

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2012-2013) 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

51ST Sitting

Thursday, 18TH April, 2013

Assembly convened at 2.07 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Monitors to be placed around Parliament Office

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, just a quick announcement, that is, Members would notice in the Members of Parliament (MPs) lounge that, I think, there is a fifty-six inch or larger size screen monitor. The Parliament Office is undertaking a project to have monitors placed in the offices and in certain places so that what is transpiring in the Chamber could be seen so whilst you are in the lounge you would know what is happening and you could respond, if needed, and follow.

Moving towards a paperless Parliament

Mr. Speaker: The other announcement, I wish I could have made, is that - we could cut out the tons of papers that we received every day - we have asked that there be a plan for us to each hopefully be given a tablet - they are relatively cheap now - so that we can access the website to get our Minutes, the agenda, Order Papers and everything. The intention is that we can move to a

paperless parliament because it is almost sinful to know that we use this amount of paper. That is another announcement I hope I can make, as soon.

Thank you for your cooperation Hon. Members. I will have to persuade Members of the Opposition and Government to see that as a worthwhile project.

Welcoming the students from Camilles Academy

Mr. Speaker: I would also like to announce that members of the Camilles Academy, which is from the East Bank Demerara, are visiting with us today and so I would like you to welcome them. I gave them a briefing about the characters of parliament. It is a very colourful place with many characters and there is much happening. I told them that they will see a heroes and villains, all those that they read and hear about, and see on television. We welcome them and invite them, and others, to come again. Thank you very much. Please be seated.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

[Written Replies]

1. NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION PASSED AGAINST REO, REGION 8

Mr. Bulkan: Could the Hon. Minister inform Members of the National Assembly what actions he has taken in relation to the no confidence motion that was passed against the Regional Executive Officer (REO) Mr. Harsawack of Region 8?

2. PROTOCOL RELATING TO AN APPOINTED OFFICIAL OF A REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Bulkan: Could the Hon. Minister inform Members of the National Assembly what is the protocol relating to an appointed official of a regional administration committing the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development for the provision of goods and services and in particular, if Mr. Harsawack is empowered to commit the Region in the absence of approval of the RDC?

3. COMMUNITY SERVICES ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

Mr. Bulkan: In 2006, the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development and Government of Guyana initiated the project named at the caption and which had as its purpose/objective, to prepare four communities for their upgrading to municipalities, these being, Bartica, Charity, Parika and Supenaam.

- (i) Could the Hon. Minister provide the relevant details for the Communities Services Enhancement Project, which was initiated in 2006 and give information on its current status?
- (ii) Could the Hon. Minister say which other communities have been added to the four previously identified and for similar upgrading in status, if any?

Answers not provided

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS

MOTION

BUDGET SPEECH 2013 – MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2013

“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 2013 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2013-03-25;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2013, of a total sum of **one hundred and ninety four billion, three hundred and forty three million, seven hundred and sixty four thousand, eight hundred and seventy three dollars (\$194,343,764,073)**, excluding **fourteen billion, and four hundred and ninety six million, six hundred and seventy nine thousand one hundred and twenty seven dollars (\$14,496,679,127)** which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the undermentioned schedule, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to make further provision in respect of finance. [*Minister of Finance*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we will resume our consideration for the Estimates of the year 2013 and I will ask that we resolve ourselves into Committee of Supply.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply

In Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: Today Hon. Members, day three, we have on our agenda Office of the President, Agency 01.

Agency: 01 Office of the President

Current Expenditure

Programme: 011 - Administrative Services - \$1,540,081,000

Ms. Selman: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: Could the Hon. Minister say what is responsible for the increase from \$106 million to \$174 million?

Minister within the Ministry of Finance [Bishop Edghill]: The increase specifically deals with electricity charges as it relates to the Long Term Evolution (LTE) towers that are to be erected.

Mr. Ramjattan: Line item 6284 – Other: I notice in last year’s budget it was revised to \$64 million, but this year I notice a huge jump of \$245 million. What has caused this “Other” to jump that high?

Bishop Edghill: The sum of \$178,965,000 is budgeted to be paid to GlobeNet, which is the company out of Brazil, as it relates to the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) programme.

Mr. Ramjattan: What is the total payment for GlobeNet? Should it not be a capital expenditure?

Bishop Edghill: GlobeNet will be paid, which is a service that will be provided as it relates to the ICT connections, a monthly rental or a monthly service fee of US\$72,750 which will take us to annual charge of US\$873,000, and in Guyana dollars that comes up to \$178,965,000.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Minister, line item 6116 - Contracted Employees. I notice in the staffing details on page 33 that there is a decrease. Could the Hon. Minister kindly indicate which position became vacant and what is the remuneration for that position?

Bishop Edghill: There was, in this programme, some adjustment in staff. There were people who joined and who left. I will give the details. For example, last year, in this programme, the Permanent Secretary was not included. The Permanent Secretary is now included. There were two Administrative Assistants, who would have joined, a Senior Technical Officer and a Supply Expeditor. Persons who would have been transferred to other programmes or left were Research Assistant, a Confidential Secretary, two Accounts Clerks, one Office Assistant and one Administrative Assistant.

Mrs. Lawrence: A follow-up. Could the Hon. Minister kindly indicate on which line item, last year, the Permanent Secretary was placed?

Bishop Edghill: He was paid through the Public Service Ministry.

Mrs. Lawrence: It is the same line item. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to the House why there is the \$6 million increase in this line item?

Bishop Edghill: This has to do with the 5 % increase but also of the movement of staff and the differential in salaries. For example, the Permanent Secretary would have come in, which is a higher level of staff, with a higher remuneration. It was a matter of switching places and the salary that the position attracts.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, through you, could the Hon. Minister lay in the National Assembly the designation and the remuneration for these positions at line item 6116?

Bishop Edghill: Is it for all the positions?

Mrs. Lawrence: Yes, under line item 6116.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, could I be guided how I should...

Mr. Chairman: Well, Hon. Members, if the Minister is asked to lay it in writing he cannot do it in an instant.

Mrs. Lawrence: I am not asking him to do that.

Mr. Chairman: I thought it was required immediately. The Minister may choose how it could be communicated.

Bishop Edghill: I have it available with me.

Mr. Chairman: Again I am saying too, Minister, and this is aside from the question asked, if it can be sent electronically. We do not mind, because that will be emailed to all the Members and they could access it on their laptop. Once the Minister gives an undertaking that it can be supplied, that is what the Member seems to be comfortable with.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, through you, just to remind the House that this particular line item is on Mr. Greenidge's motion to the House for reduction. I would just like to remind the House.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, if there is a request we will have to go into recess to allow it to be printed and circulated. If it is that we are just asking for the information to be provided and then go straight into voting it means that the request was not a genuine request for information. If it is that you genuinely would like to go through this information to be able to make a decision I will have to recess to provide it, but I will not, with respect, put this thing to the vote knowing that there is a request for information. It tells me that the request was a perfunctory one. I would like to know that the Minister has made an effort and he is prepared to do so to provide the information sought.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I could be guided I am prepared to read it out if the colleagues are prepared to receive the information.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, but there is a request for it to be in writing, not to be audibly given. Mrs. Lawrence, we need some guidance from you please. If it is a matter that is listed for amendment, so to speak, and there has been a request for the information to be supplied in written form, the Minister either could have the Parliament Office staff to do the photocopying quickly or I would take a recess, but the decision is yours.

Mrs. Lawrence: I do not think the decision lies with me because I am just barely making notification that I have seen it on the list for a reduction, but can I propose my question under line item 6264?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, with respect, I would have to go into recess to allow the photocopying to be done, because if a decision, as to amend or not amend, hangs on the availability...

Deputy Speaker [Mrs. Backer]: It is an Alliance For Change (AFC) proposal.

Mr. Chairman: Mrs. Lawrence did advert to the fact that this matter is on a list and I would want to give both sides of the House the same equal and fair opportunity to ask and to supply information.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member referred to Mr. Greenidge's motion having a cut for line item 6116.

Mr. Chairman: That is what I heard.

Ms. Teixeira: That is what you and I both heard. However, it is not on Mr. Greenidge's motion it is on Mr. Ramjattan's motion and therefore he would have to indicate his position.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Ramjattan, it is for your position, because I will not allow us to go through any superficial exercise. If the information is sought, and it is sought in a particular format, I am going to ensure that that format is provided because we are not going through anything just for the sake of going through the motions here.

Mr. Ramjattan: I agree with you, Mr. Chairman, and that is part and parcel of the convention in relation to being rational when we want to amend. I could understand that. It is rather surprising Sir, that we cannot get that explanation now from \$37 million to \$43 million and the agency has reduced contracted employees.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Ramjattan, my sense was that the Minister was about to read out the information when he was told that they want it in writing.

Mr. Ramjattan: I would like him to just read out the explanation.

Mr. Chairman: A request was made for him to do it in written form; he was about to do it orally.

Mr. Ramjattan: I did not hear that.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, we are pleased to provide the information as required.

Mr. Chairman: Orally, go ahead.

Bishop Edghill: Accounts Clerk - \$55,619, Administrative Assistant - \$53,500, Assistant Field Auditor - \$79,448, Cleaner - \$42,982, Clerk II - \$47,605, Driver - \$66,736, Driver/Expeditor - \$66,736, Information Technology Officer - \$66,736, Maintenance Superintendent - \$69,355, Office Assistant - \$42,983, Permanent Secretary - \$532,980, Pool Attendant - \$42,983, Secretary/Typist - \$45,575, Senior Technical Officer - \$210,000, Store Keeper - \$70,563, Telephonist - \$47,620, Typist Clerk - \$47,622, Supply Expeditor - \$41,083.

Mrs. Lawrence: I would still like for my own purpose to have the information in written form.

Line item 6264 – Vehicle Spares and Service: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to the House the number of the fleet of vehicles?

Bishop Edghill: The answer to that is 75.

Mrs. Lawrence: Follow-up. Could the Minister kindly indicate how many vehicles were added for the year 2012?

Bishop Edghill: Twelve vehicles were added while some were retired.

Mrs. Lawrence: Could we have the number of vehicles which were retired? Could we also be told whether this particular agency will be purchasing new vehicles for the year 2013?

Bishop Edghill: As I understand it, there were 73 vehicles last year, 10 were retired and 12 were added to the fleet. As it relates to the purchase of new vehicles, that would be coming under capital consideration.

Mrs. Lawrence: Then that takes me to line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants. It is noted that last year, despite the agency forecast that it would have been purchasing those vehicles and retiring some, the budgeted amount increase by almost \$10 million. I note this year, while it is also buying new vehicles, it is only asking us for approximately the same money that was spent last year. My question to the Minister is whether this money is adequate or whether we will be seeing a supplemental coming for increase money to this account.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, you would appreciate that the older the vehicle the more will be the fuel consumption. While there are new vehicles been added, there will be a better fuel consumption as it relates, but I have here a total breakdown of the consumption per vehicle.

Mrs. Lawrence: Is it adequate or not?

Bishop Edghill: With our projection, we believe it is adequate at the moment based on prices and all the rest of the things.

Mr. Chairman: He said that it is at the moment. I think what the Members need to find out is this: Can you anticipate coming back to the House for a supplementary provision?

Bishop Edghill: Our position at this time, to that, is no.

Mrs. Lawrence: Line item 6281 – Security Services: Could the Hon. Minister kindly indicates which security service is used for this department?

Bishop Edghill: The security companies, which are engaged, are Brans Security Services and BM Soat Security Services.

Mrs. Lawrence: It is on the same line item in the year 2012. The agency asked for some \$7 million and \$5 million was spent. This year it is asking for \$48 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate why there is the increase?

Bishop Edghill: It has to do with a budgetary allocation for security as it relates to the ICT towers. Our projection is that between July and December there will be 30 sites up and running and averaging a cost for security about \$200 per hour which gives a budgeted projection of \$26,784,000. Between September and December, there will be another 24 sites running at the same estimated cost of \$200 per hour which will give an annual cost of \$14,284,800, a projection for security, as it relates to the towers, of \$41,068,800.

Mr. B. Williams: The Hon. Member dealt with most of my matters, but could I have a follow-up on line item 6264 – Vehicle Spares and Service? Could the Hon. Minister say whether it is the Government policy not to put its logo on its vehicles?

Bishop Edghill: In my living memory, I do not know of a time when the vehicles at the Office of the President have ever been marked.

Mr. Chairman: It is to be marked, with what?

Bishop Edghill: It is with the Government's logo or anything of the sort.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Basil Williams, you may need to put the question a little differently.

Mr. B. Williams: I was asking whether it is a policy of the Government that all Government-owned vehicles, including Office of the President, should not have a distinct Government logo on it. That is one. Secondly, there should be a distinct licensed number plate, so when a person wants to lime three o'clock in the morning, at night spots, that person will be known.

Mr. Chairman: In other jurisdictions, for example, I know in Barbados, the mark "MP" could be seen, or whatever. On every Government vehicle there is a distinct the number plates, in Trinidad and Tobago, in Barbados. It is so. I am saying Barbados, because I lived in Barbados for several years and I can tell you I know what I am speaking about. In Trinidad and Tobago, for vehicles to go on the priority lane there is a marking, but that is a different story. It is a matter for policy; it is a matter for the Government to decide; we cannot compel it.

Mr. B. Williams: The question is whether there is a policy. That is my question to him.

Mr. Chairman: Obviously there is no policy.

Bishop Edghill: I think we are all very aware, in this House, that Government vehicles, in Ministries, are marked - whether it is Government of Guyana, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance - except the Ministers' vehicles. It has been the practice that the vehicles, which are at the Office of the President, have never carried that mark, as it relates to our history in this country.

Mr. Chairman: That is fair for a Government to decide, but I do not think we can compel it. The truth is that in these days, with security concern and so forth, it might not be the best thing to have the vehicles marked and moving around, quite frankly.

Mr. B. Williams: Line item 6294 – Other: It was budgeted \$9 million under this head and the agency spent only \$7 million, but this year it is asking for \$30 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate, in the light of that substantial increase, what items of expenditure it is contemplating under this head, this year?

Bishop Edghill: This projected expenditure, budgeted expenditure, has to do with the ICT programme. It is dealing with redundancy where there is projection of a total payment of US\$103,850 or the equivalent of \$21,289,250.

Mr. B. Williams: Follow-up. Under line item 6284, Other, the Minister just told us that \$178 million was for ICT also, so why would he disaggregate them under the two heads.

2.37 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: We are paying GlobeNet for services as it relates to internet connection. This other allocation, as asked by the Hon. Member, under line item 6294 – Other – is paying for satellite so that we will be able to provide redundancy as it relates to this programme. They are two different things: one is paying for a monthly service charge and the other one is paying for the satellite redundancy to ensure that we are up and running at all times, which is normal practice in any business of this nature.

Mr. B. Williams: That would be all for me for now under this line item.

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, my questions have been asked by both the Hon. Member Mrs. Volda Lawrence and the Hon. Basil Williams.

Mr. Jones: Comrade Chairman, line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – I notice under Castellani House, revised \$39.93 million and this year’s request is only for \$14.079 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain the reduction?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I thank the Hon. Member for his question. This is because of administrative changes that will take place. Castellani House will only be with the Office of the President until April. From then, it will be with the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport.

Mr. Jones: Thank you.

Mr. Ramjattan: I want to get back to line item 6284 – Other – with this GlobeNet service which it provides for the tune of US\$72,000 per month... I would like to be a little more specific with you: what services are provided for US\$72,000 per month and which company is GlobeNet?

Bishop Edghill: Thank you, Hon. Member, for you question. GlobeNet is a Brazilian company, and there is an agreement between the Government of Guyana and GlobeNet for the provision of internet services. This Synchronous Transport Module level-1 (STM-1) 155 megabytes per second (Mb/s) service will be activated at a monthly cost of US\$72,750. So, we are actually paying for STM-1 155 Mb/s internet connectivity service through fibre optic cable links. The other one is to deal with the satellite redundancy.

Mr. Ramjattan: Could we be provided with copies of that agreement?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I obviously do not have that agreement with me here, but certainly we could get it to...

Mr. Chairman: I do not think Mr. Ramjattan was asking for it now. The request was whether it could be provided.

Bishop Edghill: We could make an attempt.

Mr. Ramjattan: The final question on that score is: was this a competitive bidding process by which you got this?

Mr. Chairman: Given the nature of the cable coming from Brazil, the connectivity is at that end.

Mr. Ramjattan: I understand Brazil would get first preference.

Mr. Chairman: You cannot put something like that to tender.

Mr. Ramjattan: I do not know if there is a nexus between it. In any event, I will take a look at the contract.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, we will provide a copy of the contract. I will ask for seven days so that we can get that properly in place. Just for the purpose of the House and all concerned, this cable would find its way through Brazil all the way into Miami.

Mr. Chairman: I know.

Mr. B. Williams: My follow up, Mr. Chairman was really on that, whether it was put out to tender. I do know if the Minister could give us some insight into how this company got the contract.

Mr. Chairman: There are not too many companies providing a cable from Brazil; there is one cable that passes through the entire South America.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you for answering, Mr. Chairman, because my answer is no different.

Mr. Chairman: There is one cable. The nation is given a choice whether to buy in or not. There is one cable. I know this because I had some knowledge of what was happening. There is one cable and you can buy in and connect but, to connect, it has to pass through Guyana.

Mr. Allicock: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I just have a follow up on this cable. Could the Hon. Minister say when the cable will be a reality, because I would like to ask also if the Minister is aware that on the way to the Rupununi there are a number of places where this cable is exposed. I know that on the other side the cable is awaiting the connection. What is the deadline for the completion of this work?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, as it relates to the completion date of this project, the Georgetown fibre aspect and integration into the Lethem Georgetown fibre is to be completed by

September 2013. Fibre from Moleson Creek to Parika is to be completed in the second quarter of 2014. GPL completion of a new 69 KVA system that has a fibre component, all of that is integrated. So we are looking at a completion date for the fibre of Lethem to Georgetown by September 2013 and the connectivity of the fibre from Molson Creek to Parika by the second quarter of 2014.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, I would like to take you back to line item 6284 – Other – which poses me some difficulty. I believe that the Minister explained that a proportion of this cost or a larger part of this cost was for the hiring or paying for the services of ICT towers. Am I correct?

Bishop Edghill: Yes.

Mr. Greenidge: This is...

Bishop Edghill: The connectivity Sir.

Mr. Greenidge: Is the service to be rented for the first time this year? I am asking you if it is the first time that the service is to be had.

Bishop Edghill: The answer to that is yes.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, I wanted, if it pleases you, to turn to line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations.

Mr. Chairman: That is on page 33.

Mr. Greenidge: Yes, we are on page 33. Is that not where you are?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Greenidge: But the subsidies are to be found on pages 398. I invite you to turn to page 398 and to draw your attention to the fact that we had long discussions on, let me take them in turn, the National Communications Network (NCN) and the quality and coverage of this network. We had sought to engage the Government in an exercise intended to extract from the agency and from the Government a commitment to survey their work with a view to making it more professional, and also by way of an audit to look at the social and community coverage of this. It has not happened; we have no commitment to it happening. I wonder what it is that the

Government intends to do on its own, if it is satisfied with what purports to be a services meeting national needs and covering national issues.

Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs [Mr. Hinds]: Mr. Chairman, I would like to draw Members' attention, at least those of us who were in our dining room there a certain time last evening, I think we were seeing, on NCN, the Hon. Member, Mr. Carl Greenidge, I believe speaking about the Budget and making his presentation. I think that that is a good indication of the fact that the Government has been taking notice of what is being said.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, could you indulge me a minute please? Mr. Greenidge referred to the issue of a matter raised in discussions with the Government. He specifically spoke to the audit and the issue of professionalism of the NCN. Mr. Chairman, this was point 11 on the points presented by the Leader of the Opposition to the President on the talks on Monday, this week and on Wednesday, this week. The talks were inconclusive and the two gentlemen agreed to not continue speaking, but be open to continue speaking. Point 11, we never really got to fully discuss. It is true that the Opposition and Mr. Greenidge presented their views, but there was no proper dialogue on that issue.

The wording of number 11 of the Leader of the Opposition, AFC/APNU did not raise the issue of audit last year nor on the Commission of Inquiry. That is a brand new issue that came up on the piece of paper presented by the Leader of the Opposition to the President. We are dealing with the issue of the Estimates. If Mr. Greenidge is going to bring in things in the talks, I will have to seek, asking your permission, to speak on those issues.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, on a Point of Order, I asked a specific question. I said, "in the absence of any agreement on this matter". I was very clear. I was not asking for a repetition of what took place yesterday. I mentioned that we had discussions last year, nothing emanated from those, and I am asking now whether the Government has a programme for dealing with these concerns. It is simple. I do not have to be accused of anything else; I am simply asking a question.

Mr. Chairman: The question was: in the absence of a negotiated agreement or whatever, and seeing that there were no talks, then what is the Government's plan, programmes, policies vis-à-vis these entities? That is the question, as I understand it, if there is one that is.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, to answer the Hon. Member – thank you for the question – while I am aware that there are talks taking place at the political level... The question I think the Hon. Member wants an answer to is: what is NCN doing as it relates to the concerns that would have been raised in the public spaces and the rest of it? I am happy to report to this National Assembly, Sir, that NCN has written to both the Leader of the Opposition and to the AFC, inviting them to make appearances on NCN. NCN has received responses from both political parties. I think, in all fairness, last year when I responded on this particular matter, I did say that while we are dissatisfied and those dissatisfactions are being made known, NCN, as a national asset, must benefit from... [Mr. Nagamootoo: National?] [Mr. Ramjattan: Oh, now it is national!] Mr. Chairman, the Hansard would have the record that last year I did say that NCN, as a national asset, must benefit from the collective participations and recommendations from all who are concerned. I think the management of NCN has made a deliberate move to seek to open up more time and spaces by even inviting, by even going away and not waiting on a request coming from the Opposition, being proactive in writing to invite their participation.

Leader of the Opposition [Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger]: Mr. Chairman, just a matter of clarification, from the time of Mr. Mohammed Sattaur, I have been written to about participating in certain events in the NCN programme. I replied to Mr. Sattaur and several letters of Mr. Gordon insisting that there be equitable coverage and that the Opposition parties be given access. I told him that we were not interested in simply participating in this debate or that debate; we wanted to have access and we wanted to have better coverage. I have a string of letters from Mr. Gordon and they all say the same thing. He writes me about the same thing and I give him the same answer all the time.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I thank the Hon. Leader of the Opposition for his contribution. Answering Mr. Greenidge's question, it is also public knowledge that right now NCN has advertised for a new CEO. That is public knowledge. It intends to work on a new strategic plan which will formulate a new broadcast strategy of which NCN would be happy to benefit from the views and recommendations of the Members of the Opposition benches.

Mrs. Hughes: A follow-up question to the Hon. Minister: since Wednesday, 14th March, 2012, the Alliance for Change wrote to the CEO of NCN with a very specific request regarding the right to reply and equitable coverage of parliamentary parties on NCN. As recent as a month ago,

we also wrote requesting availability of a half an hour slot. We asked how much it would cost and what days or times were available. Up to now, we have had absolutely no response on any of these issues. The question, therefore, is: what has NCN done since last Budget to now to ensure that all parliamentary political parties have access to this national station you talk about?

Bishop Edghill: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. Mr. Chairman, I am advised that there was a meeting with a representative of the Alliance for Change and the National Communications Network to discuss the request. The proposal made by NCN was not accepted or it was not conclusive. It is something that is still open for further discussions.

Mr. B. Williams: Mrs. Hughes dealt with the issue. I wish to add, one, we are talking about a new board to direct the NCN and, two, in terms of the right of reply, in practical ways, it means that somebody must be given the opportunity to reply, for example, to the Attorney General, Mr. Nandlall when he is dilating on issues. He is doing that alone; there is no right of reply. In any democratic institution - we see that on our televisions coming out of North America, for example - there is always a right of reply. When the President makes an address to the nation in America, immediately thereafter, there is a right of reply by an opposition member.

Mr. Ramjattan: Could the Hon. Minister please give us some information as to how much advertisement moneys accumulated to the final days of December last year. They are asking for a subvention here. I want to know how much advertisement income they made.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you very much for the question. Before I give the figure, Mr. Chairman, permit me to say that there must be an admission, based upon the comments that were made as it relates to right of reply, that this consideration should be a consideration that goes across the board in our entire journalistic community. It is a culture that needs to develop where reporting must be responsible and free from bias and we must allow the nation to make the decision; we must provide the information.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, on a Point of Order, no other television...

Mr. Chairman: One second, Mr. Minister and Madam Deputy Speaker. The Minister is giving a view. That would not arise as a Point of Order; he is not violating any Standing Order. That is his view and there is a right if any Member wishes to correct him after he is finished speaking. That

is a view; he did say that NCN is a national asset. That is his view, but it could be rebutted and replied to after. It does not arise as a Point of Order to say that he has violated any Standing Order.

Minister, go ahead please.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to draw to your attention that I was being shouted at to sit. I do not know if we allow this kind of disrespectful behaviour in the National Assembly. I think I am on the record of never showing that kind of disrespect to any Member of this House.

Mr. Chairman: That is so.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you. As it relates to general advertising, to answer the Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan, in 2012, NCN generated \$288,962,150.

Mrs. Hughes: Minister, as a follow up, could you give us revenues from corporate sponsorship and also from production for the same period?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, if you would permit me, I can give you a total breakdown of the entire revenues, so the Hon. Member would have an appreciation of the total revenues. I think she wants to know that. As it relates to general advertising in 2012, as I said, it was \$288,962,150. As it relates to movies, it was \$867,000; News - \$16,789,769; programme sponsorship - \$40,550,376; sports - \$41,132,654; production - \$156,230,275; deaths and messages - \$3,013,259; others - \$9,647,658; a total in terms of revenue of \$557,193,141. Thank you very much, Sir.

Mr. Jones: Comrade Chairman, under the same line item dealing with National Communications Network, could the Hon. Minister please inform this House of the staff complement of NCN as of 30th April, 2012 and the staff complement as of today, April, 2013.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, in 2012, the total staff was 179. As of today's date, the total staff at NCN is still 179.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister say what has become of the investigation report that was done by Mr. Harryram Parmesar and if any action has been taken on that report in relation to the wrongdoings at the National Communications Network?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, my understanding is that a commitment was made during talks at the Office of the President that the Administration would release the report by the board of NCN at the conclusion of its review by April 2013, which is where we are now.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to ask a follow-up question to the last question of Hon. Member Mr. Harmon. This Parmesar report is dated 21st June, 2012 and we have been hearing, in the public, various pronouncements as to how it will be dealt with. This is possible misappropriation of NCN revenue. That is why, Mr. Chairman, you have this situation of coming here to take taxpayers' money. If the revenues are being misappropriated then there would have been no need to come here. We are asking whether this report has been sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) for advice or to the Commissioner of Police for action.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, respectfully, I would not be able to affirm that that is either sent to the DPP or to the Police. What I do know is that the board has sent the report to His Excellency for his review.

3.07 p.m.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Chairman, the National Communications Network - I have had quite a number of questions dealing with contracted employees in other sections of this head, but since we are focusing on the National Communications Network (NCN), it forms part of a huge allocation of \$799 million to a number of agencies. This year, this National Assembly is being asked to approve a transfer of an additional \$81 million to the NCN and \$135 million to the Government Information Agency (GINA).

I recall, subject to being corrected, that last year this National Assembly, by majority vote, did not approve the allocation sought then of \$130 million, but I see it is stated in the revised Estimates that \$130 million was spent for GINA and \$81 million was spent on NCN. Is there an explanation as to how these appropriations reached in the Estimates and were spent?

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Nandlall]: Consequent upon the ruling of the Hon. Chief Justice, in which the court ruled that no power resided in this Assembly to reduce Estimates presented by the Minister of Finance and there is no power in this Assembly to determine those Estimates...and the court consequently found that the majority in the National Assembly infringed the doctrine of separation of powers and the Constitution itself, directed in the judgement to...

Mr. B. Williams: On a Point of Order, Mr. Chairman...

Mr. Chairman: With respect, Mr. Williams, the question was asked of the Government what was the reason. The Government is giving its reason. It may not agree with the one that you have or your interpretation but we are getting the Government's opinion as to why it did what it did. It may be different to that of the majority, but the Government is giving its opinion.

Mr. B. Williams: I will abide until he is finished, Sir.

Mr. Nandlall: Thank you, Sir. In that edict of the Hon. Chief Justice, attention was drawn to several provisions in the Constitution, in particular Article 318, as well as sections of the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act (FMAA). The accumulative effect of those provisions reposed in the Minister of Finance a power and a responsibility, after forming the opinion that there had been an insufficient allocation made in relation to any particular budgetary agency, to take money from the Consolidated Fund and put it towards those agencies and then bring a statement to the National Assembly, at the earliest next opportunity, informing the House of the moneys so withdrawn and the agencies to which they have been directed.

The Hon. Minister of Finance, after forming that opinion and after moving in that direction, presented to this honourable House, in the form of supplementary financial papers, statements informing this House of the withdrawals made and how they were allocated. **[Mrs. Backer:** Which financial paper?] I am being asked specifically which financial paper it was. I cannot answer that particular question, but, Sir, the record of the Parliament Office is there. I can easily ask the Clerk, with the assistance of the Hon. Minister of Finance, who tabled those documents, to get the record from the Parliament Office itself. That is not a mystery.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, it is well established that after the events of April, last year when the “cuts” were effected, the Government approached the court. The court gave a ruling and on the basis of that ruling the Government took certain actions. I have since given an interpretation as to the powers here but the Government has a different view based on a ruling that it has. That has been established. We can spend the rest of the afternoon having a debate as to who is right and who is wrong.

Mr. B. Williams: No, Sir, we are not going to do that. We want to put our response on the record. We wish to say, having listened to the dilation and expansion on the matter by the Hon. Attorney General, that he has expanded our Constitution to include an article 318. The point is that there is no article 318 in our Constitution and that really is the crux of the matter in this whole context. The Hon. Chief Justice’s decision was one which was in response to the Hon. Attorney General’s request to him that the Hon. Minister of Finance be at liberty to make advances and withdrawals from the Contingency Fund – that was the first request he made – to restore the cuts. During the course of his arguments, he recognised that he had to amend his approach and he asked that ‘Consolidated Fund’ be added.

The decision of the Hon. Chief Justice was that he would not grant such a request. Any lawyer would understand what he went to the court for and what the response given by the court was. The Hon. Attorney General, really, with all of his legal training, ought not to come and tell this honourable House that they could have misinterpreted the decision of the Chief Justice in such a manner. In any event, Sir, in hindsight, you must agree, especially in light of your own ruling in this honourable House, that it was an erroneous assumption. We are saying that there was no basis for the Hon. Minister of Finance to ignore a decision of this august Assembly and, in our faces, he went and restored cuts from the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we have two views and the view of the majority of this House is known. The view of the Government is also known. We can spend the rest of the afternoon dilating and going through every line of what the Chief Justice said and did not say. It will get us no further than where we are. The Estimates are before us and we have to address our minds to the Estimates before us. I would not want us to enter into any debate and discussion about what the Chief Justice said and did not say and what the Speaker said and did not say. It is about what

is before us and that is it. I am not entertaining a debate on the Chief Justice's ruling, quite frankly, Members. I do not want us to get into that. This is not an appellate court.

Mr. Greenidge: Could the Hon. Minister or Ministers inform us as to exactly where in the Constitution or in the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act the Government has the power to spend without reference to this House?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I have answered that by saying that on the basis of the order...

Mr. Greenidge: But I am not asking about the Chief Justice.

Mr. Chairman: The Government is saying that on the basis of the order or the ruling made by the Chief Justice on 18th July, it went ahead. That is known. Mr. Greenidge, with respect, I am not going to allow us to get into a debate.

Mr. Greenidge: I am not debating; I am asking a question.

Mr. Chairman: It will lead to that.

Mr. Greenidge: May I ask a question?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Greenidge, it is known.

Mr. Greenidge: Do you know what I am going to ask, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Greenidge, I know. You have asked it.

Mr. Greenidge: You know. Okay. Thank you. Never mind.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Greenidge, we are going no place if we go that route.

Mr. Greenidge: It is good that we are able to interpret each other's minds.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Most respectfully, Sir, I had asked the question regarding the issue that raised the controversy. I do not intend to go there. I do not intend to re-litigate. You have ruled and we accept your ruling, Your Honour. I was going to ask a further question. In view of the ruling of the Speaker of this House with regards to the power of this National Assembly to propose and make amendments to Estimates, does the Government, through the Hon. Minister, not feel that

this money ought to be replaced into the Consolidated Fund, having now seen the decision of this National Assembly and in keeping with the law? I do not want to go back there but...

Mr. Chairman: But, Mr. Nagamootoo, that, again, will take us into the realms of the Chief Justice's decision versus the Speaker's decision. Let us deal with the Estimates that are before us now. It is either that the House is approving them or not approving them. That is the exercise that we are undertaking this afternoon.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman, I would not waste your time. I just want to draw your attention to Resolution No. 7/2012 that was passed in this House. It is a resolution that states that the appropriation for Agency 01– Office of the President - was reduced. The Minister of Finance breached this Resolution. What action will this House take? I have the Resolution and all of the financial papers to submit to you.

Mr. Chairman: Could you take me to a line item, please, Mr. Sharma, for approval? We are approving, today, the sums which are stated here. All questions about what is going to be done with the action taken will have to be dealt with elsewhere. Today, the House is approving or disapproving sums stated in the Estimates. What is the question on the Estimates?

Mr. Sharma: The question is: how was money expended when the budget was reduced?

Mr. Chairman: There was an explanation given by the Hon. Attorney General on that a few minutes ago.

Mr. Sharma: You asked for some information and I have them here. You asked for some information on the financial papers and I have them all for 2012.

Mr. Chairman: I will be happy to receive them.

Mr. Ramjattan: I wish to make the statement that I will prosecute my motion for reduction only in relation to line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – as it relates to the Government Information Agency and the National Communications Network. In relation to the other matters, we have had satisfactory explanations.

Mr. Greenidge: I would like to draw the House's attention to line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, on page 398 the subhead of Office of the First Lady.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Greenidge, we have not gone to Capital Expenditure as yet.

Mr. Greenidge: This is not under Capital Expenditure. Please, allow me. The item I am referring to is on page 33.

Mr. Chairman: Sorry. Go ahead.

Mr. Greenidge: The details of line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - are linked to page 398. On page 398, under Agency Code 01 – Office of the President, Programme 1 – Administrative Services, there is an item – Office of the First Lady. Am I allowed to address this?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Greenidge: For the Office of the First Lady, there is a request for \$10 million. As far as I can ascertain, with the assistance of the Minister of Finance and the President, I was able to acquire the legislation which pertains to the Office of the First Lady. The legislation itself is very unclear but insofar as there is legislation, it does seek to establish an office. It does not, in any way, seek to elaborate on what this office does. It specifies, in no way, the officers, the staffing or anything else. However, it does make reference to emoluments and, I think, that we need to know from where those emoluments are to be met and whose emoluments they are. This legislation is not a sufficient basis for the determination of whether this item should be funded.

Mr. Chairman: I can say publicly, since I do not have a vote, that I think it is a fantastic thing that the country has a First Lady after so many years and, to every extent possible, she should be supported and that legislation should be brought into place, if needed, to get it regularised. Can someone please answer the question about the First Lady of Guyana's Office?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I have had the opportunity of reading the Act – Act No. 11/2009 – and I also had the opportunity of reading the Hansard in which you, yourself, as a Member of the House at that time, made a contribution to this debate. As I understand it, your sentiments expressed now are consistent with what was expressed then.

There is no indication that in this budgetary proposal that is made for consideration, that a payment would be made to the First Lady as it relates to salary or anything of that nature. This is

not envisaged in this allocation. I would like to assure the House and the people of the nation that this is not envisaged. Every First Lady or, as the Act states, spouse, depending on who the president is, in our case we have a First Lady, would have her own platform. There would be things that the First Lady would like to execute as part of her platform as a First Lady. This allocation is envisaged to deal with the simple funding of projects that she might wish to undertake. We are all aware in this country that our current First Lady has undertaken a project of promoting positive families – and she must be commended for that – which is something that is very badly needed in Guyana. She has been working with children in the promotion of hydroponics in terms of agriculture. This allocation is basically to assist the First Lady in the execution of her platform, whether it is by way of transportation, the acquisition of equipment to get done what she needs to get done. It is not envisaged, at all, for payment to her or for her to personally benefit. This is to enhance her platform for the benefit of the people of Guyana.

Mr. Greenidge: I am not even going to ask for information on this, to be quite honest. Let me just, however, draw your attention to some things: the Act itself to which the Minister...
[Interruption by the Hon. Minister of Education.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Education, please allow Mr. Greenidge to speak. He must be allowed to speak. I know that this may be a sensitive issue but Mr. Greenidge must be allowed to speak.

Minister of Education [Ms. Manickchand]: Sir, I was not preventing Mr. Greenidge from speaking. I was doing what Mr. Greenidge does often which is heckling. I was not preventing him from speaking.

Mr. Chairman: Heckling is meant to do just that – to distract.

Ms. Manickchand: This is not meant to distract, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I need to hear Mr. Greenidge; I could not hear him. I was not hearing his voice.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, as I said, I am not even going to ask for information. I just want to draw to the attention of the House that there are some aspects of this legislation which themselves are problematic. Section 2 speaks about a spouse and the tenure shall be co-terminus

with that of the serving president. As far as I read, it is obscure and can apply to more than one person at the same time.

As regards Section 3, however, in spite of what the Minister said, I see a reference to allowances and benefits which the holder of the Office of Spouse of the President will be eligible for and these will be specified by an order. Is there such an order?

I would also draw to your attention that there is no explanatory note to this piece of legislation. What is this line item supposed to do? Where in the Estimates are there details of the statutory office? That is really what is not stated here.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Chairman, through you, I wish to state on behalf of the Alliance For Change that though we would have raised concerns with regards to the explanation not being provided in the legend, we welcome, in view of the explanation given in this House, the allocation for the Office of the First Lady.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: I would like to second the opinion of my colleague. As a woman from the Alliance For Change, we welcome it and we are pleased. We would be happy, also, if, as the Office and the platform are being set up, we can be informed and extend our help in whatever way.

Ms. Selman: Mr. Chairman, could I ask for a breakdown of how the moneys would be spent?

Bishop Edghill: I do not have the breakdown of the \$10 million with me. What I need to say for the benefit of this House is that I was not a Member of the Parliament which enacted this. I think that when this piece of legislation came into being, it was a suite of legislation which was brought to correct a number of things that existed based upon presidential *dictat* and discretion. It sought to regularise a whole lot of things that were out there in thin air. For example, there was the Leader of the Opposition Bill; there was a special piece of legislation that was brought to this House to ensure that the wife of former President Mr. Hoyte was properly taken care of because that was left up to executive *dictat*. It was a matter of regularising things and putting them in a particular framework. I would just like to remind the honourable House of that, Sir.

Minister of Finance [Dr. Singh]: Mr. Chairman, with your permission, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Dr. Singh: This House considered, in 2009, the Office of the Spouse of the President Bill, as it was then described, subsequent to become the Office of the Spouse of the President Act 2009. It would be recalled by those of us who had the honour of serving in the Ninth Parliament – and, indeed, it would have been captured for posterity in the records of the Hansard – that this House unanimously welcomed this piece of legislation and heralded the statutory recognition of an Office of the Spouse of the President and, in particular, an Office of the First Lady in those circumstances where we had a president who is of the male gender, as we currently do.

The magnanimity and unanimity with which Members of this House spoke on this matter was significant. I wish to thank my colleagues in the Alliance For Change who spoke just now and said that they welcome this modest allocation to the Office for the purposes of it coming into operation for the first time, in a formal sense, in our country's history. I thank them and I commend them for taking this position. I wish to place that on record.

I know, Sir, that, in particular, the women of this House and the women of this country welcome this development, have looked on with great admiration at the diligence and dignity with which our new First Lady has set about the discharge of the functions of her Office and for this she is to be applauded and to be supported by this House.

We would be happy, on a subsequent occasion, to provide whatever is required but I can say that this modest allocation is to provide modest administrative support services and to support her charitable and other social undertakings, as are befitting any First Lady and any Office of the First Lady.

On a matter of the Office of the First Lady of Guyana, I wish to appeal that this House speaks unanimously, as it did when this Bill came before us, in favour of the allocation being sought.

Proposed Amendment to Motion on Notice Paper No. 183

Amendment to be moved in the Committee of Supply of the National Assembly for the Estimates of Expenditure for the fiscal year 2013.

That the agencies, programmes, accounts, codes and description, details of expenditure listed below be reduced by the amounts shown in column 5.

Page 398; 01 Office of the President – 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - Government Information Agency; provided \$135,858,000; reduction (Col 5) \$135,857,999; proposed (Col 6) \$1.00.

Page 398; 01 Office of the President – 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, National Communications Network; provided \$81,337,000; reduction (Col 5) \$81, 336,999; proposed (Col 6) \$1.00.

Page 398; 01 Office of the President – 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - Office of the First Lady; provided \$10,000,000; reduction (Col 5) \$9,999,999; proposed (Col 6) \$1.00. [*Mr. Greenidge*]

Mr. Greenidge: I wish to draw to your attention that there is a motion pertaining to a number of items on page 33 which are reflected on page 398 and two of these stand in my name. I would like to invite you to put the question in relation to these items.

Ms. Teixeira: I ask that the Member itemise which subheads because there are many and they are on different motions. Therefore, Office of the President is on three different sets of motions. Could the Hon. Member please say which subhead it is and what the specific proposal to cut is?

Mr. Chairman: I was just about to ask for Mr. Isaacs' assistance on that.

3.37 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: If I could start perhaps with a clarification. Mr. Ramjattan you had indicated...

Mr. Ramjattan: I am only prosecuting my two amendments.

Mr. Chairman: Let us go through your document submitted on the 12th April - page 32, 01-Office of the President- 011/6116- Contracted Employees.

Mr. Ramjattan: I am not pursuing that.

Mr. Chairman: I could draw a line through that.

The second- Security Services.

Mr. Ramjattan: I am not pursuing.

Mr. Chairman: Not pursuing Security Services. What about Other?

Mr. Ramjattan: No, I am not pursuing that.

Mr. Chairman: Other again?

Mr. Ramjattan: Not pursuing.

Mr. Chairman: Contracted Employees?

Mr. Ramjattan: Not pursuing.

Mr. Chairman: Security Services?

Mr. Ramjattan: Not pursuing.

Mr. Chairman: Other?

Mr. Ramjattan: Not pursuing. *[Interruption]* That is on page 35. No, we will come to that, but I am pursuing for the Guyana Information Agency \$138 million cut and the \$81 million cut for the National Communications Agency. *[Interruption]* It is on my front page. It comes as line item 011/6321 on page 398.

Mr. Chairman: Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations.

Mr. Ramjattan: That is right.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Greenidge is now saying that his motion also pertains to the very same line item. I believe the rule is that the one that is largest is dealt with first.

Mr. Ramjattan the difference between your motion and that of Mr. Greenidge is one dollar.

Mr. Ramjattan: It would appear, of course, with the consent of Mr. Greenidge that we will only prosecute two. *[Interruption]* Whose motion now, oh, yes?

Mr. Chairman: The difference between the two is one dollar.

Mr. Ramjattan: We will prosecute his motion with one dollar. We will leave a dollar for them.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Ramjattan, are you formally indicating that you are no longer going ahead with your motion...?

Mr. Ramjattan: That is right.

Mr. Chairman: ...in so far as it relates to...?

Mr. Ramjattan: ...National Communication Network Inc. (NCN) and Government Information News Agency (GINA). We will be giving them one dollar.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members in that case I would like to put the question that we approve a motion standing in the name of Mr. Carl B. Greenidge, Member of Parliament received on 16th April and published for the Order Paper of 18th April.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, again we are seeking your guidance. We have several motions. I think I understand that we are dealing with the line item 6321. It would help because Mr. Greenidge and Mr. Ramjattan have Office of the President spread out over each other's motions. We need to know specifically what head we are voting on and what specific item because there are other issues which Mr. Greenidge has also tabled under this Programme 1 to do with other Heads. We would like to have the matter very clear.

Mr. Chairman: I believe Mr. Greenidge has said that we are dealing with line item 6321. Mr. Greenidge, could you clarify if that is so?

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, I thought that when you asked for clarification I made it clear that I was dealing with line item 6321 which originates on page 22 and is detailed on page 398. I remember saying that very specifically.

Ms. Teixeira: What is the number of your motion? Is it 183? Is that the motion that we are dealing with?

Mr. Greenidge: As regards page 398, it is Agency...

Mr. Chairman: I am referring to the Order Notice Paper before me, No. 183 which says, Member Giving Notice: Mr. Carl B. Greenidge, Member of Parliament (MP); it has a column.

Date Received: 2013-04-16; Date for Order Paper: 2013-004-18. It has page 398, 01-Office of the President, 011/6321 and a sum of \$135,858,000 with reduction of \$135,857,999; proposed one dollar. That is what I have before me.

Mr. Nadir: Mr. Chairman, I am on Mr. Greenidge's Notice Paper 182 which pertains to some line items prior to 6321. Do we also have to deal with that when we are dealing with this particular item?

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, may I perhaps endeavour to lend some clarity to this matter? If I understand correctly, we have Mr. Ramjattan's motion and Mr. Greenidge's motion taken together on Office of the President Programme 1, which is on pages 32 and 33, with supporting details on page 398. If I understand correctly all of the proposed cuts are being withdrawn except for two. The two that are being pursued and prosecuted are a cut to GINA and a cut to NCN, in both instances moved by Mr. Greenidge to a sum of one dollar. Am I correct in that regard, Sir? Thank you very much.

Amendment to Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - Government Information Agency - \$135,858,000

Mr. Chairman: That is what we are saying. That was my understanding all the time.

Hon. Members, before I put the entire programme, I would put the amendment that we in the instance of Guyana Information News Agency reduce the amount sought by \$135,858,999, to the sum of one dollar.

Question put.

Division sought

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

Ayes

Noes

Mr. T. Williams

Mr. Jaffarally

Mrs. Marcello

Mr. Damon

Dr. Ramayya

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe

Mrs. Hughes

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Ramjattan

Ms. Ferguson

Mr. Morian

Ms. Williams

Mr. Jones

Mr. Adams

Ms. Baveghems

Mr. Sharma

Mr. Bulkhan

Mr. Bond

Ms. Kissoon

Mr. Trotman

Ms. Selman

Mr. Allicock

Ms. Wade

Mr. Felix

Ms. Hastings

Dr. Persaud

Rev. Gilbert

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Neendkumar

Mr. Lumumba

Mr. Chand

Ms. Shadick

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Nadir

Ms. Teixeira

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Whittaker

Mr. Baksh

Mrs. Sukhai

Ms. Webster

Mr. G. Persaud

Ms. Manickchand

Mr. Benn

Dr. Anthony

Mr. Ali

Mr. Scott

Dr. Ramsaran

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon

Dr. Westford

Mr. Greenidge

Mr. R. Persaud

Mrs. Backer

Dr. Singh

Dr. Norton

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett

Mrs. Lawrence

Mr. Nandlall

Mr. B. Williams

Dr. Ramsammy

Ms. Ally

Mr. Rohee

Dr. Roopnarine

Mr. Hinds

Brigadier (Ret'd) Grainger

33

32

Amendment carried.

Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - Government Information Agency - amended to \$1.

Amendment to Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – National Communications Network - \$81,337,000

Mr. Chairman: I will now put the second question that the motion for the reduction for the sum of \$81,336,999 be effected for National Communications Agency, agency 01, line item 6321, to the sum of one dollar.

Ms. Shadick: Is it agency 001 or is it 011? Somebody needs to correct that.

Mr. Chairman: I would like to say that I am not sure. It is 011. But this is something that would come under the slip rule, that in the preparation of the document by the Parliament Office they

may have put 011. But I think we know sufficiently what it is they are identifying here. I will put line item 6231, forgetting the zeros and the ones that comes before it. The motion is that the sum of \$81,336,999 be removed from that line item and that the sum be reduced to one dollar.

Question put.

Division sought

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

Ayes

Mr. T. Williams

Mrs. Marcello

Dr. Ramayya

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe

Mrs. Hughes

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Ramjattan

Ms. Ferguson

Mr. Morian

Ms. Williams

Mr. Jones

Mr. Adams

Ms. Baveghems

Mr. Sharma

Mr. Bulkhan

Noes

Mr. Jaffarally

Mr. Damon

Dr. Persaud

Rev. Gilbert

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Neendkumar

Mr. Lumumba

Mr. Chand

Ms. Shadick

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Nadir

Ms. Teixeira

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Whittaker

Mr. Bond
Ms. Kissoon
Mr. Trotman
Ms. Selman
Mr. Allicock
Ms. Wade
Mr. Felix
Ms. Hastings
Mr. Scott
Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon
Mr. Greenidge
Mrs. Backer
Dr. Norton
Mrs. Lawrence
Mr. B. Williams
Ms. Ally
Dr. Roopnarine
Brigadier (Ret'd) Grainger

33

Amendment carried.

Mr. Baksh
Mrs. Sukhai
Ms. Webster
Mr. G. Persaud
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

32

Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – National Communications Network - amended to \$1.

Programme: 011 – Administrative Services – \$1,322,886,002 - as amended, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 011 – Administrative Services – Office of the President - \$5,320,895,000

Mrs. Backer: I am just querying. Are we going to pages 411 and 412 and coming back to page 34 and 35.

Mr. Chairman: We have been doing Current then Capital.

Mrs. Backer: That is okay; we just want to be sure where we are.

Mr. Chairman: We are going to deal with Capital Expenditure, Programme 011 then come back to Presidential Advisory.

Mr. Ramjattan: Sir, I want to make an important point. On the line item we just completed, Administrative Services, I understand that the National Frequency Management was also supposed to be here so we could ask some questions. But it is not here. On page 398 there is Castellani House, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Guyana Energy Agency (GEA), GINA and then it goes on right up to Presidential Guard Service. We were of the opinion it will come under some other head not being placed here, but we now understand it was supposed to be here. I want to know if this was part to mislead us.

Mr. Chairman: I beg your pardon? With respect, the first thing is we should satisfy ourselves that this is the way the Estimates have always been prepared. If that is a yes, then it would mean we have been misled for all the years.

Mr. Ramjattan: It could very well be.

Mr. Chairman: Let us be careful about that language.

Mr. Ramjattan: I withdraw that language, but I want to know under which head of the Office of the President we will be able to question the National Frequency Management Unit (NFMU)?

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, if I may? This is the Budget of the Central Government of Guyana. Budget agencies identified in the schedule to Fiscal Management and Accountability Act, in particular, identifies those agencies for which funds are appropriated out of the Consolidated Fund. The National Frequency Management Authority, like a number of other authorities, is a statutory body set up by law, is not funded by the Consolidated Fund, does not require any appropriations, and does not required any appropriations from the Consolidated Fund since time immemorial, certainly as far back as my memory extends. So the Hon. Member would quite easily be able to confirm, if he looks at previous years' Estimates, that the NFMU has never been, like I said - I can certainly speak for the last 10 years – the subject of appropriations because it has never been funded out of the Consolidated Fund. It is set up by a separate statutory instrument.

Mr. Chairman: I propose for your consideration, the capital expenditure for Programme 011, Administrative Services.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, I refer the House to project code 1212000, Information and Communication Technology. A sum of \$4,586,901 is being requested for the development of information technology, China. Could the distinguished Minister give us an insight into what exactly this involves? We note that the amount is primarily specific and therefore it presumably is equipment coming from China. Could he tell us exactly what is involved here?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I thank the Hon. Member for the question. I would just like to make an observation before I answer the question. I recall your ruling in this Hon. House a few days ago and I just like to bring to the attention of the House that we just voted on an entity and not one question was asked for any form of clarification. We voted not to reduce that entity to one dollar and not one enquiry was made, not one question was asked. Based upon your ruling you were asking us to be judicious, that the necessary questions be asked, clarifications sought, and this budget process not be used to carry out scores or vendettas. I would have been happy to have a “no” vote having answered all of the questions coming from the Hon. Members. I just bring to the attention of this House that not one question was asked.

Mr. Chairman: Noted. You may answer the question.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, as it relates to the \$4,586,901 this has to do with the setting up of the towers, it also has to do with the acquisition of additional laptops to bring us to 90,000. It is in keeping with Information Communication Technology (ICT) programme.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, project code 1200200. I have noticed for 2011 the sum of \$30.97 million was spent. In 2012, \$35 million was budgeted for and a total of \$34.772 million was spent. However, in 2013 there is a budgetary allocation for \$35 million and under the column Legend it reads, "Rehabilitation of building and upgrading of electrical system." I now refer to Volume 3, reference 1. Under 'Description of Project's there is Rehabilitation Works – State House, and Upgrading of Electrical System – Villas. My question to the Hon. Minister is could you say to which buildings works were done in 2012 to the tune of \$34.772 million? And, two, what works are expected to be done in 2013 and for which buildings?

Bishop Edghill: Thank you Hon. Member. Mr. Chairman, we all would agree that State House is a wooden ancient, historical, heritage building. When we undertake rehabilitation and maintenance we do not do everything in one year. Based upon moneys available we fix sections. Last year we did maintenance a number of times, painting, and the rest of it. This sum allocated here is not only for State House, but also for the villas situated at the back of Castellani House. For greater efficiency we are going to also update the electrical system which is quite ancient; it means total rewiring and putting in new systems and the rest of it.

Ms. Ferguson: A follow-up question, Hon. Member, could you provide to this House how much moneys will be spent on continuous works at State House and how much will be spent on the villas?

Bishop Edghill: For State House \$30 million, and for the electrical system for the villas \$5 million.

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, I refer to project code 1700100, Minor Works. I note there is a fairly large appropriation under this Head. I wonder if the Minister can give us some specifics in relation to the nature of the works that will be carried out – something more expansive than what appears in the legend. And, if is possible, to affix a cost to the specific item he will speak to.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you Hon. Member for the question. Mr. Chairman, this sum of \$95 million is a sum allocated before. This is not a new sum; it was allocated before. The minor works represents the humanitarian assistance the President would be at his discretion to offer to hundreds of Guyanese who would appeal to him from time to time. For example, the President may be out on a visit and an elderly person appeals to him for assistance because of hard times. It is from this minor vote that person would be dealt with. People who need medical assistance and their family cannot afford it from time to time people make appeal to the President. Communities seeking to develop themselves that would have fallen short on resources to make something happen, appeal to the President. From experience, and what has always been, from this minor works vote is humanitarian assistance, looking after the needs of hundreds of Guyanese who would expect an intervention at a presidential level in terms of humanitarian assistance. This has nothing to do with construction or building. It is called Minor Works for the purpose of budgetary allocation but it is basically for humanitarian assistance.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Project code 1212000- could the Hon. Minister say where will the ICT towers be set up in the hinterland? Two, how long will this process take?

4.07 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: I cannot hear the Member.

Mr. Chairman: Where will you think the ICT programme will be?

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Where will the towers be set up in the hinterland? Secondly, how long will this process take? Thirdly, will all villages be able to access internet services after this? And, fourthly, do you have to spend extra moneys to repair the exposed cables in Region 9 right now? Thank you.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that we are putting in 54 towers and they will at specific drop off spots, for example, Annai, I think there will be one close to Iwokrama and coming all the way through. The intent, as it relates to the ICT programme, as I understand it, it that where these towers are situated it will allow for connectivity, even to Amerindian communities.

In our budgetary allocation, there is a provision for bringing ICT connectivity to all Amerindian communities, where they will be setting up bands solar powered and they will be able to have the connectivity. We do not intend to give the laptop without the connectivity.

The 54 towers will span the Coast, including Linden, and there will also be connectivity for the Amerindian communities. There are various drop-off spots and the technical people who will be able to explain this a lot more in detail than I can do, but there are radiuses in which one can get coverage and connectivity and the rest of it. The technical people have situated these 54 towers to be able to cover the main population centres to ensure we provide that necessary connectivity on schools and all Government facilities – health centres, police stations and all the rest of it.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Minister, so you cannot say exactly how many Amerindian communities and schools will be able to access the internet?

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I did not get that.

Mr. Chairman: How many Amerindian communities will benefit from this ICT programme?

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Also, he did not answer, how long will this process take?

Bishop Edghill: As I understand it, the programme will touch all Amerindian communities. In 2013, in terms of the laying out of the programme, some 66 communities will be served this year. Like I answered a little earlier, the laying out of the programme that we are looking at is the September 2013 Programme.

Mrs. Hughes: Hon. Minister, could you give us an idea of how many Guyanese have actually secured jobs under this project so far?

Bishop Edghill: Sir, can I get a line item or a subhead?

Mrs. Hughes: Same project 1212000 – Information Communication Technology- my apologies.

Mr. Chairman: We are at project -1212000 - Information Communication Technology.

Bishop Edghill: Is the question how many Guyanese would have secured jobs?

Mrs. Hughes: Yes, so far.

Bishop Edghill: The One Laptop Per Family Programme (OLPF) has an employment of about 150 Guyanese. The E-Governance Programme has about 16 and there were four contractors that would have employed several Guyanese for the laying out of the cable. MMC, I can recall was one of the contractors, but there were three other contractors involved with numerous Guyanese involved in getting the cable laid.

In terms of people on the job right now, as a result of this programme, the One Laptop per Family, 150 persons and that is not all Georgetown based where the programme is being rolled out, the E-Governance programme has 16 persons and that is where we are.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: The Hon. Minister did not answer the question about the exposed cables in Region 9. Will you require extra moneys to get these fixed and how soon will you do this?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, it is regrettably, but I think the Hon. Member knows the terrain of the interior like many of us. It is as a result of erosion and heavy rainfall that some of the cables became exposed.

Mr. Chairman: The question is how is it going to be remedied?

Bishop Edghill: It is being remedied at no extra cost on the budget.

Mr. Chairman: I will say this though, again, from going in, particularly in the Mabura and Lethem roads, if we know rainfall patterns, flooding and erosion, why was it buried? In some instances, the cable was right there and it was only by the grace of God that someone did not take a cutlass and chop it or run over it. Mr. Allicock would tell you that cable is literally exposed in many places and it is either it be taken over head or buried deeper than it was, I can tell you that.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Mr. Chairman, thank you for explaining that.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, like you Sir, I became aware of the matter of the exposure of the cable and I have worked with the people on this project. To deal with the issue of the erosion because I did ask what would be the substitute and that would be to pass the cable through some special pipes. But when the figures came in it would have sent the cost of this programme way in a reach that we could not have handled. So, we are basically trying to manage our terrain; we are basically trying to do our best work and impress on our contractors. Maybe some of the designs

we will have to rework them as it relates to how we could get the adjustments to cater for those things. But it is being remedied as we speak because it is a matter of great concern to us. Thank you.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Minister, with regards to the laptops, how many villages have acquired laptops so far?

Mr. Chairman: Are these hinterland villages?

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: I am sorry, hinterland villages.

Bishop Edghill: The Government of Guyana through this programme have not started distribution of laptops to Amerindian communities, for the simple reason of, if we take in the laptops and we do not have the infrastructure and the connectivity, it is just an exercise in futility. So we are seeking to expedite the laying out of the infrastructure so that we will be able to accelerate our distribution into these areas. It is something that we are anxious to do particularly as it relates to equal access in terms of education for the Amerindian students to be able to do their research and all the rest of it. It is something that we are actively pursuing, but we want to get the infrastructure in place. Sir, thank you.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Another question please. When works have been completed under the E-Governance Programme, will bandwidth be sold to private persons?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, no decision has been made in that direction. You would appreciate that we have private providers of bandwidth. The intent of the Government is to ensure that it enhances its ICT capabilities in ensuring connectivity for Government. That is why we call it the E-Governance; it is for E-Government; it is for E-Governance or E-Government programmes and at the same time it will be able to provide bandwidth to the necessary institutions. There is no decision at this stage as it relates to the selling of bandwidth.

Programme: 011 – Administrative Services - \$5,320,895,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 012 – Presidential Advisory (Cabinet and Other Services) - \$642,650,000

Programme: 012 – Presidential Advisory (Cabinet and Other Services) - \$642,650,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 09 Public and Police Service Commissions

Current Expenditure

Programme: 091 – Public and Police Service Commissions – 64,982,000

Programme: 091 - Public and Police Service Commissions - \$64,982,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 091 – Public and Police Service Commissions - \$2,400,000

Programme: 091 – Public and Police Service Commissions - \$2,400,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 10 Teaching Service Commission

Current Expenditure

Programme: 101 – Teaching Service Commission - \$87,165,000

Programme: 101 – Teaching Service Commission - \$87,165,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 101 – Teaching Service Commission - \$6,360,000

Programme: 101 – Teaching Service Commission - \$6,360,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 11 Guyana Elections Commission

Current Expenditure

Programme: 111 – Elections Commission – 1,719,980,000

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, line item 6281 – Security Services - could the Hon. Minister indicate what is the reason for this increase from \$133,518,000 to \$183,591,000?

Mr. Hinds: I am advised that the Guyana Elections Commission has budgeted for 49 additional offices for the fourth cycle of continuous registration.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Line item 6284 – Other- what are the matters that are covered under “Other” for which we are asked to approve \$176,279,000?

Mr. Hinds: This increase has to do with the fourth and fifth cycles. The large items here are for a Public Relations (PR) campaign; posting of website, internet charges which is \$62 million. There is here too, a provision for some ongoing court cases, for some \$41 million; the rental of containers, repairs to air conditioners and generators, some \$13 million. There is some cross matching of fingerprints, as new persons seek to register and an allocation of \$17 million. There is a voter’s education campaign for registration that is an allocation of \$19 million and; the payment of cleaners for 76 registration offices, an allocation of \$10 million.

So those are the main items making up this total amount.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Follow-up please question: could the Hon. Prime Minister say whether this PR campaign has to do with the Local Government Elections; will the amount allocated be for a PR campaign for the Local Government Elections?

Mr. Hinds: This is for two cycles of continuous registration that are planned. I can say that one can see a link in that the aim is to have the voters’ list or to be quickly able to prepare a National Register of Registrants.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: One final follow-up please. Could the Hon. Prime Minister give us the names of those cases for which a sum of money has been allocate; the \$41 million?

Mr. Hinds: I have the list here: Civil Appeal No. 87 of 2002, Veronica Delph vs. Chief Elections Officer; Allan Bristol vs. GECOM; Veronica Delph again; Boohoo vs. Sharma; Parris vs. GECOM; Sharma vs. GECOM, etc. It is a long list.

Mr. B. Williams: Line item 6294 – Other- there is a gargantuan leap of over \$200 million under this head; \$224 million. Could the Hon. Minister say what they are expected to spend this money on?

Mr. Hinds: This is for payment of scrutineers and temporary staff for the fourth and fifth cycles of continuous registration.

Ms. Ally: A follow-up question: I heard the Prime Minister talking about two cycles of registration. I know the fourth is ongoing now. Could the Hon. Prime Minister say whether this fifth cycle is intended for 2013 and when?

Mr. Hinds: It will start in September, but it depends on if and when Local Government Elections is to be held. If it is being held at about the same time, then it would not go ahead.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Prime Minister, would you be prepared, within a specified time, to layover a copy of the list of the court cases that are pending and princely sum of \$42 million? Sir, would you be prepared, within a specified time, which you could indicate to the House?

Mr. Hinds: Yes, in fact it may be available right now. It can be copied; we can submit it to be copying.

Mrs. Backer: The list of the court cases; Hon. Prime Minister, could I respectfully ask if the list that you have there also provides the names of the firms or the individual attorneys at law who have been retained?

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Chairman, through you, this list does not include the firms providing representation.

Mr. Chairman: I believe that there is one firm, as I am aware, that represents GECOM in most matters. Mr. Williams would have encountered senior counsel.

Mrs. Backer: Prime Minister, the list that you presently have, are making a commitment that you will circulate that?

Mr. Hinds: Yes.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Trevor Williams. I meant to say that there is a Trevor Williams in the newspapers who has been held for a murder, bears no resemblance... *[Interruption]* I needed to make the disclaimer because persons may have been concerned. I wish to say on your behalf that the gentleman bears no resemble to you and I know that you would not have been...

When I heard it I was a little concerned, but I know it is not you. I thought that we should clear that up for the benefit of House. The dignity of the House has to be maintained.

Mr. T. Williams: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships)- can the Hon. Prime Minister give details regarding this increase?

Mr. Hinds: This is for the training of GECOM's managers; improving their capacity through training, participation in electoral observation and other professional development opportunities. Also, staff will travel to observe and learn how technology is being used in other electoral management bodies.

Mr. T. Williams: Mr. Chairman, just another question. Under line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence- we have an allocation of \$62 million, which represents about a 300% increase; can the Hon. Prime Minister shed some light on this necessity for?

Mr. Hinds: This is a provision for the planned two cycles of continuous registration and it includes moneys for travelling in hinterland areas and for taking along scrutineers and feeding and housing, etc. It is particularly for mobile registration to get to those people who may not easily get to a fixed centre.

Mr. Felix: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships), I would like to ask the Hon. Prime Minister if he can kindly indicate what this allocation is intended to cover for the \$3 million?

Mr. Hinds: I did refer to this, but we do not have any breakdown, but I can say what I said just now. It is to provide for the managers of GECOM to gain experience through training and participation in electoral observations and other professional development opportunities. Mr. Chairman, \$24 million is to be utilised for sending a number of persons for training in India and also in Brazil.

4.37 p.m.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I get into the question I just want to make a general observation. In relation to 2011, an election year, and this is an alarming story, they only spent \$943,260,000. In a year that was promised to be an election year for Local Government it was budgeted for 2012, \$1,163,765,000 and with an expenditure of \$1,056,245,000. With a Local Government Election pending there is an increase. The budgeted figure here is \$1,669,765,000. The alarming situation is that comparing a budget for an election year for a general and regional election with an election year there seems to be some increases which need to be justified.

Directly to my question on line item 6114- Clerical and Office Support- there is an increase of 16 members of staff and the increase in the cost is \$49 million. Could we have an explanation and at least five of the staff members' salaries and allowances listed?

Mr. Hinds: There is an increase in the number of persons to be paid under this heading; I think from 177 to 193 and I think that that is the main source of this increase. Registration Clerks I, II and III are paid under this heading.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In relation to line item 6115 there is an increase of one member of staff and that translates to \$6 million increase in cost. Could we have the salary of that staff and designation?

Mr. Hinds: There was quite a bit of movement. What we see here from 32 to 33 is just the net effect and the increases are related to that; I understand, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Sharma: For the one staff member that is there, which is the net figure, what is that staff member's salary?

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Chairman, we do not have here the listing of the operatives at this level, line item 6115. We do not have it here with us but I think that I could say that these are relatively lower level persons – cleaners, drivers, handymen – in this.

Mr. Sharma: For it to be a rapid turnover of staff and this figure to be in excess of \$6 million showing one, it means that within the period of time the Minister of Finance had compiled this

information there were a number of persons that came off the payroll; this has to be around January, so what was the movement in terms of staff. How many persons came off the payroll for January?

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Chairman, I would ask for us to submit the details on it. There is some thinking here that an earlier increase in wages may not have been included, let us say, in the “2012” so that what we are seeing here in 2013 the increases seem to be larger than it actually is, but we will have to get specific information on it.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6116- the staffing details reflect that there is a two-member increase in staff. Could we have the designations and salaries of these two members? The increase is \$14 million.

Mr. Hinds: We have a note here for 6116, which I think applied to the earlier one, that the revision of wages for 2012 was paid for by the Ministry of Finance and so did not appear in the 2012 Budget but now for the 2013 Budget they have that included now.

Mr. Sharma: Was that the explanation for line item 6116?

Mr. Hinds: Yes.

Mr. Sharma: But there has been an increase in the members of staff by two. I want their salaries and designations.

Mr. Hinds: One Regional Officer (RO) for Kamarang and the pay is \$204,000 a month and there were also two Assistant Regional Officers (AROs) for Coldigen and Kamarang.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do not want to take any more time to go through in details but just to ask a question of the Hon. Minister. The question is: In the history, since Continuous Registration (CR) started, was there any time that GECOM executed two cycles of registration in one year?

Mr. Hinds: No. I am told that it has not been done before, but it has been planned for this year. If there is a Local Government Election a second cycle would be run.

Mr. Sharma: Could the Hon. Minister say what the cost for the remainder of the present CR in this amount here? What is the cost?

Mr. Hinds: It will have to be extracted from the budget figures – the cost of doing continuous registration.

Mr. Sharma: Could it be said that it could be half of this amount?

Mr. Hinds: No, Sir, we do not think that it would be half. We would prefer to provide it later.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I just want to make a little announcement. We are at 4.50 p.m. we are scheduled to take a break at 5.00 p.m. but we are nowhere we ought to have been at 5.00 p.m. There is one other matter to raise and that is that the Hon. Prime Minister has to leave the Chamber at a not too distant time from now. I think that I can say it; the President is leaving the jurisdiction to attend the swearing in of the President of Venezuela, so I would like us to deal with the matters for the Hon. Prime Minister, as he is here because if we take the break for one hour it will affect many things. There has to be a swearing in so I am asking for your patience and for us to expedite things a bit to go beyond 5.00 p.m.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Chairman, I would like, with your permission, to make a statement then I want to ask a few questions. I have now a copy of the line item 6284- Other- that the Hon. Prime Minister had said there were allocations for pending cases. I have list of a few cases but the question that I want to ask is: In 2012 it appears that \$40,560,000 was paid towards these cases and then in 2013 the same sum was budgeted for the same cases – \$40,500,000...

Mr. Chairman: Does that list have cost to be paid in the matter of *Esther Perreira*? Those costs that were awarded in 2001 were never paid.

Mr. Nagamootoo: This has here to do...

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Chairman, I would like to make a correction...

Mr. Nagamootoo: Let me finish, Hon. Prime Minister, if you may, kindly, allow me to say this because I am a little baffled here; maybe I am missing something completely. For 2014, we have

a projected cost for the same cases, \$40 million, and 2015... [Ms. Shadick: ...lawyers would know.] I do not know. I am a lawyer but I do not charge the same amount every year for the same case so that if the case is with me for five years I am charging five times the fees.

Mr. Chairman: What is the question?

Mr. Nagamootoo: Can the Hon. Prime Minister explain this? I will ask a follow up on this, as well.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Chairman, there were some errors in the putting of the years. For the total annual cost for 2013 and then the indicative years for 2014, 2015 and 2016 there was an error so where there is 2012 there should be 2013. I think that these are just projections; figures for what might be. They are projections for what might be.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Chairman, I do not want to respond to what I am hearing; that these are estimates. The Esther Perreira case 2001: Why would we have a projection of a case like that – that had been finished – into 2015 for the same amount of fees...?

Mr. Chairman: Is it on the list?

Mr. Nagamootoo: ...and “Trotman and Ramjattan” was finished in 2006. Why are we getting a case like that projected into 2015?

Mr. Chairman: I believe that appeals might have been filed in some of these matters I know for sure that in the case of *Esther Perreira* there is an appeal, but I am not too sure about some of the others.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Well, Sir, this is the National Assembly and we are being asked to make allocations. For the other one, which I found, there is \$14 million recurrent from 2012 right into 2015 for the New and Amended Prepare Strategic Plans and implementation and one has “achieve integrity and transparency in the internal processes of GECOM”, recurring. These expenses are \$6 million and \$14 million a year. Are these things advertised, these services advertised so that legal firms could bid for them?

Mr. Chairman: The cases may be...

Mr. Nagamootoo: Sir, these are not cases.

Mr. Chairman: ...on the book, so to speak, but there is no activity – if I can put it that way – taking place...

Mrs. Backer: I think that there is some mix up. My understanding is that when the Prime Minister was asked about line item 6284- Other- and what the figure was for, the \$40 million, he indicated that it was for the paying of legal fees and the Hon. Prime Minister kindly agreed and, in fact, with dispatch, sent copies but in fact, when one looks at it, there are three items that have nothing to do with legal fees that come up to \$25 million so in fact when the question was asked the answer given was not accurate because it gave the impression that the entire \$40 million... In fact it was only \$25 million. The other points that my Hon. Colleague, Mr. Nagamootoo, has raised is also of very great concern because if one sees Patterson and Franklin – Franklin is now deceased. Well when I say “now”, he is deceased and there are a lot of cases that we are personally aware have been abandoned. There are no appeals filed in some of these cases. They have been abandoned.

Mr. Nagamootoo: The question was asked and I note Your Honour has made an intervention but we would like to have total disclosure in the interest of good governance. Is there one law firm here to whom these fees are payable or are there several and what are the names?

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that the law firm being used is that of *Ashton Chase*. I was wrongly advised that the moneys expected to be expended on the cases in court is \$25 million.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Your Honour, if there are no questions being pursued...

Mr. Hinds: The sum when one subtracts out on this page a provision for legislation, provision of integrity and transparency in the internal process of GECOM. I am told that that has something to do with migrating to some electronic systems and manuals for \$5 million. For the cases it is \$15 million remaining for court case representation.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I would like to put the question...

Mr. Nagamootoo: Before you put the question, you will, Mr. Chairman, note that the Alliance For Change has raised a lot of concerns in relation to the amendment we would have wished to make and we want to say to this Hon. House that in view of the explanations given and in view of the preparedness for what the Prime Minister said – he did not say it with certainty – for Local Government Elections, we would not prosecute the amendments that we have indicated we would prosecute under the Elections Commission on page 73.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you for notifying me and the House as such. Thank you very much. Hon. Members, given that time is of the essence I would like to put the question.

Programme: 111 – Elections Commission - \$1,719,980,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: I ask that we turn our attention to page 420 and, as we do so, say thank you to the students of the Camille's Institute and their teachers and escorts. We hope you had an interesting afternoon.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 111 – Elections Commission - \$168,237,000

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Programme code 2501000- Elections Commission- there are three categories of projects – numbered 1, 2, 3, could we have the description of the type of building, the size and the cost for each building?

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Chairman, some \$48 million is allocated for four buildings for permanent presence in each of Region Nos. 2, 3, 4 and 7. I got that wrong. It is for Region Nos. 2, 3 and 7 for \$48 million and then for Region No. 4 \$28 million. For Region No. 7 it would be in Bartica; for Region No. 3 it would be at Pouderoyen, for Region No. 2 it would be at Charity and for Region 4 on the East Bank.

Mr. Sharma: Are these accommodations for staff or for office accommodations, these buildings?

Mr. Hinds: For office; for the permanent presence of the Office of Registration.

Mr. Sharma: Item 20 Purchase of Boats and Outboard Engine- can we have the quantity and a brief description?

Mr. Hinds: An All terrain Vehicle (ATV) for Paramakatoi, an outboard engine and boat for Kamarang. That is it there. There is a list here of the other items to make up that total sum.

Mr. Sharma: Does the word “vehicle” mean ATV? Is there no other car or other vehicle being purchased?

Mr. Hinds: No cars just an ATV.

Mr. Sharma: How many boats?

Mr. Hinds: One boat and one engine.

Mr. Sharma: What is the cost of the furniture and the equipment?

Mr. Hinds: There is a new server being bought for backup and the items there total about \$22 million. There are 16 solar panel systems for some \$16 million. Those are the big items. There are 20 laptop computers at \$4 million, 16 desktop photocopiers at \$3.4, five refrigerators \$1.1 million. I think that those are the larger items.

Programme: 111 – Elections Commission - \$168,237,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: That concludes our review of the Guyana Elections Commission. Thank you very much.

Mr. Hinds: No, Programme 112.

Mr. Chairman: My apologies.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 112 – Elections Administration - \$1,586,243,000

Mr. Felix: Line item 6302 - could the Hon. Prime Minister indicate what this expenditure is intended to cover?

Mr. Hinds: Programme 112 is made up here for the expected Local Government Elections which I can say in many ways will be more demanding and challenging than the National and Regional Elections we have had hither to. It is projected that some 13,000 persons may be employed for three to four months. It is expected that there would be need to have very extensive training of those persons and of the public at large because of the new features that would be included in this Local Government Election so this item here covers meals and so on for the training of these 13,000 people who would be employed for three to four months in the course of Local Government Elections.

Mr. Felix: Just to follow up question: could the Hon. Prime Minister indicate how much of this sum is intended to cover voter education?

Mr. Hinds: I am being advised that that figure there was for the training, mainly, of the people within GECOM and under line item 6284 there is the cost expected for voter education.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Sharma, do you want to have a go here? Hon. Members, we have the Guyana Defence Force, the Public Service Appellate Tribunal, Office of the Ombudsman, the Office of the Prime Minister, the Parliament Office. I am hoping that we can get these done before 6.00 p.m. Go ahead, Mr. Sharma.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On general observation, the Budget 2013 is basically exactly what was given in 2012. There is no compensation for increases. Knowing that GECOM is paying an increase in scrutineer money in terms of the stipend and for temporary staff an increase in the amount, there is no increase reflected at line item 6294, so I do not know if the Hon. Minister wants to address that.

5.07 p.m.

Mr. Hinds: Scrutineers are part of programme one for continuous registration, so they do not appear under programme two. There is no arrangement to pay scrutineers, I am advised, during the election, itself, but they are paid during the periods of continuous registration.

Mr. Sharma: I do not know, but there are scrutineers who are involved in the claim and objection exercise.

Mr. Hinds: Yes. That is treated as part of registration – claim and objection.

Mr. Sharma: Claim and objection is part of the preparation for the conduct of election, so it is a programme two activity. I just want to ensure that sufficient fund is there. Could the Hon. Minister give us a breakdown, under line item 6294 – Other? What are the categories to be paid? If there will be Local Government Election there will have to be payments of registrar and returning officer, and so forth. Could we get the number of staff and the breakdown of the cost?

Mr. Hinds: Line item 6294, Other, is where the estimated 13,000 people will be paid over three to four months. There is a breakdown here but this is some 13,000 persons being retained over three to four months.

We have some listing here of the estimates of payments to the persons employed for a three to four-month period, temporary employees, some 13,000 altogether. There are some other allocations here for some other things - to purchase plastic seal with Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM), print and numbering, purchase of voting compartments, purchase of P.E envelopes, packing, handling and...

Mr. Speaker: Is there a list, Hon. Prime Minister, with respect, that you could hand to the Member?

Mr. Hinds: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: If we are to go through the pens and the pencils and the torchlights we are going to be in some trouble.

Hon. Member, would you be prepared to accept the list?

Members, by motion unanimously adopted, we set times for the considerations of these Estimates. From 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. we should have been covering the Parliament Office and we are nowhere near that. Reluctantly, but in vain, I am going to have to exercise a guillotine if we are to make any progress. We have gone beyond the time that this House has allocated. I have asked the leave of the House to allow us to go a bit further so I am... As I said, I do not like doing this, but I will have to move us a bit faster because we are halfway where we should have been at 5

o'clock. As I said, it was a motion of this House, which was adopted, so I am, in a sense, duty-bound.

Programme: 112 - Elections Administration - \$1,586,243,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 53 Guyana Defence Force

Current Expenditure

Programme: 531 – Defence Headquarters - \$6,785,776,000

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister in the Ministry of Finance, would you be dealing with this?

Bishop Edghill: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: I can tell you, off the bat, that one of the thing, which concerns me, Commander, is training. I see officers doing some things that I never believe they would have been capable of doing, recently. I do not know what the force is taking in and dishonouring the proud legacy of it – smoking marijuana and robbing, and all of that.

Mr. Felix: Line item 6231- Fuel and Lubricants: Could the Hon. Minister indicate the reason for the increase in the allocation?

Bishop Edghill: This describes, basically, the greater capacity of the Guyana Defence Force. There are more vehicles and aircrafts, which that are flying now. That is what will send up the cost.

Mr. Felix: Follow-up. Is the increase in capacity represented in the increase of trucks?

Bishop Edghill: The answer to that is in the affirmative, yes.

Mr. Felix: Line item 6281- Security Services: Is this allocation intended to pay a private security service and in this case which service?

Bishop Edghill: I think this is a question that we answered last year. It is the payment of a private security service for the former Chief of Staff, who opted to have private security, and the company is Kalibur Security.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. I remember that.

Programme: 531 – Defence Headquarters - \$6,785,776,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 531 – Defence Headquarters - \$601,500,000

Programme: 531 – Defence Headquarters - \$601,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 57 Office of the Ombudsman

Current Expenditure

Programme: 571 – Ombudsman - \$ 2,385,000

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Prime Minister, there is not an Ombudsman, or Ombudsperson, as I would prefer to say, for seven years, yet every year money is paid. Last year, it was for four clerical staff; this year, it is for three and that has been the pattern for the last several years. My question to you, Sir, does your Government - this prudent Government - not feel that it is a waste of money? There are two secretaries and, perhaps, a driver. I am not going to ask who the three people are, but there is no Ombudsman. These are people who come in and clean and then they shut the office at the end of the day. They have been doing this for seven years. The question is: Would it not be more prudent to temporarily close the office thereby saving taxpayers all of this money and when an Ombudsperson is appointed then the office can be reopened? This is surely a waste of taxpayers' money.

I am sure the persons can be transferred and they are contracted employees anyhow.

Mr. Hinds: I think we would prefer to persist in finding an Ombudsperson.

Programme: 571 – Ombudsman - \$ 2,385,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 58 Public Service Appellate Tribunal

Current Expenditure

Programme: 581 - Public Service Appellate Tribunal - \$6,321,000

Programme: 581 - Public Service Appellate Tribunal - \$6,321,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 581 - Public Service Appellate Tribunal - \$2,415,000

Programme: 581 - Public Service Appellate Tribunal - \$2,415,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 02 Office of the Prime Minister

Current Expenditure

Programme: 021 - Prime Minister's Secretariat - \$1,199,201,000

Mr. Greenidge: Can I refer you, Mr. Chairman, to line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, under which there is a request for Guyana Power and Light Inc. (GPL) of \$1 billion for this year? Could the Prime Minister tell us exactly what is happening here because it has gone from \$6 billion to \$1 billion? Is that not correct?

Mr. Hinds: My understanding is that it is the movement of the support to GPL, under this line item, from \$6 billion to \$1 billion this year. Is that the question which is being put?

Mr. Greenidge: Yes. What does that reflect?

Mr. Hinds: The \$1 billion could be seen as fuel support. We have put out a sheet with how the \$6 billion was ascribed last year. The situation with GPL should be addressed from the background that the required electricity prices to sustain GPL are not charged out of persons. There has been a tradition, maybe from the very early days, in the 70s, from the time the electricity company was owned by the Government, that the prices set have been below the prices that are required. I had produced, during the debate, a sheet which showed the forgone revenues, year by year. This year it is projected to be \$6.4 billion; last year it was \$8.0 billion.

This money, the Government seeks to make up in a number of ways. There is, also, the Government, in this period being the owner, provides for the expansion of the company as it seeks to meet the increasing demand. The demand for electricity, peak demand, had risen over the last 20 years from 33 megawatts to 87 megawatts in Demerara. There are two sets of moneys in which the Government needs to provide to keep GPL in the state that it is. It is not gold-plated for sure. These moneys are required.

To answer more directly why the amount is reduced, on this line item, is that this year the Government will be asking for some \$8 billion for GPL or \$7 billion to GPL on the capital stand in addition to this \$1 billion here.

Mr. Greenidge: First of all, I believe that the request for capital expenditure is not \$7 or \$6 billion but \$10 billion. That is not before us now; it is just to correct the Prime Minister.

It would help, I think. Clearly it assists the Prime Minister to put all of these amounts together because I do not know that the table, to which he made reference at the beginning, shows any clear distinction between the two sets of tables. In other words, as the Prime Minister, himself, indicates, the moneys given to GPL are fungible, so it would be better and more transparent if they were all put in a single table, rather than split in this way, where, in looking at one, one may get the impression that there is a smaller amount asked, altogether, when, in fact, if what happened last year is compared with what happened this year...

The question about presentation is one that I hope the Prime Minister will address. The table, which is provided - I think we need to come back to him because it is far from clear - would help. Whilst one asks what has happened to the money, which has been given, in order for it to be meaningful since it is spent across different cost centres, it would be helpful to give us, perhaps, a single financial table in which we see all of the outgoings and then we can see how they have been assigned.

If I might just address this specific item, can the Prime Minister tell us, in so far as it is meaningful, what assumptions underlie this request from \$1 billion as oppose to any other sum? In other words, in terms of contingencies request, can we be given some parameters so that we, ourselves, can determine when he comes back for more money that it will be based upon changing fuel cost or something else? To be truthful, I do not think we expect that this figure of

\$1 billion or that the combined figures, in which he gives us, will be roughly what he has asked for. We suspect it to be over \$12 billion.

Mr. Hinds: This year we are projecting that fuel costs would be 78% of sales. Right away, as the Hon. Member, I think, indicated, if there are changes in the price of oil it makes a big change in our situation. If it is reduced then it is a good thing, but if it goes up it would put pressure on the budget. Fuel is the big one, some 78%, and there are many other things like transformers, meters, and so on.

Mr. Greenidge: A figure of 78% in the context, that I am asking, is not helpful. If it is 78% of sales it also depends on how well sales are done.

Mr. Hinds: The money budgeted for the year for fuel is \$24.7 billion.

Mr. Greenidge: What is the assumed price, if the Prime Minister is going to use a landed price at Curacao or whatever? What is it that we have to look at?

Mr. Chairman: Are you looking ahead, Prime Minister? You must have an idea. You have to be able to look at future.

Mr. Hinds: The price is projected for the year 2013: Crude oil - US\$99.50 per barrel, heavy fuel oil (HFO) - US\$107.16, the one that is used most often, 80% of the time; light fuel oil, which is diesel, US\$132.72 per barrel.

There is a note here that states that the HFO has moved from US\$2885 per barrel in the year 2000 to US\$108 in the year 2012 and it is now down to US\$107. There is a table here of moving oil prices, year by year.

Mr. Greenidge: Is there an average, which the Prime Minister is assuming, that will prevail in the year 2013 as against which this figure of \$1 billion is set?

Mr. Hinds: Yes Hon. Member. The prices I just give are the average assumed – US\$99.50 for crude oil, US\$107.16 for HFO, US\$132.72 for diesel.

Mr. Greenidge: I appreciate the figure submitted by the Prime Minister.

Is the Prime Minister doing anything or is he in a position to do anything about the configuration of the generating plants with respect to the consuming of the less expensive fuel and an encouragement of consumers to, even where they are using equipment, move towards those?

Mr. Hinds: We have been moving from light fuel oil, diesel, to heavy fuel oil. The Wartsilla engines, five to eight megawatt units, and I think there is a two-megawatt in Anna Regina, are in use of heavy fuel oil. The other units are diesel. There is a chart here that shows in the year 2012 it was 83% heavy fuel oil and 17% diesel. In the year 2005 it was only 57% heavy fuel oil and about 43% diesel. We have been moving and we have a chart here that shows.

Mr. Greenidge: What is the target for the year 2013?

Mr. Hinds: The year 2013 target is that there is not much change. We hope to get it up to another 2 to 3%. We hope to get it to about 86% heavy fuel oil and 14% diesel.

Programme: 021 - Prime Minister's Secretariat - \$1,199,201,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 021 - Prime Minister's Secretariat - \$10,643,500,000

Proposed Amendment to motion on Notice Paper number 184

Amendment to be moved in the Committee of Supply of the National Assembly for the Estimates of Expenditure for the fiscal year 2013.

That the amount shown in Column 4 for Agencies, Accounts Codes and Descriptions, listed below reduced by the amounts shown in column 5.

Page 413; 02 Office of the Prime Minister – 2601100 – Electrification Programme 10,255, 000,000; reduction (Col. 5) 5,255,000,000; proposed (Col. 6) 5,000,000,000.

[*Mr. Greenidge*]

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, in view of your own strictures about the time and the fact that the explanations which were given just now pertaining to both sides, let me just put you on alert to the fact that there is a motion.

Mr. Speaker: I have seen the motion.

Mr. Ramjattan: Hon. Prime Minister, the audited statements to GPL for the years 2011 and 2012, are they completed?

Mr. Hinds: Yes. I think the year 2011 is already completed and the year 2012 is in process of being completed.

Mr. Ramjattan: A similar question, as like in Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) where we have to seek a bail out here, is there anything being done in relation to the plan for board changes or professionalising the board or doing anything in relation to board members at GPL, so that we can get those losses lessen as a result of that?

Mr. Hinds: We certainly do not want to be complacent, but the so-called losses in GPL are related to the suppression of tariffs. I put out a table which shows that from the year 2003 tariffs have been suppressed by a net \$27.8 billion and also through that period of time the Government, as owner, has provided another \$22 billion in loans and equity investment. I do not think we should start off by saying that these results, in terms of our support from the budget, are due to poor performance. We should not start from that position.

5.37 p.m.

As I have said, the big issue with GPL is the losses, both technical and commercial. It may be about 14% technical, about 17% commercial losses. Certainly, it is something that I feel embarrassed about, particularly the commercial losses, particularly when we compare, through parallax, the figures that are available in Barbados, the total losses are in the order of 7% and 8%. They may be in the order of 20% in Jamaica, but looking at Barbados, one certainly feels somewhat embarrassed about the losses. The technical losses we are working at with the programme, that is, in the capital side, here, being completed to put in to upgrade the transmission. Also we are working to reduce commercial losses in three kinds of areas, continuing to use moral suasion where we passed in this honourable House, here, some legislation to be more coercive to have mandatory prison terms for persons on three times stealing of electricity and with the worked with persons from other jurisdictions, which faced similar problems, I think we worked in particular with people from the utility from the

Dominican Republic and others advice, we have embarked on a programme of capital taking technological solutions, that is using different cables that are difficult to latch in, and things such as that. That increases the cost to GPL for hooking up someone in an urban area, say from about \$50,000/\$60,000 to maybe \$250,000 to \$300,000, and when the difference is multiplied by \$10,000 some significant sums of money will be got.

I do not think it is right for us to start off from a position that GPL is necessarily inefficient and ineffective. In fact, if we look at comparative figures, it is doing reasonably well, even although I would always want to do better.

If we look at the prices from the Caribbean Electric Utility Service Corporation (CARILEC) for different places across the Caribbean it could be seen that there are places that are charging even up to about \$120 a kilowatt-hour(s) (kWh). That is Bermuda. I think Guyana is averaging now about \$60. That is what we are charging and that is not what it is costing us. In Bermuda, it charges up to \$120 per kWh and Turks and Caicos /Cayman Islands it is about 95. Then there are a number of countries here that are about \$80 per kWh. Our cost of delivering the electricity is reasonable when it is compared with other places in the similar situation as us. I would like to encourage Members of this House not to think of the allocations to GPL as making up for inefficiency and wastages. It is primarily to make up for the suppressed tariffs and also to provide for the investments that an owner would be looked to provide.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, I had resolved not to ask any question, apart from the first one, but I am afraid, I cannot sit and allow the Prime Minister to get away with this. The corporation is asking for a very large amount. I thought he set out on a good foot by explaining his embarrassment about some of the problems arising from line losses, technical and commercial losses. I am just wanting to remind him that the tariffs, which the corporation has found necessary to impose, are one of the main factors destroying our manufacturing sector in this country. They have been too high for too long. I am not blaming anyone. I am just saying extremely high tariffs are a problem. I believe that when he spoke to the representatives of the private sector they raised this. All that I want to say to him is that high tariffs, as high taxes, served as an incentive for evasion. The same applies to electricity theft, and so forth, as it does to taxation. At the same time the losses, which it has experienced to the extent that they are commercial losses, are also related to those tariffs.

I make this point just to observe that we are of the understanding of the need GPL, as for the assistance, but we are also going to insist, especially in the light of what happened last year when we asked the Government Members to produce a new plan that would have addressed the fundamental problems. They assured us that they had something in place. Within three months of moneys being provided to GPL, they came back for more capital equipment and on this occasion we would not like to think that they would come back again, but we also want to be assured that they are addressing the issues that we are concerned about, and the issue of tariff levels is one that we think should be addressed seriously. We would like to see, in addition of how the moneys, which are being disbursed to the corporation, have been used, a plan which seriously addresses these issues that undermined the capacity of the company to deliver tariffs at a level that is appropriate to our needs and our capacity to pay, which are not quite the same as those in the Bahamas and elsewhere. I would just like to get his assurance that the money he is asking for is going to be spent in the context of efforts by the corporation to deal with those issues that we all regard, apparently other than the Office of the Prime Minister, as critical to the future of this country and its diversification and issue of which the Minister of Finance made great play in his budget speech.

Mr. Hinds: The cost, which we see for providing electricity in Guyana, is, firstly, as a result of the situation which we are in, being based on petroleum fuels. Seventy to 80% of the costs is generated there. As we have demonstrated here, and in many other places, our costs, which we incur, are comparable with; they are in the lower half of cost in the Caribbean. As I say that, I know that many people tell me it does not matter; we do not get pay the same as much as Barbados, or wherever, Jamaica. The fact is that when we go to buy fuel, transformers, insulators, and those things, they may be 80% plus, more than 80% of the cost, we pay the same prices as anybody else.

I would like to assure the Hon. Member that in this situation, where it is very difficult to imagine us lowering the cost of delivery of production of electricity and knowing that our people, including the industrials, would need electricity at lower cost, it is what has been motivating us to getting on with Amaila Fall Hydropower Project, which holds the promise, all the calculations show, that generation cost could be reduced from half, from an average about \$52 per kWh with

our HFO diesel mix to about G\$24 per kWh. We have been taking accounts of the needs of people for lower cost electricity and that has been driving us.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, the Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge rightly citing that this House be given some assurances that the money sought are really..., because we get a sense that every year money sought is given and then we are back at the very same place the year after. I think what the House needs is, well it is not even assurances, that things are happening, and that is what, I think, Mr. Greenidge was trying to point out.

Mr. Hinds: I hear you, Mr. Chairman. I hear the people here and the people all across Guyana and it is one of the frustrations of our jobs in the electricity sector. As you know, Mr. Chairman, one of the issues, which I believe the previous administration faced and we faced, is that the multilateral institutions, which have been supporting us, have been calling for us to set prices at costs. That has been an issue. We have put in the new law, when we made it, the Electricity Sector Reform Act (ESRA) law, that everyone has a right in Guyana to self generate. Many of the people find, even the big businesses, that it is no cheaper for them to generate electricity than to buy from GPL. The fact is that if a person goes out to generate and provide electricity in Guyana that person could not do much better. As I say that, we always looking for ways to do better, but it is very demanding to do better. That is why I show this graph here in which the other countries in the Caribbean are charging people typically \$80 per kWh. That is the kind of figure it costs to generate electricity in our circumstances, but when only \$60 per is charged kWh, every kWh, which is sold, has in it a subsidy of about \$20. This is what we need to meet every year. This is why we are persisting and persevering to try to get Amaila Fall Hydropower Project going, so that we can make a significant impact reduction on the cost of generating and providing electricity.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Chairman, through you, Sir, to the Hon. Prime Minister in this House, old people say that rain do not fall at one person yard alone. Every one of us would like to see a better GPL and a better electricity service because when there is a blackout it does not affect one section of the community. We want to assure the Prime Minister that we are trying, as hard as we could, to understand his explanations and the charts, which he had given to us, except that every time we have these explanations we seem to be compounding. I am going to ask a question quickly, but I want to say this that we try to compare ourselves with Trinidad and Barbados and

we are not taken into consideration that those consumers do not carry 33% line losses in their bills.

Mr. Chairman: At the same time too, Mr. Nagamootoo, there is the economy of scale to look at when there is a larger population with a cost of living that is better the economy and wages are higher. Sometimes there are a number of variables which have to take into account.

Mr. Nagamootoo: We are not impressed, because Your Honour, I want to say is that the way we got this explanation one would not really think that this corporation has come before us for \$22 billion in the programme for rehabilitation and rectification, and there are all the languages of talking about loss reduction and energy conservation and the substation, and we have been hearing these things. We are trying, as best, to assure the Prime Minister that we would like to have a result-based support for subvention because, just now, when there was the \$1 billion we were hoping that we would have had a status report as to how the spending was done last year. I just want to draw the attention of this House to this one fact.

The Hon. Prime Minister has been catering in this programme for foreign funding. Again, I want to make an observation that on all these capital pages we do not know what is grant and what is loan. I consider that... I would not use a strong word, but we need to know what is for the grant and what is for a loan. This kind of a double speak is not helpful for anyone of us who would want to understand that state of our borrowing and the state of generosity towards us.

There is an "Other". There is an allocation, a source of foreign financing as China; there is the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and then there is an "Other" at \$8,255,000,000. That is projected for this year. I want to ask the Hon. Prime Minister if this source of funding, unspecified source of funding, has been now identified in which he is asking us to vote for money here and whether we can have some details of this or else we will be left with a conjecture that by some subterfuge we will be asked to vote back money from the purse - the people's purse - because we do not know the source and we do not know if this funding is finalised.

Mr. Hinds: I take it that the Hon. Member is referring to reference number 17 of Volume 3 of the Estimates and down at the bottom there, from China, through the EXIM Bank loan we are looking to complete the transmission upgrade this year and that is the \$1.5 billion, which is

projected there. This is an entry here to bring in the flow of the money. It is a loan. We can get into discussion of soft loans and grant equivalent portion, and so on, but those are considerations that come up. The next portion, \$450 million, comes from and IDB, I think, US\$5 million. All together loan that is focusing on institutional strengthening I think it is from this area that we are getting the funding on the loan, at the moment, to harden the circuits against people stealing electricity and other things.

The “Other” is coming from the PetroCaribe Fund and that is that we accumulate, in Guyana, the financed portion from the PetroCaribe arrangement. This portion is coming from there. I would say that it has two parts in it, \$4.77 billion for support to GPL for a number of things, to which there is a listing here and a portion, \$3.46 billion, goes to preparatory works for Amaila Fall Hydropower Project. That is full the declaration on this page here, this allocation.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Project 2605400 – Micro-Hydropower Project: The \$150 million for the Micro-Hydropower Project in Kato, will this project benefit all residents of the village? That is one. Two, will other villages benefit also?

Mr. Hinds: Yes, this is to establish a 330 KVA, I think, small hydropower station on the Chieung River at Kato. It will benefit Kato. It does not include large networks, maybe a central area. A new secondary school is being established at Kato and that would receive electricity from here. This project also includes a pilot, or test, fixed agriculture on the savannah. It would provide irrigation. It shows it involves damming one of the narrow valleys and pumping water to a fixed area to test fixed agriculture or fixed fields in the Kato area. It also involves a transmission line to Paramakatoi to supply, in particular, the school that is already there. I would expect many buildings in the top of Paramakatoi. They will also be included in this small grid.

Dr. Singh: Very briefly, and mindful of the time constraints confronting us, in particular, because of the magnitude being proposed, I thought it potentially helpful for me to make a very few brief observations. Let me say that all of the challenges identified, in relation to the electricity sector, are, I believe, appropriately identified. Mr. Nagamootoo spoke of the rain falling not in one’s yard but in one’s neighbour yard. We all confront the challenges with GPL every day and in our day to day life. The reality is that there are no easy and immediate answers; there are no magic bullets for solving the problems of GPL. I suspect if there were the Prime

Minister would be happy for somebody to present to him or to aid him in this covering those easy answers or magic bullets. We share the concerns of colleagues on that side of the House as they relate to the fixing the challenges that are confronted by GPL. What we would urge is a universal recognition in this House that the reality is that GPL is facing a cost structure, which imposes a burden, that it is unable to carry at its current tariffs, including, of course, the challenge of losses identified on that side of the House. The reality also is that GPL requires significant investments in its capital that it is unable to meet from its own generated cash flow. I would urge that this House support the appropriations that are being sought and not cut them and I would equally say that we equally avail ourselves of the mechanism of the various Parliamentary Sectoral Committees as an appropriate forum for us to put our heads together on this matter. GPL has previously appeared with the Prime Minister before the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Economic Services and I am sure that we will be able to do so again.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I will now put the motion in the name of Mr. Greenidge, firstly and then I will put, secondly, the actual motion for the adoption of the Capital Estimates.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman [*inaudible*] makes some changes and Ministers have to come in. There are quite a number of people outside.

Mr. Chairman: Believe me, I would not just go to the vote. I am just going through the preamble, so to speak. I will put that first. In the meantime, while we are doing the change around, certainly for me, what I would have like to hear, is what will happen to GPL if it does not get the amount sought. I think no one has really made the case for every dollar reduced what is the likely impact on the corporation's ability to function. I have asked the Serjeant-at-arms to get the others to come in. It is something you may wish, in the meantime, to address, Prime Minister.

Mr. Hinds: Without this money GPL would be having a hole of about 20% in what it requires to sustain itself and some of it would probably end up in reduced purchases of fuel; some of it would ended up in reduced purchases of other supporting machinery, materials, transformers, and so on. I would like to entreat this House to accept... We just have to look back. All along the prices we charge for electricity are about 70% of the cost. That is the situation we came and met, in which the IDB was demanding that we charge the economic prices, but as policy we have not

been charging economic prices. The costs incurred in GPL we all want them to be lower but they are about the prices that people in our situation find. People, who use petroleum fuel, spend about \$80 per kWh to provide electricity and we are charging \$60 per kWh. Every kilowatt-hour we sell needs \$20 support from the budget.

Motion put.

Mr. Hinds: Division:

Committee divided: 33 Ayes and 32 Noes, as follows:

Ayes

Mr. T. Williams

Ms. Marcello

Dr. Ramayya

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe

Mrs. Hughes

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Ramjattan

Ms. Ferguson

Mr. Morian

Ms. R. Williams

Mr. Jones

Mr. Adams

Ms. Baveghems

Mr. Sharma

Mr. Bulkan

Mr. Bond

Ms. Kissoon

Mr. Trotman

Ms. Selman

Mr. Allicock

Ms. Wade

Mr. Felix

Ms. Hastings

Mr. Scott

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon

Mr. Greenidge

Mrs. Backer

Dr. Norton

Mrs. Lawrence

Mr. B. Williams

Ms. Ally

Dr. Roopnarine

Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger

Noes

Mr. Jaffarally

Mr. Damon

Dr. Persaud

Rev. Gilbert

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Neendkumar

Mr. Lumumba

Mr. Chand

Ms. Shadick

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Nadir

Ms. Teixeira

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Whittaker

Mr. Baksh

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai

Ms. Webster

Mr. G. Persaud

Ms. Manickchand

Mr. Benn

Dr. Anthony

Mr. Ali

Dr. Ramsaran

Dr. Westford

Mr. R. Persud

Dr. Singh

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett

Mr. Nandlall

Dr. Ramsammy

Mr. Rohee

Mr. Hinds

Motion carried.

Project 2601100 – Electrification Programme amended to \$5,000,000,000.

Programme: 021 - Prime Minister's Secretariat - \$5,643,500,000, as amended, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

6.07 p.m.

Agency: 07 Parliament Office

Current Expenditure

Programme: 071 – National Assembly – \$880,696,000

Programme: 071 – Parliament Office – \$880,696,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 071 – National Assembly – \$134,213,000

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister state what are the items covered under the sum allocated to the Office of the Leader of the Opposition, the sum of \$8,180,000?

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Chairman, it is a provision covering some salaries and I am told rental too. I am told that we have already passed the current expenditure and your question was really on current expenditure and I answered on current expenditure. It is not in the capital allocations. The answer I gave you was...

Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger: Mr. Chairman, could I ask the Hon. Prime Minister if any allocation has been made under capital expenditure for the purchase of furniture for the Office of the Leader of the Opposition? He is aware, I am sure, that in November of 2011, a few days before the National Elections, an instruction was passed by a certain office to remove the furniture that was acquired for the Office of the Leader of the Opposition and distributed elsewhere. For the last 15 months, the Office of the Leader of the Opposition has had no furniture except for a few chairs. You are quite aware of that. I am asking where the allocation is now to restore the furniture which was provided for the Office of the Leader of Opposition up to November, 2011.

Mr. Hinds: There is an allocation of \$6,070,000 and it is...*[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the Prime Minister needs not only to speak but to be heard.

Mr. Hinds: It is on profile page number 47. It is included in that one for Parliament Office, Building, Land Transport, Office Equipment and Furniture for Parliament Office. Six million out of the listed \$28 million is for the Office of the Leader of the Opposition.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger: Are you saying that the Office of the Leader of the Opposition is being given less money than the Office of the First Lady?

Mr. Hinds: This is on capital, Sir.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger: Could the Hon. Prime Minister say whether any allocations are being made for a vehicle for the Office of the Leader of the Opposition?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, just to indicate, there are no allocations in this year's Budget for a vehicle for the Leader of the Opposition. There needs to be full disclosure on this matter so that we do not have any confusion because the media is looking and the people are listening and hearing questions. The total allocation in terms of benefits, whether it is to the Office of the Leader of the Opposition or to the Opposition Leader, amounts, for the year, to \$16,708,104. That would be the total allocation to the Leader of the Opposition, which is minus the capital expenditure. When you add the capital expenditure it would be \$16 million plus the \$6,070,000. Thank you, Sir.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger: Mr. Chairman, this is a serious matter. The Office of the Leader of the Opposition is a constitutional office. It was established by an Act of Parliament. I am stating clearly that there was a deliberate attempt to paralyse the Office of the Leader of the Opposition by removing the furniture that was allocated.

Secondly, this matter has been brought to the attention of the President, has been brought to the attention of the Office of the President, has been brought to the attention of the Speaker and has been brought to the attention of the Clerk. The Office cannot function at present by the way it is funded. It is quite impossible for the Leader of the Opposition to fulfil his constitutional role with the way it is funded at present. The amount allocated is punitive. It is not designed to allow the Office to function properly; it is designed to paralyse the Office of the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Teixeira: I do not want to get into the dollar figures, but I do want to say this: in the Ninth Parliament, in the Parliamentary Management Committee (PMC), the Parliament Office had purchased equipment and furniture for the Office of the Leader of the Opposition at that time around 2004. The equipment was purchased and put in the upper flat in the Parliament building. The Parliamentary Management Committee, headed by the then Speaker, Mr. Ramkarran, on several occasions – and the Minutes will prove this – repeatedly asked the representatives of the Opposition, the PNC at the time, to please extract the equipment and furniture that were purchased for the Office of the Leader of the Opposition.

If you check the penultimate minutes of the PMC of the Ninth Parliament, I think it was 2010 or somewhere around, the Speaker was so upset that he instructed the Clerk, and it is in the

Minutes, to take the equipment and furniture and use it in the Parliament Office because the staff required it. Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I think Mr. Granger, the Hon. Member, may have been misinformed about this. I would like to stand by the Minutes of the Parliamentary Management Committee.

I am also aware that furniture, et cetera, were made available post 2011 Elections of what was available, whereas some staff were put out of their chairs and tables to accommodate the request.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I would respectfully ask that the Hon. Member, Mdm. Teixeira, provide that information that she just spoke about and the Minutes of this Parliament. I can say, Mr. Chairman, that Dr. Luncheon, the Head of the Presidential Secretariat, admitted that he instructed that the furniture be removed. He admitted that he gave the instructions.

Mr. Chairman: Well the matter will be dealt with. I will ask the Clerk for us to look at those Minutes. Hon. Members, indeed it is a serious matter. The Leader of the Opposition has not once, nor twice, but countless times raised it with me and with the Clerk. It has been raised with the President. I hope that in this year, 2013, with the sums budgeted, that we can move. We would not have to have a repeat of this. It is something I am going to be paying particular attention to. Thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: The Hon. Member used the name of Dr. Luncheon, who is not in this House, and, therefore, I am obliged to represent him in this sense. I have no doubt that with the amount of money, which was several millions of dollars, spent on furniture and equipment over those years that Dr. Luncheon did say to Mr. Harmon that he gave instructions, nor that, in fact, Mr. Luncheon may have indicated to us on our side that we are wasting our time having the stuff parked upstairs. It is the Parliamentary Management Committee that made that decision ultimately. Dr. Luncheon may have expressed his chagrin and disturbance that valuable millions of dollars of furniture were sitting getting dust and not being used. Nevertheless, it was not Dr. Luncheon's instruction that moved anything; it was the Parliamentary Management Committee made up of Opposition and Government at that time, Sir, which instructed.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, what is happening here is that the National Assembly is literally washing its linen. The Clerk advises that the former Speaker, Mr. Ramkarran, in frustration, did say that the furniture should be disposed of. That is confirmed. I have no doubt indeed that it has

been confirmed on both sides that Dr. Luncheon may also have made some statements. At the end of the day, the Leader of the Opposition needs to know that his Office is fully furnished and is functioning in the way it should be; that is what this is about. What happened has happened but, at the end of the day and going forth, a year has passed, and the Office of Leader of the Opposition must be made to function in the way that the framers of our Constitution intended it. That is something I am hoping the Hon. Prime Minister, in particular, representing this agency, will ensure - that the moneys voted for are made available. Thank you.

If there is any documentation, Minister of Finance, that you wish to share, please go ahead and have dialogue with the Office of the Leader of the Opposition.

Programme: 071 – National Assembly - \$134,213,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, it is twenty minutes after six o'clock. We will take the break now. I propose a fifty-minute suspension. One second before we go, this is just to have us go out on a happy note, Guyana, our country, vied for a possible five tourism awards as part of the Caribbean Tourism Organisations prizes. Guyana has actually won three of the five. The Heritage Award has been won by the National Trust of Guyana. The Caribbean Excellence in Sustainable Tourism Award has been won by Karanambu Ranch and the Biodiversity Conservation Award has been won by the Guyana Marine Turtle Conservation Trust. Congratulations to those involved and to Guyana.

We will take the suspension for 50 minutes.

Sitting suspended at 6.23 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 7.17 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: The session is resumed. We will go immediately into Committee of Supply.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply

In Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: Members, we are scheduled to go until 10.00 p.m. In the time remaining, we are to cover the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security and the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport. With that said, I ask that we turn to pages 196 and 197.

Agency: 48 Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security

Current Expenditure

Programme: 481 – Strategic Planning, Administration and Human Services – \$194,938,000

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings – could the Hon. Minister tell us which buildings they are renting?

Minister of Human Services and Social Security [Ms. Webster]: Mr. Chairman, the sum being voted here is for the rental of offices for the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic in Maraj Building.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Minister, Guyana Legal Aid, I note on pages 398 – 401, has received a substantial increase of some \$11 million. Why are we still paying rent for it?

Ms. Webster: Mr. Chairman, that increase, I would like the honourable House know that whilst we are paying rental for the Legal Aid Service, we have plans to expand the services. It also includes... Sir, last year, in this honourable House, you would recall that there were questions raised about provisions for Linden Legal Aid. Out of that sum this year, the sum of \$4.3 million is going to be provide for legal aid services in Linden.

Ms. Selman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a follow-up question to Hon. Member Mrs. Lawrence's question. Could the Hon. Minister provide a breakdown as to the allocation in all the Regions as it relates to legal aid?

Ms. Webster: We have legal aid offices in Georgetown, core offices; we have in Region 5, Fort Wellington, the sum for that is \$167,031; Region 2, Anna Regina, we have \$5.5 million allocated; Region 6 has \$5.5 million allocated; the remainder is for Georgetown and \$4.3 million for Linden.

Dr. Ramayya: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the Hon. Minister a question under line item 6116 – Contracted Employees. What are some of the reasons for the increase from 32 to 52 contracted employees?

Ms. Webster: Mr. Chairman, there are 20 additional positions. During the latter part of last year, we had a Deputy Permanent Secretary who was appointed. We have a Principal Assistant Secretary of Finance who had retired and is now being re-employed under contract. We have two Administrative Assistants who were recruited, three Accounts Clerks, one Research Officer, one Personal Assistant, two Technical Officers, five Drivers, one Cleaner and one Office Assistant.

Dr. Ramayya: Mr. Chairman, can the Minister please give us a little more detail as to the salary of these contracted workers, the highest paid?

Ms. Webster: The highest paid is the Deputy Permanent Secretary; the salary is \$248,090.

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6281 – Security Services – I note the decrease of some \$4 million here. There was \$16 million spent last year and this year you are only asking for \$12 million. Is that adequate to cover the security that you need?

Ms. Webster: Mr. Chairman, in response to the question asked by the Hon. Member, Mrs. Lawrence, what has happened here was that the security services for the Hon. Minister of Labour was provided for under this head. It is now being catered for under Programme 483, thus the decrease.

Programme: 481 – Strategic Planning, Administration and Human Services - \$194,938,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 481 – Strategic Planning, Administration and Human Services – \$27,800,000

Mrs. Lawrence: Project code 2506000 – Office Equipment – would the Hon. Minister kindly indicate to us which one of the agencies within the Ministry will benefit from this purchase?

Ms. Webster: Mr. Chairman, the sum being voted here will provide items such as workstations for the staff within head office, and it will purchase cubicles, fax machines, air conditioning units for the documentation centre and chairs and office furnishings on a whole.

Mrs. Lawrence: A follow up, Mr. Chairman: would the Hon. Minister indicate to the House whether there is a plan to remove the Ministry from the building it is presently housed in to another location?

Ms. Webster: Mr. Chairman, the answer is yes. A building has been identified for the Ministry at Lamaha and East Streets, the former GRA building, but all staff members will not be accommodated there because it is a large Ministry. Some offices such as the Probation Office, Director of Social Services, the Minister, the Permanent Secretary (PS), the Difficult Circumstances Unit and the Administration Personnel will be relocated there.

Mrs. Lawrence: Can you say which divisions will remain at the Water Street office?

Ms. Webster: At the Water Street location, there will be the Co-op Department, the Statistical Department, the Women's Affairs Bureau, the Men's Affairs Bureau, the Documentation Centre and the Women of Work (WOW) Programme.

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Would the Minister tell us what portion of the furniture and equipment would go to Lamaha Street from this \$5 million?

Ms. Webster: Mr. Chairman, I would say just about 40 per cent, because we will be moving with all the things that we currently have. We have already budgeted, Sir, to buy items that are required for certain departments. That is why the sum is put there.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, project code 2402800 – Land Transport – would the Minister tell us which department would benefit from these vehicles?

Ms. Webster: It is the purchase of a minibus. It is a 15-seater bus to be used to transport staff, probation officers, administrative staff, accounting staff, personnel staff going out on official duty to the other locations of the Ministry.

Mrs. Lawrence: So, would all of these vehicles be in Georgetown?

Ms. Webster: Yes. It is one vehicle; it is a minibus.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, project code 1206800 – Buildings – I note rehabilitation and enclosure of buildings and completion of the centre. Are you speaking about the Palms Geriatric Institute, the recreational centre?

Ms. Teixeira: The question the Hon. Member is asking, I believe, belongs to Programme 482, capital expenditure for Social Services. We have not dealt with current expenditure as yet for that. We usual do it sections. I do not know. I am just asking the Chairman for guidance.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. That is correct. The Government's Chief Whip is correct. What I could do is put the question.

Programme: 481 – Strategic Planning, Administration and Human Services – \$27,800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 482 – Social Services – \$8,201,465,000

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, line item 6116 – Contracted Employees – I note that there is a reduction here of some four persons. I gather that three may have been transferred to the Child Services Protection Unit. Would the Minister inform the House which position is now vacant?

7.32 p.m.

Ms. Webster: Mr. Chairman, there are no vacancies. The 29 positions here represent the positions being transferred to Programme 484. The positions being transferred are: director of Children Services; seven maids; two deputy directors of the Childcare and Protection Agency, eight cooks, and 11 social services assistants.

Mrs. Lawrence: Line item 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skilled: would the Minister be kind enough to indicate to the House which five positions were vacated, given the transfer of some 19 persons?

Ms. Webster: The 19 positions were transferred to Programme 484. Those were social services officers, and there was the resignation of four officers.

Mrs. Lawrence: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: can the Hon. Minister tell this House why 2013’s allocation for this line item has increased by some \$53 million despite a reduction of 29 employees?

Ms. Webster: The reason being, Sir, that whilst there is a reduction, you can recall that last there was the 5% across the board increase. Under this subhead, the salaries of the officers on contract were increased by 5% and it is catered for. In addition, it caters for officers on contract who acquired vehicles.

Mrs. Lawrence: Follow up, Mr. Chairman: can the Minister tell this House how many of the 130 employees on contract are social workers and how many are data entry clerks?

Ms. Webster: There are four data entry clerks, a director of social services, one special projects officer, eight probation officers, 31 patient care assistants, two administrative and documentation officers, 10 orderlies for the Palms Geriatric Institution and the Night Shelter, one chief statistician, three statistical officers, and one information manager.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, through you, with four data entry clerks, could the Minister tell us how many persons under the Public Assistance Programme and old age pensioners are catered for by the Ministry for the year because I suppose that these are the four persons who will be entering the data.

Ms. Webster: This year, we have approximately 9,000 beneficiaries under the Public Assistance Programme and approximately 42,500 pensioners who will receive old age pensions.

Mrs. Lawrence: Could the Minister indicate what the rate of output is? We are talking about 51,000 applicants.

Ms. Webster: At present, we are operating not at the highest efficiency level, but we do have mechanisms in place to have our staff work extra hours whilst representation to the Public Service Ministry has been made for the filling of vacant positions.

Mrs. Lawrence: Minister, I am a little taken aback at this because you would be aware that there is a problem whereby persons who apply for old age pension and public assistance have to wait

for a long period after they would have laid their applications to receive their books. I am wondering when this is going to be fixed.

Ms. Webster: I would like to say that the comments of the Hon. Member have been noted. At the level of the administration, we, too, have noted that and we are working, I want to assure this honourable House, to improve efficiency levels in the processing of old age pension and public assistance books. I am assuring the Members of this House that whilst we are awaiting approval for the recruitment of additional officers, the Ministry's current staff are putting in extra hours and working beyond the call of duty to bring change to this position and have the pension books, which are pending for distribution, brought up to date. This is in respect of new applicants.

Ms. Baveghems: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: given the addition of the rehabilitation centre at Onverwagt, Drop-In Centre, Night Shelter and [inaudible] homes, coupled with the increased incidences of trafficking, is this amount adequate given the increased visits needed?

Ms. Webster: Whilst I recognise the Hon. Member's point and since the Ministry will be acquiring an additional vehicle, I would say that we have to try to be prudent in the way we manage our resources and we will endeavour to do that, but if it is that we are short of funds, we will try to make representation through virement later in the year.

Ms. Baveghems: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: what maintenance works are planned for the Ministry's main office?

Ms. Webster: We are discussing Social Services, Programme 482 and I have answered that. She said "main office". This is the Social Services Programme that we are dealing with.

Ms. Baveghems: It is maintenance of buildings.

Ms. Webster: There are some plans to do work to the Palms Geriatric Institution – rehabilitation of the bathrooms, some of the floors, roofs, plumbing and electrical works – and some works are to be done at the Drop-In Centre.

Ms. Baveghems: Minister, how much of this amount is allocated for the Palms Geriatric Home and what major maintenance works are planned?

Ms. Webster: We plan to expend at the Palms Geriatric Institution for general carpentry and electrical repairs to blocks A, B and C - \$8 million; repairs to floor and sanitation and bathrooms - \$4.4 million; and painting of interior walls and floors - \$8.5 million. This is out of the total sum that is budgeted here.

Ms. Baveghems: Line item 6243 – Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies: the amount budgeted is reduced by some \$995,000.

Ms. Webster: In response to that, the sum budgeted under this line item has been transferred to Programme 484 to cater for the operations of the Childcare and Protection Agency, for the homes and so on.

Ms. Baveghems: A follow-up question: with the rehabilitation centre at Onverwagt catering for 180 live-in street dwellers, is this amount adequate?

Ms. Webster: Yes.

Ms. Baveghems: Line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence: Minister, with the reduction of \$4,712,000, would the amount of \$8 million allocation adequately cover this category of expenses given the extension of your social and welfare department?

Ms. Webster: In response to that question, the answer is yes. The difference has been transferred to Programme 484. That caters for subsistence and allowances for the travelling officers of the Childcare and Protection Agency which was previously budgeted for under this Programme but is now being budgeted for under a specific Programme – 484.

Dr. Ramayya: The Hon. Minister indicated to this House that there are 42,000 pensioners in this country. For a couple of years, the question is being asked about the number of pensioners. I would like to know if the names of these pensioners can be published in record – not called out now – by the Ministry.

Mr. Chairman, you realise that over two years ago we were talking about phantom pensioners and I am asking... *[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I will advise you how you can respond, despite the urgings of others. This matter has come up before. In fact, it was the subject of much heated debate and controversy.

If I recall, when you became Minister, on assumption, you did say that you would be doing a review – which I believe you have done – and, therefore, there ought to be a list available and that list ought to be made available to the Member, as requested, or any other Member, but I would prefer it in electronic format. By no means should you attempt to read that list this evening.

Ms. Teixeira: With due respect to your advice, I think this House has to remember that we passed the Access to Information Act which has it in issues relating to people's personal information. Therefore, I would ask that there be some caution on this. The publication of people's names who are in receipt of old age pensions or public assistance are persons' private matters. If a Member and the Minister want to sit and peruse the list, that is a different issue. I just wish to caution that in light of the Access to Information Act that this matter is looked at a little more closely. That is all that I am saying.

Ms. Manickchand: Sir, I just want to say that this had come up before, as Your Honour mentioned. Pensioners specifically said...and I do not think that this is unknown to Members of the House. There are some pensioners – quite a number actually – who are receiving a pension and do not want the very members of their households to know that because then they are bullied and the money is taken from them. This is something that is quite common.

Every year, two things are done: the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security distributes the pension books through social services officers. They then have to go to the post office to encash and then that coupon goes to the Ministry of Finance. There are three different places which can verify the number of persons receiving. [**Mrs. Lawrence:** Let the Minister answer. Why are you embarrassing her?] In any event, October/November of every year, when the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security, under the able management of Minister Webster, distributes the books, people have to go there to receive their books and that is when they are counted year after year. Every year, the Ministry gets to count how many people are coming forward.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, it is a large list of 42,000 names but, by the very fact that these people go every month to a post office in a very public way, I see nothing wrong with an elected Member of this House asking for information. This is not a member of the public. Certainly, I would be the first, indeed, to ensure that this information is not shared and I would invite the Member to meet with the Minister to work out a format in which he could peruse it. I was not going to recommend that it be published but, certainly, a Member should have the right, if he wishes, to check on certain aspects of his Region.

Ms. Webster: Mr. Chairman, if Members have queries and concerns about payments of old age pension and pensioners, I would be willing to meet with them but I think that, in all fairness to our pensioners, we must respect, also, their privacy and not have public lists circulating about the place about the beneficiaries. I would be willing to share information if Members have concerns about pensioners, for example, in Region 6 or Region 5.

Mr. Chairman: That is fair. There has to be a balance. Hon. Member Trotman, it looks as though they are trying to use you as an example of something.

Mr. Trotman: I would feel very good to allow people to have that information. I have no problem.

Mr. Chairman: I am aware of the problem raised by the Hon. Minister, Ms. Manickchand. I am aware that that is a real, live and genuine problem.

Ms. Webster: I can share with this House that there are many pensioners whose families depend upon their income and actually take it away from them as soon as they collect it, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I know it is a genuine problem and I was saying it. Dr. Ramayya, you may continue, knowing that the Minister and her Ministry are available to you at anytime should you wish to go in to review and see records and so forth.

Ms. Ferguson: Line item 6292 – Dietary: I have noticed that for 2012 the sum of \$125,450,000 was budgeted; \$129,449,000 was spent. However, for 2013, I have noticed a decrease in the amount allocated. Could the Hon. Minister say whether this amount is adequate?

Ms. Webster: The amount voted here caters for the agencies which fall under this Programme. The decrease represents the Childcare and Protection Agency and the homes that were previously provided for under this Programme. The difference has been transferred to Programme 4.

Mr. Chairman, you can recall, in this honourable House, that last year questions were asked about the direct cost relating to the Childcare and Protection Agency. Hence, this year, there is a separate Programme and so persons will be able to see all of the expenditure under the respective line items.

Mr. Nagamootoo: I accept your explanation. I had said on the last occasion on my seat that the explanation for not publishing the names of pensioners is totally unacceptable in an era in which access to public information should not be restricted. I believe that the recourse to shelter under the Access to Information legislation is very specious because there is no mechanism under that legislation by which one could access information in a structured way. One cannot use a law for an umbrella and try to give...

Mr. Chairman: Okay, let us...

Mr. Nagamootoo: Sir, I have gone past that.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, there has to be a balance struck between making information public and protecting private, personal rights. That is why the mechanism is that one makes an application, state the reason and... There has to be a balance. We live in a world in which it cannot be on either side of the spectrum. We have to strike a balance somewhere in-between and I believe that the balance has been struck in that any Member of this House may approach the Minister and the Minister is prepared to abide by the request. I, personally, know of cases, indeed, where pensioners are bullied –if I can use that word – for their little pension.

Dr. Ramayya: Mr. Chairman, I will agree with you to an extent but all of us know that once a person attains the age of 65, that person is of pensionable age. Everyone knows once a person is 65 years old, he or she is eligible to collect a pension. How has that become secretive in this House? I do not understand that.

Mr. Chairman: How it becomes what?

Dr. Ramayya: How has it become a secret?

Mr. Chairman: No one has said it is a secret. I think the Minister has said that on any day that you choose you may go and the records are there, so it is not a secret. It is not being made public in terms of it being published in a widespread manner, but it is available to you on any day that you choose to avail yourself of the facility.

Mrs. Backer: Is the availability limited to going and sitting there and slavishly looking through the record? Would one be entitled to take away copies or does one have to just sit there? Does Dr. Ramayya have to go and sit down for three or four days and go through 42,000 names? What are we saying? He has made a very good point. Everybody knows when someone reaches the age of 65; one's family knows.

Mr. Chairman: What is amazing is that the Minister did not say what can be taken and what cannot be taken. What is advised is that a Member goes and, I believe that— knowing this Minister and her officers – his or her request will be facilitated. We cannot assume that that nothing will be shared. Let us go and find out.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): \$7 million has been budgeted for 2013. Can the Hon. Minister kindly say which category of staff is going to be trained?

Ms. Webster: There is capacity building training to be done at the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute (GWLI); training for our probation and social services officers; and training at the Palms Geriatric Institute for the patient care assistants, as we seek to improve the level and quality of care.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Line item 6343 – Old Age Pensions and Social Assistance: I take note that you have said it is 42,500 pensioners but could you, for a little more clarity, say how much is allocated towards pensions and how much is allocated towards social assistance? Also, on the side, has Region 2 pensioners received their books by now?

Ms. Webster: First of all, there was a problem with the distribution of some of the pension books earlier this year in Region 2 but that matter has been resolved. The Hon. Member had spoken with me and I had addressed her concerns. The officer at that time was in Georgetown

collecting pension books and that is why there was a slight delay in the distribution of those pension books which were outstanding.

Of the sum budgeted this year, the sum of \$5.8 billion will go towards old age pensions for the entire year from the \$7.4 billion.

Mrs. Lawrence: A follow-up question on line item 6343 – Old Age Pensions and Assistance: it is good that we can now see exactly how much money is going towards old age pension. Just as the Hon. Member, Ms. Lowe, asked about Region 2, Minister, I would like to bring to your attention the fact that the senior citizens in Region 9 – and this is the third time I am asking about it – are asking for an extension centre at Aishalton for those villages deep south so that they can go to Aishalton and receive their moneys instead of some of them paying \$8,000 to go to Lethem to collect their pensions and when they get to Lethem there is no money available to pay.

Dr. Norton and I were at the post office and we witnessed for ourselves several persons waiting to receive pension. The postmistress had no money to release. There were Toshaos there for two and three days waiting for money. Something is wrong and I am asking you to please look into that matter.

8.02 p.m.

Ms. Webster: I thank the Hon. Member for the comments and the sentiments expressed. However, we at the Ministry recoup the payments from the Ministry of Finance and the moneys are paid over, in bulk, to the Post Master General, who deals with the distribution.

We are currently looking at other ways of having the pension payments method improved. We have been in some discussions also with the Minister of Amerindian Affairs and the Ministry of Local Government too to see how best we can network and to try to improve that so that our pensioners do not have to suffer and wait for extended periods of time in those hinterland communities, especially Region Nos. 8 and 9.

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you Mdm. Minister. Mdm. Minister thru' the Chairman, last year you spoke about approaching the banks, about paying old aged pension through the banking system. At Lethem, we have a Guyana Bank for Trade and Industry (GBTI) bank and another bank will soon come on stream, so I am asking that consideration be given. Perhaps you can update us as

to what is the position, in terms of your interactions with the banks and paying the moneys through the banks.

Ms. Webster: Actually, the Hon. Member is right. At the level of administration we have been considering, perhaps in those hinterland areas now that there are banks, to perhaps use the banking system for the payment pensioners in some of those areas.

Of course, we are in the process of doing a survey to find out from our pensioners whether some of them would like to have their moneys done through the bank. So we are addressing that concern too.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman and Mdm. Minister thank you. Mr. Chairman, I know turn my attention to line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships) - I heard the Minister mention about what training they were going to do for the staff. Would the Minister kindly tell us whether there are any scholarships offered this year and in what field?

Ms. Webster: The sum being voted here is for training locally. The scholarships are normally done through the Public Service Ministry, which deals with Human Resource Management and Human Resources Development. There are plans to have some of our officers trained with Masters in Psychology. There are currently some officers who are being trained through a partnership, which was done by Minister Manickchand for officers from the Ministry of Education, I think welfare officers together with some of our officers, to benefit from an exchange programme with the University of Leslie.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Line item – 6343 – Old Age Pensions and Social Assistance- Hon. Minister I am happy to hear that you are considering other payment options for our pensioners. I would like to bring to you attention that in Region No. 8, I was informed that the pensioners get paid every three months. One pensioner, she died before she received her allowance and could not pay the shops. She owed the shops and did not get her moneys to pay. Her relatives could not collect the money to pay the shops.

I am glad to hear that you are networking with the Ministries of Amerindian Affairs and Local Government to get this on priority. Thank you.

Mr. Sharma: I would like to ask the Hon. Minister what amount is set aside for public assistance and for how many recipients?

Ms. Webster: I said earlier there are 9000 beneficiaries for public assistance this year and the sum of \$637 million is set aside for the payment of public assistance.

Mr. Sharma: In relations to water, how many recipients are receiving water and at what cost with the water subsidy?

Ms. Webster: As it relates to the water subsidy, the sum of \$342,516,000 has been budgeted for the payment of water subsidies for those pensioners who live at their own homes and who do not operate a place of business. I do not have the total number here, but I can provide that.

Mr. Sharma: Could the Hon. Minister state the water rates for Georgetown and the rates for the other outlying regions? Is there a difference in the rate of water subsidy?

Ms. Webster: Yes, I did say in the budget presentation that pensioners in Georgetown and the environs get \$11,664 per annum as a water subsidy and those in the other areas \$8,868.

Mr. Sharma: In the Budget Speech, water subsidies mentioned by the Minister is \$200 million. The Minister is stating \$342,516,000, I do not know if there is a difference there or an incorrect figure mentioned in the Budget.

Ms. Webster: Mr. Chairman, no. The figure that I have here is correct.

Mr. Sharma: In the Budget Speech its \$200 million. In relations to Electricity Subsidies, how persons are receiving the subsidies?

Ms. Webster: We have not concluded that, but the sum of \$590 million is budgeted to meet that.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman that is correct, \$590 million is announced in the Budget Speech for Electricity Subsidies and that worked out to 29,500 persons. But, the difficulty is how will persons know if they are qualified; what is the criterion?

Ms. Webster: Mr. Chairman, I do not have the criteria here with me, but I can provide that information to this Hon. House.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you Mr. Chairman. I would like the criteria for water and electricity subsidies provided.

Ms. Webster: I can give you the criteria for water subsidies. The criterion for each pensioner who is eligible to receive the water subsidy must own his/her own home and must not operate a place of business from their premises.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman, I do not know. The pensioners are watching. The persons that own their own homes are rich people; people who are renting for money. We speak about bullyism. The pensioners were bullied by the landlords or whoever they were staying with. Because the landlord has the tenancy they are asked for moneys for water and electricity bills.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, but if the pensioner is renting, the onus is on the landlord or landlady to pay that bill not the tenant.

Ms. Webster: I was just about to make that point when I said that the meter must be in the pensioner's name and the pensioner must own his own home. I do not think that the Hon. Member is quite correct because there are many pensioners who do own their own homes; retired civil servants and so on, over years gone by.

Mr. Sharma: Pensioners in the whole would take a room; they cannot afford a water meter and so forth or rent an entire building. The Ministry need to address how they would incorporate persons without meters to benefit from these subsidies. These are the poor people.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, if a person has no meter, he or she will not be billed. He or she will not receive a bill and he or she therefore will not need a subsidy to pay a bill because they have no meter; they are not metered.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman, I am putting out this situation here because this is the report I receive daily on pensioners. That they are being bullied by persons they are staying with. It could be relatives, family or strangers. Persons complain that they have to pay water rates because they are using the water and that they have to pay electricity, so they are taking about the pension from them.

Mr. Chairman: Well you confirmed what Minister Manickchand was saying earlier about bullying.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations- Hon. Minister is there an allocation set aside for the Salvation Army’s Drug Rehabilitation Centre?

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Minister. Minister are you aware that the subsidy for both water and the electricity assistance programme will discriminate a large number of senior citizens, since they are also paying electricity, but not to Guyana Power and Light Company (GPL)? GPL does not provide electricity in Region No. 8, some parts of Region No. 9 and some parts of Region No. 10. Many of these persons take electricity from private business people. So, I would like to know what provisions you are going to make under this subsidy for those persons to be able to access this allowance that is being given by the taxpayers of this country.

Ms. Webster: Mr. Chairman, I think the comments the Hon. Member has made, I have noted them, but the Hon. Minister of Finance, when he delivered the Budget Speech, spoke about an electricity subsidy for pensioners to GPL. He was quite clear on that.

Mrs. Lawrence: Yes. I am talking about the discrimination

Mr. Chairman: People say in Kwakwani or Lethem or someplace else, if there is some way that some relief could be brought to those persons because it is not GPL that operates there.

Minister of Housing and Water [Mr. Ali]: Mr. Chairman, in the case of water, the hinterland regions does not pay for the water. It is completely subsidised. The water in Regions 1, 8 and 9 is completely subsidised.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Mr. Chairman, I did not get an answer.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, may I very briefly simply point out that contrary to the Hon. Member, Mrs. Volda’s Lawrence’s assertion about this subsidy providing some advantage to GPL customers, may I point out that pensioners in the overwhelming majority of cases in the

communities that she mentioned, do not pay the rates that GPL customers pay for electricity, they in fact pay much lower rates. *[Interruption]*

Mrs. Lawrence: So you are helping out GPL.

Dr. Singh: May I repeat Sir, that GPL customers currently pay ...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, why is this such a controversial issue?

Dr. Singh: Because it is an attempt by the Hon. Member to misrepresent the facts on this matter. The Hon. Member, Mrs. Volda Lawrence is well aware that pensioners who are GPL customers currently pay an electricity tariff that is considerably higher than the electricity tariff paid by customers in other parts of the country. She is well aware of that. *[Interruption]*

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: I did not hear a reply from the Hon. Minister to my question. Hon. Minister I did not hear your reply.

Mr. Chairman: Allow Mrs. Lawrence and the Minister to finish their dialogue and then we will resume when they are ready for us.

Ms. Webster: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member Mrs. Garrido-Lowe asked a question which I did not answer...

Mr. Chairman: Minister, I am asking you please to allow the two Members to finish their discourse and then the rest of us will continue. They are in charge. *[Interruption]*

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Thank you Mr. Chairman. I asked the Hon. Minister a question just now I do not think I received an answer, but I just want to add on to that. If there is no allocation towards that entity, why is that so? Thank you.

Ms. Webster: There is no allocation in this year's budget for the Salvation Army Drug Rehabilitation Centre, but during 2012 there was an allocation of \$16 million to support the expansion of the Salvation Army's drug programme.

Ms. Ferguson: Under line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - I am looking at page 401 – Board of Industrial Trading. Last year the sum budgeted \$120 million was spent... *[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman: We have not reached there as yet.

Programme: 482 – Social Services - \$8,201,4,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 483 – Labour Administration - \$371,882,000

Mr. B. Williams: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations- could the Hon. Minister indicate where expenditure in 2011 and 2012 was at \$121,800,000 and now it has almost doubled? How does he plan to absorb an almost 100% increase in this subvention; this in under line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations on page 401?

Minister of Labour [Dr. Gopaul]: Mr. Chairman, we have been training a number of young persons in various communities over the years. The past five years would have seen us training 249 craft apprentices long term over the duration of four or five years. Under the National Training Project for Youth Empowerment, we have trained 7058 persons. For the single Parent Training Programme we have trained 1274 persons. Last year we would have trained nearly 2000 persons.

In that training we paid to those persons who we trained a very meager stipend of \$4,000 per month as a transportation assistance, plus we try to give them a kit. Because of complaints we have received we made representation that we want to increase that sum that was \$63 million, in terms of the stipend alone. The Kit averaged \$15,000 - \$17,000 when they would have finished the programme.

We did projection on a proper safety kit if we want to observe Occupation Safety and Health properly on which we are insisting that we do. That will increase the cost of providing that Kit to about \$20,000 to \$25,000 per month, as they depart. We indicated that we are considering increasing the stipend so that we can bring more people. There was the reluctance of some of the youths to come into the programme because the stipend, they found, was too low.

This year we target 3000 persons and if we were to increase the value of the Kit, plus the stipend we believe that \$224 million will be inadequate. That is increasing the intake by an additional 1000 plus making these provisions.

The demand has been based on our labour market survey and we do that right at the Ministry of Labour. There is an increased demand for skills in the mining, forestry and agricultural sectors. Of the 192 persons we trained last year at a cost of \$10.6 million, all those persons have gained employment and substantial employment. This year we target to train 400-500 person and to carry the training programme, especially of heavy equipment operators from... we have them currently in Region Nos. 4 and 10 and we want to take these programmes to Region Nos. 2, 7, 5 and 3, so that altogether we will have about 500 persons trained for 2013.

So you see Mr. Chairman, although there is an increase, it is budgeted for a good cause and it is going towards a good cause. It is an incentive to bring the young people out. We believe that if we want to end child labour, those persons who have left school young, we have to give them the training and provide them with the opportunities to go into the world of work.

I know questions have been asked from the other side, "What are we doing to help to train the young people and provide them with opportunities?" This is an opportunity and we are going to seek all the young people, in every area in every community and we want the support of the Opposition in this regard.

Mr. B. Williams: A follow-up question: Hon. Minister could you supply us then with that type of information that you just disclosed, showing your trainees having being translated into employees? Could we have that data?

Dr. Gopaul: Yes.

Mr. B. Williams: We would be grateful for that data; the amount of your trainees that have been translated into employees.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Williams it is available, you will get it momentarily.

Mr. B. Williams: Yes, I would be grateful.

Dr. Gopaul: We have one for the Chairman, one for Mr. B. Williams and one for Mr. Ramjattan. We prefer to pass it on through the Leader of the Opposition and one for Mr. Ramjattan.

Mr. Chairman: Very Good.

Mr. B. Williams: A follow-up question: could the Hon. Minister say, what is the Youth Unemployment figure?

Dr. Gopaul: Sir, as I indicated earlier, when the debate started, no one knows the exact figure. We are working and we are hoping that we would be able to establish that, but the fact is that we know that there are quite a number of vacancies existing in jobs from GuySuCo to many other public sector agencies. We do not have that figure.

Mr. B. Williams: Follow up. Could the Hon. Minister tell us what is the general unemployment figure in Guyana?

Dr. Gopaul: No, I would not be able to answer that.

Mr. B. Williams: Under the same line item, the same page, the Labour Market Information System Commission, it was not there in 2011, it was no there in 2012 and you have budgeted \$1 million for that. Could you tell us what is the remit of this organisation; what is it about?

Dr. Gopaul: It was there, it is a small division that is headed by Mr. Ivelaw Henry, who has a degree in Economics and other staff, some of whom have Post Graduate degrees. We are now intensifying their work to do research with respect to unemployment data and they are putting out a quarterly bulletin on employment issues and stats and data. We will make copies available.

Mr. B. Williams: Up to know? A follow-up question: can we have the quarterly bulletin too?

Dr. Gopaul: Yes, sure.

Mr. B. Williams: Have they put out a household budget survey?

Dr. Gopaul: Sir, no. We are hoping that when the survey which was recently concluded by the Statistical Bureau might be able to give us a guide

Mr. B. Williams: Will they be doing the manpower survey?

Dr. Gopaul: They have finished their work, but I am saying that out of that we might be able to garner some information to start our work.

Mr. B. Williams: I am saying you are budgeting \$1 million to them; will they be doing a manpower survey for Guyana?

Dr. Gopaul: One million cannot do a manpower survey; that \$1 million is just assist them with incidental expenses; very minuscule.

Mr. B. Williams: What is this? Mr. Chairman is the Hon. Minister then accepting that in his Ministry, this Nation has absolutely no idea about the different rates of unemployment for youths in general, the question of their joblessness, the question of a manpower survey. We have no information coming out of this Ministry. Would the Hon. Minister accept that and pledge to change all of that?

Dr. Gopaul: Sir, it has been so for a long time and we are working to standardise and get information so that the Nation can benefit. But as I said, there are opportunities for quite a number of persons right now in the country.

When you take the opportunities which you have, the mobility of workers from the coastland into the hinterland areas, it is a very difficult task at this point in time, but we are hoping that we will be able to get there with the intensification of this department and to perhaps strengthen it and bring out some serious statistics.

Mr. B. Williams: Same line item, same page, Occupational Health and Safety. You have budgeted \$800,000, what does this head mean?

Dr. Gopaul: I prefer it not to even be there, it can hardly do anything, but the Occupational Health and Safety has other expenditure under the labour section of the labour division and so it is a sum which assist them in terms of travelling around, doing inspectorate, providing a meal no and again when they work through their luncheon period, etc. But it is a small sum.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, under Occupational Health and Safety, I am wondering am I correct in saying that within the Ministry of Labour, there is an Occupational Health and Safety Department?

Dr. Gopaul: Yes.

Mrs. Backer: I am just wondering, if that is so, why is it that they are getting \$800,000 under Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations.

Dr. Gopaul: Sorry I was advised that this \$800,000 was not going to that. The \$800,000 is going to the National Advisory body, stipends for meetings and meals.

We have a National Advisory headed by Mr. Beresford; a tripartite body. That \$800,000 goes to that body for meals and stipend.

Mrs. Backer: Would you accept that the heading of Occupation Health and Safety is incomplete and perhaps in brackets we could have... it could have that it is that body it is going to because it just says Occupational Health and Safety, at least you should have had Advisory Board or something like that so that it could be complete.

8.32 p.m.

Dr. Gopaul: We had a tripartite body; out of that tripartite body has an Occupational Health and Safety body - a Council - that advises us on Occupational Health and Safety. That body meets regularly. At meetings you have to provide snacks, you have to provide a stipend and as a result of that we budgeted \$800,000. I think the work they are doing is tremendous; they have assisted in the drafting of legislation on the discrimination of workers against HIV/AIDS and quite a number of other pieces of legislation. They have assisted in drafting, regulations and formulating work with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), so they have been doing a tremendous amount of work.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Board of Industrial Training, Hon. Minister, I am well aware that lots of good training has been coming out from the Ministry, what I am concerned about though is how many hinterland youths have been coming out to get some of these training. As you pointed out the mining and forestry areas are where jobs are and that is where the hinterland youths are.

Dr. Gopaul: I do agree Sir and we are making every effort to reach out to every community and every region and we will move to all the areas as soon as possible to train the youths. What we have been doing is to bring some out, but that is inadequate. If we were to put some more money rather than bring the youths out, we can perhaps double up the training in some of the areas.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Minister, did you mention that you are taking some of the training into the Regions?

Dr. Gopaul: Yes we will.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Alright thank you.

Mr. B. Williams: Under line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations- Minister, I do not see the subvention to the Critchlow Labour College. Where would I find that?

Dr. Gopaul: Sir, I do not think that came under the Ministry of Labour. It was, I think, under the Ministry of Education.

Mr. B. Williams: The Critchlow Labour College does not come under the Ministry of Labour?

Dr. Gopaul: As far as I know.

Mr. B. Williams: Do you not propose to bring it back, as the new Minister of Labour?

Dr. Gopaul: I did indicate that we have been in discussions with the Guyana Trade Union Congress (TUC), Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Guyana (FITUG) and the Prime Minister and I have been engaging them. That is one of the issues, which is on the table.

Mr. B. Williams: Line item 6322 – Subsidies and Contributions to International Organisations- that would be found on page 405, you have over \$2 million budgeted. Is that organisation the International Labour Organisation (ILO)?

Dr. Gopaul: Yes Sir.

Mr. B. Williams: Follow-up. What is the situation with the Guyana Government and the ILO, are you still participating in the activities of the ILO?

Dr. Gopaul: Yes. In fact, the ILO has been very eager since Guyana adopted the Decent Work Country Programme. They have had three visits and participated in three seminars over the last six months in Guyana. In addition to that, we have been able to secure financial assistance from the ILO to do Hot Meals and Transportation Programmes on the highway for school children, which saw from a 40% attendance at school to about 95%. It is currently ongoing; it was on an experimental basis. We found that when that programme was intended for only one year we were able to appeal to the ILO and that is ongoing currently. It will be up to this academic year, but that programme has been a tremendous success.

Mr. B. Williams: Hon. Minister through the Chair, have you been informed by the ILO of allegations of breaches to the conventions that this Government has signed onto?

Dr. Gopaul: No, I have not been advised by the ILO. There is a procedure in dealing with these issues; there are certain protocols. Whenever explanations are sought we provide those explanations. I know of concerns being raised at the level of the ILO about certain breaches, we have responded to those and on those matters we continue to dialogue.

Mr. B. Williams: You just told me no, but you are saying now that they raised breaches at the Convention, alleged breaches, and you have responded.

Dr. Gopaul: Yes, but ILO has not pronounced on these matters as yet.

Mr. B. Williams: Hon. Minister you are anticipating me. Follow-up: Could you indicate the areas or the nature of the breaches that were raised with you or that you responded to?

Dr. Gopaul: Mr. Chairman, I am aware that a few trade unions a while back indicated that they have not been able to conclude collective agreements. That was a while back. The ILO Committee of Experts, on Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining, pronounced a while back and that was not go do with Guyana, but generally on this issue, that the state in times of chartering a new economic policies and programmes can determine wage increases, but that the period must be one of a limited duration until they overcome these problems. They see absolutely nothing wrong with the State determining wage increases for those periods. Those issues have been determined as a general rule by the experts on Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining.

When the unions would have made their case at that level, obviously this body would have taken that into consideration; the response and the economic situation of the country. As I said the tripartite body is working at the level at this point in time. I think and I can say that we have a very cordial relationship. We are working towards doing two things, one is strengthening our relationship with all the trade unions and social partners to collective bargaining and two, and I am serious about that, I am working towards getting a social compact. If we have goodwill from all the sides we will be able to get there before the end of this year.

Mr. B. Williams: A follow-up question: are you attending the annual ILO Convention as a Government delegation?

Dr. Gopaul: As a matter of policy, we have decided that we will go every other year. But we do keep abreast with what is taking place. Last year we attended the conference.

Mr. B. Williams: Were you accredited; were you allowed into the convention?

Dr. Gopaul: Of course, we are a full fledged member of the ILO and we have contributed to the ILO. *[Interruption]*

Mr. B. Williams: Well I am happy that you have improved on the position that Minister Nadir left. The composition of your delegation, who comprised your delegation, when you went to the ILO?

Dr. Gopaul: It was public knowledge that my delegation was myself, Mr. Kenneth Joseph and Mr. Samuel Goolsarran.

Mr. B. Williams: Are there representatives from the Guyana Trade Union Congress?

Dr. Gopaul: There was a representative and we...

Mr. B. Williams: That was not my question.

Dr. Gopaul: We have an arrangement. Because of the division of the Labour Movement the accreditation would be one representative from the Government, one from the Trade Union and one worker. We are working with an understanding that we rotate. If we give FITUG this year,

the following year we give the TUC and we rotate. It is an understanding until we can see unity in the movement.

Mr. B. Williams: Well that is laudable; that is the only important thing you are showing me that you have moved on away from Mr. Nadir's malaise that he left the Labour Movement in. I will encourage you to continue working to reunite the Trade Union Movement in Guyana.

Programme: 483 – Labour Administration - \$371,882,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Members, I have realised that inadvertently I did not formally put the Current Expenditure for Programme: 482 – Social Services, even though we did have a fulsome discussion and debate or I thought I did; we did put Capital Expenditure. So just for the correction of the records, I would like to put Programme: 482 – Social Services, Current Expenditures.

Programme: 482 – Social Services - \$8,201,465,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 483 – Labour Administration - \$69,400,000

Mr. B. Williams: Project 4401900 – Institutional Strengthening- there was nothing in 2011 or 2012 and you are now proposing to spend \$52 million, “Provision for support to Central Recruitment and Manpower Agency.”

Ms. Webster: Mr. Chairman, this year we intend to upgrade the computerised database at the central office for Central Recruitment and Manpower (CR&M) and we will be establishing offices in Regions 3 and 10, as we seek to further strengthen the work of the Manpower and Recruitment Planning Database.

We will also be strengthening the current offices that we have in Regions 2, 5 and 6. We hope to have an online registration process completed by the end of 2013.

Mr. B. Williams: That is a lot of money; \$52 million. With that expenditure Hon. Minister, we should not be wanting, in terms of whatever is asking the substantive Minister of Labour, your Manpower surveys, etc. Could you respond to me?

Ms. Webster: Mr. Chairman, I can recall my colleague saying earlier when he was asked a question about having a database, alluding to the fact that he did not have that information at hand. But Mr. Chairman, we are seeking through the funding to be provided here, to work towards achieving that at the level of the Ministry of Labour.

Programme: 483 – Labour Administration - \$69,400,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 484 – Child Care and Protection - \$233,776,000

Mrs. Lawrence: Line item 6343 – Old Age Pensions and Social Assistance- could the Hon. Minister indicate to us what amounts included in the \$15 million relates to foster care?

Ms. Webster: Actually the foster care programme, the funding provided is not provided for under here, it is actually provided for under programme two, line item 6343. For the foster care programme this year we have provided \$9.6 million.

Mrs. Lawrence: A follow-up question to the Hon. Minister. Can the Minister indicate to the House how many children she is expecting to have in foster care that she allocated this amount for the year?

Ms. Webster: We plan to have approximately 176 children.

Mrs. Lawrence: Hon. Minister through the Chair, could you kindly indicate to the House what amount is allocated per child?

Ms. Webster: Mr. Chairman, we allocate the sum of \$18,000 per child, but what we do is, there is also a formula, if a foster parent has more than two or three children, then there is a formula, an additional \$10,000 per child. For the first child it is \$18,000 per month and the additional child is \$10,000 per month.

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you Mdm. Minister. Could the Minister kindly indicate to the House how the money is paid; whether it is paid like the old age pension on the first day of the month or whether it is paid at the end of the month?

Ms. Webster: It is paid at the end of the month.

Mrs. Lawrence: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us whether there is a statutory date or day of the month when this money is paid. There have been several complaints of the moneys being paid in the next month.

Ms. Webster: The current system in place for payments to foster care parents is linked to the dates when Government salaries are paid, we try to stick to around that time.

Ms. Baveghems: Line item 6292 – Dietary- Cde. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister say how many children and how many meals are catered for under this head?

Ms. Webster: We have more than 300 children in our care and we are catering for those children. We provide breakfast, lunch, dinner and school snacks for those attending school.

Ms. Baveghems: A follow-up question: how much of the \$65 million is allocated for the Drop-in Centre?

Ms. Webster: I do not have that information with me, but I can commit to providing that information by tomorrow.

Ms. Baveghems: Thank you. Line item 6343 – Old Age Pensions and Social Assistance- can the Minister tell us what this allocation is intended for?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member I think that I should just say that, I am suggesting that we do not take a break or a recess. Snacks are available, so any Member who wishes could avail themselves at any time, just go; coffee, water or for a snacks and we try to get through before the appointed time.

Ms. Baveghems like you have the Minister stumped.

Ms. Webster: I can provide that information a little later, I am not finding it.

Mr. Chairman: Very well.

Ms. Baveghems: A follow-up question: how many persons are intended to benefit from this \$15 million allocation?

Mr. Chairman: Is it along the same lines; can you answer that?

Ms. Webster: We have 176 children and 98 foster parents. I alluded to earlier that there are rates payable. Also under this allocation here there are other services which are provided to assist foster care parents through this same line item.

Ms. Baveghems: Another follow-up question: how many of these children are under the care of the Ministry?

Mr. Chairman: I think that was answered already.

Ms. Webster: All of them.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships)- I noticed \$5 million allocated. Hon. Minister, how many persons will be trained and what capacity will they be trained in? Also, will any of the persons be distributed in the regions and sub-regions, especially where health care and protection are concerned?

You are quite aware, as everyone knows, what is happening in the regions right now. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Which is?

Ms. Webster: Mr. Chairman, this year we will undertake with the funding provided training for caregivers of the care centres and we budgeted the sum of \$1 million. Specialised training for the child protection officers who are deployed in the regions, we have budgeted \$1 million of that. Then we have computer training for our children who currently live in our centres, we have budgeted \$500,000 for that. Then we are having training for parents and primary caregivers, including potential foster care parents, conducted this year throughout the country.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Thank you Hon. Minister.

Ms. Kissoon: Mr. Chairman, can the Hon. Minister say in Region No. 10, how many foster homes there are and how many foster children are in the care of those homes.

Ms. Webster: Mr. Chairman, I do not have that information with me, but we will make a note and supply the information.

Programme: 484 – Child Care and Protection - \$233,776,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 484 – Child Care and Protection - \$15,000,000

Programme: 484 – Child Care and Protection - \$15,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member we will now go to the last Ministry for today's schedule business that is the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport. Thank you members and technical, officers of the Ministry, for attending and waiting all day. I am sure we provided some entertainment in the meantime though; it was not boring. Thank you very much.

Agency: 44 – Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport

Current Expenditure

Programme: 441 – Ministry Administration - \$170,110,000

Mr. Jones: Cde. Chairman, line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings- could the Hon. Minister please inform us which building is going to be rented?

Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport [Dr. Anthony]: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. We are renting a building in Queenstown for the two Cuban coaches that we have in the country.

Mr. Jones: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings - \$8 million is requested, could the Hon. Minister please inform this House which buildings are going to be maintained?

9.02 p.m.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, we will be doing maintenance work on the Head Office. We will also be doing work on the Ministry's Annex which is on Middle Street. At the Head Office, we will be doing some repainting of the interior walls; doing some work on the ceiling. At the Ministry's Annex we will be doing some electrical wiring and some plumbing works. You will recall that at the Middle Street Annex, we had a fire some time ago so we are advised that we need to do some rewiring there.

Mr. Jones: Line item 6255- Maintenance of Other Infrastructure-could the Minister please indicate which are those in the...?

Dr. Anthony: The other infrastructure that we are talking about here is basically to do things like the lawns. We have a facility at the Head Office to do cleaning and pruning of trees and also at the facility that we have at Carifesta Avenue and at the Annex Building.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wonder whether the Hon. Minister might be so kind as to have a look at the wages and salaries section. I am looking specifically at "Contracted Employees", which is line item 6116, and involves a significant increase in expenditure between the revised amount from last year and this year's amount which seems to be \$73 million. Could he tell us what underlies that; in other words, what change in programme are you taking to justify that increase and what categories of staff does that involve? I mean, what skills are you bringing in to do the work?

Dr. Anthony: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In this category of 'Contracted Employees' we are employing 14 extra persons or 14 persons and we have a number of different people. We have a Driver, Office Assistant, Accounts Clerk II, Typist Clerk I, Stock Verifier, Typist Clerk again, Assistant Development Officer, a Coordinator for volunteers, a Project Officer for volunteers, another Typist Clerk I, another Driver. We also have the Deputy Permanent Secretary.

Mr. Greenidge: I opened my question with the request that the Minister indicates to us what the change in programme is. This seems to be a significant expansion in numbers. What is it in terms of your programme that you are going to undertake this year to justify that change, which almost seems a change in composition? They are contracted workers but mostly at nontechnical and non-skilled levels from the sound of it.

Dr. Anthony: We had some vacancies during the year so it is the filling of some of these vacancies.

Mr. Greenidge: It does not involve any change in emphasis in your programme; just an increase in the number of staff members.

Dr. Anthony: The only change I would say is the volunteer programme is a new programme. We have introduced a volunteer platform where we are working as coordinator for Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). This is new. We have employed two persons within that unit. The Ministry did not have a Deputy Permanent Secretary and we now have a Deputy Permanent Secretary. Those are new positions.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, the recruitment was done on what basis? Who did the recruitment of the 14? new staff members that you have just listed? Who is to do them?

Dr. Anthony: It is the normal arrangement. We get permission from the Public Service Ministry (PSM) to fill the vacancies. They are advertised. People are interviewed. There is a panel. Based on the evaluation the best person is recruited.

Mr. Greenidge: This is your panel rather than PSM's.

Dr. Anthony: PSM would have persons on our panel so it is a mixture.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6284 - could the Hon. Minister kindly explain how this \$4 million is going to be spent? Thank you.

Dr. Anthony: We are using this to pay for supervision services for maintenance work and also when we incur bank charges this heading is used, to pay for those charges.

Programme: 441 – Ministry Administration - \$170,110,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 441 – Ministry Administration - \$24,600,000

Programme: 441 – Ministry Administration - \$24,600,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme 442 – Culture – \$532,565,000

Mr. Ramjattan: Mr. Chairman, line item 6321- Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – I notice that that has increase from \$142 million to \$177 million and at page 400, under this, there is a sub-programme, Sports and Art Development Fund, of \$100 million. Could the Minister kindly indicate what that fund goes towards for \$100 million?

Mr. Chairman: It is a lot of money, Minister. You should be able to track it down pretty easily.

Dr. Anthony: The Sports and Art Development Fund- this fund has been used to fund a number of activities in the arts and also in sports and your question is: what are we doing with the money?

Mr. Chairman: Some definition, some specificity.

Dr. Anthony: In 2012, for example, we paid for professional sport services. That is we have this bilateral with the Cuban government where we have hired two coaches to come in. Those two persons would be working with us for two years. We are spending \$26 million we have had the Visual Arts Competition and Exhibition. That would have cost us \$13,122,000. During the year we also hosted Mr. E. R. Braithwaite and we spent \$1.3 million on that visit.

As you know we are also in the process of constructing the 1823 Monument. The monument site, the landscaping and works that we are doing there has cost us \$28.3 million. On the Guyana Prize for Literature we have spent \$11.6 million and for the Interim Management Committee that we had set up for cricket last year we spend \$19.5 million.

I can also say what we are projecting to spend this year. We have a number of things that we want to do this year. We are looking at getting two additional Cuban coaches. That is one of the proposed things that we want to do. The visual arts competition and exhibition, while it is every

two years, we have been advised that we should do workshops in between so we will be spending some monies on that. During this year we marked 250 years since the Berbice Slave Uprising and we earmarked moneys to do a number of commemorative activities; some of which we have already had, like the distinguished lecture series.

The Guyana classics: We have earmarked money here to do a number of Guyana classics so we have a publishing agenda of a number of books that we would be doing this year. In addition to that, I spoke about the upgrading of the Amerindian language dictionaries and we have been in contact with Dr. Edwards who had worked at the University of Guyana (UG) developing these dictionaries so we want to bring him back to upgrade the dictionaries before we publish them. We have also set aside moneys this year for a film endowment; this collaboration that we have with the University of Guyana so that they could continue to produce short films.

We have also earmarked moneys for the Inter-Guiana Culture Festival. As you know, this is a festival that we have been having between the three Guianas. French Guiana will be hosting this year so we will have to send a delegation to French Guiana and we have also earmarked money for Guyana's participation in Carifesta XI in Suriname so that is how we intend to spend from this fund.

Mr. Chairman: Those are a lot.

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, I may follow up to the last question: could the Hon. Minister say, for the Amerindian dictionary, which language would those dictionaries would those dictionaries be referring to and how much money he intends to spend?

Dr. Anthony: In all, for our publication agenda for this year... [**Mrs. Backer:** No, for the Amerindian dictionaries.] I am coming to that. We intend to spend \$16,000,265. This year, for the actual dictionaries that we will be publishing there is the Arawak Dictionary that we have gotten permission for. That is on the list to be published this year. For the rest of the dictionaries, we have six others that need upgrading that is the work for which we will be brining in Dr. Edwards to work with us to upgrade them and then we will be working with Mr. Adrian Gomes... There are two where we do not have the information as yet and we will be compiling that so we have local persons along with the linguists who will be working to compile those. We have set aside close to \$5 million to work on the upgrades and to start compiling.

Dr. Norton: Could the Minister, under line item 6321- Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations- you have listed there the Rupununi Weavers Association and the Amerindian Handicraft Association. Could you say how much is allotted to each of these two organisations and what their programmes are for this year?

Dr. Anthony: It is actually on page 400. For the Rupununi Weavers Society there is \$150,000. What is the...

Dr. Norton: Amerindian Handicraft Association.

Dr. Anthony: We do not have that one.

Dr. Norton: Sorry.

Dr. Anthony: Page 400 has the breakdown.

Dr. Norton: What is your programme for the Rupununi Weavers Association?

Dr. Anthony: Actually we give the money to them and they decide.

Mr. Ramjattan: Just a follow up to the previous question: Sports and Art Development Fund. That is a very impressive list, I must tell you, again this year but have we gotten audited statements for the previous years or up to last year, let us say.

Dr. Anthony: Yes. Last year we were audited by the Auditor General and that is the Ministry. The funds have been audited up to last year.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, last year we had an extensive discussion on this same area and the first question I want to ask, through you, Sir: The Sports and Art Development Fund, is it a local organisation? This is Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. In the same way that we know that the Theatre Guild of Guyana is a local organisation, the National Trust, the Rupununi Weavers Society. The first question, Hon. Minister, is the Sports and Arts Development Fund a local organisation and, if it is, where is it housed?

Dr. Anthony: I think we can consider it as a local organisation. That is my opinion and I will tell you why. My understanding is that there are two types of local organisations; those that are Government local organisations – let me just put it how I understand it – and maybe there are

non-governmental organisations. Of the Government organisations there are those organisations that are set up by statutes and then there is another type that can be set up by Cabinet. The Sports and Arts Fund has been set up by a decision by Cabinet and that is how it has been functioning. It is part of the Ministry. It is being audited and these are the things that we have been doing with the fund.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, your answer is that the Sports and Arts Development Fund is a local organisation. Who heads that local organisation, Sir?

Dr. Anthony: We have a panel in the Ministry that examines the requests that we will get and we have three people – the Permanent Secretary, the Director of Culture and we have the Director of Sports.

Mrs. Backer: So the Permanent Secretary, the Director of Culture and the Director of Sports are the three people who head this local organisation. Is that what you are saying to this honourable House and their books are audited separately?

Dr. Anthony: It is audited by the Auditor General and it is part of our chart of accounts.

Mrs. Backer: When you say “part of our chart of accounts”... It is a local organisation so whose chart of accounts...?

Dr. Anthony: The Ministry’s.

Mrs. Backer: Where is it housed?

Dr. Anthony: In the Ministry.

Mrs. Backer: So it is a department of the Ministry. Is that what you are saying, Sir?

Dr. Anthony: Not necessarily.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. B. Williams, sorry this is about...

Mr. Greenidge: If you are going to move from it I would ask to be allowed to...

Mr. Chairman: Yes, go ahead.

Mr. Greenidge: The discussion, as my colleague had indicated, last year was a long one and I believe that in that exchange we had indicated to the Minister that he ought to look at the organisational arrangements for this entity. Just in case I am misunderstood, when we discussed it our concerns were pricked by the fact that moneys collected or assigned to this entity, the fund, in one year were held over into the next year and is what caused the questions to be put in relation to this. If it is the funds are held by the Ministry and they are not in a separate account that is specifically for Sports and Development Fund account which does not have a separate board of directors and trustees with specific legal organisations then it should not be treated as a subsidy to a local organisation because it is really just a subset of the Ministry and in effect it is a way of having the Ministry avoid the obligations that it would otherwise have for receipt and disbursement of funds and therefore we have had concerns raised in relation to a range of other agencies which have tried to have such arrangements and the question is: Have you sought legal advice on this since last year? Why has it come back in the same manner? Part of the problem, for example, if one looks at the range of activities it is very commendable but it is not clear as to what the overall goal is, what the criteria you use are and so forth.

Presumably you set up a separate body; they would in their articles be bound to set those out. We can follow them a lot easier. It is not the entity. One is tempted here to say to you that you should put your house in order before you ask us to look at these expenditures again because it is not the first time you are raising them.

Mr. T. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Notwithstanding the concerns expressed by the Hon. Members and the answers given by the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, I recall that last year in his deliberations he indicated that this fund also supported the maintenance of grounds across this country and tonight I could not hear him specifically mentioning that sports grounds were benefitting from this fund. Therefore my question is: What criteria govern the dispersing of funds to grounds, organisations or individuals? I will take that one first.

Dr. Anthony: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much, Mr. Williams, for the question. These funds have not been used for grounds. We have a separate fund and that is actually under “Sports” so when we come to “Sports” there is money there for grounds. It is not here.

Mr. T. Williams: I think that I can recall. I am sorry that I do not have the benefit of the Hansard but I can recall the mention of sports grounds and I also saw in the press earlier, it think it was last year some time or this year, that the Ministry would have distributed a number of weeding machines which I think were priced at \$435 each with the cleaning of grounds. While I encourage the idea of contributing more to sports and development, I want to echo the sentiments of Mr. Greenidge and others that this organisation or institution needs to be structurally set up properly coming before this House because I am quite confused as to the nature and the purpose of it and who can grant. For example a youth organisation or community looks into the budget and sees money for sports and art development and then we, ourselves, cannot really definitively answer how these moneys are going to be disbursed.

My other question to the Minister on this is simply how long has this body been set up and how many communities across Guyana has benefited.

Dr. Anthony: Just again, maybe for clarity, there are two separate things. The Sports and Arts Fund we have primarily used, I would say, more in the area of culture. The grounds that the Hon. Members is talking about are actually under “Sports”; it is separate. The particular Arts and Sports Fund has been here since 2007 and we can provide information on what we would have spent it on.

The one with the grounds was started two years ago and we have a list of the communities that would have benefited. That one we advertised in the newspaper and it is driven by the community so the community would then write and say ‘Well, we would like to benefit from this grant’. We examine it and we give grants to the communities but it not under this area. It is under ‘Sports’.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, a little earlier you gave us a list of things that I assume came to nearly \$100 million. Would you be prepared, Hon. Minister, to share a copy of the list of activities as such, endeavours that you listed? Would you be prepared to share a copy with the House and, if so, when would you be in a position to do so? The list you were just reading from.

Dr. Anthony: Most certainly, I can do that by tomorrow.

Mrs. Backer: We will have that list eventually but are you saying that for the Sport and Art Development Fund, of the \$100 million, nothing is allocated for sports? In this thing, Sports and Art Development... The name of it is “Sports and Art Development”. Is any part of the \$100 million allocated to any sport activity?

Dr. Anthony: Yes, there is. We have paid from the fund for the two Cuban coaches; one is in boxing, one is in swimming. We want to use from this year’s allocation to hire two additional coaches. One would be in athletics and another coach would be in swimming so that is where the sport part comes.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Under line item 6291- National and Other Events- in 2012, the sum of \$75 million was budgeted however \$78.781 million was spent. Can the Hon. Minister explain why the increase and I have noticed for 2013 you have here \$78.8 million being budgeted for. What constitutes ‘National and Other Events’? There are, more or less, three things that you have to answer here.

Dr. Anthony: Let me hear the first one.

Ms. Ferguson: Firstly, why the increase in 2012 and 2013? Those are two. Thirdly, what constitutes ‘National and Other Events’?

Dr. Anthony: Actually from 2012 to 2013 we have had an increase of \$18,000.

9.32 p.m.

The events which the Ministry normally supports, under this head, \$51.8 million was spent on Mashramani, Emancipation Day activities and Arrival Day activities. There is the Independence Day activity. There will be a child art competition that the Ministry would be working on later in the year. It wants to introduce a Phillip Moore Lecture Series, so moneys are attached to that and there is also the Desiree Fox Lecture Series. That was introduced about two years ago and it is continued.

Today, actually, is International Monument and Site Day, which that is recognised globally and moneys have been set aside for the exhibitions and activities, which are done, to highlight this day.

Mr. Felix: Line item 6281 – Security Services: I notice that budgeted for the year 2012 was \$42.7 million, the Ministry underspent, and then for this year’s budget it is \$30 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain the variation?

Dr. Anthony: Actually, there has been an increase this year because there are some additional sites where guards will be put. Guards are added to the 1763 Monument site and Ministry’s intention, once the 1823 Monument site will be opened is to place guards there as well. These are in addition to the cultural sites where the Ministry would have guards.

Mr. Felix: Was the process exposed to competitive bidding? How many companies tendered and which won?

Dr. Anthony: There were six companies bidding and the lowest was Strategic Action Security Services and it won the bid.

Mr. Jones: Sports and Art Development Fund, I noted in the statement from the Minister that he made mention of “we have allocated or we have disbursed”, but earlier in his answers, which he provided, he also stated that “we disbursed moneys on request”. Is it that organisation, communities request moneys from this fund or is it that the committee sits down and decides what they will allocate funds to?

Dr. Anthony: There are organisations that write to the Ministry and request moneys. For example, Scene Guyana, which is operated out of the University of Guyana, has requested money of the Ministry to help with the training of persons in doing short films and in producing short films. In the past the Ministry had supported its efforts and it has made request to the Ministry, for this year, to continue that support. In some cases, organisations would write to the Ministry requesting specific funding for specific projects. There are other things that we know will be happening during the year, for example, Caribbean Festival of Arts (CARIFESTA), Inter-Guianas Cultural Festival, and so forth, that we would start planning for.

Mr. Jones: Follow-up. Could the Hon. Minister please indicate how many organisations or communities had requested funds last year?

Dr. Anthony: Last year there was the visual arts competition and exhibition. The Ministry also had a request from the Guyana Prize for Literature. It had funded those two. It also received a

request for Scene Guyana, which it is covering in this year. It has also received a request for the publication, this year, of a number of books, so that is going to be funded. The Ministry does get request.

Mr. Jones: Follow-up. Could the Hon. Minister state, of those requests last year, how much in totality that amounted to?

Dr. Anthony: The request for the visual arts competition and exhibition amounted to \$13,122,000. It got the entire sum.

For the Guyana Prize for Literature, it had requested, last year, \$24.6 million. The Ministry was able to give, last year, \$11.6 million.

Mr. Greenidge: I thought the question was how many entities requested assistance. The Minister has indicated two as the main ones. I thought the question was: How many entities and how many were the Ministry able to satisfy?

Dr. Anthony: Basically, the Ministry got from those two entities, and the Caribbean Press which takes it to three.

Mr. Jones: Minister, are you adding the Caribbean Press? If so, could you please state the amount?

Dr. Anthony: Last year the Ministry did not give it any money because it had a previous publishing agenda the year before for which it was completing the work. That work was completed last year and this year a request has been made and the Ministry is going to fulfil that request. It is close to \$10 million.

Ms. Kissoon: Could the Hon. Minister state, under this same Sports and Arts Development Fund, the criteria use for applying? Secondly, would the Lichas Hall in Region 10 be eligible?

Dr. Anthony: I think it depends on what it is that you want to do at Lichas Hall. A project proposal can be put up and sent to the Ministry stating exactly what it is it wants to do. It would be examined and decided upon so that it can be assisted.

There are a number of things that can be done. It deals with preservation - any project which has to do with the preservation of Guyanese heritage, promotion of the arts, promotion and development of cultural industries, that same thing dealing with helping organisation to develop elite athlete's programme – that is why those expert coaches are brought in - helping sports organisation for accreditation, and so forth. There is a whole list of broad areas that the Ministry can fund. The organisation must write stating the project and the sums that it is requesting, and it will be considered.

Mr. Bond: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Could the Minister advice us on when the Caribbean Press, those moneys issued there, would begin to benefit contemporary writers?

Dr. Anthony: It is already benefiting contemporary writers. In fact a number of persons' work has already been published. If the Member wants I can name a few: Mr. Cedric Castello, his book was done, *Rasta Lyrics; Berbice Uprising 1763*, Ms. Anna Benjamin's book, was published; David Dabydeen's book, *The Intended* and a number of book by Mr. Ian McDonald. I think three of his books were done. Sister Mary Noel Menezes books, two of those were done – *Portuguese of Guyana* and *British Policy towards Amerindians in British Guiana*; Elly Niland, *Selected Poems*, Petember Persaud, *Guyanese Short Stories*, Mark Mc Watt, *Interiors*. Petember Persaud has been working with a group of poets and an *Anthology of Guyanese Contemporary Verse* would be coming out shortly; Sase Narine Persaud, *Undisclosed Entrances*.

Those are some. In addition to that, there are about 60 books that were done.

Mr. Bond: Follow-up. Could the Minister state the criteria where contemporary writers, some of whom I know, could ascertain as to how their works could be published via the Caribbean Press?

Dr. Anthony: It is actually very simple. There are two managing editors of the press who are doing it on a voluntary basis, Dr. Ian McDonald and Dr. David Dabydeen. The transcripts of the works would be sent, they have a panel of experts who look at them and work with the authors to get them published. In fact they also offer advice on how to strengthen the work, and things such as that.

Mr. Bond: I know the Guyana Prize for Literature attracts hundreds of writers. It is more of a recommendation. Is it not possible for the press, or the managing directors, to focus on that pool of writers, in terms of having persons to apply, who submitted to the Guyana Prize for Literature, those that are shortlisted, to actually have their works published?

Dr. Anthony: We are very much opened to get work because we believe that we need to get more published material in Guyana. The press is really there to help bring those works to the general public. Whatever we can do to help I think we would want to do that.

The Guyana Prize for Literature is managed by the University of Guyana. I know that there is some working relationship and some close collaboration and I am sure the recommendation, which the Member has made can, somehow, be factored in.

Mr. Bond: Could I make another recommendation?

Dr. Anthony: Sure.

Mr. Bond: In terms of copyright legislation for those writers, I do know that writers, in general, feel a sense of insecurity where their works are concerned. Does the Ministry have a policy to protect the works of writers and artists in general?

Dr. Anthony: I think at some point the copyright legislation will have to be worked on. There was a draft done some years ago and I guess it is a collective effort because it is a very comprehensive draft and it involves a number of parties. Barring that, as I understand that, there are old legislation, which exist, where if people feel that their works have been infringed they can go to the courts and get a remedy. I think, at some point, as a collective body, we will need to work on that legislation.

Mr. Nagamootoo: I just want to make an observation and then a question.

It is whether the Hon. Minister, through you, Mr. Chairman, judging from what has been said before by Hon. Members Mr. Greenidge and Mrs. Backer, he should not be consulting with his legal department, perhaps the Minister of Finance as well to... There is a conceptualisation of the fund. The fund may be a wrong word in the context of the Ministry...

Mr. Chairman: Mrs. Backer said that it is a misnomer.

Mr. Nagamootoo: It is a misnomer but this, from what we heard the Minister was saying, is perhaps a very silent but significant and unsound part of good work, if I may say so for want of the better words. I did say, when I spoke to the budget debate, that his presentation was a breath of fresh air and so were his explanations tonight, but it is the legal definition of what the fund is that has created some doubts in our mind when we advance a proposition for amendment to the fund. Perhaps this fund should be called the Art and Literary Fund or some other word, except fund. We have heard the Minister and a lot of this would have been avoided if there was circulated, at the time of the Estimates, an addenda to give those explanations that he had given here. I am saying that - I wish to speak on behalf of learned colleague Mr. Ramjattan - we would not be prosecuting out proposals for amendments.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister Rohee, could you move the motion for an extension for us to go beyond 10.00 p.m. please.

Minister of Home Affairs [Mr. Rohee]: Mr. Speaker, I would like move the suspension of Standing Order 10 (1) to allow for the sitting to continue uninterrupted for the completion of the examination of the Estimates for the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport.

Question put, and agreed to.

Standing Order suspended.

In Committee of Supply

Mr. Trotman: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: I note that in the year 2012 \$14 million was budgeted for and \$14 million was spent. In the year 2013 \$14 million has been requested. I raised this matter because I find it very strange that an item, such as electricity charges, can realise the same expense in two consecutive years. I am wondering if the Minister can say if this figure has been arrived at out from an objective assessment of the situation or if it is something which has been pulled out of the air.

Dr. Anthony: I think these are estimates of consumption and, maybe, based on historic records what has been consuming that is why it is budgeted here at \$14 million.

Proposed Amendment to motion on Notice Paper number 183

Amendments to be moved in the Committee of Supply of the National Assembly to the Estimates of Expenditure for the Financial Year 2013.

That the amounts shown in column 4 for agencies, account codes and description listed below be reduced by the amounts shown in column 5.

Page 400; 44 Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports- 6231 – Sports and Art Development Fund; provided \$100,000,000; reduction (Col.5) \$99,999,999; proposed (Col. 6) \$1.00.

[*Mr. Greenidge*]

Mr. Greenidge: In keeping with the concerns we raised just now we would like, in putting the motion, that you take into account the motion for amendment that we have here. We do not have a difficulty...

May I just take the liberty just to say to you, Mr. Chairman, as we have indicated, that our problem is not with the substance of what is in the Minister's programme but the fact that we come back for a second year with the programme in this form, having drawn to the attention that it should be a separate agency properly constituted as a local organisation and it does not. We would like the motion to be amended as proposed. If the Ministry comes back, with the Minister of Finance's assistance, as soon as it brings it back, properly constituted, we will support it.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I have been asked by Mr. Greenidge to put the motion. I know that Mr. Ramjattan's motion was withdrawn. I think, officers would have to be excused when the bell sounded and persons summoned.

Officers, please do not go so far because we have two other programmes to look at today.

Mr. Nagamootoo, I think, had spoken on behalf of you, Mr. Ramjattan in your absence that your motion is withdrawn and that he was satisfied, he did not speak on your behalf, with the...

Mr. Ramjattan: I indicated to him to so indicate.

Motion put.

Hon. Members (Government): Division.

Committee divided: Abstained 7, Ayes 26, Noes 29, as follows:

Abstained

Mr. T. Williams

Ms. Marcello

Dr. Ramayya

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe

Mrs. Hughes

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Ramjattan

Ayes

Ms. Ferguson

Mr. Morian

Ms. R. Williams

Mr. Jones

Mr. Adams

Ms. Baveghems

Mr. Sharma

Mr. Bulkan

Mr. Bond

Ms. Kissoon

Mr. Trotman

Ms. Selman

Mr. Allicock

Ms. Wade

Mr. Felix

Ms. Hastings

Mr. Scott

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon

Mr. Greenidge

Mrs. Backer

Dr. Norton

Mrs. Lawrence

Mr. B. Williams

Ms. Ally

Dr. Roopnarine

Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger

Noes

Mr. Jaffarally

Mr. Damon

Dr. Persaud

Rev. Gilbert

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Neendkumar

Mr. Lumumba

Mr. Chand

Ms. Shadick

Mr. Nadir

Ms. Teixeira

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Whittaker

Mr. Baksh

Mrs. Campbell- Sukhai

Ms. Webster

Mr. G. Persaud

Ms. Manickchand

Mr. Benn

Dr. Anthony

Mr. Ali

Dr. Ramsaran

Dr. Westford

Mr. R. Persaud

Dr. Singh

Mr. Nandlall

Dr. Ramsammy

Mr. Rohee

Motion negatived.

Programme: 442 – Culture - \$532,565,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

10.02 p.m.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 442 – Culture - \$77,200,000

Programme 442 – Culture - \$77,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 443 – Youth – \$490,416,000

Programme 443 – Youth - \$490,416,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 443 – Youth – \$35,000,000

Programme 443 – Youth – \$35,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand as part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 444 – Sport - \$264,299,000

Mr. Jones: Line item 6281 – Security Services: Could the Hon. Minister indicate the reason for the increase?

Dr. Anthony: The increase here is that there are a number of other locations that are coming on stream, the Resource Centre at Woolford Avenue. The Ministry will also be looking at Leonora later in the year. Security will be put there as well.

Mr. Jones: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Could the Hon. Minister indicate the reason for the increase?

Dr. Anthony: At line item 6321, there is an increase of \$4.4 million.

Mr. Jones: It is the reason for the increase.

Dr. Anthony: It is basically works which will be done at the racquet centre because there are those extra facilities that came on board. At Woolford Avenue now there is the lawn tennis area and there is a racquet centre. Maybe, in another month, or so, there will also have a resource centre there. It is catering for that, operating those things.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarship): I notice that there is no allocation since the year 2011 to now for training, and this is for sport. How the Ministry does training? Where does it cater for training in its budget because, as it is known, we need top coaches for our different sports.

Dr. Anthony: The National Sports Commission is a subvention agency. The money, at line item 6321, will be going to the National Sports' Commission. It would be able, from that allocation, to budget for training.

Dr. Ramayya: I would like to ask the Minister, please, if there is any allocation of funds for Region 6, in terms of playing fields and other facilities for cricket.

Dr. Anthony: Actually, it is under the capital expenditure.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, it is when we get there.

Dr. Anthony: I will answer the Member when we get there...?

Dr. Anthony: Which number?

Dr. Norton: I am asking for the line item if the Ministry should support, in any way, the annual games in South Rupununi that it is going to be held this year, known as the August Games, in the village of Shea. Under Sport, is there any intention of supporting that event and under which line item it will fall, if the Ministry should?

Dr. Anthony: The allocation will be done through the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs. However, under the National Sports Commission an application can be made and sent to it and the Ministry will be able to support.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, I have one question. Is there any one or perhaps two sports that the Ministry has identified, say in another three or four years, in which Guyana will be brought up to Olympic qualifying standards? Are you working in any targeted way on any sports at all?

Dr. Anthony: We are working on maybe three areas and that is our intention - boxing, swimming and later on we will be working more closely with athletics. These are the three areas that we are focusing on.

Programme: 444 – Sport - \$264,299,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 444 – Sport – \$935,000,000

Ms. Selman: Project 4501800 – National Sports Commission: Referring to profile reference page 166. Could the Hon. Minister identify the sports facilities which have been slated for upgrade? Could he say how much moneys will be spent on them?

Dr. Anthony: You are talking about the capital projects.

Ms. Selman: Yes. There is the upgrade of other sports facilities.

Dr. Anthony: The upgrading of sports facilities there is the allocation of about \$300 million for community facilities. I think Mr. Williams earlier had asked and Dr. Ramayya. This is where communities can apply to the Ministry and it will be able to give grants to the various communities. This is the fund, I think, which was referred to earlier. In the previous year the Ministry was using about \$100 million. This year there is the allocation of \$300 million because of the constant request the Ministry has been getting. Previously, it has capped it at a million dollars but the feedback that it has received is that the sum is not adequate. The Ministry will be reviewing that sum and perhaps taking it up to a higher level.

Ms. Kissoon: The Minister has already answered. I was going to enquire about Region 10 but I guess that it can apply.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Minister. Mr. Minister, you have made no allocation here for the National Stadium. Is there any reason why nothing has been allocated for the National Stadium?

Dr. Anthony: Actually, the funds for the National Stadium have been passed, the operating expenses and other expenses. We did that already.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: It has here - I see at project 1902000, page 436 - an actual amount in the year 2011 of \$14,227,000 and after that there are just zeros.

Dr. Anthony: Again, we have passed that already where the Ministry has allocated moneys to the National Stadium.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The money is gone somewhere else.

Dr. Anthony: Yes, because we passed it. Under that there were some moneys to do maintenance, and so forth. We have passed that.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Hon. Minister, it is just for a point of clarification. You said just now that communities have to apply to get allocation for whatever funds. On February, we visited Adelphi, in Canje, and its play ground was filled with bush. The residents did not know how to get funds but they did say that you had promised them some funds. Is it that we would be correct in telling them now that they can apply for funding to upgrade that ground?

Dr. Anthony: Yes. Within, I would say, probably, a month or two, the Member would see an advertisement in the newspaper that details everything. Persons will use the procedure, which will be outlined there, to apply. Once that is done, the application will come in, it will be reviewed and the Ministry will be able to fund it. So far, as of last year, almost everybody who applied the Ministry was able to satisfy that person's request. The funds really are not a lot of money, so I would encourage people to apply early. Last year, fortunately, the Ministry did two calls, but I guess, as the words spread around, more people would know. I would encourage people to apply.

Mr. Jones: Could the Hon. Minister please indicate how many communities had applied for this grant last year? How many were granted? How many communities have applied for this year, thus far?

Dr. Anthony: Last year, there were about 87 communities which would have benefited under this fund. It is for all the regions. There is a breakdown of the various regions and of which grounds, and so forth.

Mr. Jones: It is just a follow-up. Could the Hon. Minister please lay the list of the 87 grounds/communities, which had applied and were granted, and the amounts that were granted to them?

Dr. Anthony: We can do that.

Ms. Selman: Would the Minister be so kind as to identify the criteria and tell us what is the time line for the granting of these projects?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I think the Minister just said in a month's time there will be an advertisement. But Minister I was going to ask if you could...

Ms. Selman: No. It is after a person would have applied. How long it will take before it is granted? It is the process. How long does it take?

Dr. Anthony: There will be a date, which is set, in the newspaper by when the Ministry will receive the application. Within a month of that date people are replied to and the money is disbursed. The money for the regions goes through the regional administration, so that the Ministry can account for the money.

Mr. Jones: If I am permitted, in what perhaps could be the last question. In the Hon. Member Mr. Neendkumar budget presentation last year he had responded to a question that I asked pertaining to these same grounds. He had stated that there is a very long extensive list: "Those moneys were not spent by the Ministry, they were allocated to various regions and then the Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs) disburse same." I do not know if by chance it is another fund altogether or it is the Ministry that disbursed the funds.

Dr. Anthony: For accounting purposes, the Ministry would send the moneys to the region with the specific nature of doing this ground or that ground, based on the request, because it has to account for the money. A lot of times the community organisations, which are applying, do not have bank accounts; they do not have the systems in place to account for the money and that is why the Ministry would send it through the region and the region would do the accounting.

Mr. Jones: It is just for clarification. If it is after a person would have applied to the Ministry for funds, let us say from Region 10, they would be then allocated to the Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs), or in the case of a National Democratic Council (NDC).

Dr. Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Jones: Well, then on your advice, Sir, would it not be easier for the funds to be at the RDCs/NDCs levels and communities in those respective regions apply there rather than to the Ministry?

Dr. Anthony: This is a fairly new thing. As I said, it is only two years old and so far it has helped a lot of people. The mechanism is working; let us see how it evolves.

Programme: 444 – Sport – \$935,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we have come to the end of our scheduled business for today. We will resume in Assembly.

Assembly resumed.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, I would like to move that the House stands adjourned until tomorrow Friday, the 19 of April, at two o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we stand adjourned until tomorrow Friday, the 19th of April, at 2.00 p.m. Have a good evening everyone, good night.

Adjourned accordingly at 10.21 p.m.

