

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

83RD Sitting

Tuesday, 15TH April, 2014

The Assembly convened at 2.04 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS

MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 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 Estimates of Expenditure have been approved by the Assembly an Appropriation Bill shall be introduced in the Assembly providing for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet that expenditure;

AND WHEREAS Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of Guyana for the financial year 2014 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2014-03-24

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: Today, we will commence consideration of the Estimates for Office of the President, the various Service Commissions, including, of course, the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM), the Guyana Defence Force (GDF), and the Office of the Ombudsman, which we welcome, the Public Service Appellate Tribunal, the Office of the Prime Minister, the Parliament Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Legal Affairs, which includes the Supreme Court, and we expect that the Hon. Minister of Finance will make the requisite announcement regarding the Supreme Court. I believe and I hope we can carry ourselves as far as the consideration of the Estimates for the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport. In that way, we will finish, as I anticipated, tomorrow.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply

Agency: 01 Office of the President

Current Expenditure

Programme: 011 – Administrative Services - \$1,335,928,000

Mr. Scott: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I notice that there has been a reduction to \$48 million this year as against last year’s amount of \$53,974,000. With the increase in wages that has been paid out, could the Hon. Minister say what the reason is for less being given to more?

Minister in the Ministry of Finance [Bishop Edghill]: Last year, we paid the staff in the Office of the Commissioner of Information from under this programme. They have since gone over to a subvention agency.

Mr. Scott: Line item 6231: There has been an increase in the amount budgeted for fuel and lubricants. Could you explain the reason for that increase and say how it is broken down?

Bishop Edghill: The increase caters for five new vehicles that were procured during the last quarter of 2013 and six new vehicles that are to be procured in 2014.

Mr. Scott: Line item 6281 – Security Services: Which security service services the Office of the President (OP)?

Bishop Edghill: They are Brans Security Service and B.M. Soat Security Service.

Mr. Scott: In 2013, the budgeted amount was \$48 million for security service; the revised amount for 2013 was \$13 million. For 2014, there is a projection of \$13 million. Is that the standard to be paid to them for this year?

Bishop Edghill: In last year's Estimates, we catered for the Information Communication Technology (ICT) Programme. In this year's Estimates, it is not included here.

Mr. Scott: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: There has been an increase from \$792,533,000 to \$847,580,000. How do you justify this increase? Could you say how you are planning to apportion that money?

Bishop Edghill: This is largely due to the subvention that would be given to the Office of the Commissioner of Information to run the operation.

Mr. Scott: How is it broken down? Would \$22 million be given to him?

Mr. Chairman: Is the money being allocated for the office or for the person?

Bishop Edghill: The office.

Mr. Chairman: I thought so.

Mr. Scott: Is that increase only for that office, sir? Could you say how it will be apportioned?

Bishop Edghill: It is stated in the Estimates at page 402 that the total is \$21,536,594. It is basically salaries and benefits – employment costs.

Mr. Scott: Under that same head - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - there is the Presidential Guard Service for which \$254.5 million has been budgeted. Regarding the money that has been set aside for the Presidential Guard Service, the Report of the Auditor General for 2011 and 2012 have stated that this office should not be placed under local organisations but should have its own agency so it can have reports presented to the National Assembly. Could you say the reason why it is still placed under the head of Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations? I notice that Castellani House has been removed but the Presidential Guard Service has remained. Could you say why? And, what are your intentions regarding the removal of the Presidential Guard Service which would be in compliance with the request of the Auditor General?

Bishop Edghill: This is the Presidential Guard Service we are talking about, sir, and, as far as I am aware, that decision is to be determined by the Defence Board under the Defence Act and I would await that decision and disclosures coming from that level.

Mr. Scott: The response that the Ministry gave to the Auditor General's observation was that the Administration was still awaiting a response from the Ministry of Finance to make that final removal, as was done with Castellani House. It has nothing to do with that organisation you just mentioned. There was a promise to have it removed and placed as an agency to be accountable. Could you please say when that will be done?

Bishop Edghill: I am aware that there is an exchange of correspondence between the Office of the President and the Ministry of Finance, but that is awaiting a policy decision because, like I said, this needs to be determined by the Defence Board.

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: Line item 6284 – Other: There is a modest increase from \$66 million to \$69 million, but in 2013, \$245 million was budgeted for. Could the Hon. Member explain the variations? Why did he budget \$245 million in 2013 and spend \$66 million? Could the Hon. Member indicate what items are being paid for under this line item of “Other”?

Bishop Edghill: Last year, the budgeted allocation catered for the ICT Programme and that is what was responsible for the amount. Under line item 6284, we pay for things like the Official Gazette, chemicals for the swimming pool, repairs to office furniture and consultancy fees.

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: The Hon. Minister has not answered my question. You budgeted for \$245 million and spent \$66 million. You actually spent less than you budgeted for. What was the reason for that?

Bishop Edghill: Last year, out of this \$245 million, \$178 million was directly for the ICT Programme which we were anticipating to have advanced and we would have paid for some links and the rest of it, but this was not done. The expenditure was not incurred.

Mr. Jones: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: I note that for the Government Information Agency (GINA) and the National Communications Network (NCN), for last year, different amounts - \$83,337,000 for NCN and \$135,858,000 for GINA - were budgeted. I can recall this House reducing this amount to \$1 but I can see under the revised amount for 2013 it was still spent. Could the Hon. Minister explain?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, we relied on and were guided by the Chief Justice's ruling.

Mr. Greenidge: Under line item 6321 and the subhead to which Mr. Jones just referred, I believe we are guided in these matters by the Constitution, which requires the National Assembly specifically to approve expenditure from the Consolidated Fund. I am not aware that in the Chief Justice's decision anywhere, he has appropriated for himself authorisation to spend. He cannot, himself, as far as I am aware, authorise the House to spend any moneys whatsoever. If the House has acted wrongly in, perhaps, cutting expenditure, it does not authorise and his decision cannot authorise anybody else to spend. Who exactly is authorising and has been authorising the Minister to spend? Which article of the Constitution?

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Nandlall]: Consequent upon the ruling of the Chief Justice, Cabinet requested the Attorney General to prepare an opinion on whether or not the cuts which were effected to the national Estimates could have been restored. The Attorney General advised that, pursuant to article 218(3) of the Constitution, where there is an insufficiency of budgetary allocation or where there has been no budgetary allocation for

whatever reason, the Minister of Finance can do one of two things: He can come to the National Assembly with a supplementary provision seeking the imprimatur of the National Assembly for permission to use moneys from the Consolidated Fund or, alternatively, he can use money from the Consolidated Fund and submit to the National Assembly, *ex post facto*, a statement of excess detailing how those moneys have been spent. I am aware that that statement of excess has been presented in relation to wherever there was a restoration of the moneys cut out of the national Estimates.

Mr. Greenidge: I am not aware that statements of excess or the Contingencies Fund can be utilised unconditionally by the Executive. Nowhere does the Constitution state that expenditures from the Consolidated Fund may be effected in circumstances, other than by approval of the House, unconditionally. As far as I am aware, therefore, the basis for this expenditure still remains to be explained. As regards the expenditures that the Government may carry out in circumstances that are *ex post*, it is conditional on matters being urgent and there are other conditions, notwithstanding the interpretation by the Chief Justice. I am not aware that salaries, under any circumstances, nine months after they have been due, can be regarded as matters that are urgent.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are not about to have a debate on this. We are considering the Estimates. The opinions have been given of the Opposition and of the Government. It is either we approve of the sums or we do not approve of the sums.

Deputy Speaker [Mr. B. Williams]: Sir, there is no provision in our Constitution that states the Executive could breach a decision of this House. Regarding the funds that were cut or reduced by this House, there is nowhere in the Constitution that states the Executive could restore that.

Mr. Chairman: That may be so, but, Mr. Williams, what we are doing is approving sums for this year.

Mr. B. Williams: We understand that. It is just to put it in the Hansard to show that the Hon. Attorney General is incorrect.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Greenidge has made the case very well and it is noted.

Mr. Greenidge: We are dealing with Agency Office of the President, Programme 011 and, more specifically, with the item 01, under which these two items, which have been raised, fall. I wish to draw to your notice at this point in time that given the unconstitutional action by the Government and given the fact that a figure is shown in these Estimates which was not approved by the House, we are not going to approve this item at all. If that has consequences for the approval of the head as a whole, so let it be.

Mr. Chairman, you need to take that into consideration when you are putting to the House whether or not it approves the item.

Mr. Chairman: Noted.

Mrs. Hughes: Would the Hon. Minister state how much income GINA derived from placing advertisements on behalf of the Government for 2012 and 2013? The question comes under the same line item – 6321.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I am probably between a rock and a hard place in answering this because GINA operates and places advertisements on behalf of the President. It is not a commercial making entity.

Mrs. Hughes: I think, as a standard, it would derive a commission payment of 15%. What was the value of the income?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, there needs to be a clear distinction here. GINA is the Government's information news agency, which is an agency that operates on behalf of the President and the Office of the President. NCN is a totally different matter. In its marketing, it is allowed to generate income, but GINA operates at a different level.

Mrs. Hughes: Are you saying, Minister, that all advertising for GINA placed in the local media is, in fact, placed through NCN?

Bishop Edghill: The Hon. Member is asking if it is only through NCN. GINA would place public advertisements and notices in print and electronic media on NCN and other agencies.

Mrs. Hughes: Does GINA, therefore, receive a commission on that payment or are you saying it does not receive a commission on that payment? Generally, any agency placing an advertisement

would receive a 15% commission from any media outlet. I do not know if, maybe, that is no longer done or it was never done.

Bishop Edghill: I am advised that GINA is prepared to provide a statement on this matter by tomorrow on all of those transactions so that the House can see exactly how it operates.

Mrs. Hughes: Does that mean that it does collect a commission but you do not have access to the information now?

Bishop Edghill: I am advised that the information, which the head of GINA is prepared to get, could be made available within an hour and we would be able to present it to the Committee.

Mrs. Hughes: Could the Hon. Minister say how many people make up GINA? Also, which locations are they located at?

Bishop Edghill: There are 39 staff members at GINA currently and they operate and are deployed from GINA Headquarters, Georgetown.

Mr. Ramjattan: Could the Minister provide an executive summary of what the \$135 million last year went towards and what the proposed \$139 million would go towards this year?

Bishop Edghill: If I am hearing the Hon. Member correctly, he would like to know what last year's breakdown was and what this year's breakdown is.

Mr. Ramjattan: I would like it in written form. Could you give me that?

Bishop Edghill: I will read it out and still give it to you. For last year, total wages and salaries - \$77,835,000; for 2014, we are asking for \$79,634,000 and I guess you would be aware that this caters for the 5% increase.

As it relates to other charges, a total of \$58,000,024 was asked for last year. This year, we are asking for \$60,000,167. A breakdown of that would include material, equipment and supplies - \$16,224,000 for last year; this year, we are asking for \$17,222,000. As it relates to fuel and lubricants, last year, it was \$5,392,000; this year, we are requesting the same amount. As it relates to rental and maintenance of buildings, \$4,849,000 was asked for last year; we are asking for the same amount this year. As it relates to travel, transport and postage, last year, we asked

for \$10,663,000; this year, we are asking for \$11,808,000. For utility charges, a total of \$6,785,000 was asked for last year; we are asking for the same amount in 2014. It would include the cost of telephone services, electricity and water. For security services, a total of \$4,000,001 was asked for last year; the same amount is being asked for this year. Other operating expenses, which would include national events and refreshment and meals to cover exhibition across the country and for staff working extra hours, \$8,467,000 was asked for; the same amount is being sought in 2014. Education, subvention training, \$495,000 was asked for last year; the same amount is being sought this year.

Mrs. Hughes: Could you say when the last audit of GINA's assets was done and could this Committee be given a copy?

2.34 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: A report for 2004 to 2007 was the last produced audited report. The auditors are presently working on the report for 2008; that is the Auditor General's Office.

Mrs. Hughes: Would the Minister be able to advise us as to how we would explain or how we would be able to verify the moneys spent in the last two years? I know you have a list of different things that you are purchasing, but, if you do not have the up-to-date reports, do you have an inventory? How would we be able to identify those purchases and where would the assets be located too, of course?

Bishop Edghill: While I have indicated that 2004 to 2007 were the last set of reports completed and they are presently working on 2008, all of the financial reports have already been submitted to the Auditor General's Office.

Mr. Ramjattan: In relation to NCN, Mr. Minister, it would appear that that one earns money. Could you tell us how much it earned in 2013?

Bishop Edghill: Last year, NCN earned \$476,655,732 and when one adds the subvention which it received from the Government, the total would be \$557 million.

Mr. Ramjattan: Could you similarly state what the staff strength at NCN was?

Bishop Edghill: The total staff strength of NCN is 236; 177 are permanent staff and 59 are temporary workers – people who do special programmes on short contracts, whether it is radio or television.

Mr. Ramjattan: There was a report out of NCN called “The Parmasar’s Report” and we understand that there was some irregularity, to put it mildly. Could you say what the status of that is in relation to some staff matters?

Bishop Edghill: I will converse with the relevant people because I want to be factual and give an up-to-date status. I am advised that this matter was discussed at the last board meeting of NCN for determination by the board.

Question put.

Hon. Members: Division.

Division bell rang.

Committee of Supply divided: Ayes 32, Noes 33, as follows:

Noes

Mr. T. Williams

Ms. Marcello

Dr. Ramayya

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe

Mrs. Hughes

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Ramjattan

Ms. Ferguson

Ms. Williams

Mr. Morian

Mr. Jones

Mr. Adams

Ms. Baveghems

Ms. Kissoon

Mr. Elliot

Mr. Bond

Mr. Trotman

Ms. Selman

Mr. Allicock

Ms. Wade

Dr. Cummings

Mr. Felix

Ms. Hastings

Mr. Scott

Mr. Bulkan

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon

Mr. Greenidge

Dr. Norton

Mrs. Lawrence

Mr. B. Williams

Ms. Ally

Dr. Roopnarine

Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger

Ayes

Mr. Jaffarally

Mr. Damon

Dr. Persaud

Rev. Dr. Gilbert

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Neendkumar

Mr. Lumumba

Mr. Chand

Mr. G. Persaud

Ms. Shadick

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Nadir

Ms. Teixeira

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Whittaker

Mr. Baksh

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai

Ms. Webster

Ms. Manickchand

Mr. Benn

Dr. Anthony

Mr. Ali

Dr. Ramsaran

Dr. Westford

Mr. R. Persaud

Dr. Singh

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett

Mr. Nandlall

Dr. Ramsammy

Mr. Rohee

Mr. Hinds

Motion negatived.

Programme: 011 – Administrative Services - \$1,335,928,000 does not stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: I now ask that we move to capital expenditure. Hon. Members, I see that there is some consignment. The Committee of Supply does not approve or disapprove of the Estimates. The National Assembly approves or disapproves of the Estimates so what the Committee of Supply has done is indicate its intention, vis-à-vis these Estimates but the sums have not been cut.

Capital Expenditures

Programme: 011 – Administrative Services - \$3,846,901,000

Mr. Scott: Thank you, Sir. There is the construction of a building at project code 3400700 for \$8 million. Where will that building be and what type of building will be constructed?

Bishop Edghill: It is not a new building that is being constructed. If that is the impression, we apologise for that. It is a storeroom, a room that is already in the compound, that is being refurbished.

Mr. Scott: Well if it is an existing building, where one does not have to have any feasibility studies of, foundation or anything, how does one justify \$8 million for just a little building?

Bishop Edghill: I would like to give the honourable Committee a full breakdown of how the \$8 million will be expended, for clarification.

Mr. Scott: When will that be done, Sir?

Bishop Edghill: There will be the purchasing of a photocopy machine - \$1,340,000; the construction of the storage facility which the Hon. Member enquired about just now - \$1,796,092; the purchase of two professional camcorders - \$1,035,000; a Sony HVR desktop HDV VTR - \$518,126; Nikon Deluxe Kit with 18-55 mm VR lenses (2) - \$213,831; a Nikon AFDS – I guess these are all cameras – \$262,100; Nikon SB 700 Speed Light Shoe Mount (4) - \$82,800; a Magnavox DV 225 MG Combo Player (3) - \$41,400; memory card Sand Disk 32 GB SDH Memory Cards (4) - \$8,200; a Sony Flash Memory Unity – \$165,600, tripod systems with fluid (2) – \$62,100; two air conditioning units – \$140,000 - to replace the faulty ones in the library and the editing area; refurbishing the kitchenette – \$500,000, which is to replace the rotting cupboards with walls and floor.

Mr. Scott: You may have put too many things under the same heading, perhaps. Project code 4502100, “Provision for fence, guard hut, vehicles, media production and transmission improvement” for \$60 million: Could you say where this fence and this guard hut are to be located and what vehicle you plan to buy?

Bishop Edghill: To construct the front fence with an iron gate, a man trap and a guard hut will be \$12 million. I will give you the breakdown for the total \$60 million under the head...

Mr. Scott: Hold a second. You said \$12 million. Are there an existing fence and an existing guard hut right now?

Bishop Edghill: It is no secret that the fence and the guard hut at NCN, as is obvious to all, are in very poor shape. You could pass and check it.

Mr. Scott: Has there been security information that says that this is a hazard to health so that you have to have a new fence? Is there a security consideration for you to have a new guard hut? I pass there every day.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I do not think I need to answer that.

Mr. Chairman: Apparently not.

Bishop Edghill: I will proceed with the breakdown. I noted the Hon. Member's commentary.

Mr. Scott: Do you agree with it?

Bishop Edghill: The satellite fly away system is to facilitate and do remote broadcast via satellite - \$12,420,000; spares for the satellite uplink/downlink system - \$1,236,000; generator installation - \$1,236,000; animation and graphic editing system - \$1,449,000; DDR recorders (4) - \$621,000; television traffic system (1) - \$1,030,000; transmitter spares - \$103,000; spare modules for the UPS (4) - \$1,030,000, broadcast pick production switch for television outside broadcast - \$4,120,000; server - \$401,000; lavalier microphones (8) - \$41,500, that would be each, hence a total of \$332,000; camcorders (2) - a total of \$828,000; complete desk top computere systems (6) - \$720,000; network revamp - \$1 million; Drobo storage for archiving - \$3,090,000; and one bus, a 'pit bull', \$6 million; that is a total of \$60,500,000. Just to indicate, Mr. Chairman, in the earlier part, some of the items that I read were just for the unit cost per item.

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the Hon. Minister, project code 1200200: Could the Hon. Minister kindly give us a breakdown of this expense with regard to the notation in the profile?

Bishop Edghill: Thank you, Hon. Member. The electrical system and wiring at the Office of the President need to be rehabilitated and that is at an estimated cost of \$25,625,775. The other moneys to be expended would be at State House, the extension to the Learning Centre, the construction of a new shed to the southern side of the State House building and the land filling of the lawns which we know are often under water when there is flooding – \$24,374,225; that is a total of \$50 million.

Mrs. Lawrence: A follow-up, Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, in the profile, it states at 1 that rehabilitation works will be carried out at both the State House and Office of the President. The description which you just gave indicates that no moneys will be spent for rehabilitation work at the Office of the President. Could we please have this deleted from here?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, it would appear that I was misunderstood with my first answer – the rehabilitation of the electrical works is at the Office of the President.

Mrs. Lawrence: I do not need to go on and on with this, but I am going to read the description of the project:

“The project entails:

1. Rehabilitation works - Office of the President and State House.
2. Upgrading of electrical system - Office of the President.”

Bishop Edghill: I stand by my earlier explanation. The sums allocated are for the electrical works at the Office of the President and the works I highlighted at State House.

Mr. Chairman: Very well. I recognise Ms...

Mrs. Lawrence: I am not finished, Mr. Chairman. One cannot come to this House, give me a book with explanations with regards to figures that I must vote on and then come here and tell me that what I am reading is wrong but what you have is right. It cannot be. If there is a mistake, there is a mistake, but we, as Members of this House, cannot be treated like this.

I will move on to line item 1700100: Could the Minister kindly indicate how many projects were done in 2013?

Bishop Edghill: I am advised that they are in excess of 20 projects but that listing is not here with us.

Mrs. Lawrence: Would the Minister undertake to provide the listing of the projects undertaken in 2013?

Bishop Edghill: Sure.

Mrs. Lawrence: When, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: When can we reasonably expect to receive the list of 20 projects?

Bishop Edghill: I would suspect by tomorrow or...

Mr. Chairman: Very well, thank you. Does that complete your questions, Mrs. Lawrence?

Mrs. Lawrence: Yes, thank you.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. May I direct the Hon. Minister's attention to project code 2400100 - Land Transport – "Purchase of vehicles"? Could the Hon. Member say how many fleets of vehicles there currently are and the number of vehicles to be purchased with this \$50.5 million?

Bishop Edghill: Before I answer, Ms. Ferguson, let me just indicate to make sure that the information are housed. Under the projects that are undertaken by the President as it relates to minor works, these are support given to humanitarian causes and things of that nature so while I know that the Hon. Members would like to have a copy of that, I am not sure that we want to have that circulated...

Mr. Chairman: Well, with respect, Hon. Minister, if the President gives out money to worthy causes, I think that the nation has a right to know that. That should not be a secret because if they are worthy causes, I see nothing wrong with the...

Bishop Edghill: We have no difficulty with that, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: A President should have that discretion and this House has always afforded a President that discretion, but certainly the House has a right to know.

Bishop Edghill: The only reason I am bringing this to your attention is because under this vote indicates assistance to citizens who would have approached the President who are experiencing difficult circumstances.

Mr. Chairman: As I am saying, this House has always afforded every President that right to always... If Parliament gives the approval, Parliament has a right to know but it is not to be published...

Bishop Edghill: I just wanted to raise it. It is not a contention. We will.

Mr. Chairman: Very well.

Bishop Edghill: As it relates to the Hon. Member's question, there is a total of 102 vehicles at the Office of the President; 15 are about to be sold because of their ages and state of disrepair and, currently, for this year, the money being sought is to purchase six vehicles.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Member say what types of vehicles will be procured?

Bishop Edghill: They will be, mainly, cars and we are replacing the President's Fleet.

Mr. Jones: Follow-up, Cde. Chairman: Is the Hon. Member indicating that the Office of the President has 102 vehicles? Is that correct?

Bishop Edghill: I am sure that Members of this Assembly would appreciate that the Office of the President comprises a very complex operation. This would include vehicles used by the Presidential Guards and other agencies that fall under the Office of the President. The total is 102 with 15 about to be sold.

Mr. Jones: Project code 4502100 - National Communication Network - under the project profile, it states that it is also purchasing traffic. Could the Minister just give an explanation on what exactly "traffic" is?

Bishop Edghill: I think it is just the way the product is named but this is a system that will improve NCN's traffic which means the sale and placement and billing work flow. It is a

software. This will improve financial controls and allow for better oversight by management. It is a software.

Mr. Chairman: It is a software.

Mr. Jones: What is the cost attached to this?

Bishop Edghill: I stated it when I gave the breakdown but I could go back again - \$1,030,000.

Mr. Jones: Along the same line of questions, the Hon. Minister explained earlier that it includes as well purchasing of transmitter spares but under the project profile it states “transmitter”.

Bishop Edghill: Maybe it is just a typographical error but the intent here... These are replacement parts for the NCN transmission equipment. These are spares needed to repair and upgrade equipment currently in operation. We are talking about transmitter spares.

Mr. Jones: The purchase of the vehicle, same project code, we note the project profile states that it is between Regions 1 to 10. Could the Minister say in which region this vehicle will be used?

3.04 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: I am a little confused, Mr. Chairman. Could I get the question exactly?

Mr. Chairman: Is this the question on transmission?

Mr. Jones: In which region will the vehicle be used?

Mr. Chairman: Which project code please, Mr. Jones?

Mr. Jones: Project code 4502100.

Bishop Edghill: I think it is a ‘pit bull’ being bought or a minibus.

Mr. Chairman: I was going to say a ‘pit bull’ is really a minibus that it is called a ‘pit bull’ because of its shape.

Bishop Edghill: It is to transport staff and to get the business of NCN done. It will be based in Georgetown but not limited to only working in Georgetown.

Mr. Jones: Are we to understand, Sir, that the ‘pit bull’ minibus will also be used in Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, while I appreciate the Hon. Member’s question, while it is stated in the project profile that these items being procured would be from Regions 1 to 10 – I guess that is what he is trying to say to us – the vehicle and the rest are to be used by NCN operating out of its Georgetown headquarters and to be deployed on assignments.

Mrs. Hughes: Hon. Minister, could you tell us how many vehicles are in the NCN fleet - same project code?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, this is an interesting story because there are 24 vehicles but nine are unserviceable.

Mrs. Hughes: Another question: Minister, you spoke about the equipment that is going to be purchased. My question is: does NCN have an inventory that will give the location of equipment that has been purchased, let us say, over the last two or three years? How do we verify purchases in the past and where they are actually located?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, there is an inventory and there are management controls. They would obviously be reported in the annual reports.

Mrs. Hughes: When was the last audited report?

Bishop Edghill: The last financial statement laid in Parliament was the 2011 audited report, and 2012 is being dealt with right now.

Mrs. Hughes: Do you have an idea, Hon. Minister, when we would see that report? And if not in the near future, in the interim, could we be given information with regards to the location of millions of dollars of equipment purchased over the last two years? Thank you.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, the 2012 audited financial statement is awaiting the management letter from the Auditor General’s Office. For 2013, NCN has already submitted the draft financials and are awaiting commencement of the audit. We are up to date in all the other areas.

Mrs. Hughes: Sorry, I still do not have an idea of when. Is it the next year or six months?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I cannot speak on behalf of the Audit Office. We have to discharge our responsibilities, which we did, and the Audit Office is to now deal with the rest.

Mrs. Hughes: Absolutely Minister, that is why I requested if the audited reports are not available, if we can have access to information with regards to how and where the equipment is located.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I see no difficulty in that. I did indicate that we have an inventory of all the spares and equipment purchased in the previous years and where they are deployed.

Mr. Chairman: The question is: could it be made available and, if so, when?

Bishop Edghill: We have no difficulty with providing that.

Mr. Chairman: When?

Bishop Edghill: I guess it would have to be sometime after tomorrow once the staff get that completed.

Mr. Chairman: Very well.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Chairman, the question is - the Government, having been aware of the Opposition's concern with regard to NCN and GINA and the use of taxpayers' money to fund these entities for partisan political purposes - why has the Government not delinked these project codes since we could not propose or initiate cuts due to the ruling by the Hon. Chief Justice? The question is on project codes that have been dealt with before - 3400700 and 4502100. The Government is aware that we have problems with the use of taxpayers' money to subsidise State entities used for partisan political purposes, hostile political purposes, and have refused to democratise them but, instead, they are bundled here with other projects with which we have absolutely no problem. We have no problem voting for information and communication technology and any of the other items.

Mr. Chairman, you have initiated a tripartite committee but the Government had withdrawn from that committee. At the subcommittee, we had hoped that the Government would, in accordance with Justice Chang's ruling, initiate the delinking and perhaps propose amendments. The

Government now has to answer to the Guyanese people why they have refused to delink these items.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, on a Point of Order, please, the Hon. Member said that the Government had withdrawn from the talks. There is no such thing, Sir. There was no such thing. You are well aware, Sir, of the meeting held in your office and the agreements that were reached which were honoured in the breach the following day by the Members of the Opposition. The Government did not withdraw from any consultations. We were shut out from the whole process. So, Mr. Chairman, I cannot stand and listen to the Hon. Member misinform the Guyanese public on what transpired. The Government was deliberately shut out by the Opposition's breaking of the agreement we had on how we were to proceed.

Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs [Mr. Hinds]: Mr. Chairman, further to what my Chief Whip has said, I would like to recall that the Government participated in good faith in talks in 2012 and proceeded to make that adjustment to the old age pension. When it was the turn for Members of the Opposition to honour a discussion we had, they did not. I want to repeat my position: let them pass this Budget; they owe us something. Let them pass this Budget and resume the 2012 talks after the Budget.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, you will recall, Sir, that, at your behest, we established this special committee. The information requested was given via email the following morning. You will recall, Sir, that when you called the meeting for us to discuss some items we were proposing to cut, the Opposition turned up and the Government did not turn up at that meeting. It follows, therefore, that the Opposition wanted to have these discussions and these matters settled, unlike the Government; they did not want it and disrespected the Speaker's establishment of that committee.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, if you will indulge me, the agreement we had was by nine o'clock each day, because the Opposition said it did not want to give us the list of areas it wanted to cut because it did not want the Government to mobilise - that is the word that was used. So we agreed that every day at nine o'clock, we would receive it.

Mr. Chairman, let me read two emails for you. You and I were in contact the very first morning about not receiving anything. Mr. Nagamootoo, it might be useful to you too because I do not

know if you have seen these things. The Hon. Speaker sent out to Mr. Greenidge, Mr. Ramjattan, Ms. Amna Ally, Dr. Ashni Singh and myself, 10.14 a.m., Thursday, 10th April, 2014:

“Dear Colleagues,

In view of the fact that there has been no submission by the Opposition regarding the Estimates to be considered today, there will be no meeting of the subcommittee as previously anticipated. We will proceed with our sitting at 2.00p.m.”

This was not cancelled by the Government. The Speaker, having received no submissions - and none of us did - cancelled the meeting.

Mr. Chairman, I repeat at 10.43 a.m. on Thursday, 10th April, 2014, an email was received by me from Ms. Amna Ally and copied to Mr. David Granger, Mr. Raphael Trotman, and Mr. Prakash Ramjattan. The subject of the email was “proposed non-approval items”. It stated the following:

“Dear Gail,

I forward herewith four areas which you may need for information. These I guess will come up for consideration at today’s sitting.

- (1) Specialty Hospital;
- (2) Amerindian Development Fund;
- (3) Community Policing; and
- (4) Institutional Strengthening, Labour.

All for your information.”

Mr. Chairman, we had discussed the day before that issues that were zero, non-approval, there was no area for negotiation. If there were areas for cuts, that is reduction, there was room for discussion. This letter has no indication that we wish to talk about anything. All it states is that it is for my information. Furthermore, on the day in question, Ms. Amna Ally and I spoke on the phone after the email and I said we will not agree to the removal of these items. I said to her, and I said to her again in this House, when the Amerindian Development Fund is cut, what will be the implication? What is involved in it? I spoke about these items and she said, well, that is what they are going to do. I said if that is what you are going to do, then that is what you are going to

do. I am trying to convey to you, Sir, that there was no approach by the AFC; the AFC did not come and speak to any Member of the Government that it was interested in talking about anything. So the discussion is between the two here. The AFC may have its own position but it certainly did not communicate it to this side of the House.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I wanted us to complete the consideration of these Estimates. For me, personally, it is unfortunate that discussions that took place in chambers and by email could now form part of open discussions for the national...but I guess this is what democracy has come to, and the people have a right to know.

I recognise Mr. Greenidge and then we will resume with the consideration of the Estimates.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would not hold the Committee up. I would just like to say that my understanding was that the initiative you took to bring the parties together was an initiative intended to find consensus in circumstances that were very difficult. I believe that the agreement, in fact, causing some concern over the terms over which we would give prior notification, was, in a sense, part of the effort to bridge a gap because there is no constitutional or legal requirement to give notice to the Government. The understanding was that notice would be given so that the Government may give consideration... The point I am making here is that as regards these matters, we understood that we would meet so as to determine, when there was no initial agreement, whether some common ground could be found, for example, where this side may propose not to support a particular item whether the Government, having understood the causes for non-support, would be willing to amend the item to ask for a lower amount, to ask for a larger amount, or a different amount. So it is unfortunate that we should stand on principle as regards time, and that a list that was sent would have been required to have a long treatise alongside it explaining the whys and wherefores.

The basic principle was this: when on the first day the motion threatened to delay consideration of the Estimates, the Government found itself at the meeting. Mr. Chairman, when they were fearful that the request for GuySuCo's funds would be cut, they found themselves at the meeting, notwithstanding the absence of 24-hour notice. But when it came to the Amerindian vote, because they saw it as a propaganda item and because they had already gotten information and

went off and mobilised a whole set of Amerindians with moneys voted by this House that were not intended to be used for such political purposes, they did not have a difficulty.

Mr. Chairman, I think it is a sad day we have arrived at because there are many issues here that could be resolved if the other side showed good faith. And that is what is at issue with us here, nothing else.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Minister of Finance [Dr. Singh]: Mr. Chairman, I note, of course, your admonition that we proceed forthwith with the Estimates and it is not my intention to detain the Committee unduly, except to say this: from the very first meeting held, convened so graciously by your good self, the Government side made it very clear that a meaningful discussion could only be had if we were provided with an exhaustive list of the areas of concern identified by the Opposition, allowing for idiosyncratic issues to arise from time to time as we proceeded with the Estimates. And I wish to say for the public record, and for the record of this House, that, to date, we have not been provided with, and to the best of my knowledge the Opposition has not produced an exhaustive list of the areas of concern. I wish to register again that it is impossible to have a meaningful and sensible discussion and identify areas for compromise if one does not even know what the areas of concerns are. The Opposition cannot ask us to compromise on areas which have not even been identified as yet. In the absence of an exhaustive list, there is no basis for discussion.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I am bringing this to an end now. I am proceeding with the Estimates. There is a question on the floor.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, let me indicate to the House, in response to Mr. Nagamootoo, that these estimates...

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Nagamootoo has not put a question on the Estimates. If it goes back to an opening up of this debate, I will not allow it. Mr. Nagamootoo made a statement.

Bishop Edghill: But he referred to two project codes, Sir. And I want to refer to the two project codes.

Mr. Chairman: He did not ask any questions; he referred to them.

Bishop Edghill: Yes, he asked a question, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Which was what?

Bishop Edghill: He asked why did we not disaggregate it from the Estimates and I am about to answer that, Sir. I am about to say that the Budget has been presented this year in the same fashion and same form like any other year. There has been no sleight of hand here, trying to hide anything anywhere. It is in the same place where it has been all the time.

Mr. Chairman: Very well, Minister.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, under project code 1212000 – Information Communication Technology - could the Hon. Minister state whether the sum here required would see the completion of this project and, if so, when could we expect this project to be completed?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, the sum sought here is to bring the ICT programme to some semblance of completion and we hope to do so by the end of July. I think that is the information I would give at this time.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister indicate what he means by “some semblance”? The project information states installation and commissioning of the wireless and terrestrial network system. My understanding is that this is going to bring it to an end and commission it. So, he must explain what he means by “some semblance of completion”.

Bishop Edghill: There are 54 sites that are being worked on, and we anticipate that these 54 sites will be completed by the end of July. The moneys being sought is to bring it to its final completion.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: You are saying, Mr. Minister, that at the end of July, this project will be completed and that you are not likely to be coming back to this National Assembly for any money?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, based on our planning and projection, the moneys being sought are to bring to completion the 54 towers that are being set up by the end of July.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, this project is not about setting up 54 towers. This is a project that entails bringing a cable from Brazil, setting up towers and setting up several other facilities to complete a project. So I am asking the Minister to indicate whether the project will be completed, not 54 towers being set up. This is not what the project document states.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, it would be good if the Hon. Members of this Assembly appreciate the magnitude of this programme. One of the things being sought for in the moneys allocated here is for the purchase and installation of servers and software for what is called cloud computing. Cloud computing allows for the various Government agencies to pool resources of servers while maintaining a desired level of autonomy. In the first phase of the project, the e-government data centre will provide the cloud computing paradigm called infrastructure as a service. This allows for all agencies to utilise a unified set of infrastructure that can handle a diverse set of protocols and technology while lowering the cost per individual agency. So while we might be able to have everything in terms of the hardware set up, this objective – that is why I say some semblance – needs to troubleshoot and needs to get going.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, it is public knowledge that this project has gone over time. It is well beyond the completion date and my understanding is that there is a lot of cost overrun involved. Could the Hon. Minister state what equipment will be purchased and at what price?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, \$1.3 billion will be expended. It will be, first of all, interim and final payments for the construction of the long term evolution sites. Secondly, there will be the purchase and installation of servers and software for cloud computing. Thirdly, there will be the purchase of LTE base station analysers and microwave spectrum analysers. These three are estimated at \$1.3 billion. The remainder of the money is for the One Laptop per Family (OLPF) Programme and is to purchase the third batch of laptops for the OLPF Programme.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: So the description “purchase of equipment and software” is not a complete description of what you are going to do here. You are using \$1.3 billion to make a final payment but that is not purchase of equipment and software, as I understand it.

Bishop Edghill: The project profile indicates three things: purchase of One Laptop Per Family computers; \$2,045,901,000 for the purchase of the third batch of computers. The \$1.3 billion is for the interim and final payments for the construction of the sites; the purchase and installation of the servers and software for cloud computing and the purchase of the LTE base station analysers and the microwave spectrum analysers.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Sorry to prolong this, Sir, but I asked for the equipment to be purchased and at what price.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I do not know specifically what the Hon. Member is seeking because I just read what is being purchased and the price.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I just want a very simple answer: purchasing cloud computing equipment is going to cost so much money. That is what I am asking you, but you are mixing up things. I am asking you to be very specific about what equipment you are purchasing and put alongside what price you are paying for it - only the equipment.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, if the Hon. Member would like to have a spreadsheet with a breakdown of all the particular items that would constitute a block, we can provide that.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: If that is the way, I will accept it, but usually I know the Government likes to put these things on record. I will accept the spreadsheet.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I believe Ms. Ferguson will take the last question then I will put the question.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, I had my light on since before the discussion.

Mr. Chairman: I can tell you it is now showing up, sorry.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I can recall in the Hon. Member's speech, that is Dr. Ashni Singh's speech, he said that 100 hubs will be commissioned. My question to the Hon. Junior Finance Minister is: Could you say from this allocation whether there is any provision for the construction of the 100 hubs and, if so, the amount?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I believe we have already dealt with the construction of the 100 hubs in the various villages when we dealt with the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs Capital Expenditure. This money being sought is for the coastal programme that provides the connectivity from Moleson Creek all the way to Anna Regina.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, to the Junior Minister of Finance, project code 1212000: Could the Minister kindly indicate how many laptops will be purchased and which areas are earmarked to receive laptops?

3.34 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: The quantity will be determined through the tendering process. This is the money that is available to us. We will have to go out to tender, as is the procedure, and the quantity will be determined, based upon the unit price, when the tenders would have been submitted.

Just to remind the Assembly that this money, for the purchase of the laptops, is as a result of the grant aid which we are getting from China.

Mrs. Lawrence: Is there a list of the areas you would like to target this year with the one laptop?

Bishop Edghill: Obviously, it is now public knowledge that we are building 100 hubs in various Amerindian villages and it is one of the areas that will be given laptops this year. Then we will continue distribution throughout the rest of the country. For the hubs, the proposals is not being included, I do not know, there will have to be some reprioritising.

Mrs. Lawrence: I asked which are the areas. If they are going to the Amerindian villages, I do not know of an Amerindian village in the country that is named “various Amerindian villages”. I asked which areas will be targeted. Do you have a list? That is what I asked.

Bishop Edghill: The One Laptop Per Family programme (OLPF) is not a new programme that is being instituted. From the very inception, this programme was designed to ensure that 90,000 families, who could not have afforded to purchase their own laptops, have access to a laptop. This was not restricted to Georgetown; it was for the entire country.

Over 34,000 laptops have already been distributed. There are some in stock and the distribution is to continue throughout the country. What we have indicated, and what the Hon. Member is referring to, is that we were moving the distribution of the One Laptop Per Family programme to 100 Amerindian villages. We could not just give the people the laptops and they do not have the accessibility to operate them, so we were building the hubs, putting in the electricity and infrastructure for them to be able to operate in 100 villages that have already been determined by the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs. We are continuing with the distribution throughout the entire country.

Mrs. Lawrence: It is unfortunate that the Junior Minister of Finance could not answer that part of the question. I will move on to project 2605200. In the project description, number 3, it speaks to “Provision for the strengthening of regional disaster and risk management capacity”. Could the Minister kindly indicate how much of this \$24 million will go towards the Disaster Risk Management Programme for the regions and could he indicate which regions will be targeted?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, just for the information of the Members of the Opposition, there is no such post as Junior Minister. There are Ministers within the Ministry and that existed under Presidents Burnham and Hoyte’s administration. There are no “Junior Ministers,” there are “Ministers within.”

Mr. Chairman: I think we are edified. I myself always believed that there were Senior and Junior Ministers, but I take the explanation.

Bishop Edghill: It is if we can get back to the question... [*Interruption*] Mr. Chairman, if I am to respond to the Hon. Member’s concern and question that were raised, I am sure that the 100 Amerindian villages, which will benefit in the first phase of the One Laptop Per Family programme, can be made public - the first 100 villages.

I think under this question, in as much as I am responding to it, that would have been properly put to the Minister of Amerindian Affairs when she was on the floor. That would have satisfied the Members of the Opposition before they voted against the proposal to provide this service to the people of the interior. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman, it would appear that only special Members of this House have the right to speak and to explain themselves but I will not be silenced when I have something to say.

As it relates to the issue of the Civil Defence Commission (CDC), the areas, which are being targeted this year, for the Hon. Member, are Regions 2, 5, 8 and 9.

Mrs. Lawrence: I asked how much is allocated for that particular project.

Bishop Edghill: The total amount being allocated is \$24 million.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I believe that I am in a position to put the question and that is that the Committee gives its approval....

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, if I can give some other clarifications because it would seem that Mrs. Lawrence is interested in the actual figures. As it relates to the purchase of equipment, it would be \$11,900,000 and for the training to take place in the various regions it is \$12,100,000.

Question put.

Ms. Teixeira: Division.

Bill rang.

Committee of Supply divided: Noes 33, Ayes 32, as follows:

Noes

Mr. T. Williams

Ms. Marcello

Dr. Ramayya

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe

Mrs. Hughes

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Ramjattan

Ms. Ferguson

Ms. Williams

Mr. Morian

Mr. Jones

Mr. Adams

Ms. Baveghems

Ms. Kissoon

Mr. Elliot

Mr. Bond

Mr. Trotman

Ms. Selman

Mr. Allicock

Ms. Wade

Dr. Cummings

Mr. Felix

Ms. Hastings

Mr. Scott

Mr. Bulkan

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon

Mr. Greenidge

Dr. Norton

Mrs. Lawrence

Mr. B. Williams

Ms. Ally

Dr. Roopnarine

Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger

Ayes

Mr. Jaffarally

Mr. Damon

Dr. Persaud

Rev. Dr. Gilbert

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Neendkumar

Mr. Lumumba

Mr. Chand

Mr. G. Persaud

Ms. Shadick

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Nadir

Ms. Teixeira

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Whittaker

Mr. Baksh

Mrs. Sukhai

Ms. Webster

Ms. Manickchand

Mr. Benn

Dr. Anthony

Mr. Ali

Dr. Ramsaran

Dr. Westford

Mr. R. Persaud

Dr. Singh

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett

Mr. Nandlall

Dr. Ramsammy

Mr. Rohee

Mr. Hinds

Motion negatived.

Programme: 011 – Administrative Services - \$3,846,901,000 does not stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 012 – Presidential Advisory (Cabinet and Other Services) - \$808,581,000

Mr. B. Williams: Line item 6116, Contracted Employees: I have a couple of questions for the Minister. There has been a diminution over last year in this category by four, yet the total has gone up by over \$8 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain?

Bishop Edghill: Seven persons have gone over to programme 3, which is reflected in the programme, and three persons were hired. The increase caters for the 5% increase.

Mr. B. Williams: Follow-up Mr. Chairman. Could the Hon. Minister say if these contracted employees entered into written contracts with the Office of the President?

Bishop Edghill: All contracted employees at the Office of the President are on contract with the Office of the President – written contracts.

Mr. B. Williams: Follow-up, please, Mr. Chairman. Could the Hon. Minister then confirm if it is the Government's policy to bypass the Public Service Commission in making appointments within that Ministry?

Bishop Edghill: I am not aware of any such policy. As a matter of fact, the Public Service Ministry guides in these matters and persons have an option.

Mr. B. Williams: Follow-up Mr. Chairman: Could the Hon. Minister confirm whether there are traditional civil servants positions within the Office of the President?

Bishop Edghill: The answer to that is yes.

Mr. Greenidge: In that case, would the Minister please be good enough to give us a breakdown of these 137 employees and the categories within which they fall? As it stands here, the table shows categories, but when it comes to "Contracted Employees" it is just a lump sum. Perhaps, he can tell us what the net consequences are of the seven employees who were transferred out and the three who were transferred in.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, the category of employees in this section will move from the Head of the Presidential Secretariat, Administrative Assistants, Research Assistants, Special Assistants...

Mr. Greenidge: I am sorry Mr. Chairman. We are aware of the broad categories. What I would like to know is the allocation or the disposition of the staff under contracts, under these categories. How many are in each category?

Bishop Edghill: I do not particularly understand the question. What do you want to know? We are covering line item 6116.

Mr. Greenidge: Would you be good enough to give a breakdown of the 137 employees into the categories that are shown in the table at the bottom of page 35. In other words, we know the administrative categories, you have set them out, but we do not know how the contracted employees fall in those categories - the skill mix. [An officer: It is the Senior Technical.] Yes, but he said that they fall within the context of the traditional public service categories. If they fall in those categories then he should tell us. It is not a quarrel; I am not quarrelling. I am just emphasising so that he can understand. It is the designations.

Bishop Edghill: All 137 of those employees are catered for under line item 6116.

Mr. B. Williams: Follow-up. What are the designations of those 137 contracted employees? We want the designations, the highest paid and the lowest paid.

Bishop Edghill: Designations: Head of the Presidential Secretariat (HPS), Special Assistant to the Head of the Presidential Secretariat, Confidential Secretary, Word Processing Operator, Personal Assistant to the Head of the Presidential Secretariat, Typist Clerk, Special Assistant to the Head of the Presidential Secretariat, Driver, Personal Assistant, Deputy Secretary to Cabinet, Administrative Assistant...

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: One second Hon. Members. The Minister is answering a question by Mr. Basil Williams. I believe that he should be allowed to do so.

Mr. Greenidge: I am sorry, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: If there is to be an objection it has to come from Mr. B. Williams. He answers to the question, with respect.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, Mr. B. Williams was following up. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: May I be heard please? If Mr. B. Williams posed a question and the Minister is answering it and if it is not being answered in the way he expects, it is for him to so indicate.

Bishop Edghill: I continue. Deputy Secretary to Cabinet, Administrative Assistant, Technical Officer, Cabinet Monitor, Word Processing Officer, Special Projects Officer, Secretary, Community Relations Officer, Cabinet Attendant, Executive Secretary, Adviser to the President, President Political Liaison Officer, Senior Research Officer, Confidential Secretary, Divisional Head, Special Assistant to the President, Boat Captain, Protocol Adviser, Manager, Confidential Secretary, Protocol Officer, Driver, Administrative Officer, Information Technology Officer, Financial Officer, Technical Officer, Office Assistant, Confidential Secretary, Personal Assistant, Adviser, Confidential Secretary, Driver, prime Executives, Special Projects Officer, Household Service Officer, Office Attendant, Cleaner, Admin Officer, Manager, Communications Coordinator, Driver, Social Policy Officer...

Mr. B. Williams: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Yes Mr. Basil Williams.

Mr. B. Williams: I had asked for the salaries also and the Hon. Minister is proceeding with the list. I do not wish him to restart, but what I would ask is that he lays over the list with the categories and salaries.

Mr. Chairman: Very well.

Bishop Edghill: I have always believed that this honourable House is always desirous of having the information before it takes necessary actions.

Mr. B. Williams: You are not giving it.

Bishop Edghill: I am giving the information.

Mr. B. Williams: I asked for the salaries.

Bishop Edghill: I am going to give you the salaries; you asked for the highest. If you do not want to have the other positions I will give you the salaries.

Mr. B. Williams: The Minister is calling designations without salaries. I have requested that he lays them over. Could the Hon. Minister lay over the list with the designations and the salaries for the corresponding designations?

Bishop Edghill: I have no difficulty, but I will answer the question for the House. The highest salary \$1,000,001.53; the lowest salary...

Mr. B. Williams: Who gets the highest salary?

Bishop Edghill: It is the Presidential Adviser.

Mr. B. Williams: Who is the Presidential Adviser? In fact, what is the designation of the Presidential Adviser? Is it someone who replaced Mr. Lumumba in there? Is he the adviser on Empowerment or African Empowerment? What is that advice on?

Bishop Edghill: It would appear that the lowest salary is \$43,137 and it would be for a Typist Clerk I.

Mr. B. Williams: Follow-up Mr. Chairman. I have asked the Hon. Minister of Finance... You will notice that I am not saying junior or senior. I thought he would have been more cooperative. Could he indicate the 10 highest salaries and designations? It is not all 137, the 10 highest with the designations. It is not just say Presidential Adviser, but the particular...

Bishop Edghill: I would like to be guided on what I am answering to.

Mr. B. Williams: It is the 10 highest designations and their salaries. We do not want "Presidential Adviser". We want the "Presidential Adviser", on whatever it is, and the salary.

Bishop Edghill: The 10 highest paid persons at the Office of the President, under this line item, would be the Presidential Adviser on Governance; the Head of the Presidential Secretariat...

Mr. B. Williams: You are not saying the salaries with it.

Bishop Edghill: The Presidential Adviser on Governance - \$1,000,001.53, Head of the Presidential Secretariat - \$983,238, Adviser to the President - \$735,553, Director General, CDC - \$728,887, Presidential Adviser on Sports - \$721,000, Divisional Head - \$648,402, Senior Deputy Secretary to Cabinet - \$552,333, Coordinator, Public Information - \$551,254, Administrator - \$525,000 and Adviser on Sustainable Development - \$496,125.

Mr. B. Williams: Thank you very much.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, I believe that the records will show that I had asked the Minister to give a breakdown of the list of contracted employees in a manner that compares with the table at the bottom of page 35. It is in response to his failure to do so that Mr. Basil Williams had risen and that was really why I was interrupting. Having said that, let me say that I would still like the question to be answered.

There are broad categories. The Minister listed secretary, how many secretaries are there in total? In terms of the various categories, the Minister spoke about drivers, and so forth, he classified them, I assume, according to the list, which is at the tableau, at the bottom of page 35, Administrative and others, or he can give a of the Administrative into categories that he wants. The manner in which he lumped them together is not helpful. To list all the different designations from 1 to 137 without giving us numbers is not helpful. [Mr. Nadir: That is what Mr. Basil Williams asked for.] Mr. Basil Williams was clarifying a question I raised. Listen. It was after the Minister failed to answer the question put to him.

Bishop Edghill: Under this programme, 137 staff are provided for under line item 6116. I was about to read out to this entire House what the designations are of all 137 staff members. They are provided for under line item 6116.

Mr. Felix: I have two questions. One is under line item 6281 and the other is under line item 6284. Under line item 6281, Security Services, I notice that the actual sum voted in 2012 was \$31.6 million, it went up in 2013 to \$46.4 million, but revised downward to \$41.6 million. In 2104 the request is for \$49 million. Could the Hon. Minister provide us with a list of the areas which are guarded, the number of guards and to explain the increase? This is the first. Could I go on to the second one?

Bishop Edghill: Could we deal with them one at a time, Sir? Last year it went up because we were catering for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) under this programme head. My apologies, Sir. ICT was not included in this.

The areas in which security were provided and the companies, which the Hon. Member is asking for, are Police Special Constabulary, Strategic Action Security, R.K. Security, Strategic Action Security and Strategic Action Security. These are placed at the residences of officials of the Office of the President. B.M. Soat Security is placed at the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre; Instant Security Service is placed at the Guyana Relief Council Shelter, Sentinel Security Service, John Fernandes Security Service and Strategic Action Security are placed at the residences of officials of the Office of the President. MMC Monitoring are installed at several residences of officials of the Office of the President, and MMC Patrol and GEB Security.

I need to indicate that under this programme security is provided for some Ministers as well as other officials of the Office of the President.

Mr. Felix: Why is there the increase?

Bishop Edghill: It is the same answer that I would have been giving throughout this entire consideration, the increase of rates, as it relates to the new minimum wage order.

Mr. Felix: Line item 6284, Other: We notice a whopping \$21.6 million increase. Could the Hon. Minister please say to this Assembly what includes “Other” and why there is such a massive increase?

Bishop Edghill: The increase is as a result of the engagement with The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). This is a company that deals particularly with the climate change and advising on things such as that. It is for consultancy. It was US\$100,000 and this year we plan to expend US\$200,000.

Mr. Felix: What does “Other” include?

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6284, I can give you the breakdown for the full amount if you are interested. Is that what you want Sir?

Mr. Felix: I thank you very much, Hon. Minister.

4.04 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: It would include legal fees, installation of carpets, purchase of cellular phones, purchase of floral arrangements and paintings, expenditure related to the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre, advertising, hosting of television programmes, payment for rebroadcasting of the 6 o'clock News, Guyana Publication Inc. subscription, payment of cable services, routine maintenance of the Red House building, travelling, equipment maintenance, office material, field material, refreshment of meals, print and non print and the consultation through the Office of Climate Change and airfare and other cost incurred by consultant and, of course, The Energy and Resources Institute which is called TERI - US\$200,000 which will bring it to the \$94 million.

Mr. Felix: It is a follow-up. I have heard the Hon. Minister was referring to field materials but it is separately catered for under line item 6222, Field Materials and Supply. Could the Minister please advise?

Bishop Edghill: There is a block support that is given to the Red House and that totals \$3.4 million. It includes routine maintenance, equipment maintenance, office material, field material and so on, directly for the Red House.

Mr. Jones: Line item 6294, Other... Okay, Sir, I withdraw.

Mr. Greenidge: I thank my colleague for allowing me to go. I want to follow up on the very line item 6284, Other. I understand that the Minister has indicated that the maintenance of Red House, for example, comes under this item. Would the Minister provide us with the terms of the contract under which Red House is utilised by the Cheddi Jagan Research Institute? I would be interested to know what proportion of the maintenance cost, if any, is required to be met by the Government as opposed to the users. Could we have the terms of the contract and the last time a rent was paid for it by the People's Progressive Party (PPP)?

Bishop Edghill: I will deal firstly with Mr. Jones' question under line item 6294, Other. Under this line item this expenditure is largely related to the Walter Rodney Commission of Inquiry which \$112 million, 166, 150 has been allocated to, gifts, contribution to food festival, receptions hosted by His Excellency, GuyExpo and honorarium for staff. Those are the expenditure included there.

As it relates to Mr. Greenidge's question, the Red House is a heritage building and it falls under the control of the administration. There is support that is given to the Red House for specific things.

Mr. Greenidge: I did not understand the answer given. I am asking about the contract and the obligations of the owner of Red House which I take to be the state as opposed to the people who are renting it. I also asked about the payment of rent but I heard no answer to any of those questions. On what terms is the Cheddi Jagan Institute is using it? It is not for free, it should not be.

Bishop Edghill: The Red House is managed by a board and the Government lends assistance to that facility. It is a historical building.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, I am sorry but I still do not understand. Red House is a national asset, I believe. It is listed by the Guyana National Trust as a national monument. On what basis can it then be led to a body, the status of which I am unaware of here, and we were just told that a board manages it? What is really going on? If it is a state's asset, there has to be terms under which it is extended to a private entity.

Bishop Edghill: I am sorry. I am not in a position to provide any further information at this time.

Mr. Greenidge: Am I to understand that we are being asked to make a payment in respect of a national asset which is used for purpose other than for the state, the purpose that has to do with a private operation, and the Minister is not in a position to tell us on what terms, at all, the private entity has access to a state asset?

Mr. Chairman: That is correct.

Mr. Greenidge: I see.

Dr. Cummings: For confirmation, line item 6294, Other, the Minister dealt with this before but I just want a clarification. I notice in the revised for allotment for 2013 was \$79 million and in 2014 there is an increase of \$114 million. You did say that the Walter Rodney Commission Inquiry takes up \$112 million, am I correct?

Bishop Edghill: Yes. You are.

Mr. Bulkan: Follow-up to line item 6294, Other. The budgetary allocation for last year was \$31 million but \$70 million was actually spent, would the Minister be kind enough to provide an explanation for what constituted the additional \$48 million?

Bishop Edghill: The Hon. Member would remember that he supported a supplementary provision under this head for \$48 million.

Mr. Greenidge: In answering the question about the composition of “Other” the Minister indicated that the Walter Rodney Commission of Inquiry is being funded under this head. It seems to be a bit surprising that an item as important as this would be hidden under “Other”, especially other operating expenses. The question I would like to ask, specifically, is: How much is allocated for the Commission of Inquiry?

Mr. Chairman: I think that was given that few minutes again - \$112 million.

Programme: 012 – Presidential Advisory (Cabinet and Other Services) - \$808,581,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 013 – Defence and National Security - \$65,137,000

Mr. Scott: Line item 6116, Contracted Employees: I notice the same pattern here. There is allocated \$8 million but there is no previous allocation. Could the Minister say what is this for?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, you would recall that when we dealt with the first programme I said seven staff were transferred over to a new programme, this has to do with the National Intelligence Centre.

Programme: 013 – Defence and National Security - \$65,137,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Members, thank you. This concludes our consideration of the Office of the President. I would like to thank the Minister. I know, Sir, that it was not an easy task for you this afternoon and to thank Mr. Omar Sharif and the other technical staff who assisted as best as they could. Thank you very much for your care and attention to the consideration of these Estimates.

Agency: 09 Public and Police Service Commission

Current Expenditure

Programme: 091 - Public and Police Service Commission – \$50,407,000

Mr. B. Williams: Could the Hon. Prime Minister say why these two commissions are in one head when they are separately provided for by the Constitution?

Mr. Hinds: I am not too sure that this is a proper question for this area but the answer is that they are two separate commissions and one secretariat.

Mr. B. Williams: Follow-up Mr. Chairman. Could the Hon. Prime Minister indicate the separate staff for both commissions?

Mr. Hinds: My understanding is that there are two bodies of commissioners and they are served by one secretariat.

Mr. B. Williams: Could the Hon. Prime Minister say, in relation to the provision for the statutory wages and salaries, whether the commission is constituted? What is the situation with respect to that? Is the salary the same or not?

Ms. Shadick: We know that it is not possible.

Mr. B. Williams: Why therefore is the provisioning?

Mr. Hinds: I am advised by the member from the secretariat that it is awaiting the appointment of the members of the commission.

Mr. Greenidge: Could the Hon. Prime Minister indicate, in relation to these items dealing with salaries, from line item 6011 down, which member of staff they have catered for here? Who will be dealing with which set of matters? Is it that all members of the secretariat are dealing with Public Service Commission and Police Service Commission? Is there no division of skills or labour involved?

Mr. Hinds: I am advised that line item 6011, Statutory Wages and Salaries, makes provision for the payments of all of the Members of the two commissions and that line item 6012, Statutory Benefits and Allowance, if you were to ask, makes provisions for the benefits for all of them.

Mrs. Lawrence: Line item 6242, Maintenance of Buildings, Prime Minister, would you kindly tell us how many buildings there are?

Mr. Hinds: It is one building. It is actually a part of a building. It is shared.

Mrs. Lawrence: Line item 6272, Electricity Charges: Given the fact that it is one building and it is shared, could the Hon. Prime Minister kindly indicate why there is this steep increase for electricity charges?

Mr. Hinds: It is the same provision, which was put for 2013, that is being repeated here and I am advised that it has its own meter.

Mr. Felix: Line item 6281, Security Services: We know that it is one building in the same compound but there is a 100% increase requested in 2014. Could the Hon. Prime Minister please advise?

Mr. Hinds: I am advised that payment is made here for one security which is in the area of the commissions and that this relates to the same increase in rates for security personnel.

Programme: 091 - Public and Police Service Commission – \$50,407,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 091 – Public and Police Service Commission - \$2,500,000

Mr. Felix: Project 2500400, Public and Police Service Commission, “Purchase of furniture and equipment” with an allocation of \$2.5 million. Could we have an indication as to what sort of furniture and equipment will be purchased?

Mr. Hinds: Yes. We have the list here - one binding machine, two guillotines, three air-conditioned unit, four filing cabinets, desk, water dispenser, table and fans.

Programme: 091 – Public and Police Service Commission - \$2,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: I would like to thank the staff for assisting the Prime Minister and the House in the consideration of those Estimates.

Agency: 10 Teaching Service Commission

Current Expenditure

Programme: 101 – Teaching Service Commission - \$73,776,000

Mr. B. Williams: Line item 6116, Contracted Employees: Could you give us the designation of these employees under this line item?

Mr. Hinds: There is the Systems Analyst, Personal Assistant to the Chairman, Confidential Secretary, Electronic Data Processing Officer I, three Clerks II (General), Accountants Clerk II, Receptionist, Typist Clerk I, Records Clerk, two Drivers/Mechanics, Typist Clerk, and Secretary Teaching Service Commission (TSC).

Mr. B. Williams: Now, these commissions, seeing that they only have a life for three years, all the employees on contract, are they employed for the duration of the particular term of years for the commission?

Mr. Hinds: Yes. I stand advised by my colleague, the Hon. Attorney General, that the commissions' terms stand forever but the Commissioners are appointed from time to time.

Mr. B. Williams: I would not make any comment, but my question is related to the staff who are contracted employees. I am asking if the duration of the contract is coincident with the life of the commission.

Mr. Hinds: I am advised that the practice is year to year with an option to renew.

Mrs. Lawrence: Line item 6261, Local Travel and Subsistence: Hon. Minister, I note that the staff decrease from 42 to 36, yet I note that the travel and subsistence went up by \$1 million. Could you tell the House why?

Mr. Hinds: This line applies to the Commissioners, the members of the commission.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Prime Minister, could you say whether the commission was in place last year?

Mr. Hinds: I am advised, yes.

Mrs. Lawrence: Minister, line item 6281 - Security Services: Could the Prime Minister indicate why there is this large increase for security services? Are there going to be more sites or are there going to be more security guards?

Mr. Hinds: I am advised that it is to confirm with the recent minimum order.

Ms. Lawrence: How many sites are there, Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Prime Minister, and how many security guards we are talking about? How many were there in 2013 and how many we are expecting to have in 2014?

Mr. Hinds: I am advised that one building is secured; it is the police guard service and there is no change in numbers of persons.

Mr. Felix: Line item 6255, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: There is a request for \$1.3 million. The context of the Teaching Service Commission, could the Hon. Prime Minister say what constitutes "Other Infrastructure"?

Mr. Hinds: Maintenance of external works, in particular the fence and grounds.

Mr. Greenidge: Could the Prime Minister help us? I am a bit puzzled as to the status of the commission. Could he name us the current Commissioners and when they were appointed please?

Mr. Hinds: They are Ms. Ramson as Chairperson and Mr. Munroe is Vice Chairman, Mr. Kendal and Mr. Maydha Persaud. There were two deceased in the last year, but the quorum is still being made.

Mr. Felix: Sir, I am wondering if you would permit me to have a follow-up on line item 6255, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure. I would like for the Prime Minister to clarify, for me, that I heard him correctly saying "Other Infrastructure" means lawns?

Hon. Members (Government): Grounds.

4.34 p.m.

Mr. Felix: Which ground? The Teaching Service Commission is next to the Brickdam Police Station just across the road. There are no grounds or lawns.

Mr. Hinds: I am told that there is a bridge.

Mr. Felix: That has to be a very small bridge, Prime Minister.

Programme: 101 - Teaching Service Commission - \$73,776,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 101 - Teaching Service Commission - \$2,300,000

Programme: 101 - Teaching Service Commission - \$2,300,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: That concludes our review of the Commission. Thank you very much, Mr. Khandai. Members, from my own investigations, I just thought I should say that, indeed, last year, we did have the Public and Police Service Commissions coming as one. It is not just for this year that this has happened.

Agency: 11 Guyana Elections Commission

Current Expenditure

Programme: 111 - Elections Commission - \$1,587,846,000

Mr. Chairman: We Welcome Mr. Lowenfield and congratulate him on his recent appointment as Chief Elections Officer.

Ms. Ally: Line item 6284 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister explain what is contained in this line item?

Mr. Hinds: Yes, demarcation and voter education.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, a follow-up question: Could the Hon. Prime Minister say how much will be spent on demarcation and how much will be spent on voter education?

Mr. Hinds: One hundred million dollars will be expended on voter education and \$3.5 million on demarcation.

Ms. Ally: Follow-up, Mr. Chairman: Could the Hon. Prime Minister say what will be the aspects of the voter education under this head?

Mr. Hinds: Continuous registration and preparatory works for Local Government Elections.

Mr. B. Williams: Is that voter education?

Mr. Hinds: Yes.

Ms. Ally: Is that the only aspect of voter education for this \$100 million?

Mr. Hinds: The Local Government Elections, as presently envisaged, entails some 585 constituencies and we think that there is a great need for voter education with respect to these constituencies. They are to be put up on billboards and fliers so that people will know which constituency they are in and that sort of thing.

Ms. Ally: Thank you, Hon. Prime Minister. That is why I asked what aspects of the voter education will be done.

Line item 6294 – Other: Noting that under line item 6284, there was a large sum and now again there is a large sum under other operating expenses, “Other” again carries a very large amount. Could the Hon. Prime Minister explain what is provided for under this line item?

Mr. Hinds: This is to cover payments to scrutineers and other staff during seven months of continuous registration.

Ms. Ally: A follow-up question: Is that the only expenditure this amount of money will be used for?

Mr. Hinds: I see here listed some overtime for staff, and some temporary staff also - drivers, registration clerks, encoders, verifiers and handymen. Some \$20 million will be spent on that.

Some of the regular staff would be asked to work overtime. I see \$43.8 million is assigned for that.

Ms. Ally: Is that the full list for which this amount of money is to be paid?

Mr. Hinds: There are some other things here, smaller things, such as uniforms, usual staff retreat and work study attachment.

Ms. Ally: May I ask that the Hon. Prime Minister lay over a list of these items and the amounts that will be paid for each of these items? Thank you.

Mr. Hinds: Okay.

Ms. Ally: Line item 6302 – Training: Could I ask the Hon. Prime Minister who will be trained?

Mr. Hinds: This is basically refresher training for staff for every cycle of continuous registration and managers are also trained.

Ms. Ally: For clarification purposes, regarding the refresher staff for registration cycle, Hon. Prime Minister, are you talking about the Returning Officers, clerks, *et cetera*?

Mr. Hinds: Every time there is another cycle, they reflect on the experiences they had on the last and previous cycle and they refresh people's mind so as to reduce errors.

Ms. Ally: How many training sessions are envisaged for this \$24 million?

Mr. Hinds: There are 180 persons altogether, distributed quite widely across the country, and they are brought together at particular points for training, so there is a significant component in there too for transportation and staying over at the point of training.

Mr. Greenidge: Line item 6294: Could the Hon. Prime Minister indicate to us whether the programme for 2014 takes into consideration expenditure that might be required to implement any of the recommendations of the Commonwealth Advisory Group which looked at the 2011 Elections and had recommendations to make as regards division of labour between the Chief Elections Officer and the Commissioners and some questions about declaration, which I suspect may perhaps involve upgrading technology and some other things?

Mr. Hinds: Many of the issues are still under consideration; some of the issues are being adopted and implemented.

Mr. Greenidge: Prime Minister, are you in a position to indicate, perhaps in broad terms, which of these are likely to be implemented this year?

Mr. Hinds: One of the items being worked at is electronic fingerprinting at the point of registration.

Mrs. Lawrence: I have four line items to deal with. I will begin with line item 6281. Hon. Prime Minister, I know that you are asking us for an increase of some \$28 million. Could you say whether there is going to be additional guards and additional sites? If so, how many?

Mr. Hinds: This is just to cover the increases to confirm with the minimum wages order.

Mrs. Lawrence: Could the Hon. Prime Minister indicate to the House how many sites and whether it is 24-hour service?

Mr. Hinds: It is 24 hours a day service and 37 locations.

Mrs. Lawrence: May I now turn your attention to line item 6261 - Local Travel and Subsistence? I note the \$10 million increase here despite there are only seven extra employees added to the staffing details. Could you kindly tell us why there is the request for such a large amount?

Mr. Hinds: It covers, in particular, exercising mobile registration covering the Hinterland. This has not been done for some time and there are plans to do it. It has been done every cycle but this time we are doing more of it. We are putting greater emphasis on the mobile registration.

Mrs. Lawrence: Hon. Prime Minister, through the Chairman, could you kindly say how many mobile units you had in the last cycle and how many you intend to have in this new cycle?

Mr. Hinds: May we ask that the information be provided subsequently?

Mrs. Lawrence: Certainly, Hon. Prime Minister. Could we now turn to line item 6241? Could the Hon. Prime Minister kindly indicate how many buildings are being rented and where?

Mr. Felix: Mr. Chairman, could I ask a follow-up to the same question under the very line item?

Mr. Chairman: Let the question be answered and then you could ask your follow-up.

Mr. Hinds: Fifteen buildings are rented across the country.

Mrs. Lawrence: Locations, sir.

Mr. Chairman: Is there a list that can be provided, Hon. Prime Minister? A list could be provided and laid over.

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Felix wanted to ask a follow-up question.

Mr. Hinds: The list will be provided, but, to start it off, there is a building being rented in Mabaruma and another building being rented in Port Kaituma.

Mr. Chairman: There are also buildings in Georgetown.

Mr. Felix: Under the same line item, 6241, I notice a variation in cost of rentals. Some years it went up; this year, it has gone down. Could we have an explanation please?

Mr. Hinds: A payment was made to one of the owners of a building rented during 2013 and that paid for some arrears. That payment is not again listed in 2014.

Mr. Bulkan: A follow-up question in relation to the mobile registration: In addition to the number of units, could we be advised in which regions or in which areas they will be deployed?

Mr. Hinds: In every region, there is some part or whole that is serviced.

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6133 - Benefits and Allowances: I notice in the revised 2013 allocation there was \$18 million and now, in 2014, there is an increase of \$7 million. Who are the beneficiaries of such allowances?

Mr. Hinds: There were 57 employees who became eligible for the benefits in January of this year.

Mr. Chairman: I would like to put the question. We have two more programmes to consider for GECOM before five o'clock.

Programme: 111 - Elections Commission - \$1,587,846,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Mrs. Lawrence, I noted but I have indicated that we have two more programmes before five o'clock. Other Members had also indicated...

Mrs. Lawrence: Sir, I indicated, too, that I had four questions to ask and you called other persons in between me asking the questions.

Mr. Chairman: Sorry, I thought that you were finished because other persons continued. My apologies.

Mrs. Lawrence: That is alright.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 111 - Elections Commission - \$126,700,000

Mr. Trotman: I note that under project code 2501000, the Commission is requesting \$126 million to do several things, including completion and construction of buildings and trestles, purchase of vehicles – boats and engines – and furniture and equipment.

In relation to the first item, completion and construction of buildings and trestles, could the Prime Minister say which buildings or trestles are to be completed, which are to be constructed, and the appropriate cost?

Secondly, in relation to the purchase of vehicles – boats, engines, *et cetera* - could we be advised as to the type of vehicles that are to be bought, the number of boats, the type of outboard engines, *et cetera*, and the cost?

Mr. Hinds: There are four buildings to be constructed this year in Regions 2, 3, 5 and 8 and there is completion of two buildings in Parika and Charity, and some trestles involved bring that group up to \$65.5 million. There are seven 4x4 double cabs pickups and that is at a cost of \$38.5 million plus one boat and engine for \$2.5 million; that is a total of \$41 million. Those two together are already \$106 million out of it.

There are a number of smaller equipment - 12 desktop computers, two photo printers, 67 fans, 15 water dispensers, three air conditioning units, seven cell phones and one grass cutter. That is the list.

Mr. Trotman: Follow-up, Mr. Chairman: I wonder if the Prime Minister can make available a complete list in writing of all of those things that have to be dealt with under this head.

Mr. Hinds: Yes, we can.

Ms. Ally: A follow-up to the question asked by Hon. Member Mr. Trotman: May I ask the Hon. Prime Minister which locations these vehicles are going to be posted? I note that it is one boat and engine, according to his answer.

Mr. Hinds: The boat and engine is for Mabaruma and the seven pickups are to be spread along the coast and Mackenzie; there is one for Headquarters, one for Mackenzie, one for Anna Regina, one for Plantain Walk, one for Corriverton, and one for Fort Wellington, New Amsterdam.

Ms. Ally: A follow-up, Mr. Chairman: Could the Hon. Prime Minister say whether these vehicles and the boat, in particular, will have distinguishing marks on them?

Mr. Hinds: I have been advised that all of GECOM's assets are marked.

Ms. Ally: Wonderful.

Mr. Greenidge: I am a little puzzled as regards the item which is designated Elections Commission. I am wondering whether there is some rationale for assigning this equipment or calling it "Elections Commission" as opposed to the 'Elections Administration'. I noticed that in the...

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Greenidge, I am having some problem hearing you. There is a telephone near to the Prime Minister's microphone or yours.

Mr. Greenidge: No, it is not mine.

Mr. Chairman: Prime Minister, did you understand the question, sir?

Mr. Hinds: I think so.

Mr. Chairman: Very well.

Mr. Hinds: The Elections Commission is always there. The Elections Administration deals with administering specific elections so that is why the things are acquired for the Elections Commission.

Mr. Chairman: I do not know whether that was suffice, Mr. Greenidge.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, I do not know whether the Prime Minister would like to give himself time to perhaps give a more complete answer later. I am gleaning from his response that if there were an election to be held in 2014 and additional equipment was needed for the election itself, it would come under Elections Administration. Is that correct?

Mr. Hinds: Yes.

Mr. Greenidge: Thanks very much. That is clear.

Programme: 111 - Elections Commission - \$126,700,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

5.04 p.m.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 112 – Elections Administration - \$1,596,356,000

Ms. Ally: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6224 - Print and Non-Print Materials: Could the Hon. Prime Minister indicate what type of material will be dealt with under this head?

Mr. Hinds: These are elections material, statements of poll, tally sheets and ballot papers.

Mr. Scott: Mr. Prime Minister, I would like to know who is administering Programme 112, as I noticed that there are no staffing details.

Mr. Hinds: I think you are coming to the same kind of question that was asked just now. It is the people in Programme 111 who administer the elections.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Having heard the Prime Minister's answer, which I accept, to my question and Mr. Scott's, I am still wondering why under revised 2013 there seems to be no expenditure, although there was a request and we are back for Budget 2014. Have I missed something?

Mr. Hinds: We did not have an election in 2013 so there is no charge on Programme 112 in 2013.

Mr. Greenidge: There was no election in 2012 and you have not announced an election in 2014.

Mr. Hinds: I think that this was carried over from 2011 Elections and, if you notice, it is a very small number compared with what an election really costs.

Mr. Greenidge: What is it that you are anticipating in 2014?

Mr. Hinds: I have been advised by these gentlemen - and I did try to influence them and they rejected all of my efforts to do so - that they are expecting... They are prepared. They follow the instructions of the Commission and they are prepared to hold an election if one is called.

Mr. Greenidge: Local or national?

Mr. Hinds: Whichever one is called.

Ms. Ally: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6294 – Other - \$883.190 million: Could the Hon. Prime Minister explain what is going to be taken care of under this?

Mr. Hinds: Well, it is the staffing of some 12,000 persons possibly for over 2,000 polling stations - 12,000 persons for some period of time.

Ms. Ally: Therefore, may I ask then why it was not under the Temporary Employees, line item 6117, if it is something anticipated because there are no staffing details listed here?

Mr. Hinds: This is a traditional way of doing things where people are hired for a particular purpose. I guess if you were drawing it up, the first time it was drawn up, it might have been done that way, but this is the way it is being done.

Ms. Ally: Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister. This is a changing world anyhow. Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): Could the Hon. Prime Minister say what category of workers or otherwise would be trained?

Mr. Hinds: This is for training all of the same 12,000 or so people and maybe more that would be involved in a particular election.

Ms. Ally: Could the Hon. Prime Minister say whether that amount would include payment for only GECOM governmental workers or whether it would also include the payment for polling agents?

Mr. Hinds: I am being advised that scrutineers are paid during the run-up to elections but polling agents are not paid by the Commission.

Mr. Scott: Thank you, Sir. They have 37 locations that were covered under Programme 111 in terms of the security which would be line item 6281. Could you say which locations you have identified for this line item 6281 location under Programme 112?

Mr. Hinds: I think for Local Government Elections, another 271 offices are expected to be opened and I think it might be getting into 2,000 or something like that - much more.

Mr. Scott: So your security needs have been covered under Programme 111. Could you explain then why it was necessary to go to another non-administrative aspect?

Mr. Hinds: This is security specific for elections at Programme 112.

Programme: 112 – Elections Administration - \$1,596,356,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, that concludes our review of the Guyana Elections Commission. I would like to thank the Hon. Prime Minister, the Chief Elections Officer and the other technical officer who assisted. We thank you for your time spent and for assisting the Prime Minister and the Committee with the answers. Members, this is a convenient time for us to take the suspension for one hour. When we return, we will have much work to do. Thank you very much.

Sitting suspended at 5.12 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 6.03 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Good evening, again, Hon. Members. Please be seated. The sitting has resumed.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, when we took the suspension a few minutes ago, we were just about to begin consideration of the Guyana Defence Force, both current and capital expenditures, defence and security support, so the Hon. Minister will indicate when he is in a position to proceed. You are. Thank you.

Agency: 53 Guyana Defence Force

Current Expenditure

Programme: 531 - Defence and Security Support - \$7,272,801,000

Programme: 531 - Defence and Security Support - \$7,272,801,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 531 - Defence and Security Support - \$653,452,000

Programme: 531 - Defence and Security Support - \$653,452,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, thank you. I would like to thank the officer who waited so uncomfortably in that chair for so long. Thank you, sir.

Agency: 57 Office of the Ombudsman

Current Expenditure

Programme: 571 – Ombudsman - \$20,015,000

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Basil Williams, after many years of almost crying in the wilderness, you can now ask questions about an ombudsman. As soon as the PM is in a state of readiness, we will proceed with Mr. Basil Williams' questions.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Chairman, I am ready.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the Prime Minister has indicated his readiness.

Mr. B. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could the Hon. Prime Minister give the designations of the five new contracted employees and their salaries?

Mr. Hinds: Registry Officer, Typist Clerk, Confidential Secretary, Administrative Assistant, Office Assistant and Assistant Accountant.

Mr. B. Williams: Thank you, Hon. Prime Minister. Could the Hon. Prime Minister, concerning line item 6284, say what \$11,500,000 represents?

Mr. Hinds: Investigators, legal fees and other services.

Mr. B. Williams: Investigators?

Mr. Hinds: Legal consultation, legal fees, a website and investigators.

Mr. B. Williams: Follow-up: How many investigators?

Mr. Hinds: As the need arises...

Mr. B. Williams: How many are catered for under that head?

Mr. Hinds: None is catered for specifically here. There is a sum of money that is available to pay for investigators as the need arises.

Mr. Williams: Finally, would they be independent of the Police Force, independent investigators and not policemen?

Mr. Hinds: I am advised that that would be so.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In view of the fact of the constitutional importance of this Office and what appears to be the very skimpy provision for staff to support the

Ombudsman, may I ask whether the Prime Minister can indicate to us what the request that emanated from the Ombudsman was? What exactly did he ask for by way of staff?

Mr. Hinds: I am advised that more or less what has been provided here for is what was being looked for.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister. I am glad to hear that.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Programme: 571 – Ombudsman - \$20,015,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: That concludes our review of the Office of the Ombudsman. We thank the Prime Minister and the technical staff who assisted with the very few questions that came. Thank you very much. The irony is, sometimes, that you can wait ten hours to spend five minutes in the hot seat.

Agency: 58 Public Service Appellate Tribunal

Current Expenditure

Programme: 581 - Public Service Appellate Tribunal - \$5,294,000

Mr. B. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6011 refers to statutory wages. Mr. Prime Minister, does that refer to wages for a three-man appellate commission?

Mr. Hinds: I think one person is expected to be full time. I think there is only one person. The Chairman is traditionally the full-time member.

Mr. B. Williams: Follow-up: Could the Hon. Prime Minister say how soon the Public Service Appellate Tribunal will be constituted?

Mr. Hinds: I am advised, and I do believe that my advice is true, that there have been consultations or attempts at consultations between His Excellency the President and the Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition [Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger]: Mr. Chairman, I think that the Prime Minister is being badly advised. There have been no such consultations.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. B. Williams: Follow-up: Could the Hon. Prime Minister indicate what were the reasons that, for all these years, this Public Service Appellate Tribunal was not constituted? That is certainly before 2011.

Mr. Hinds: I am not so sure that this line of questioning falls within the Estimates but I am advised that there has been a search for a suitable candidate.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Prime Minister. Hon. Member, just by way of a reminder, the Standing Orders speak of a debate ensuing, not an interrogation but our practice has been more of an interrogation. But there is nothing wrong with a Member posing a question as it relates to the policy because, indeed, year after year, we have been voting sums for a Public Service Appellate Tribunal and so it is more than a fair question to ask when this tribunal will be established. I think that that is a very valid question in the context of what we are being asked to do.

Mr. B. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Programme: 581 - Public Service Appellate Tribunal - \$5,294,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Estimates

Programme: 581 – Public Service Appellate Tribunal - \$3,400,000

Programme: 581 – Public Service Appellate Tribunal - \$3,400,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, that concludes our review of the Estimates of the Public Service Appellate Tribunal. Hopefully, next year we will be able to get a report from the Hon. Prime Minister that there has been established a Public Service Appellate Tribunal. We thank the officer as well who has been waiting for some hours for his ten minutes in the chair. Thank you.

Agency: 02 Office of the Prime Minister

Current Expenditure

Programme: 021 - Prime Minister's Secretariat - \$220,476,000

Programme: 021 - Prime Minister's Secretariat - \$220,476,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 021 - Prime Minister's Secretariat - \$4,383,175,000

Programme: 021 - Prime Minister's Secretariat - \$4,383,175,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Prime Minister and your staff, thank you very much for the few moments that you spent with us.

Agency: 07 Parliament Office

Current Expenditure

Programme: 071 - National Assembly - \$988,754,000

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the Hon. Prime Minister, line item 6113: I note in the staffing details that you maintained the one staff and, unlike the others, I note here that you have budgeted the same amount as you did in 2013. The revised shows \$763 million and here you are budgeting \$763 million. I am asking whether the 5% did not come into place here and if it did not come into place here, why not?

Mr. Hinds: I am advised that it would suffice.

Mrs. Lawrence: Is the person not getting the 5% increase as we were told about the others? It is not a contracted staff, PM.

Mr. Hinds: I am advised that the 5% was already in the \$763 for the revised 2013.

Mrs. Lawrence: I will move on to line item 6223 but I am a little baffled by the first answer. For line item 6223, given all of the Committees during the year for the Parliament, I am asking whether this amount is adequate or whether we are going to see a supplemental coming to cover expenses such as this and others.

Mr. Hinds: Yes, there is a belief that it would be adequate.

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister. For line item 6223, I am not sure whether this question is relevant to this line. However, I hope that you will assist me. Would this line item cover materials for the library? If so, how much? The library of the Parliament is really in need of upgrading.

Mr. Hinds: I am told that the library is catered for in this. I am told that for purchase of new books, there is \$1.5 million.

Mrs. Lawrence: I will rest for now, Mr. Chairman.

Programme: 071 - National Assembly - \$988,754,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditures

Programme: 071 – National Assembly - \$70,400,000

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Project code 2500500 - Land Transport: Could the Hon. Prime Minister indicate how many motor cycles we are talking about here?

Mr. Hinds: Yes, one motor cycle for moving mail around Georgetown.

Programme: 071 – National Assembly - \$70,400,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, thank you again and to the staff of the National Assembly for assisting the Prime Minister and the Committee.

6.25 p.m.

Agency: 04 Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Current Expenditure

Programme: 041 – Development of Foreign Policy – \$929,798,000

Ms. Selman: Mr. Chairman, line item 6112: Could the Hon. Minister provide the designations and emoluments of the three senior technical employees?

Minister of Foreign Affairs [Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett]: Two Foreign Trade Officers at \$175,137 per month and one Expenditure, Planning and Management Analyst at \$112,604 per month.

Ms. Selman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6116: Could the Hon. Minister provide the designations and emoluments of the four additional employees contracted, and the designation and emoluments of the three highest paid contracted employees?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: That would be one Accountant, one Driver, one Cleaner and one VIP Lounge Attendant; those are the four. With respect to the highest salary for contracted employees, it would be \$556,009; the lowest would be \$39,540 for the Cleaner; the highest is for the Director General.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, would the Minister be good enough to tell us whether these newly contracted employees are new employees to the Ministry altogether? I notice, for example, that admin staff has also gone down by exactly four. Is there a connection?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The Lounge Attendant was moved from Programme 043 to this Programme and the other three are new.

Ms. Selman: Mr. Chairman, line item 6131: Could the Hon. Minister indicate what items are provided for under this head - Other Direct Labour Costs?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The reduction was because we were paying responsibility allowance and are no longer paying that responsibility allowance. This is what we use this item for I am told.

Ms. Selman: Line item 6242: Could the Hon. Minister provide, in writing, the list of buildings for maintenance under this line item?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It is very short so I can give you. It is basically the washing of the building of the Ministry and refurbishing of the main conference room and the security hut.

Ms. Selman: Line item 6284: Could the Hon. Minister say what other goods and services will be purchased under this line item?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: We use that item to pay bank charges.

Ms. Selman: Line item 6294: Could the Hon. Minister inform this National Assembly what other operating expenses are being catered for under “Other” and could the Hon. Minister also say what is responsible for the increase in the budgetary allocation?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: We will be hosting our Heads of Mission Conference this year, hence the increase. But we use it for receptions, lunches, gifts, handling charges for private aircraft if we have a Head of State or other officials visiting Guyana, transportation for visiting delegations, and hotel accommodation when we are providing that.

Ms. Selman: Line item 6302: Could the Hon. Minister describe the nature of training, the number of potential beneficiaries and indicate whether any scholarships will be offered and, if so, whether these are going to be local, international, or online?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: There is a combination of training we do here; some are partially funded and some are fully funded. We use part of this line item for the Foreign Service Institute (FSI). In 2013, 18 of our officers were trained by the DiploFoundation. There was training from Singapore, Australia, Brazil, India, Mexico, Switzerland and Germany.

Ms. Selman: Line item 6265: Could the Hon. Minister indicate what is responsible for the increase in the allocation, and what other transport, travel and postage will be obtained under this head?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: We use this line item for posting and reposting staff. We will be posting staff to New Delhi, Kuwait and South Africa under this line item.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, could I take the Minister back to line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings? Last year, when we discussed the Ministry’s activities in relation to buildings, lands and so forth, we got the impression that there was consideration being given to acquiring some or

one building elsewhere. I do not see anything happening in relation to rentals. Could you give us an update?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: That will be under Programme 042. This here caters for rental of the residence of the CARICOM Secretary General (SG). As I mentioned in my budget presentation, we will be having some Columbian lecturers to teach the Spanish language. We also use this line item for that.

Mr. Greenidge: I will like to thank the Minister for that explanation. But as she has made mention of rental of the facility for the CARICOM SG, may I have from the Minister an indication of what they propose to do with the residence which was formally utilised by the SG in Camp Street?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: We have not discussed what we plan to do with it but certainly it has now been reverted to the Government. I know Minister Benn was involved with doing some rehabilitation work there. I am sure a decision will be made shortly on what we can use that facility for.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Was there not an agreement between the Government and CARICOM regarding the specific use of that building?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: No, not in relation to that building. Our responsibility is to provide accommodation for the Secretary General, and his staff identified accommodation for him which is different to the one on Camp Street and that is why we are paying the rental for that new accommodation. We are working at the moment to build suitable premises for the Secretary General.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, at the moment, it is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that has control of the building. Is the Ministry quite sure this is the former CARICOM residence... Is the Minister certain there is no agreement regarding the use of the building? Just to explain to you, my understanding is that there was an agreement or commitment on the part of the Government for the use of the building specifically for the housing of the CARICOM Secretary General. I want to know whether that has been changed.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: No, the agreement we have is to provide suitable accommodation for Secretary General, not an agreement to provide that specific premises on Camp Street. When the new Secretary General was appointed, that accommodation was found to be unsuitable because of the size of his family and a new building was identified, which we are renting, even as we look at building a house to accommodate the Secretary General. So there is no agreement with respect to that specific building.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, if there are no other questions, I would like to take the Minister to line item 6322 – Subsidies and Contributions to International Organisations. Mr. Chairman, I am asking a question on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, specifically CARICOM. I want to ask the Minister about the contribution of the Government and Guyana to CARICOM and the work of CARICOM in relation to the Canada-CARICOM Free Trade Agreement. Where is it especially as regards the negotiations?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Thank you for your question. Mr. Chairman, on page 407 of the Estimates, there is \$298,863,000 paid to CARICOM and would include both the Secretariat and the Office of Trade Negotiations; under that Office, it would include the negotiations with Canada.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you. A follow-up, Mr. Chairman...

Mr. Chairman: We are really not at page 407.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Page 407 is the list of organisations and the payments.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, go ahead.

Mr. Greenidge: Contributions to International Organisations: CARICOM is one of them. I want to know, in relation to the contribution to CARICOM and in relation to the trade negotiations being carried out on behalf of the region by the Secretariat and its Office of Trade Negotiation (OTN) arm, the amount that the Government of Guyana and those of the region contribute to the funding of the College of Negotiators.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The OTN submitted a budget and, in keeping with the formula, Guyana is providing the full amount – I think it is 7% that we paid towards the budget. This

amount we have here requesting your approval includes the full amount we are paying towards the College of Negotiators, the entire trade negotiations programme to be done by CARICOM which would include CARICOM/Canada.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The Minister has given us the share that we bear in relation to the overall OTN budget and that is helpful. But I would like to also know what the contribution to the negotiations themselves is, specifically in the context of negotiations. You have a College and the College in its work has a series of workshops which are preparatory to the negotiations, and then there are the negotiations themselves. I am raising this question because the Minister has, herself, made reference to this matter of the funding of the negotiators.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Mr. Chairman, we have made a very conscious decision in CARICOM to avoid certain things that happened in the past, so we are going to fund the negotiations. So the OTN was asked to prepare its budget for the work for 2014 which would include the CARICOM/Canada trade negotiations. The amount that is included here is the complete cost Guyana is being asked to fund in terms of the formula.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, would the Minister be good enough to tell us what part of those negotiations were paid for by CARICOM Governments in the past and which part they are bearing now? Which specific parts were paid in the past?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Mr. Chairman, I would not mind providing that but I think that question would relate to a question that would have to come to me. This line item is for the 2014 Budget.

Mr. Chairman: The other thing is I do not know whether you can speak on behalf of other governments.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, I am not asking here to speak on behalf of other governments. I am asking here to tell me what it is Guyana is funding.

Mr. Chairman: The question you asked was: what did the other CARICOM countries contribute?

Mr. Greenidge: Collectively; the formula is shared. What I am interested in is this: the Minister had made allegations about negotiators in the past and I would like to know what specifically they fund now that they did not fund before, Guyana being part of them as one of many countries. I am not interested in what Antigua did as regards what Guyana did. I am interested in what Guyana did as part of that funding.

Mr. Chairman: Very well. Minister, are you in a position to provide an answer?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Mr. Chairman, I can disaggregate the core and the OTN budget and provide that before the evening is out, in terms of what Guyana is providing as it relates to the formula. But I cannot provide the individual sums for the other CARICOM countries. I can provide what Guyana would be providing and you can do the multiplication and get what the total is.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, I am not interested in what individual Caribbean Governments are paying. I am interested in what Guyana, as part of the region, is funding, the activities in the context of negotiations. For purposes of clarification, if I may, Mr. Chairman, so there is no confusion, there are a variety of things by the OTN, and specifically in the case of negotiations, there is the preparation...

Mr. Chairman: The Minister has said she will provide these later in the evening.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, I am taking the trouble of explaining to you because a written question was put to the Minister and, up to today, that question has not been properly answered apparently because of confusion. I am trying to ensure that now there is not that excuse.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Greenidge, is it that the question was answered but not satisfactorily or not at all because I would have to send for the question.

Mr. Greenidge: The Minister indicated in the question...

Mr. Chairman: You said a written question has been submitted.

Mr. Greenidge: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Having made a comment and then having a question following up from the comment, the Minister indicated that she could not be expected - in my words - to answer that question. That was the sense of the answer. And I believe that in asking

for funds for these activities, it is proper here, if not in the written question, to get an answer, and that is why I came back with it.

Mr. Chairman: I see. Minister, please.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Mr. Chairman, you would appreciate that I cannot answer a question on the 2014 Budget in 2013; we are dealing with the 2014 Budget. The question that was asked of me had nothing to do with this Budget but had to do with my budget speech some time ago. That is a different matter. What we are dealing with here is the Budget and Mr. Greenidge has asked me what aspects of the OTN's budget we are funding. We do not choose line items in CARICOM of what a country would fund; it is apportioned across all the member states. What I am saying I am willing to provide to him is the lump sum Guyana is providing. With respect to the questions asked previously, I had answered them in the sense that I cannot speak for the CARIFORUM Directorate.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, just to say that the Minister indicated even just now that as regards the 2014 Budget, they are taking measures to ensure that things that happened in the past will not happen in the future. I am just responding to the Minister's own comments.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I believe, in anticipation of the information being provided later, we will proceed to give our approval or non-approval of these Estimates.

Programme: 041 – Development of Foreign Policy – \$929,798,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 041 – Development of Foreign Policy – \$18,000,000

Ms. Selman: Project code 2400300: Could the Hon. Minister indicate how many vehicles will be purchased, the type and estimated cost of each?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: We are thinking of buying two large busses.

Ms. Selman: Mr. Chairman, project code 2501100: Could the Hon. Minister provide the quantity of each category in writing?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Sure, we can provide it.

Programme: 041 – Development of Foreign Policy – \$18,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 042 – Foreign Policy Promotion - \$2,351,760,000

Ms. Selman: Mr. Chairman, line item 6112: Could the Hon. Minister indicate the designation and emoluments of the senior technical employee?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: A Foreign Trade Officer at \$167,000.

Ms. Selman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6113: Could the Hon. Minister provide, in writing, the positions of those employees captured under Other Technical and Craft Skilled?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The Minister will provide.

Ms. Selman: Line item 6116: Could the Hon. Minister also provide, in writing, the designations and emoluments of the contracted employees?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Yes.

Ms. Selman: Line item 6131: Could the Hon. Minister say what overhead expenses fall under Other Direct Labour Costs?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: This would be overtime for drivers at the various missions; sometimes we have to pay responsibility allowance. But basically, it is used for overtime for our drivers.

Ms. Selman: Line item 6241: Could the Hon. Minister say what is responsible for the increase in budgetary provision for the rental of buildings, how many buildings are being rented and for what purpose?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The increase was due to the fact that we have moved the consulate in New York. The rent in the past used to be US\$10,700, but it is now US\$19,600. We paid a lower rent because when we rented that premises, it was just after 9/11 so the price was very low, but we had to remove and this is the rent we pay now.

Mr. Chairman: What is the new address?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: I can provide the new address, Mr. Chairman. In terms of the number of buildings being rented, we paid three rentals in Washington. Mr. Chairman, could I provide this in writing, because it is a long list?

Mr. Chairman: I heard the Chief Whip saying to the House but I have been suggesting that not every Member wishes to have information on every single thing; to just be running paper to everything... If a Member wishes indicates that he or she wishes to have that information, it would be provided. If you wish to provide it to the entire House, that is up to you. But I am sure you should be leading the fight in favour of conservation. But go ahead.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Mr. Chairman, let me just give...

Mr. Chairman: The Member wishes to receive it in written form.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: So it is just the mission and the number of premises we rent.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Ms. Selman: Line item 6255: Could the Hon. Minister say what other infrastructure will be maintained under this line item?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: This is regular seasonal maintenance at the various missions.

Ms. Selman: Mr. Chairman, line item 6242: Could the Hon. Minister provide, in writing, the buildings which have been identified for maintenance?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It would be the missions we own in London, Washington and Ottawa.

Ms. Selman: Line item 6284: Could the Hon. Minister say what other goods and services will be purchased under this line item?

And Mr. Chairman, could I ask about line item 6294 as I am standing? Could the Hon. Minister say what other operating expenses will be catered for under this line item?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Line item 6284, like I said for Programme 041, will be bank charges but from the end of the mission. And as you know, Mr. Chairman, we now have a mission in South Africa and a consulate in Barbados, hence the increased cost.

Under line item 6294, we normally use this line item for gifts for departing ambassadors, contributions to diplomatic groupings and stipends for some honorary consuls.

Ms. Selman: Mr. Chairman, line item 6302: Could the Hon. Minister say how many persons will benefit from training and what would be the nature of the training?

Ms. Selman: This is basically language training for our staff.

Programme: 042 – Foreign Policy Promotion – \$2,351,760,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 042 - Foreign Policy Promotion - \$71,600,000

Ms. Selman: Project code 1200500: Could the Hon. Minister provide a breakdown of the estimated budgetary provision to be spent on the following as outlined in the project profile?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I can provide the individual budgeted sum to the Hon. Member.

Ms. Selman: Project code 2400300: Could the Hon. Minister indicate the number of vehicles to be purchased and their type?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Two vehicles will be purchased - one for the High Commission in London and one for the military attaché in Brazil and South Africa.

Mr. Chairman: Brazil and South Africa or you meant South Africa instead of Brazil?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: There are three, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Selman: Project code 2501100: Could the Hon. Minister identify the overseas missions that will benefit from the purchase of furniture and equipment?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It will be all of them: different quantities but all of the missions.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, project code 1200500: Could the Hon. Minister indicate whether there is any allocation for a building in Suriname that the Ministry is either renting or buying or something of that sort?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: No, Mr. Chairman. This is just for Washington, London and Ottawa.

Programme: 042 - Foreign Policy Promotion – \$71,600,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 043 – Development of Foreign Trade Policy - \$39,450,000

Ms. Selman: Line item 6111: Could the Hon. Minister say what is the designation and emolument of the administrative staff?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It is the Director of Foreign Trade at \$260,459 per month.

6.55 p.m.

Ms. Selman: Line item 6112, Senior Technical: Could the Hon. Minister provide the positions and emoluments of the Senior Technical employees?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: They are four Foreign Trade Officers at \$76,291 per month.

Ms. Selman: Line item 6116, Contracted Employees: Could the Hon. Minister provide the designations and emoluments of the contracted employees?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: They are the Deputy Permanent Secretary - \$450,592, Systems Administrator - \$139,449, Stores Clerk - \$41,083, Office Assistant - \$39,540, two Foreign Service Officers - \$69,355 and the Clerk II (General) - \$58,611.

Ms. Selman: Line item 6294, Other: Could the Hon. Minister say what the “Other” operating expenses are?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: I am advised that we use this line item when we cannot accommodate some of the costs, which are just above it, such as refreshments and dietary. That is the explanation I am given.

Programme: 043 - Development of Foreign Trade Policy - \$39,450,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 043 – Development of Foreign Trade Policy - \$600,000

Ms. Selman: Project 2506300, Office Equipment and Furniture: Could the Hon. Minister say where the furniture and equipment will be placed?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: They will be placed in the Foreign Trade Department.

Programme: 043 – Development of Foreign Trade Policy - \$600,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, this completes our review of the Estimates for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Again, I thank the Minister and her technical officers, the Director General and others who have supported the Minister and aided in the satisfactory answers to questions sought. Minister, please be reminded that you undertook to provide information to some Members, Mr. Greenidge and Ms. Selman.

Members, prepared yourself to consider the Ministry of Legal Affairs. I believe at this stage, in addition to considering the Estimates, we are to hear from the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Members, in fulfilment of an undertaking given to the House by the Hon. Minister of Finance, regarding the budget for the Supreme Court, I have requested the Hon. Minister to make a pronouncement before we begin consideration of the Ministry of Legal Affairs. I had expected this to be done since last evening, but I believe it will be done before we begin consideration of the Ministry of Legal Affairs. Minister, please go ahead.

Dr. Singh: My recollection might be somewhat different from yours. I was of the impression that I had consulted you and the Clerk about when a motion should be moved.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, but you said that you would lay it over yesterday with the Clerk. That was my understanding.

Dr. Singh: My distinct understanding was that I enquired whether I could give it to the Clerk today. I thought that I got an answer in the affirmative, but I might be mistaken, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: You are. Thank you.

Dr. Singh: In any event, as indicated on the first day of consideration of the Estimates, it is my intention to move, at the appropriate time, whenever that might be, that the respective line items under Agency 55, Supreme Court, be reduced by an amount equivalent essentially to the last eight months of expenditure. As explained to my colleagues, on that side of the House when we met, it is collapsing those last eight months worth of expenditure into a lump sum to be budgeted for under line item 6321, which is where the other constitutional Third Schedule items are budgeted.

In addition, I have prepared and made available, presumably they will be copied and circulated shortly, an insert into the Estimates which will now be numbered page 617 (a), because there is a page 617 already, in Appendix T that deals with budgets of statutory bodies and that Appendix will outline, in greater detail by the respective chart of account classifications, the lump sum. That Appendix will provide a disaggregation of the lump sum.

As I said, I have the document ready. I will ask the Clerk to circulate it. It has been ready for some time, Sir, and I was, as I said, awaiting instructions on when to circulate it. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: I really would have liked for the House to see it before we began consideration, of these Estimates, quite frankly. We have not seen it. Mr. Clerk, are you in possession of it already? Very well Members, the document will be replicated, forthwith and circulated. We will begin consideration of the Estimates for the Ministry of Legal Affairs.

Agency: 52 Ministry of Legal Affairs

Current Expenditure

Programme: 521- Main Office - \$20,752,000

Mr. Bond: Under line item 6116, Contracted Employees: Could the Minister state the designation and the emoluments received by the employee?

Mr. Nandlall: I presume that the Hon. Member is referring to Programme 1. There are two new employees. One System Developmental Coordinator, the salary is \$159,216 and one Systems Support Officer, the salary is \$52,319.

Mr. Bond: Line item 6133, Benefits and Allowance: Could the Minister list for us the benefits to be received, the benefits and allowances and the types of benefits and allowances paid to the employees and the amount?

Mr. Nandlall: It is simply travelling allowances for the Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Coordinator.

Mr. Bond: What is the amount, please, Sir?

Mr. Nandlall: The amount is \$7,859.

Mr. Bond: Could the Minister explain, under line item 6281, Equipment Maintenance, the 210% increase in security services?

Mr. Nandlall: This is in relation to the installation of a security alarm system at the home of the Permanent Secretary at a rate of \$52,000 per quarter.

Mr. Bond: Could the Minister explain, under line item 6302, (Training including Scholarships) the type of training to be received by the employees and whether such trainings are in keeping with the Ministry's policy goals of ensuring optimal utilisation of financial, human and physical resources that are allocated to the Ministry?

Mr. Nandlall: Could you repeat that? I did not hear you.

Mr. Bond: Could the Minister explain, under line item 6302, the nature of the training and whether it is in keeping with the policy goals of the Ministry?

Mr. Nandlall: The training includes the continual training of personnel to administer the newly installed software in relation to the Monitoring and Evaluation Oversight Programme installed under the Justice Improvement Programme. The *Official Gazette* is now online and we are

training personnel to man that system, as well as the law revision exercise, which is expected to be a continuing one.

Mr. Bond: Mr. Chairman, if you may just allow me a few seconds. I do not want to get to “Training (including Scholarships)” for the other agencies, but I did find a pattern, in terms of the Ministries’ budgetary allocations under “Training (including Scholarships)”. In some instances, if I can just make an analogy to what is granted under “Refreshments”, these sums are 37 times more than what is granted to “Training (including Scholarships)”. I want to ask a general question. It is whether the Minister in his budgetary allocations finds more significance in “Refreshments and Meals”. If we use line item 6293, Refreshment and Meals, as an example, it is six times more than what is allocated here.

In other instances, as I have said Minister, there is no training and scholarships, and in some instances it is very meagre. I just want to ask if the Minister is aware that under his policy goals training and scholarships are very important. Why is he allocating greater sums for “Refreshments and Meals” over “Training (including Scholarships)”?

Mr. Nandlall: That question demonstrates my learned friend’s unfamiliarity with the way central Government is run, particularly in relation to scholarships. Scholarships are centralised by the Public Service Ministry. The Ministry of Legal Affairs does not administer any scholarship programme.

Mr. Bond: I think the Minister misunderstood me. Please, if I may, the same line item 6302, could the Minister explain this? The policy of the Ministry is to ensure optimal utilisation of financial, human and physical resources. I did not put scholarships and training there. It is what the Government put. I did not put those words. I am asking the Minister for an answer as to whether or not it is his Ministry’s intention to allocate more money to food rather than to training his employees.

Mr. Nandlall: I have answered the question already. The Ministry of Legal Affairs administers no scholarship programme - none at all.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you have been provided with an answer. Are there any other questions?

Mr. Bond: No, please. I am done here.

Mr. Greenidge: Let me take the Attorney General back to line item 6116, Contracted Employees, if I may, which I see has increased significantly from Budget 2013 to the allocation that is now requested, and even from what was spent in 2013 to what it is now. This is a very significant increase, nearly 40%, as compared to the employees' number, which does not seem to have changed significantly, by one. What is the reason for this? Could he tell us what is happening in relation of the employees' move from four to one - what category?

Mr. Nandlall: I agree that there has been some increase. That increase can be accounted for by the explanation that there was a shortfall in respect to the salary for the Permanent Secretary. The accumulated amount, in terms of arrears owed to those personnel, was paid under this head. It is \$532,675. That, if added to the two new contracted employees, will explain the increase.

Mr. Greenidge: I see one additional contracted employee. Could the Attorney General tell us what the cause of the shortfall is? When he says the shortfall in emolument, what exactly does it mean?

Mr. Nandlall: I am told that it had to do with some shortfall from the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Greenidge: I think, if the Minister needs time to get a better explanation, we can give him the time. An employee, if it is a pensionable employee, has predictable emoluments. If it is a contracted employee, I would assume, has also predictable employment. How is it that there was a shortfall? What is the nature of the shortfall? Has the Ministry employed someone that the Ministry of Finance refuses to pay or to pay at the level they stipulated? The Minister seems to be blaming the Ministry of Finance.

Dr. Singh: If I may shed some light on this. I think this explanation has been tendered on one or two previous occasions and, certainly by me on several previous occasions, it would be recalled that the Ministry of Finance has an allocation called "Revision of Wages and Salaries" now called "Other Employment Costs". Under that allocation ... [**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Is that what it means?] That is precisely what it means. Under that allocation we meet the cost of the annual across the board salary increase, new recruits and any other employment costs shortfall that might be incurred by any other budget agency.

This has been an arrangement that has been in place since time immemorial. I have explained this, I think, on several occasions in the House. What in fact had happened was that in 2013 the Ministry of Legal Affairs exhausted its allocation under this line and required additional funds. Those additional funds were met from the Ministry of Finances “Revision of Wages and Salaries”, now called “Other Employment Costs” allocation. That expenditure is reflected in the Ministry of Finance accounts.

This year we have provided, having ascertained who is there, what their salaries are at the current point in time, a sum that will meet the cost of persons currently in the position. That is essentially what transpired and it is consistent with explanations we provided on this matter.

Programme: 521- Main Office - \$20,752,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 521 – Main Office - \$2,300,000

Programme: 521 – Main Office - \$2,300,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 522 – Ministry Administration - \$49,717,000

Mr. Bond: Line item 6111, Administrative: Could the Minister explain why, after a 42% reduction in staff, there was an 11% increase in wages paid?

Mr. Nandlall: The Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator was transferred to programme 1, from March 2013, at a salary of \$205,787. That person was on programme 2. The Registry Supervisor was promoted to another Ministry. Her salary was \$54,934. That is how the lessening of the expense is accounted for.

Mr. Bond: Line item 6116, Contracted Employee: There is a noted staff increase of four persons. Could the Minister indicate the designations, the emoluments and benefits of the four persons added?

Mr. Nandlall: The four persons are three Accounts Clerks, at a salary of \$47,605 and one Typist Clerk, at a salary of \$43,137.

Mr. Bond: Again, at line item 6281, Security Services, there is that noted increase in security services. Could the Minister explain or give a reason for such increase?

Mr. Nandlall: I am instructed that there was an increase in the number of ranks at the Ministry's main office.

Mr. Bond: We are returning again to the comparison with line items 6302 and 6293. The training here is a miserly \$20,000, but the meals are \$742,000. That is 37 times more than you allot for the training of your staff. How do you expect your Ministry to perform at an optimal level? The meals cannot do it.

Mr. Nandlall: Did he ask a question? Mr. Chairman, I did not hear if the Member asked a question that requires me to answer. I did not hear that. I heard him make a comment.

Mr. Chairman: Very well, no question put.

Mr. Bond: I am asking respectfully, Sir, as to the reason why the training of the staff is 37 times less than what is allotted to "Meals and Refreshments", I am sure for your conferences? Is there is a reason for that, Sir?

Mr. Nandlall: It is because we have less training.

Mr. Bond: Under the same line item I would propose to the Minister... It is not too late, under Standing Order 76, which states, if I may read, subsection (2):

"An amendment to any Head of Expenditure to increase the sum allotted thereto whether in respect of any item or Sub-Head or of the Head itself may only be moved by a Minister who shall signify to the Committee the recommendation or the consent of the Cabinet to the increase."

I will suggest respectfully that for the head, in relations to training, the Minister has enough time to propose an increase.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Bond, can you suggest specific training? It is in the hands of the subject Minister to determine what training is needed, if needed. To just say that you suggest that there be an increase in training without more...It is in the domain of a Minister to determine what training is required in his or her Ministry. To just say that there should be an increase, I mean, it sounds nice, but is not a substantive recommendation, quite frankly.

Mr. Bond: Sir, if I may. During my budget debate I gave a number of instances under which those trainings might occur.

Mr. Chairman: Maybe, it is if you could point to some of them.

Mr. Bond: I will be glad to point my learned friend in the right direction.

Programme: 522- Ministry Administration - \$49,717,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 522 – Ministry Administration - \$8,500,000

Mr. B. Williams: I respectfully refer the Hon. Attorney General to line item 6116, Contracted Employees: Could the Minister provide the designations of the four new employees who earned over \$15.6 million?

Mr. Nandlall: There are three State Counsels, each earning \$217,585, along with a Secretary earning \$54,000.

Mr. Chairman: One second Hon. Attorney General. We are considering the Capital Expenditure for the Ministry's administration. We have covered the Current Expenditure.

Mr. Nandlall: My friend asked about it.

Mr. Chairman: He asked about a current expenditure matter; we are on capital expenditure.

7.25 p.m.

Mr. Bond: It is if the Minister could tell us the intended type of vehicle that he intends to purchase and who would be the recipient of its use.

Mr. Nandlall: I am told that it is expected to be a CRV Honda for Ministry Administration

Programme: 522 – Ministry Administration - \$8,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 523 – Attorney General’s Chambers - \$150,129,000

Mr. B. Williams: The question I posed earlier, the Hon. Attorney General could repeat the answer.

Mr. Nandlall: The answer to the question posed is that there are four new employees, three of whom are State Counsels and one Secretary. The remuneration of the State Counsels is \$217,585 each and for the Secretary is \$54,934.

Mr. B. Williams: Follow-up. Could the Hon. Attorney General indicate whether this means that the Minister is in full strength, right now, in terms of attorneys-at-law at the Attorney General’s Chambers?

Mr. Nandlall: I could answer that very quickly. It does not.

Mr. B. Williams: Follow-up. How many State Counsels are there the Attorney General’s Chambers?

Mr. Nandlall: There are 11 State Counsels.

Mr. B. Williams: In the Drafting Department, what is the complement of it?

Mr. Nandlall: There are currently five counsels in the drafting department.

Mr. B. Williams: Follow-up. Hon. Attorney General, are you saying that you desire more in your Chambers or you are satisfied with what you have?

Mr. Nandlall: I just said what I said. I said what we have. If you are asking me whether I think I need more...

Mr. B. Williams: That is what I am asking you.

Mr. Nandlall: You did not ask me that. You are now asking me that.

I think that it would be desirable that the Ministry should have more, both in the Legal Drafting Department as well as in the Litigation Department. Unfortunately, it is difficult to recruit at the salary that is currently being paid.

Secondly, there is an accommodation problem which we are working to address.

Mr. B. Williams: I respectfully refer the Hon. Attorney General to line item 6111, Administrative, where there is a diminution in the number of the admin employees but there is an increase of nearly \$10 million. Could the Hon. Attorney General explain?

Mr. Nandlall: There was an addition of four State Counsels who were on the job but certain delay was encountered in getting them on the payroll so they were eventually added at a late stage. There is an increase that would now reflect their addition to the payroll, then in addition to that a Deputy Solicitor General was hired and her salary is \$1,018,880. That is what accounts for the increase.

Programme: 523 – Attorney General Chambers - \$150,129,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 524 – State Solicitor - \$ 26,865,000

Mr. B. Williams: Line item 6111, Administrative: Could the Hon. Attorney General tell us what is the designation of that employee in the State Solicitor's Department?

Mr. Nandlall: This is the person who is the Public Trustee and she performs the functions as well of the Official Receiver and State Solicitor. This officer performs three functions.

Mr. B. Williams: What is her salary?

Mr. Nandlall: It is \$1,100,000 or thereabout. I do not have the exact figure here but I gave it last year and of course she benefited from 5% increase in salary.

Programme: 524 – State Solicitor - \$26,865,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 524 – State Solicitor - \$500,000

Programme: 524 – State Solicitor - \$500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 525 – Deeds Registry - \$29,638,000

Mr. B. Williams: I respectfully refer the Hon. Attorney General to Line item 6116, Contracted Employees, which has increased by three but the total sum has dropped from \$17 million last year to \$8 million this year. Could the Hon. Attorney General explain that?

Mr. Nandlall: I did not get the question, Mr. Basil Williams.

Mr. B. Williams: There is an increase under this item by three, but there is a decrease from last year where it was \$9 million and it is now \$2 million.

Mr. Nandlall: Perhaps, it is important that I explain to the Committee that what is before the House, in terms of these Estimates, is only four months of Estimates because the Deeds Registry and Commercial Authority is a statutory body that will come into operation from May 1st, and thereafter their budget will be treated as a lump sum as is reflected in Appendix T of the Estimates. That will change, materially, the information that you have before you.

Mr. B. Williams: Follow-up. Is the Hon. Attorney General saying that, *mutatis mutandis*, the balance that we see reflected under the other items here would collapse into a lump sum for the registry?

Mr. Nandlall: That is correct. It is reflected as page 617 of Appendix T.

Mr. Bond: I was focusing my attention on line item 6271, Telephone Charges, because questions were asked on most of the other line items. It is whether the Minister is aware of the

benefits of having a Voice over Internet Protocol (ViOP) system in which internet phone calls could substantially reduce his expenses related to telephone charges because I know in the registries and the High Court there are internet facilities.

Mr. Nandlall: The Deeds Registry utilises the available telephone facilities that are in the Government system. My friend's question, again, is predicated on the assumption that we make overseas calls. That is the only material difference I think is in relation to the ViOP mechanism.

Mr. Bond: You do not know, Mr. Nandlall it can be used to make local calls too.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Line item 6116, Contracted Employees: Could the Hon. Attorney General indicate whether this number covers the Land Registry staff as well?

Mr. Nandlall: No. It is only the Deeds Registry and what will now be called the Commercial Registry.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I have seen nowhere in the Estimates where Land Registry is dealt with. Is there some item where it is dealt with?

Mr. Nandlall: I do not hold the ministerial responsibility for the Land Registry.

Mr. B. Williams: The Staffing Details, could the Hon. Attorney General indicate the salaries of the head of the proposed Deeds Registry and Commercial Authority and for the deputy or the three senior persons?

Mr. Nandlall: The salaries are \$400,000 for the Registrar of Deeds and \$300,000 for the Deputy Registrar of Deeds.

Programme: 525 – Deeds Registry - \$29,638,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, this concludes our review of the Ministry of Legal Affairs. I thank the Hon. Minister of Legal Affairs and his staff for their able assistance rendered both to the Minister and to the House.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, I do not think that we did the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are going to take a 15-minute recess. I have received the document from the Hon. Minister of Finance but my laypersons might need to understand it a bit better before I proceed further.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, perhaps, you did not hear me.

Mr. Chairman: I heard you very well. We will take a 15-minute recess.

Assembly resumed

Sitting suspended at 7.40 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 8.14 p.m.

In Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: The suspension was taken at my behest really because I wanted to be able to satisfy myself that the motion submitted by the Hon. Minister of Finance met the expectations of all those who discussed this matter a few days ago, I think it was sometime last week. After much heated discussions and debate we are satisfied that we will proceed with this.

I also wish to state that I had been under the impression that the Minister of Finance had spoken to me about this on a previous date. In fact, it was yesterday. I wish to correct myself that it was yesterday that the Minister said to me that he would have presented these documents, in his word “tomorrow”, but in my mind I thought it might have been on Friday. The mistake is mine and I correct that mistake and any misapprehension that may have flown there from.

We are at the stage of going on to consider the Supreme Court, so I invite the Hon. Minister of Finance to move his motion.

Dr. Singh: I now wish to move, if now is the appropriate time, Sir, I will be guided by your instruction.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I think, now is the appropriate time.

AMENDMENTS TO BE MOVED TO THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2014 IN THE COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

That the amounts shown in Column 4 for the Agencies, Account Codes, and Descriptions listed below be reduced and / or increased by the amounts shown in Columns 5 and 6:

Col 1	Col 2	Col 3	Col 4	Col 5	Col 6	Col 7
Page	Agency and Description	Acc code & Description	Estimated Amounts			
			Provided	Reduction	Addition	Proposed
			<i>(G\$Mn)</i>	<i>(G\$Mn)</i>	<i>(G\$Mn)</i>	<i>(G\$Mn)</i>
244	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6011 - Statutory Wages and Salaries	224.181	151.99	-	72.19
244	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6012 - Statutory Benefits and Allowances	74.503	34.57	-	39.94
244	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6111 - Administrative	45.62	31.71	-	13.91
244	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6113 - Other Technical and Craft Skilled	4.263	2.84	-	1.42
244	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6114 - Clerical and Office Support	41.043	27.37	-	13.68
244	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6115 - Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled	9.441	6.29	-	3.15
244	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6116 - Contracted Employees	103.804	73.17	-	30.63
244	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6131 - Other	0.31	0.25		

	Court	Direct Labour Costs			-	0.06
244	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6133 - Benefits and Allowances	11.402	2.69	-	8.72
244	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6134 - National Insurance	6.663	4.46	-	2.21
244	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6221 - Drugs and Medical Supplies	0.54	0.54	-	-
244	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6222 - Field Materials and Supplies	0.374	0.36	-	0.01
244	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6223 - Office Materials and Supplies	17.345	16.57	-	0.78
244	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6224 - Print and Non-Print	35	34.42	-	0.58
244	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants	5.009	3.89	-	1.12
244	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6241 - Rental of Buildings	11.16	8.66	-	2.50
244	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6242 - Maintenance of Buildings	19.2	16.69	-	2.51
244	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6243 - Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies	5.7	5.20	-	0.50
244	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6255 - Maintenance of Other Infrastructure	5	4.51	-	0.49
244	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6261 - Local Travel and Subsistence	8.291	6.86	-	1.43
244	55: Supreme Court	551/6263 - Postage, Telex and Cablegrams	1.171	1.11	-	0.06
245	55: Supreme Court	551/6264 - Vehicle	4.322	3.58		

	Court	Spares and Service			-	0.75
245	55: Supreme Court	551/6271 - Telephone Charges	26.595	25.86	-	0.73
245	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6272 - Electricity Charges	17.62	15.60	-	2.02
245	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6273 - Water Charges	4.036	4.02	-	0.01
245	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6281 - Security Services	29.147	23.41	-	5.74
245	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6282 - Equipment Maintenance	8.448	7.13	-	1.31
245	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6283 - Cleaning and Extermination Services	4	3.17	-	0.83
245	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6284 - Other	19.026	16.83	-	2.19
245	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6291 - National and Other Events	0.602	0.55	-	0.05
245	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6293 - Refreshments and Meals	8	6.84	-	1.16
245	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6294 - Other	36.517	33.28	-	3.24
245	55: Supreme Court	551/6302 - Training (including Scholarships)	0.29	0.29	-	-
246	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6111 - Administrative	115.707	77.20	-	38.503
246	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6113 - Other Technical and Craft Skilled	6.022	4.03	-	1.994

246	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6114 - Clerical and Office Support	20.175	13.55	-	6.621
246	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6115 - Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled	0.542	0.36	-	0.181
246	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6116 - Contracted Employees	82.636	57.53	-	25.103
246	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6117 -Temporary Employees	6.146	4.26	-	1.885
246	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6131 - Other Direct Labour Costs	0.468	0.47	-	-
246	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6133 - Benefits and Allowances	24.246	10.58	-	13.665
246	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6134 - National Insurance	5.194	3.49	-	1.703
246	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6221 - Drugs and Medical Supplies	0.600	0.60	-	-
246	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6222 - Field Materials and Supplies	0.765	0.77	-	-
246	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6223 - Office Materials and Supplies	9.000	8.40	-	0.596
246	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6224 - Print and Non-Print	12.000	11.57	-	0.431
246	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6241 - Rental of Buildings	15.360	11.55	-	3.814
246	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6242 - Maintenance of Buildings	15.000	12.66	-	2.337
246	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6243 - Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies	6.000	5.50	-	0.500

246	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6255 - Maintenance of Other Infrastructure	5.820	5.34	-	0.483
246	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6261 - Local Travel and Subsistence	29.755	20.14	-	9.616
246	55: Supreme Court	552/6263 - Postage, Telex and Cablegrams	0.260	0.23	-	0.032
247	55: Supreme Court	552/6271 - Telephone Charges	1.428	1.02	-	0.404
247	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6272 - Electricity Charges	6.500	4.91	-	1.594
247	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6273 - Water Charges	4.968	4.97	-	-
247	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6281 - Security Services	19.441	15.01	-	4.428
247	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6282 - Equipment Maintenance	2.500	2.29	-	0.208
247	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6283 - Cleaning and Extermination Services	3.272	2.96	-	0.310
247	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6284 - Other	7.000	4.90	-	2.100
247	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6291 - National and Other Events	0.400	0.38	-	0.024
247	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6293 - Refreshments and Meals	3.000	2.54	-	0.459
247	55: Supreme Court	552/ 6294 - Other	0.920	0.73	-	0.188
245	55: Supreme Court	551/ 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to	-	-	862.663	862.663

		Local Organisations				
Total			1,193.748	862.663	862.663	1,193.748

Dr. Singh: I now wish to move the motion circulated in my name making reductions to all of the line items under Agency 55 in an amount approximately equivalent to the financing needs of the last eight months and placing those allocations in a single lump sum under it. That will be line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations.

The aggregate of the amount being moved from the various line items is \$862.663 million and that amount is being moved as a single lump sum allocation to line item 6321 as indicated, and I so move.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, could you, for the benefits of Members, such as me, who are not financially grounded in all of the different terms and practices, explain the effects of this in the coming years?

Dr. Singh: Well I will endeavour my best declaring, of course, my own status as a layperson in this matter. I will say that this change is in keeping with our discussions on the first day that the Estimates were considered and in that respect you would recall that I presented, myself, a statement on the Government's behalf indicating that we would be bringing the Supreme Court of Judicature, or the treatment of the Supreme Court of Judicature's budget, in alignment of with those of the other agencies listed in the Third Schedule to the Constitution, entities that are also, sometimes, called the article 222A entities. This in effect does that and what it achieves is exactly what is contemplated in the Constitution, a financial allocation approved by this National Assembly after consideration of the Supreme Court's budget as part of the determination of the national budget. The language of Article 222 is quite clear and there is very little that I can do to elaborate or elucidate it further.

Suffice it to say, the result will be the approval by this National Assembly after due process and consideration of a lump sum allocation for the Supreme Court. That really, Sir, in my layperson's terms, would be my best endeavour in this matter.

Mr. Chairman: For the benefit of those of you who did not fully understand what it is the Minister of Finance is really attempting to say I will read Article 222 of the Constitution. It states:

“In order to assure the independence of the entities listed in the Third Schedule –

- (a) the expenditure of each of the entities shall be financed 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 a review and approval of the entity's annual budget as a part of the process of the determination of the national budget;
- (b) each entity shall manage its subvention in such manner as it deems fit for the efficient discharge of its functions, subject only to conformity with the financial practices and procedures approved by the National Assembly to ensure accountability; and all revenues shall be paid into the Consolidated Fund;
- (c) the terms and conditions applicable to grants and donations destined for the entities shall be approved by, and disbursements shall be made through, such appropriate government agency or department as determined by the National Assembly.”

In effect we are seeking to make the Judiciary insulated from financial control of the Executive and that is my expectation certainly.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman for your tolerance. I just want to say that the arrangement, which we have concluded, does allow the Estimates now to reflect, in the manner required by Article 222A, as you have indicated and as the Minister have indicated, as lump sum. There are other dimensions to the independence of the judiciary which we will have to continue to strive for, which has to do with knowing the request that was made before and the

adherence to the disbursement in a manner that is being approved by this House itself. That is one step in probably a multi stepped process.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I wish to, again, commend both the Minister of Finance and the Members of the Opposition who took the time to sit in discussions, as I said, even at times heated discussions, so that we may arrive at this first step. Again, I reiterate that anything and everything can be settled and resolved if we put our minds to doing it, even if it means having heated discussions, but at the end of which we will achieve something.

Agency: 55 Supreme Court

Current Expenditure

Programme: 551- Supreme Court of Judicature - \$489,939,000

Mr. Bond: Line item 6111, Administrative: Could the Minister inform us as to how many persons are in...

Mr. Chairman: The Attorney General seems to be getting legal advice.

Mr. B. Williams: We cannot cut anything because it has already collapsed.

Mr. Chairman: It is not a matter of cutting anything but at least we have a right of review if we wish.

Mr. B. Williams: I suppose that it could only be for clarification.

Mr. Chairman: The Constitution states that we may review and approve the entities annual budget.

Mr. Greenidge: In so far as I was the originator of the motion, let me say that it was not intended, and I believe in other jurisdiction such as the United Kingdom (UK), to remove the possibility of discussion. What it would remove is the possibility of amending it, by line, by the House. In terms of a discussion of the policy as in anything else one is still allowed that option.

Mr. Chairman: That is my understanding.

Mr. Greenidge: As it will be done with the other items which are lump sums.

Mr. Chairman: There is an announcement made, not by the Chancellor of the Judiciary, but by the learned Attorney General, that there will now be a complement of 20 judges. Certainly a Member may wish to ask where would these be accommodated, what emoluments and so forth.

Dr. Singh: May I, Sir? It is just for the purposes of clarity. Thank you very much for repeating the language in Article 222A. I think the crafters of our new Constitution were deliberate in their choice of language when they said:

“...determine as a lump sum by way of an annual subvention approved by the National Assembly after a review and approval of the entity’s annual budget as a part of the process of the determination of the national budget”.

I think those words are significant in their inclusion. The Government has absolutely no difficulty whatsoever with the budget of any of the Third Schedule entities being subject to scrutiny, question and interrogation as the rest of the budget. I just thought I should clarify that.

Mr. Chairman: I did not anticipate that you would but thank you for clearing that up.

Mr. Bond: Line item 6111, Administration: Could the Minister state as to how many of the personnel there are in substantive positions but nonetheless acting in other positions?

Mr. Nandlall: Do you want to know how many of them are acting?

Mr. Bond: Yes. They are in substantive positions but yet acting in other positions.

Mr. Nandlall: I may not have all of that information here but I have the list of the names of all of the employees. I can tell you that the Chief Justice and the Chancellor are acting, but in terms of the other functionaries I may not be able to tell you, as I stand here, which one of them would be an acting officer, but if the Member wants the entire list I can read it out.

Mr. Bond: The other question on the same line item is - there is an increase of four personnel - could the Minister state who those persons are and what are their designations?

Mr. Nandlall: As I indicated in my budget speech, there has been established a civil and criminal justice committee. Those committees have been staffed and the new additions are the persons who are attached to those committees.

Mr. Bond: Could the Minister indicate the emoluments that those persons will receive including benefits and allowances, and so on?

Mr. Nandlall: The Administrator at \$314,000, two Portfolio Officers at \$160,000 and a Secretary at \$120,000.

Mr. Bond: Are there any commensurate benefits and allowances to those salaries?

Mr. Nandlall: There are contracted employees and the normal contract terms will apply.

Mr. Bond: Line item 6271, Telephone Charges: Could the Minister explain the great increase in terms of telephone charges?

Mr. Nandlall: There was a connectivity database which was established and was being used at the time when the project was in existence. Upon the conclusion of the project the cost of that mechanism or programme is now being borne by the Supreme Court, hence the increase in expenditure.

Mr. B. Williams: Could the Hon. Attorney General confirm, in terms of line item 6011, Statutory Wages and Salaries - whether the proposed six new judges' salaries are included there.

8.29 p.m.

Mr. Nandlall: The quick answer to that would be no.

Mr. B. Williams: Follow-up, Mr. Chairman: Could the Hon. Attorney General say then what is the complement of judges this sum caters for?

Mr. Nandlall: It is the salary for the Chancellor (Ag), the Chief Justice (Ag), two Justices of Appeal, 11 Puisne Judges, and the increased provision represents employment of one Justice of Appeal who left, as you know, and I have the date of the resignation.

Programme: 551 - Supreme Court of Judicature - \$489,939,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 551 - Supreme Court of Judicature - \$109,200,000

Programme: 551 - Supreme Court of Judicature - \$109,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. B. Williams: Staffing details, Hon. Attorney General: Could you say which item here provides for the magistrates?

Mr. Chairman: We are coming to the Magistrates next.

Mr. B. Williams: Sorry.

Programme: 551 - Supreme Court of Judicature - \$109,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 552 - Magistracy- \$405,125,000

Mr. B. Williams: I was given another page. The question still stands, Hon. Attorney General.

Ms. Teixeira: *[Inaudible]*.

Mr. B. Williams: Are you thinking about ‘grazing’?

Mr. Chairman: Members, the question is put that we accept the sum sought. Those in favour say “aye”.

Mr. Williams, I did not hear a question. I heard something about ‘grazing’ and you sat down with a smile.

Mr. B. Williams: Mr. Chairman, I told him that the question is the same. Mr. Nandlall, the question was: Which staffing detail caters for the magistracy? He has to answer the question.

Mr. Nadir: Which line item?

Mr. Nandlall: Will you protect me, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. B. Williams: Staffing details. I referred you to line items 6111 to 6117.

Mr. Nandlall: I object to your tone of voice.

Mr. B. Williams: I am asking you in what item here in this detail would the magistracy be found. If you do not understand, then you can ask me again.

Mr. Nandlall: Is my Friend asking me under Programme 552, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: We are at Current Expenditure. Have you found it?

Mr. Nandlall: Is it line item 6111 - Administrative?

Mr. Chairman: You have it there.

Mr. Nandlall: It is the payment of salary for 22 employees. These employees include one chief magistrate (Ag), one senior magistrate, 14 ordinary magistrates, five clerks of court 2 and one clerk of court 1. The increased provision represents the employment of three magistrates and there were resignations of three magistrates as well.

Mr. Chairman: There is word around that the former Chief Magistrate, Mr. Fung-A-Fat, is going to be returning to the bench.

Mr. B. Williams: That would be timely.

Mr. Nandlall: I have not heard that word, Sir.

Mr. B. Williams: Follow-up, Mr. Chairman: Could the Hon. Attorney General say what will be the full complement of magistrates that he contemplates?

Mr. Nandlall: Twenty-one (21) is the full complement; we have 17 at the moment. As soon as we get the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) appointed, and I spoke about that in my budget speech, pending applications are to be considered by the new members of the Commission.

Mr. Bond: Line item 6133 - Benefits and Allowances: Could you state what is responsible for the increase? It cannot be the 5%, by the way.

Mr. Nandlall: It is employees' allowances and other auxiliary expenses, including mileage, commuted allowances, vacation allowances, special utilities allowances, *et cetera*.

Programme: 552 – Magistracy - \$405,125,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 552 – Magistrates’ Department - \$107,070,000

Mr. Bond: Project code 1201400: Could the Minister tell us what is the number of rooms in that particular court that will be built and what the rooms will be used for?

Mr. Nandlall: If my Friend is referring to the No. 51 Village Magistrate’s Court, it is a singular court – one room with magistrates’ chambers. As I indicated, Sparendam will accommodate two courts along with accompanying magistrates’ chambers.

Mr. Bond: Minister, are you aware that in some courts there are robing rooms and counsel rooms whilst in some courts there are none? Is there a reason why in some rooms attorneys-at-law could meet with clients and in some courts this is absent? We have to meet with them downstairs and on the road. Is there a policy for this?

Mr. Nandlall: All the new courts that have been constructed under my tenure have been constructed with accommodations for lawyers to meet clients.

Mr. Bond: Not this one.

Lt. Col (Ret’d) Harmon: Could the Hon. Minister state when the magistrate court at Sparendam to be constructed as a new court...and while you are at it, could you indicate where this land court will be constructed?

Mr. Nandlall: I answered both questions already in my budget presentation, but I will repeat.

The building at Sparendam would be a brand new building; the building that is standing now would be taken down and a new building would be constructed in its stead. The land court will be built in the compound of the Supreme Court of Demerara. I have no doubt that my Friend would immediately visualise where that building would be constructed.

Mr. B. Williams: Same line item: Hon. Attorney General, might I respectfully refer you to the Linden Magistrate Court? When is that estimated to be completed?

Mr. Nandlall: The contract will come to an end at the end of this month. The court will then be handed over to the Judiciary and then the Judiciary will determine when it will open that court.

Mr. B. Williams: Will that be this month?

Mr. Nandlall: It will be this very month.

Programme: 552 – Magistrates’ Department - \$107,070,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, before we leave the Supreme Court, I would ask that we formally approve the motion that was proposed by the Minister of Finance.

Motion put and carried.

Mr. Chairman: Members, that concludes the review of the Estimates of Expenditure for the Supreme Court and I wish to thank the Hon. Attorney General and his capable staff for the time spent in supplying the questions.

Agency: 56 Public Prosecutions

Current Expenditure

Programme: 561 – Public Prosecutions - \$87,946,000

Mr. Bond: Under line item 6111, could the Minister tell us the designations of the three personnel staff that were lost?

Mr. Nandlall: They are a Senior State Counsel, who was transferred to the Ministry of Legal Affairs, one State Counsel was transferred to the Magistracy and one State Counsel resigned.

Mr. Bond: Could the Minister tell us the impact that that would have on the working on the Chambers of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP)?

Mr. Nandlall: I suppose it will have an impact, Sir.

Mr. Bond: What will be the nature of the impact?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the Attorney General has no overview whatsoever over the DPP’s Chambers. In fact, a previous Attorney General sought to write a letter that had led to

some upheaval but I do know not that the AG could speak about the impact in the Chambers of the DPP.

Mr. Nandlall: And that is a subject of the constitutional provision which my Friend should be familiar with.

Mr. Bond: For these purposes, if I may, Sir, if the Minister would be so kind enough as to entertain the staff in the DPP Chambers and be properly briefed, I think we could have better answers.

Mr. Chairman: Not even that he is allowed to do, quite frankly.

Mr. Nandlall: Read your Constitution, Mr. Bond, and understand it.

Mr. Bond: Sir, line item 6302: Could the Minister tell us the nature of the training to be undertaken by the staff?

Mr. Nandlall: It is general staff training such as administrative and professional seminars. My Friend must know that the DPP office regularly attends and sometimes hosts seminars involving prosecution. We had one in relation to anti-money laundering on various occasions through the auspices of the Argentina, Brazil and Chile (ABC) countries, via the embassies, prosecutorial seminars are arranged and the DPP office participates.

Mr. Bond: If I may, Sir, I would like to commend, to the Minister, the practice that the DPP entertains where she spends more on training and less on refreshment; it is one he would be good to abide by.

Mr. B. Williams: May I refer the Hon. Attorney General to line item 6011 - Statutory Wages and Salaries? Could the Hon. Attorney General say what the designations of the officers attracting those amounts are?

Mr. Nandlall: Is it line item 6011? The singular officer there is the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. B. Williams: Follow-up, Mr. Chairman: Staffing Details: the Deputy DPP, Assistant DPP and other counsels, could you say how many lawyers that amount to?

Mr. Nandlall: Are you asking about personnel or money?

Mr. B. Williams: I am asking about lawyers other than the DPP.

Mr. Nandlall: There is one Deputy DPP, an Assistant DPP and five State Counsels at different levels.

Mr. B. Williams: Five State Counsels?

Mr. Nandlall: Sorry, there are more than five because some are contracted employees.

Mr. B. Williams: Could you give us the number? Take your time.

Mr. Nandlall: There are three additional State Counsels on contract.

Mr. B. Williams: That is eight in all. Is that the full complement for that department?

Mr. Nandlall: I am told no.

Mr. B. Williams: What is the full complement?

Mr. Nandlall: I do not have that information at the moment.

Programme: 561 - Public Prosecution - \$87,946,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 561 - Public Prosecutions - \$5,000,000

Programme: 561- Public Prosecution - \$5,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, that concludes our review on everything judicial and legal for the evening and we wish to thank the Hon. Minister of Legal Affairs, in this instance, the staff of the Deeds Registry, DPP Chambers and the Supreme Court. Thank you.

Members, I had hoped by this time that we would have been well into the Estimates of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, but, unfortunately, we are not. I, therefore, turn your attention to the consideration of the Estimates for the Public Service Ministry.

Agency: 14 Public Service Ministry

Current Expenditure

Programme: 141 – Public Service Management - \$818,169,000

Mr. B. Williams: Line item 6116 - Contracted employees: There is an increase of six. Could the Hon. Minister give the designations and the highest and lowest emoluments?

Minister of Public Service [Dr. Westford]: I have one Principal Personnel Officer - \$291,123; one Manager of Scholarship - \$166,910; two Training Officers at \$139,600; one Accounts Clerk at \$58,610 and one Typist Clerk at \$50,003.

Mr. B. Williams: Line item 6302 – Training: The sum of \$671.432 million is budgeted. Could you tell us the nature of the scholarships you are offering in relation to that vast amount of money?

Dr. Westford: This sum is for payment of stipends and other incidentals for persons we already have on training. There are currently 224 students overseas in countries such as Cuba, Canada, United States of America (USA), Russia, China, United Kingdom (UK), Grenada, Trinidad and Mexico. We also have at the University of Guyana 220 students that we have to pay for.

New scholarships will be for post graduate students. We will be sending six post graduate students – three have already left – to study in the fields of gynaecology, psychiatry, dermatology, pathology and general surgery. We also will be offering 140 scholarships to the University of Guyana – 25 of those will be for teachers and the others will be in different disciplines. We also will be offering 30 scholarships to the Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA), 10 scholarships to the *Carnegie* School of Home Economics and, based on necessity, we will also be giving scholarships to other places for training such as computer training as the need arises.

Dr. Norton: Just a follow-up on that question: Could the Hon. Minister say if there is a policy or if there should be one in the future where leave with pay would be considered for students wanting to do post graduate studies in, let us say, medicine, for instance?

Dr. Westford: Mr. Chairman, I am not clear about what the Member is asking, but what I know is there is a policy governing leave with pay. There is a policy and it is based on one, the years of service that the person has been working before requesting to go and study; two, should they be granted study leave with pay, they would have to sign a contract whether the scholarship is being granted by the Government of Guyana or they are getting it by themselves. The fact that they are going to be paid a salary while studying, they would have to sign a contract to return and offer services to the Government of Guyana. That policy is in place.

Dr. Norton: Just a follow-up: We have to take into consideration the cost of the scholarship. Granted, the area of specialty will be one that is chosen by the Government. This student, who is only asking for leave with pay, is prepared to pay the cost of all the other expenses that involves this scholarship. Are you in a position to say if such an effort will be encouraged by your Ministry in order to encourage the number of persons who undertake post graduate studies?

Dr. Westford: I think I just said that whether the person is given a scholarship by the Government or whether they are self-sponsored, the policy applies.

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6131 - Other Direct Labour Costs: I just wanted to ask the Hon. Minister if overtime is included in this line item because I know that at one time the Public Service Ministry had disallowed overtime. So, I would just like to know if this is allowed here. Thank you.

Dr. Westford: No, Sir, we do not work overtime.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Line item 6112: Could the Hon. Minister state whether this person in the senior technical position is sufficient to undertake the job of evaluation in the public service, as is required for you to be doing from time to time, as stated in the mission statement of the Public Service Ministry?

Dr. Westford: Sir, under line item 6112 - Senior Technical, we have one Training Officer, who is on the pensionable establishment; that is what is listed there. We also have under the very

senior technical as a contracted worker one other Training Officer II, two Student Affairs Officers and one Senior Student Affairs Officer.

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: The answer I am trying to get is whether any of the staff you have here in the complement of staff is capable of conducting a job evaluation of the public service as required by your mission statement.

Dr. Westford: Yes. The job evaluation for the public service is not solely done by the staff employed within the Public Service Ministry. For that evaluation, we also employ other resource persons outside of the Ministry; we also include persons from the Ministry of Labour in that exercise.

Mr. B. Williams: Line item 6322 - Subsidies and Contributions to International Organisations: Hon. Minister, I see that we have doubled our contributions to over \$7 million this year to the Caribbean Centre for Development Administration (CARICAD). What is that? What is the remit?

Dr. Westford: What is what?

Mr. B. Williams: What is the remit of the Caribbean Centre for Development Administration? Last year, we paid \$3 million; this year, we will be paying \$7 million.

Dr. Westford: The Caribbean Centre for Development Administration is an organisation within CARICOM that is responsible for the policies governing human resource management within the CARICOM region. That is the organisation that looks after training in the field of management reforms of the public service. Regarding this increase, there was a decision taken by CARICOM late last year that all member countries would be required to pay this increased sum. So, Guyana's total, which was US\$17,720, is now US\$31, 609 per year.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, a follow-up on line item 6322: Could the Hon. Minister state whether her Ministry is responsible, in any way, for the payment of contributions to the Hugh Wooding Law School?

Dr. Westford: No, sir.

Programme: 141 - Public Service Management - \$818,169,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 141 - Public Service Management - \$11,635,000

Programme: 141 - Public Service Management - \$11,635,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

8.59 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, that concludes. I notice that you did not have anyone assisting you. I thank you for availing yourself so that the Members will be acquainted with your Estimates. Members, we will turn our attention to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and I will give the Minister's technical staff time to gather, the PS and others.

Minister of Natural Resources and Environment [Mr. R. Persaud]: Mr. Chairman, they have as much confidence in me as I have confidence in them.

Mr. Chairman: Why are they here then? Is it just to give you a cheering?

Mr. R. Persaud: Solidarity.

Mr. Chairman: I see.

Mr. R. Persaud: For further clarification, should I require.

Mr. Chairman: You will require it from time to time. Hon. Members, without any ado, I invite you to turn to pages 122 and 123.

Agency: 24 Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment

Current Expenditure

Programme: 241 - Ministry Administration - \$120,946,000

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Through the Chairman to the Hon. Minister, line item 6111: Could the Minister indicate, apart from the 5% increase, what the other portion of this \$1 million is for?

Mr. R. Persaud: The additional cost has to do with the allowances for the Principal Assistant Secretary, Finance, whose appointment took effect during the course of 2013.

Mrs. Lawrence: Line item 6265 - Other Transport, Travel and Postage: Could the Hon. Minister indicate what he plans to do with this \$1.3 million increase? What additional travelling would you like to do, sir?

Mr. R. Persaud: Primarily, given the expansion, some of the new and even some of the existing issues in terms of environmental management, ensuring compliance in both the mining and the forestry sector, technical staff are required to go out more from time to time to carry out various forms of assessments and even engage in a number of investigations

Mrs. Lawrence: May I just ask, Mr. Chairman, to the Minister, on line item 6231, what is your fleet?

Mr. R. Persaud: There are a total of ten vehicles assigned to the Ministry.

Mrs. Lawrence: Would the staff not use any of these vehicles to go out into the field as you related for line 6265?

Mr. R. Persaud: Certainly, but in some locations, given logistics, time and other factors, air as well as water transport would be much more economical and reliable and in terms of safety for staff, having them sent to those locations using those forms of transportation.

Dr. Roopnarine: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: Looking at the staffing details for line item 6116, I see that there is a consistency in the increase from \$38.492 million to \$53.120 million and the increase of five contracted employees. Could the Minister kindly indicate the categories and who these contracted employees are? What are their designations, please?

Mr. R. Persaud: The additional employees are three graduates, who returned from Cuba, engineers, and they have been assigned to a number of agencies from the Ministry as well as

legal advisor, who was also awarded a government scholarship. Also, we have retained the skills of another technical officer in terms of assisting in monitoring and enforcement.

Dr. Roopnarine: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships) - which has moved from \$4.995 to \$7.5, could you explain the increase and, perhaps, tell us something about the details of the training?

Mr. R. Persaud: There are a number of new initiatives that are constantly brought to the fore, both at the domestic as well as the international level, and we would require staffers and even other stakeholders being aware, being trained. Take, for instance, developments within the extractive industries in terms of our initiatives and Reducing Emissions From Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+). One that readily comes to mind is the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) and there are a range of other new issues that the sector has to address. If we do not build capacity and enhance the technical capability of those in charge of developing policy as well as enforcement, it would certainly do a disservice to the good of the sector, hence the need for us to do more training.

Mr. Bond: My question is along the same line as my Colleague, Dr. Roopnarine. Could the Minister tell us how many staff members would benefit from this training?

Mr. R. Persaud: Whilst there is a level of internal training, we also have a number of agencies within the subject Ministry and, depending on the subject at hand, the size of the cohort will change; it can go from six or 12 and sometimes we go out of the Ministry and the agencies and we invite even stakeholders to be part, so it varies depending on the programme and its applicability in terms of range.

Mr. Bond: Again under Training, does the Ministry provide, under this head, training of miners, especially those small-scale miners, who, I have been told, more often than not, in terms of practising safe mining practices... Does any of this go towards edifying or educating those small-scale miners?

Mr. R. Persaud: The answer to that is no but the Hon. Member would know that last year we were able to launch the Guyana Mining School which is funded by resources of the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) and I am happy to report that close to 125 miners,

particularly small-scale miners... If we look at the new mines that are coming up, we are able to take individuals who operate within the sector but give them specialised skills that the larger miners require and we are doing that not only on our own, but we also partner with a Canadian university. We have visiting lecturers from other jurisdictions and also we are working closely with some of the companies because we want them to see training too as part of their corporate social responsibility. So that particular task is the responsibility of the Guyana Mining School.

Mr. Bond: Very well. Thank you, Minister. The last question on the same line item 6302: Does the Ministry still have a policy – it is a new Ministry – of sponsoring students to further their education at the University of Guyana?

Mr. R. Persaud: That is primarily the task of the Public Service Ministry. However, the agencies such as the GGMC and the Guyana Forestry Commission, because of their specialised skills... Take for instance the GGMC would support the Geology Programme of the University of Guyana and there is some element of sponsorship there. The Guyana Forestry Commission would do the same at the University of Guyana, but also work closely with the Guyana School of Agriculture which also has a forest certification programme. So within the sector, it has done specialised skills but broadly that falls under the ambit of the Public Service Ministry.

Mr. Nagamootoo: To the Minister, line item 6251: I see there is a zero there as well as the same line item for Natural Resources Management and Environmental Management. My question to the Hon. Minister is: Is there an item somewhere - if not this - where roads are provided for?

Mr. R. Persaud: I am viewing the question in the context of an earlier query made under a different line item and I indicated that I would be in a position to provide some information. As regards access into particularly mining areas, support is provided by the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission both in the form to the Ministry of Public Works for its execution of its road programme and some of it is administered by the Hinterland Road Committee which is made up of a number of entities – the Ministry, the agencies, the Miners Association and also the Ministry of Public Works. That programme is designed and is prepared based on representation by the mining communities, themselves. So, at the end of every year, based on discussions with stakeholders, a list of priority roads, which have been recognised as not being provided for by the subject Ministry or even discussions with the Ministry of Local Government and regional

Development and given the urgency and the necessity to assist miners...those programmes are executed through a special projects unit of the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission. So you would not see it within the particular Ministry's heading there, but it would form part of our support to the mining community and that is where that particular intervention resides.

Mr. Nagamootoo: If you may permit me to follow up, Mr. Chairman, it is an interesting area and I do appreciate the response of my Hon. Friend, Minister Robert Persaud. I simply want to ask because of the specific information that was given to this House with regards to the Brian Sucre Junction to Mahdia Road, the Mahdia inner road that I had asked about, and the Hon. Minister of Local Government and Regional Development did say that that specific project was provided for under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment in conjunction with GGMC. Now, the response that I got from the Hon. Minister of Natural Resources and Environment does not really correspond or is at variance with what another Minister had said with regards to this project. So my question is: Could the Minister say for sure that there is, in fact, a project to be executed this year from the Brian Sucre Junction to inner Mahdia?

Mr. R. Persaud: I see no difference in presentation or disconnect in what my Colleague Minister of Local Government and Regional Development reported because he is absolutely correct. In terms of the intervention in the mechanism I outlined, a number of road works were done, one within the internal Mahdia road, which he pointed to, and that was carried out at the cost of \$35 million and that work was executed by Mekdeci Machinery and Construction company and then there was also the rehabilitation of the road from the Brian Sucre Junction to two particular points, Maikobi and Tumatumari. Again, that was carried out by Mekdeci Machinery and Construction Company at a cost of just over \$89 million and it also included the construction of three bridges. Also, there was, which was a much more expansive project that covered a reasonable distance, not only distance but also saw work done at 20 bridges, and that was rehabilitation of the road from the Brian Sucre Junction to Black Water, which was in excess of \$500 million. I wish to point out that many of these works were done not only based on representation by the mining community, but also the Regional Chairman, himself, a frequent visitor to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, as other Regional Chairpersons because it is important that we interact through the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development with especially the Interior Regional Administration to support and on also how

we can support our miners and mining communities as a whole and here we received a newsletter from the Region 8 administration where, in it, there is Mr. Crawford carrying out inspections. We provided that information because we also wanted the regional administration and even the political head of the region too to be engaged in some form of monitoring. Mr. Crawford was kind enough to have sent an e-mail where he verified the amount of road works that were done at different points in time. There is that collaboration and I wish to confirm what my Colleague had mentioned in terms of support provided to have work done from the Brian Sucre Junction to various points, including heading into the Mahdia area.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Finally, it does raise a very important issue here as to whether any of this is publicly funded. Whether it comes through GGMC or whether there are any other agencies that handle or ought to dispense public funds, ought not these programmes to be brought under the Ministry proper so that this National Assembly can interrogate the Estimates regarding any allocation for projects such as these? It was a very lengthy answer, but my point is really the concern that if the Ministry is using an initiative – I do not want to use the word ‘influence’ – on a sector for a particular community, then would it not have been better if the money is paid over to the Consolidated Fund so that the Ministry could spend it to benefit everybody else, while we are concerned about Mahdia and the mining community? What he seems to be explaining here is an arrangement between a state body, which is a Ministry, and an individual, whether it is Mekdeci, whether it is some organisation that is private, mining entities and a state corporation, a public corporation, GGMC, but none of this is reflected. I see one zero where roads are supposed to be voted some allocation.

Mr. R. Persaud: Whilst there was not a specific question posed to me but a query in terms of policy, let me make a few important points. First and foremost, the GGMC Act provides for this form of support and it has been doing this for a number of years and it is done in response to representation by the sector and the work done will not only benefit miners. There is not a sign post or mining officer standing saying, “If you are a miner, only then will you be allowed on the road.” It is there for public use because, as the Minister of Public Works would tell you, once the road has been developed, it becomes public access. The first point is that it is allowed; it is provided for. Secondly, it is there for the wider use by the community. Speak to non-miners, the residents of Maikobi, people of Region 8 and other parts of the country where this

intervention...whether it is Region 1 supporting the Regional administration, it is there for the people of Guyana, including miners in this regard. The third point I want to make, listening to the Hon. Member, whilst he is entitled to his opinion and his perspective on it, is if you do you are damned and if you do not, you are still damned.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Just a follow-up to the Hon. Minister: I do not know the list of roads that you have identified that were done in the last year. If you would be so good as to provide us with a copy of that list of the roads that were done and if it is possible also for us to have a copy of the list of the roads that you propose doing in 2014, I think those will be a good start.

Mr. R. Persaud: I will undertake to have that list provided to the Hon. Member tomorrow evening.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Just by way of a follow-up, I think that the Minister has given a lengthy explanation of why it is that moneys held by the GGMC are spent on roads. I think one's concern here is whether any consistent criteria are used in the choice of roads that are built or even the way that GGMC's money is spent outside of the areas for which they have more direct responsibility. I think it would help if you could provide some indication of the criteria because I think you need to know that that is the concern. One does not spend simply because one has it because there are many priorities. How do you choose where moneys are spent and why is it that you are saying that what you are doing is superior to what the Minister of Finance would be doing if the moneys were subject to the same sieve under the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. R. Persaud: The suggestion of unilateral or some form of behaviour that is not provided for is certainly a misrepresentation of the reality. As I explained, the list and what roads are supported by the GGMC are determined based on various stakeholders and that list includes, and I can name one, the Guyana Gold and Diamond Miners' Association. The committee that looks at the roads is broad-based. As I said, it is made up of the Ministry of Natural Resources, the various agencies, the miners' associations and also the Ministry of Public Works. These particular interventions are determined based on a review, based on – you asked about criteria – needs, how it will support the mining sector. Take for instance the fluctuating price of gold. Many miners have complained saying that we need to support the sector in terms of addressing

cost. One of the areas in which one could immediately impact cost is if one could reduce in terms of transportation cost, logistics and improve efficiency of access to the resources and we recognise that support for the sector, based upon what the sector has been saying. This is not the Government determining what the priority for the sector is but, based on what broad stakeholders have said, we have been able to derive that list and work together in this regard. The committee that monitors this is also made up of those stakeholders. I must also say that this also goes through the public tender process.

Mr. Greenidge: On the last matter, I believe that at least one of the awards of contract has been the subject of dispute. I do not know that it is unambiguous. One of the questions here that arises is: Is there a specific quantum allocated each year that is part of a formula in the longer term, a formula that is medium or long-term formula or is it that you just spend what you have? What is the basis on which these moneys are spent in this way?

Mr. R. Persaud: There is a budget that is prepared annually by the Board of Directors of the GGMC and an allocation is made in terms of support in terms of road work. As I said, it takes various forms – direct support to the Ministry of Public Works, sometimes working very closely with the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development in a particular region or, in some instances, being administered by the Special Projects Unit of the GGMC. But in terms of allocation, it is made based on the budgeting process of the GGMC.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps I could ask the Minister if he would be so kind as to set out the criteria in writing for us so that we can look at them in a more leisurely fashion in the near future. He has given an explanation which I will accept for the moment, but I would like to see it set out.

Mr. R. Persaud: I will so undertake at a subsequent time.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Hon. Members, I note three other Members wishing to ask questions. I am going to ask your permission to leave at 10.00 p.m. and I would ask that Mr. Basil Williams take the Chair after 10.00 p.m. so that you may proceed with your Estimates.

Dr. Cummings: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6281 - Security Services: Hon. Minister, I have noted an increase of approximately \$3 million to that service. Could you tell this

Committee which security firm has been contracted, what changes took place to arrive at this sum and where these guards are located? Is it in Region 4?

Mr. R. Persaud: The Ministry, for a part of 2013, was housed within the Office of the President compound and we were able, as it were, to benefit from the security arrangements. Having now relocated to its own premises and the need to provide security for those premises, we have had to retain security for the Ministry. The security service that we have is GEB Security Services Inc.

Mr. T. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under line items 6251 and 6252, I have a general question in relation to the Ministry's policy regarding certain types of roads in interior connections. For the Hon. Minister, the question is this: If a major miner or large-scale miner opens up a roadway, whether an old roadway or a new roadway, to mining lands...

Minister of Housing and Water [Mr. Ali]: *[Inaudible]*

Mr. T. Williams: Later on, I will answer you.

Mr. Ali: Line item.

Mr. T. Williams: He was not listening. He was asleep all the time. If this road is opened up...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Williams, are you asking a question or are you having a discussion with Mr. Irfaan Ali? Could you please ask your question? Time is going. Please ask the question.

Mr. T. Williams: He is asking me...

Mr. Chairman: But you have to be able to focus.

Mr. T. Williams: Under line items 6251 and 6252, my question is on the general policy that the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment has if a major or large-scale miner opens up a roadway, accessing land that was previously inaccessible by smaller miners. There is a practice where the larger miner may charge a fee or levy on the movement of machinery to such lands. I would like to know if the Minister could shed some light on the Ministry's response or awareness of such things.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, could that not really be brought up at a bilateral level? It does not pertain to... If it is a policy of what larger companies do and how they relate to smaller miners, it does not arise out of the estimates really and I am sure that the Minister can be approached at any given day or evening and asked what the policy is. Please proceed.

Programme: 241 - Ministry Administration - \$120,946,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 241 – Ministry Administration - \$1,450,000

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The only project code there, 2507500 - Furniture and Equipment: Mr. Minister, in 2012, you got approximately \$14 million and a further \$3.8 million in 2013 to purchase furniture for the Ministry's administration. Could you kindly say whether this next amount in 2014 is for a specific section of the Ministry?

Mr. R Persaud: As was recognised by another Member, it is a relatively new Ministry and, based on needs, based on the requirements for the Ministry to fulfil its evolving mandate from time to time, we would need to enhance and re-equip ourselves so this is broadly for the Ministry in terms of providing... If you look, it is provision of desks, chairs, a projector, screens, especially for training both within the Ministry and when the technical staff go out to various institutions to make presentations. Even in the field, they require some of these forms of – we can call them – teaching aids, equipment or other tools that they need to carry out their work.

9.29 p.m.

Programme: 241 – Ministry Administration - \$1,450,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 242 – Natural Resource Management - \$119,490,000

Mr. Ramjattan: Under line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - I notice there is a subsidy of some \$119 million to the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission.

My question here is: in view of page 600 where we notice that the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission has a bank balance in excess of \$200 million, why is the Minister coming for a subvention of \$119 million? The bank balance is \$102 million actual as of 2012 and \$112 million as of 2013.

Mr. R. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, one would recognise that there is a subvention provided by the Government to the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission. And on the same page 600, you would see what is the total sum required to finance the operations of the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission.

The Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission would collect acreage fees, carry out surveys, and these are earnings it would have had from its operations. Certainly, it is to allow the Commission, based on its own earning capacity and with the additional support, the subvention of \$119 million, to fulfil its mandate.

Mr. Ramjattan: In view of the fact that you have such a big bank balance after making your moneys from miscellaneous receipts, which I will ask about just now, rents, royalties, fees and fines and all of that, why do you come for a subvention? You have money in the bank.

Mr. R. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, if you look at the proposed expenditure on the very page, you would see the proposed expenditure is \$492 million. If one is getting a subvention of just \$119 million, even what is in the bank balance would not be sufficient; it is hope that is based on earnings.

Mr. Ramjattan: Mr. Chairman, the revenue from operations is \$347 million projected for this year, and the \$200 million you have. Why then come for that big subvention when you are keeping the bank balances there?

Mr. R. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, it is not keeping the bank balances. The Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission has a number of ongoing projects in terms of looking at demarcation which is wider, looking at opening new agriculture lands. Also, the resources we have are to ensure that in addition to our income and the subsidy, we are able to fulfil our mandate. And as we go through the year, take for instance last year there were two or three emergency works that the Lands and Surveys Commission had to embark on... One was in West Berbice, which one of the

Hon. Members would be quite familiar with, where historically people were living and they had no title, the area was not surveyed, and we had to embark on those types of works in the Cotton Tree area. So it allows us to carry out the works we budget for, but also there are other activities that come up from time to time.

Mr. Ramjattan: Well, whatever it is, the trouble is at the beginning of 2014, you had a bank balance of more than \$200 million, but I am not going to press it. Your miscellaneous receipts are some \$164 million for last year. Could you kindly tell me from what activities you got the miscellaneous receipts? It is a lot of revenue you earned there.

Mr. R. Persaud: As I said, Mr. Chairman, the services of the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission, in terms of carrying out cadastral surveys and other types of specialised works, are some of the activities by which we would be able to earn and under which those forms of activities are covered.

Mr. Chairman: Was this not the objection raised about the survey to be done in the Rupununi?

Mr. R. Persaud: It is similar, where there was insistence that the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission embark on it because it will not only allow us to make full use of our capacity, but also become an income generating activity. Activities such as those catered for. That is what miscellaneous receipts would also represent.

Mr. Ramjattan: I want to press this. The Budget for this entity is \$490 million projected. Last year, you made, from sale of goods and services, \$311 million and also made, from miscellaneous receipts, \$164 million. That could take care of your budget. Could it not?

Mr. R. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, the budget made is based on certain projections. In many instances, we have not been able to realise fully, especially in the areas of acreage fee... In fact, we have a current programme we have embarked on in terms of collecting arrears. The average collection we have sometimes ranges from 35% - 40% in terms of the potential to collect. So even if we look at those particular areas in terms of earning, there is great scope. Even what we budget for, we do not have that full representation.

But I must say, Mr. Chairman, that the aim is to ensure that both with support from the subvention and the income of the Commission, we are able to satisfy the needs of Guyanese in

terms of ensuring adequate and proper land administration and management, particularly in the area of opening up new areas and ensuring there is regularisation.

Programme: 242 – Natural Resource Management - \$119,490,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 242 – Natural Resource Management - \$25,000,000

Mrs. Lawrence: Project code 3300300: Minister, could you kindly say whether the provision for surveys here has anything to do with the Del Conte road project?

Mr. R. Persaud: Not directly, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Do you want to explain the indirectly.

Mr. R. Persaud: I say so because some amount of surveying would be required, but it was not provided for specifically under this particular area. The possibility may exist that the GGMC may engage the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission in terms of carrying out. That is why I used the phrase “not directly”.

Dr. Norton: Just a follow-up to that same project code: Could the Hon. Minister say if a social environmental impact study was done for that particular road?

Mr. Chairman: Are we answering or not?

Mr. R. Persaud: I sense that the Hon. Member withdrew his question.

Mr. Chairman: I did not get that, sorry.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister explain in the project details what is compilation of stock plans in Corentyne, Hubu to Lanaballi and Bartica.

Mr. R. Persaud: The compilation of the stock plans is to allow us to have a full appreciation of areas that were leased out, look at the status, and carry out a comprehensive review to establish what is taking place on the ground, because, in many of these particular areas, there have been

demand and applications. So it is in order for us to be able to determine what we revoke or make available. These stock plans will be required to allow sensible planning, as it were.

Programme: 242 – Natural Resource Management – \$25,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 243 – Environmental Management - \$423,091,000

Programme: 243 – Environmental Management - \$423,091,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 243 – Environmental Management - \$88,266,000

Programme: 243 – Environmental Management - \$88,266,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, it is now twenty minutes to ten o'clock. I have indicated my willingness to work until ten o'clock. We can start. What is the view of Members?

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, I propose that we finish at this point and take the rest tomorrow so that we can consider them carefully. There is no reason for us to rush through them now.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, please apologise to your staff. I presume they are here and probably have been waiting for hours.

Members, we will start promptly at 2.00 p.m. tomorrow and I anticipate that by the break at 5.00 p.m., we will be finished. Please have a good evening.

I wish to take the opportunity, Members, on behalf of the Assembly, to wish all students writing the Grade 6 Assessment tomorrow and Thursday and the parents our best wishes. Thank you very much. Hon. Members, have a good evening.

Assembly resumed.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Adjourned accordingly at 9.42 p.m.