 6301 – Education Subventions and Grants: could the Hon. Minister explain the increase in the education and subvention grant?

Ms. Manickchand: This is to cater for the more than 188,000 students who would each receive \$10,000 as a cash grant for the first time in the history of our country.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Line item 6243 – Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies: could the Hon. Minister explain the increase of \$2 million?

Ms. Manickchand: This is the line item under which we give grants to schools for the purchase of items such as bleach, smell-o-pine, and other janitorial supplies. It is \$2 million but we could do with a lot more. It is to cater for requests to better meet these needs.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: could the Hon. Minister give us details on this?

Ms. Manickchand: This is to cater for the maintenance of compounds in Georgetown. There are 98 schools, our institutions and our PIC centres. We give the heads the money and they ensure that the schools are cleaned and weeded. For example, Sophia Nursery at A Field Sophia costs an estimated \$250,000 from January to December to weed the entire compound. To weed, clean, and repair the fence to the Smith Street Nursery, it is estimated to cost \$400,000. Ascension Nursery, West Ruimveldt, is estimated to cost \$250,000. His Honour had mentioned that these lists could be provided so that I do not read them out and I would be happy to provide this to my Colleague before the end of the night.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Line item 6281 – Security Services: there is a \$13 million increase. Hon. Minister, could you kindly explain this and give us the name of the security service?

Ms. Manickchand: This line item caters for the provision of security services to all technical institutes, PICs and nursery, primary and secondary schools within Georgetown. This increase caters for the increased minimum wage as per the Order we are trying to comply with. The names of the security services are Inter-Services Enterprise and Home Safe Security and Domestic Services. Just so the Hon. Member knows, we usually comply with the Procurement Act in procuring these services. I believe we advertise and persons bid and the lowest responsive bidder gets the job.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Line item 6284 – Other - and line item 6294 – Other: kindly give details on these line items.

Ms. Manickchand: This is a 2% increase from last year. It is to cater for the payment of marking Grades 2 and 4 examinations and moving of furniture for the predominantly nursery and secondary schools under repairs. If we are repairing a school, we have to move all of the furniture out and when the repairs are finished, the furniture has to be moved back in. These things have a cost attached.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Does that include the amount under line item 6294, Hon. Minister?

Ms. Manickchand: The \$1,820,000 is provided for under this head to move furniture. We are talking about children. They play; they break up furniture because they are children. When we have to move it out and bring in new ones, there is a lot of transportation cost. It also includes some internet charges and purchase of water. That would come under this head.

Ms. Ally: Line item 6281 – Security Services - \$318.816 million: could the Hon. Minister tell this National Assembly how many schools will be enjoying 24-hour security service as against the number of schools generally.

Ms. Manickchand: We know the number of schools, generally; it is 98. As to how many are enjoying 24-hour security service, could I give that information by 2.00 p.m. tomorrow afternoon? I do not have that information offhand.

Ms. Ally: Tomorrow at 2.00 p.m. will be good.

Mrs. Hughes: Line item 6301 – Education and Subvention Grants: what is the programme for distributing the \$10,000 grant? How is it going to be done? Would it be done through vouchers, through the schools?

Ms. Manickchand: Given that I did not know the budget would be passed, we have not finalised our plan. We have to sit and decide how we will do it. We do administer a very successful uniform voucher programme through vouchers. We give each child a voucher, the parent receives it and the school is responsible for the accountability of getting the parents to sign it. Then they go to authorised stores and purchase from those stores. The way we get those stores is by advertising and asking them if they are interested in doing the programme. If they are, they can come on board with us. They have to get their Taxpayers' Identification Number (TIN) certificates and so on.

As to how we would do it precisely, we are not sure but we will talk about that - the smoothest way to do it, considering that we have to reach all of the regions and not every region has banks and stores. It is something we have to examine more. What I can say is we have been extremely effective doing the uniform grant and I hope that whatever programme we come up with would have as its highest aim to make sure we not only give the grant, but that we do it smoothly and efficiently and that we can account for every cent that is given.

Mr. T. Williams: Would the Hon. Minister be willing to give this House a mid-year report or update on how this particular project is being executed?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we have four sectoral committees that can summon ministers, can get updates, can review, and questions can also be asked. Minister, do you anticipate to give an update later in the year?

Ms. Manickchand: I cannot commit to June because we do not know when we would do this. Once we have decided how we are rolling it out and once we roll it out, we would be happy to give an update to the House.

Mr. Chairman: Members are reminded that they may approach the ministers or ministry officials for information. Members may ask questions, as they do throughout the year.

Committees may also proceed to bring ministers or officials pertaining to a project or programme before the Committee for review.

Mrs. Hughes: Line item 6302 – Training (Including Scholarships): could the Minister explain the increase? Are there additional scholarships or training programmes that have been added?

Ms. Manickchand: There is a general Government policy that scholarships are dealt with by the Public Service Ministry (PSM). Wherever there is training, including scholarships, it most likely will mean just training in the other ministries. In the Ministry of Education, it means just that. It is to cater for workshops conducted by the Department of Education. The Department of Education – Georgetown is what is dealt with under this line item. When the Department is training its officers, head teachers, science teachers and Spanish teachers, it is under this head it would be done. They are going to train the teachers on how to use the six-year curriculum in delivering math and science. There is going to be training of Secondary Competency Certificate Programme (SCCP) teachers under this head. Practical workshops in the delivery of this programme are going to be held and hosted under this head.

We are trying to meet the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ). We have specific standards we have to meet. We will be training teachers and administrators under this head.

It caters for training of head teachers for administrative management of the schools in Georgetown.

Programme: 415 Education Delivery – \$7,442,992,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Given the time, I am inviting the Hon. Prime Minister to move a motion for us to continue beyond 10.00 p.m.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO. 10(1)

Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs [Mr. Hinds]: I propose that we continue until the Ministry of Education is complete. The Government side would not be unhappy to continue to consider the Ministry of Health. The officials are still here.

Question put, and agreed to.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 415 Education Delivery - \$2,108,072,000

10.06 p.m.

Mr. Trotman: Project code 1205900: I notice that there are specific sets of activities to be carried out under this project and I am wondering if the Minister can lay over in this House, for each item head, the specific activities that have to be carried out with the associated costs for each activity so that we can be satisfied about what it is that is going to be done under this particular project code.

Ms. Manickchand: Is the Hon. Member asking for a further breakdown of each line item?

Mr. Trotman: I am asking not only for a further breakdown, but a breakdown with associated cost of each activity. That is what you do not have here. All you have is the specific activity but no cost. You must have the estimated cost. You must have a sense of...

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, if I may help the Hon. Minister, I think my colleague is asking, as I had the same question, how much is for retention, how much is going to be spent on La Parfaite Harmonie, how much is going to be spent on One Mile Wismar School? We want for each of them.

Ms. Manickchand: We have that.

Mr. Chairman: One second. How many schools are you talking about here?

Ms. Manickchand: Ninety-eight.

Mr. Chairman: No. You can supply the list, please.

Ms. Manickchand: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: We are not going to go through 98 schools tonight.

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the Hon. Minister, I note that this is another large lump of money here to do several things. My concern is like that of the Auditor General...

Mr. Chairman: Mrs. Lawrence, please use your microphone.

Mrs. Lawrence: I am, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Sorry. I do not think that we are getting you.

Mrs. Lawrence: Sorry. Mdm. Minister, I am saying that my concern is like that of the Auditor General; your Ministry has not been complying with the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act, Section 31. In many instances, contractors were paid the total sum of contract in advance and then we were told that there was some issue and the contractor did not conclude the work. I am drawing this to your attention. The Parliament is going to appropriate \$960 million for this and we would like to have value for our money and accountability. Thank you.

Ms. Manickchand: Right. That is our aim. We have the same concern that Mrs. Lawrence has about these historical matters. They are matters that happened in the past. We have been advised both by the Auditor General's Reports as well as further meetings about how we could minimise this. Let me explain what happens. We go public and we say, "Who wants to build this school?" Let us take Sand Creek. The person who is responsive bids. The lowest bid which complies with the Procurement Act and so on wins that bid and begins to build. We say the same thing about consultants. We ask, "Which consultant would like to supervise the construction of Sand Creek?" Again what happens is, according to the Procurement Act, the person who comes in the lowest and satisfies all of the criteria wins. What happens is when that consultant brings to the Ministry of Education a report that states, for example, let us use the Sand Creek example, "90% of the building has been painted", we use that report and we pay and that is how overpayment happens.

Mrs. Lawrence: No.

Ms. Manickchand: I agree with the Hon. Member.

Mrs. Lawrence: There are instances where 100% was paid upfront. That is what I am talking about. I am not talking about those instances.

Ms. Manickchand: I am saying let us talk about the specific examples. We are unhappy with any overpayment. We are unhappy when we do not get quality work. I do not believe that the

Ministry of Education alone could supervise this and that is why we have actively engaged on a policy that I spoke about in my presentation to go out into the communities and say, “This is the school that is being built. Here are the bills of quantities (BOQs)...”

Mr. Chairman: What project code are you referring to now?

Ms. Manickchand: Sorry?

Mr. Chairman: What project code are you speaking to?

Ms. Manickchand: Mrs. Lawrence asked the question based on...

Mr. Chairman: Let us deal with project codes please.

Ms. Manickchand: Is that going to be struck from the record?

Mr. Chairman: No. I am not striking anything. I am just saying...

Ms. Manickchand: Sir, I wanted to specifically explain because this thing here is a big thing because when the Hon. Member stands up and says that you are allocating to us \$960 million and make sure that it is spent right, I do not want to be accused, in any way, of not spending it right.

Mr. Chairman: Very well, go ahead.

Ms. Manickchand: I think all of us in this House and, indeed, the entire nation has a duty to make sure that these moneys are spent rightly so when one has a supporter that is building and supervising, one has to make sure that he or she does the right thing too. This Sand Creek example is a good example of how we got robbed. We sent the file to the Ministry of Legal Affairs to see how we can recover, if at all, any money or have any reparation for the shoddy job that was done at that school and we are having a look at it. I am saying that this is something that concerns us. We are doing as much as we can - involving the community, involving the local people - to try to make sure that we get quality for our money.

Ms. Hastings: Thank you, Comrade Chairman. I am looking at project code 2603500. The project includes purchase of furniture and equipment for schools and dormitories and it is national. My question to the Minister is: which schools and dormitories in Region 7 are earmarked to benefit from this project?

Ms. Manickchand: Under this head, the furniture would be mostly for Georgetown, as would the equipment. Under the Ministry of Local Government and Development, you would see under Region 7, Education Provisions, and that is where the provision of furniture for the regional schools is provided for. However, Region 7 will receive, because we are purchasing furniture nationwide or will be warranting money to the Region, approximately \$14 million; that is allocated for the purchase of furniture for the Region 7 schools. The Hon. Member would remember that this is the year that we plan to saturate all of the schools with the furniture that the children need so every single child should have furniture to sit on, adequate numbers to sit on, providing we were given the right numbers when we asked for the information in the first place. That is what we catered for.

Ms. Ally: I have a follow-up, Mr. Chairman. I am concerned with this particular item because in the legend, the profile states that it is for Regions 1 to 10 and it is a large amount of \$270 million. I would like to ask the Minister: am I to understand that all the schools in all of the regions, including Chenapau Tuseneng, will have adequate furniture for the children?

Ms. Manickchand: The PPP/Civic Government prides itself on equitable distribution of services and so, more than anything else, we will make sure that the places that need the furniture or have greater needs are addressed first but, like I said, with this amount, in addition to the amounts catered for under this line in the Local Government Budget, we hope to be able to give all of the furniture that is needed in every single school. That, however, has a little bit of a caveat and that caveat is we are relying on what the school said to us they need. So if they told us that they need ten pairs and we asked for ten pairs and we got ten pairs, but they really need twelve pairs, then they might be two pairs short.

Mr. Elliot: Project code 1206000 - President's College - an allocation of \$18 million is set aside to pay for the completion of bridge and rehabilitation to the dormitories. I would like if the Minister could inform us about the retention for the bridge and if this \$18 million will be sufficient to do the rehabilitation works for a big institution like President's College.

Ms. Manickchand: I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the Hon. Member back to the House and to say that President's College really gets the lion's share of individual school's budget every year so this \$18 million is a continuation of what they would have gotten last year,

the year before and the year before that. We would be happy to provide what we have estimated for each item here. For the bridge specifically, which you are asking about, we anticipate that it is going to cost about \$2.9 million.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Thank you, Hon. Chairman. Back to project code 2603500, legend: purchase of furniture and equipment. I would like to ask the Hon. Minister if in hinterland villages, the furniture would be built there in the villages.

Ms. Manickchand: Yes. We want to work with the village councils, wherever that is possible, to build the furniture locally so that we could produce jobs and so on. But also, we believe that if people are building furniture for their own children, they will do it stronger and with a better quality and so on. While we intent to have specifications generally where we say to everybody across this country that if they are going to build furniture for our children, these are the specifications they have to build it to. The engineering department is working on those specifications. We would like, as far as we can, where there are the resources, to build the furniture locally.

Ms. Ally: At project code 2606100 - Secondary Education Improvement Project: could the Hon. Minister say which secondary schools will be constructed? I would like to have a full list of all the secondary schools that will be constructed and the time frame within which they should be completed.

Ms. Manickchand: There are three schools. They are at the Good Hope/Lusignan Area and that is to take off about six to seven primary tops that exist in the area right now. The school at Good Hope is going to have a capacity of 800. The school at Yarrowkabra, Upper East Bank, would have a capacity of 800 and the school La Parfaite Harmonie, in Region 3, would have a capacity of 1,000. When we build La Parfaite Harmonie's school and when we build Zeeburg's school, we believe that we would achieve universal secondary education in Region 3.

Ms. Ally: Time frames, please.

Ms. Manickchand: We want to build them all simultaneously and we hope that if we could begin this year, we would be finishing them by mid-2016.

Programme: 415 – Education Delivery – \$2,108,072,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Minister and her capable team for answering the questions. That concludes our business in Committee for tonight. Members of the subcommittee of this Committee are reminded that we are likely to meet at noon tomorrow if notice is given that we need to meet, so please be on standby to consider the Estimates of the other agencies coming up tomorrow. We will resume in Assembly, please.

Assembly resumed.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I propose that the House be adjourned to tomorrow at 2.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Very well, Hon. Members, we stand adjourned until 2.00 p.m. tomorrow, Thursday, 10th April, 2014.

Assembly adjourned accordingly at 10.22 p.m.