

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2006-2010) OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

138TH Sitting

Thursday, 23RD December, 2010

The Assembly convened at 2.10 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Report was laid:

Financial Paper No. 5/2010 –Supplementary Estimate (Capital) totaling \$3,000,000,000 for the period ending 2010–12–31. [*Minister of Finance*]

The Minister named Thursday, 30th December, 2010 as the date for consideration of this Financial Paper in Committee of Supply.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTER, INCLUDING POLICY STATEMENTS

(i) UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE SUGAR INDUSTRY

Mr. Persaud: I wish this afternoon to provide a very brief update on current developments and issues as it is pertaining to the Guyana sugar industry. We are all aware that the sugar industry is under going challenges; challenges which are not unique to Guyana, but certainly challenges

which exist within sugar industries across the Region. In Guyana, we have seen a firm and genuine commitment by the Government of Guyana to ensure that steps are taken - investments are made - to guarantee the eventual viability and sustainability of the sugar industry. If we go back to 2000, and when the discussion started on the removal of the sugar protocol and the preferential prices, and the markets that we have got, many countries within the Region, and perhaps within the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP), took the easy decision, and that easy decision was to get out of sugar. In Guyana's situation there was a firm commitment that Guyana would stay in sugar, not just to stay in sugar, but would ensure that we construct and build a much modern and, certainly, a competitive sugar industry as is demanded in the current trade and global environment.

Having taken that bold and, certainly, that required step in the interest of the national development and the welfare of our people, particularly those who depend on the sugar industry, the Government proceeded to make substantial investments. Among those investments was the close to US\$156 million in the Skeldon sugar modernisation project, both with the new factory, the cogeneration facility as well as the expansion of the agricultural area at Skeldon. Further to that, a number of other investments were made throughout other estates to ensure that both factory and field operations were brought to a level to guarantee that competitiveness, and that viability which is required in today's environment. As we speak, US\$12 million, a new packaging and processing plant, at Enmore, is about to be completed and that would allow the packaging of close to 40,000 tons of sugar per annum, and allowing, too, the opportunity to tap in to the better prices that Guyana will get for package sugar in the international market.

Since 2005, we have seen, especially after the flood of 2005, and also a number of other challenges, Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo)'s ability to substantially increased production being hampered. A number of bold steps were taken as a part of the Government's effort to address the issue of production and some of those included the termination of the much controversial Booker Tate management contract; also there was the reorganisation of the management, and further to that, there were efforts to look at having in place a viable and a relevant plan which is referred to as the GuySuCo Turnaround Plan to guarantee the viability of the sugar industry. That Plan, agreed, adopted and being implemented, has already seen some results. Result, one, in terms of cutting wastage, cutting the cost and, in addition to that, looking

at ways in which, very substantial steps being taken, to increase and enhance production and productivity. In addition to some of the achievements contained within that Turnaround Plan, we have seen the area under agriculture, meaning the area under cane, has grown substantially and for the first time this year we will see that GuySuCo having more cane in the field and not being able to take those cane off in the factory due to the weather and industrial relations issues among other factors. In fact, the projection is that close to 40,000 tons of sugar will have to be taken over into the next crop and into 2011.

Another major challenge, which has hampered the sugar industry, has been the European Union (EU) price cut. For the first time, this year, we will see if Guyana, and other countries that would have benefited from the sugar protocol, will be facing the full impact of that price cut – the thirty-six per cent price cut. That alone will see GuySuCo losing close to \$9 billion in potential revenue this year and no company in and out of Guyana can be able to sustain that amount of loss of revenue. But notwithstanding that fact, and due to the commitment and the investments that are being made by the Government, we are very confident and we look forward for next year, 2011, as being a very landmark year in terms of the industry being robust, being strong and being on formed footing to withstand the effects of the price cuts and the other challenges and the indication is that next year GuySuCo will be able to move production to 300,000 tons, or even very close to 300,000 tons, based on the investments and the results of the Turnaround Plan which is in place.

I want to update the National Assembly further on Government's commitment, because we have seen the efforts being made to question the Government's commitment to the sugar industry. I have already enumerated the investments that we have made. But just last year, in the National Assembly, we were able to provide, through land sale to GuySuCo, \$4 billion. Further to that, before the National Assembly, there is a further \$2 billion which will be provided to GuySuCo through the Central Planning and Housing Authority also to fund the sale of land. Just yesterday, His Excellency the President met with sugar workers, based on a request. Notwithstanding the reality of GuySuCo's inability on its own to provide a wage increase, the Government, through an intervention, was able to provide a five per cent one-off to the workers which will cost close to \$720 million. I wish to say that that \$720 million will be funded by \$2 billion which will be provided to GuySuCo through the land sale. Further to that, and recognising the critical

importance of the sugar industry, this is just the initial support that the Government intends to provide, and very soon there will be further support - further relief - to the sugar industry so that we can insist and ensure that management and other stakeholders are able to take the industry to where Guyana requires it to be.

I also want to reiterate, and make it absolutely clear, that the workers welfare in the sugar industry is very paramount to this Government. Any idle speculation of the Government jeopardising the workers welfare is what I have classified it to be “just idle speculation.” But I also want to make it absolutely clear that the issue, or any suggestion, of derecognition of the sugar union is in fact a non-issue. The President has already pronounced on that. Never under the PPP Government will Guyana Agriculture and General Workers Union (GAWU) or any sugar union be derecognised.

Our country’s economic prosperity and our country’s economic development certainly hinge not only on the progress of the sugar industry, and other industries within our national economy are important, but we all recognise the special place and the special role of the sugar industry in our economic and social developments. I want to encourage all stakeholders because if we are going to be able to come out of the EU price cuts, we are going to be able to deal with the impact of climate change and the other challenges facing the industry, it will require all stakeholders, workers /management, also stakeholders outside of the industry - be it the private sector, be it social group, be it the Members of the National Assembly - total commitment and the full resolve of the Guyanese people to ensure that sugar survives and sugar continues to be very productive, in the sense of taking care and enhancing national prosperity.

Mr. Speaker: I thought that you are no longer interested, Hon. Member.

Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport [Dr. Anthony] I was waiting on you to call on me.

Mr. Speaker: Well, you do not have to wait on me; you have to catch my eyes. If you do not catch my eyes, we will move on.

**(ii) UNITED NATIONS’ DECLARATION OF THE YEAR 2011 AS THE
INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT**

Dr. Anthony: On the 18th December, 2009, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the year beginning on the 1st January, 2011 as the International Year of the People of African Descent. This was done by Resolution 64/169 which was adopted without a vote indicating a wide consensus in the international community. This resolution builds on the work done in 2007 when the world commemorated the bicentenary anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade, in captive Africans. Around the world many events were held to reawaken the world's collective memory to the atrocities perpetuated on the millions of African men, women and children for more than four centuries.

Plantation slavery was the most horrendous forms of tyrannical rule in modern history. It was the embodiment of the worst excesses of a depraved age. Not only did it exploit and abuse one portion of humanity, but throughout its existence it brutally suppressed any and all expression of disaffection on the part of the outraged victims.

During slavery the plantocracy orchestrated the suppression of all Afrocentric customs and traditions, especially language and those practices that threatened the security of the system and its ruling class. Through successive combinations of legislation, criminalisation and political suppression many of the Afrocentric languages, customs and traditions disappeared. This has denuded a people of their identity and deprived our nation of the richness of this diversity.

We in Guyana joined the rest of the world in condemning those atrocities as a crime against humanity. We also demanded an apology and we sought reparations for the injustices. That was done at the official ceremony that was held at the National Cultural Centre under the theme, *We Must Never Forget*. It was further reinforced, by this National Assembly, with the passage of a motion.

Over the years there has been tremendous momentum in the international community. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights, recognising the universal vulnerability of people of African descent around the world, established the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent to mitigate and, in many cases, eliminate those vulnerabilities experienced. This is reflected in the final resolution that was adopted, that call for the strengthening of national actions and regional and international cooperation for the benefit of people of African Descent in relation to their full enjoyment of economic, cultural, social, civil, and political rights; their

participation and integration in all political, economic, social and cultural aspects of society, and to the promotion of a greater knowledge of and respect for their diverse heritage and culture. In this resolution the General Assembly urged Member States to make preparations for and to identify possible initiatives that could contribute to the success of the year.

The Government of Guyana is fully cognisant of the tremendous contributions that people of African descent have made in the development of Guyana, the Caribbean and the wider world. Through their collective efforts they have helped to build the infrastructure for plantation agriculture and the drainage and irrigation systems, and made sterling contributions to every sector of our country character with special reference to education, culture, music, arts and, of course, politics. Thousands of Guyanese owed their birth and good health to the caring hands and expert minds of Guyanese of African descent in the medical fields. Thousand of Guyanese owed their good education to the many dedicated educators of African descent. We recognise the monumental contributions that Guyanese of African descent have made our country.

With this in mind, the Government of Guyana, through the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, established a standing committee of about thirty persons representing various stakeholders, both at the national and regional levels, this includes representatives from Regions 2,3,4,5,6 and 10. The inaugural meeting was held on the 18th June, 2010, and since then this committee has met under the chairmanship of Dr. James Rose more than eleven times to discuss the most appropriate ways in which we can commemorate this year.

Some of the proposals that were discussed and accepted include: An official launching in January, 2010; the building of a monument for the Demerara Slave Revolt of 1823, in which more than two hundred and fifty slaves were murdered. We will do this by having an open competition for the design of the monument, and then finally there will be a panel to evaluate those designs and the winning entry will be chosen to build it. There will be several exhibitions which will be held throughout the year, including a permanent exhibition at the Museum of African Heritage and a mobile exhibition that will be travelling to various communities. Special Art exhibitions will be held throughout 2011.

Prominent scholars will be engaged to hold lecture series, at least once every quarter, in 2011. A number of local conferences have been planned and these will include Ghana Day and round

table, Eze Day and round table, a caucus of African cultural workers and Victoria Commemorative Conference, amongst others. A delegation to attend the UN International Conference under the theme, *People of African Descent: Recognition, Justice and Development*. Another delegation will attend the UN Regional Conference in the Caribbean.

The Guyana slave route tours and sites will be developed. This will include identifying places of historic importance, placing markers and recreating the historic routes. Youth groups and schools will also be encouraged to visit on educational tours.

A number of school based initiatives will be implemented, including a National School Debating Competition, National School Essay Competition, video conferences with schools in Africa and in the Caribbean.

There will also be a number of book launches. The Government of Guyana will publish, as part of the Guyana Classics, a book entitled, *Hearing Slaves Speak*, by Professor Trevor Bernard. This book is based on court testimonies of slaves in Berbice in the period of 1810 to 1820. Through these records we can get a glimpse of the brutality of slavery that occurred here in Guyana.

These are some of the major activities that the Government of Guyana in collaboration with the standing committee will be implementing in 2011. The estimated cost of the listed activities is approximately \$32.6 million. The Government has agreed to allocate this sum to ensure the smooth implementation of these activities in 2011.

I am extremely pleased that this programme emerged from the discussions and consultative process within and by the standing committee. I can, therefore, with optimism, say that next year, the UN designated year of People of African Descent, will be tremendous success.

All of these activities do not prevent me, or the Government, from inviting every Member of this National Assembly, individually, or as a party, to add his or her own activities to make the year really one of psychological, mental, spiritual and very practical significance.

Let us play our part in commemorating our past, acknowledging the present while creating our future.

REQUEST FOR LEAVE TO MOVE THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE ASSEMBLY ON DEFINITE MATTERS OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Mr. Ramjattan: Mr. Speaker, a couple of days ago the Alliance For Change came out with a press release in which it articulated the state of crisis that the sugar industry is in. A couple of days ago I notified the Clerk and yourself, through a letter, requesting, understanding Order 12, that I wish to notify you to propose to move that the adjournment of the National Assembly at this sitting, today's, to discuss this matter as an urgent matter of public importance which, that is, the present untenable deplorable situation of the sugar industry, as seen the Government-owned sugar company, GuySuCo, in a belligerent confrontation with its workers, threatening to decertify the sugar workers' union, GAWU, and refusing, in this season of goodwill, to offer those sugar workers the increases they sought.

The objective of this motion, on my behalf, is to call upon the Ministers responsible, namely the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Labour, to provide the adequate and credible explanations to the people of Guyana on the true state of affairs in the sugar industry and industrial relations therein, which is one of the important pillar on which the entire economy of Guyana rests – that is, the sugar industry – and which the livelihood of twenty thousand, or so, families depend. I have no doubt that the fact about the above matter, that is, the debate on the sugar industry, at this stage, qualifies for such deliberation in this August Assembly, because it does reach the qualification as a matter of surely definite urgent and national public importance. The situation, of course, having reached this far and having been rapidly deteriorating, right up to today's date, to the extent that there have been over two hundred strikes in this industry, there are big shortfalls in projected targets for 2010, and which are all in direct contradiction to the Strategic Plan, 2009-2013, that there is now a public admission that there are major designed flaws at the Skeldon Factory; that there are massive sums of taxpayers moneys been given to bail out the incompetence of GuySuCo's management, and Board included. There are tactical manoeuvres to strengthening derecognition of the sugar workers' union, GAWU. There are colossal adverse, financial and social impacts, which this state of affairs will have on all Guyana.

In addition – a couple more points and I will only take one or two minutes more – that the Strategic Plan, which is the point I have just raised, being approximately eighteen months old is obviously failing. We need a debate as to the attempt here, now, to commence revising same.

That is why it is also a matter of urgent public importance. We also want, at this August Assembly, to have this debate so that we will know the total financial commitment to sugar, in view of the President's statement in today's *Stabroek News* that the sugar industry is becoming, quote, "less important in the economy". Iana Seales writing at page 8 of the *Stabroek News*, quoting the President. Are we going to get, within two to three years, another \$8 billion that would be pumped into the industry or how much more, knowing very well that there is a \$7 billion deficit that the President made very public recently?

Since, also, there is the Strategic Plan there is going to be what is called a productive motivated team of workers in the industry, is it going to be the seven hundred and twenty-five per cent payout that he is going to do which is going to be taxed, by the way, and is going to come down back to only about \$411 million being taxed at a pace of thirty per cent and more. Is that going to increase worker productivity by having this productive workforce? Additionally, what is going to be the new regime of management, knowing now that the roles of GuySuCo are somewhat in disarray?

2.40 p.m.

The Board is now saying that management could have tactically threatened the workers to de-recognise and decertify the union as stated by my good friend, Mr. Ramotar, who seems to want some funding from me. The management which had issued calls for de-recognition stated, in combination with the Board, that they do not have moneys to pay. Then there is the President who has found \$720 million to pay. What is this new regime of management of the sugar industry? Who is the boss? Is it the company? Is it the President? Is it the Board? Is it the management?

Mr. Speaker: You need to wind down Hon. Member.

Mr. Ramjattan: I wish to conclude by saying that this is obviously a crisis. Mr. Speaker for those reasons, there is a crisis in the sugar industry. I want to make the point that because the Minister of Agriculture had to make a personal statement is also evidencing the fact that, indeed, it is matter of urgent public importance.

Finally, I want to make this statement. Notwithstanding that there will be one Director of the Board coming out publically today to state that there is no need for a national debate and that state sponsored presidential candidate must not influence you in one way or the other.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I tried to decipher what really you were saying because it is quite a lot but much of it is basically contained in the letter which you sent to me dated 21st December, 2010. I am trying to decipher from this letter what it is that you are asking me. I figure it is saying that you are urging me to suspend the business of the House to discuss the threat to decertify the sugar union and the refusal, in the season of goodwill, to offer sugar workers an increase in wages and salaries. You went on to say that this should be used as a basis to provide adequate and credible explanations of the true state of affairs in the sugar industry and you referred to several problems which have existed over quite a period.

Hon. Member, I gave a ruling on 15th March, 2004 and several other rulings, some written, in which I analysed the basis of an Adjournment Motion. I also remember writing an article in the newspaper after Mr. Corbin had made such an application. The matter must be a clear emergency. It must have arisen suddenly in a manner of an emergency and should not have arisen over a series of weeks. I do not think that on the basis the issue of the wages and de-recognition are matters which have arisen suddenly. Well, maybe for the de-recognition issue. However, threatening to de-recognise a union does not qualify as a matter of urgent public importance. I am not saying that it might not be definite. I am not saying that it might not be urgent for the union and the Corporation. I am not saying that it might not be a matter of public importance but one has to address this issue in combination with all of these factors. It is not like a hurricane, a fire disaster or things of that nature.

In addition to that, if I may quote Erskine May:

“The matter must not be a grievance that is continuing which does not qualify as a sufficient matter of urgent public importance.”

In the circumstances Hon. Member, I do not think it is necessary for me to go into a more detailed ruling. I have no hesitation in declining your request for the adjournment of the House.

Interruption

[Members of The Alliance For Change exited Chamber]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Presentation and First Reading

The following Bills were introduced and read the first time:

DEFENCE (AMENDMENT) BILL 2010 – Bill No. 23/ 2010

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Defence Act.” [The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs]

NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND EXTENSION INSTITUTE BILL – Bill No. 24/2010

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to promote greater efficiency in the crops and agricultural product industry, to provide enhanced services in Agricultural Research and Extension and Crop Protection and to establish the National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute, so as to make provision for effective administration and regulation of trade, commerce and export of crops and agricultural product and for matters related or incidental.” [Minister of Agriculture]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION

FINANCIAL PAPER NO. 3 OF 2010

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly approves of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 3 of 2010 – Schedule of Supplementary provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totaling \$1,918,999,270 for the period ended 31st December, 2010” [Minister of Finance]

Mr. Speaker: Let the Assembly resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider Financial Paper No. 3 of 2010.

Assembly in Committee of Supply

Minister of Finance [Dr. Ashni Singh]: Mr. Chairman in accordance with article 171 (2) of the Constitution, I signify that the Cabinet has recommended for the consideration by the National Assembly the motion for the approval of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 3 of 2010 and I now move the motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Item 1 04-041 Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Ministry Administration - \$93,106,340

Leader of the Opposition [Mr. Robert Corbin]: Mr. Chairman, while I raise this issue in the first item I would like to proffer that the Minister of Finance is showing great disrespect for this National Assembly by bringing these supplementary applications which make a mockery of our whole Budget arrangements of Estimates and Expenditure. The supplementary provisions sought for both Current and Capital Estimates, in many cases, far exceed the original application which came to this National Assembly at Budget time. The flimsy explanations given in the remarks column shows a blatant disrespect for this National Assembly and shows a lack of proper planning on the part of his Ministry.

Mr. Chairman: I cannot allow you to make a speech at this time.

Mr. Corbin: I am asking the Minister of Finance whether he does not feel that this is an insult. I am coming to the specific item One - UNASUR

[Dr. Singh took the floor]

Mr. Chairman: I will allow you to respond in your answer, Hon. Member.

I am sorry but this is not a question for the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Corbin: I am directing the question to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Dr. Singh: It was a general question and I was going to respond.

Mr. Corbin: I am still on my feet.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Corbin, allow Dr. Singh to respond to your statement because you made a charge.

Mr. Corbin: You said I could not ask a question. Could I now ask him a question directly?

Mr. Chairman: This question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Dr. Singh will not have the opportunity to answer that question.

Mr. Corbin: Do you want me to then complete the question, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: Complete the question.

Mr. Corbin: My question is whether the Minister of Finance does not feel that he owes this National Assembly a duty to present a proper explanation to us for the manner in which this supplementary provision is presented. Secondly, does he not believe that as a professional, this is reflective of bad and inefficient planning in the Ministry of Finance and his Budget Office?

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, permit me to say that I disagree roundly with the assertions made by the Leader of the Opposition and with the grossly erroneous conclusions that he has reached. In fact, the submission of these Financial Papers is something that is provided for in the Constitution of our country, in applicable legislation including the Fiscal, Management and Accountability Act and it is done in full conformity with the Constitution and with that Act.

Instead of endeavouring to cast a generalised paint brush like aspersion on these supplementary estimates, intended solely for the purpose of political grandstanding, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition should make bold enough to identify which item he is challenging.

Mr. Corbin: Mr. Chairman I would trust that the Hon. Minister of Finance would recognise that as Leader of the Opposition, I am not here for political grandstanding. I have asked a serious question which requires an answer and that is not grandstanding. Let him answer the question in a responsible and respectful manner.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members please do not allow our debate to degenerate. Mr. Corbin you made a point which is not relevant to the issue before us and I have allowed the Minister of Finance to respond. Hon. Minister, you have exceeded the time Mr. Corbin spent making the point so I would ask you to wind down.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman I would conclude simply by saying that instead of generalisms, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition should come out and say which item he opposes. Is it the item to provide dietary supply for the students in the Waramadong dormitory? Is it the item to provide accommodation for the Guyana Police Force (G.P.F.) and Guyana Defence Force (G.D.F.)?

Mr. Corbin: Item 1- The Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) Meeting was held in Guyana recently and I think that it is a very laudable institution, so my remarks have nothing to do with the institution. However, since Guyana has held the Rio Summit and other international fora, one would expect that a planning unit arranging for the first such South American Union conference here would have a proper plan. This is the point that I am making. In the Financial Paper the voted provision was \$41 million, but the supplementary provision is \$93 million. I am making the first reference to the generalisation that I am speaking about. Why was this expenditure not foreseen at the beginning of the planning? Secondly, what was the nature of this expenditure that caused the supplementary expenditure to be more than double the original allocation?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It would have been very difficult for the Ministry to have a final figure at the time of constructing the Budget because the total that is before us would have been dependent on the number of people who were coming and whether it was at the representation of Head of Government or Foreign Minister.

[Interruption by Members of the PNCR]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members of the Opposition you asked the question. If you do not want to hear the answer, the Minister can sit.

Mr. Corbin: I want to hear the answer.

Mr. Chairman: Control your Members, Hon. Member, Mr. Corbin. Your members are not even listening to me.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: For instance, if I could elaborate, on the eve of the Summit in one case the Ministry was informed that there would be an additional ninety persons coming for the meeting. All of this information could not have been garnered earlier. I am prepared to give the Hon. Member, Mr. Corbin a complete breakdown of how the Ministry came up with the Budget.

Mr. Corbin: I do understand the Minister's answers, but the Ministry was planning for a summit, which by its mere name suggests that it was expecting the Heads of State of each country in South America which has a fixed number of countries. If the Ministry is planning for a summit, its budget would have expenditure for the Head of every country and if they do not turn up, then the Ministry saves.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: If a Head of State is coming, it would have been a large number of people and in the case of South America; even more security. At the level of representation of a Foreign Affairs Minister, there would only be about four or five persons. Rather than answer your question, "How do you know that all of these people are going to be here?" when we first presented the Budget, we felt that this was the better way to do it.

Question put, and agreed to.

Item 2 16-161 Ministry of Amerindian Affairs – Amerindian Development - \$1,500,000

Mr. Corbin: Since the Hon. Minister of Finance asked for examples, I want to point to another example under this heading. In account number 6294, the original allocation is \$5,436,000. We have a supplementary estimate that is now \$8 million. In the remarks column it states:-

"To address the challenging situation of the threat to food security in the North and South Pakaraimas Villages and other neighbouring Amerindian Communities affected by prolonged rainfall"

One may try to switch this politically and say that because I am questioning this, I am questioning allocations to the Indigenous People but that is not the issue. The Minister of Agriculture boasts about the country's new Doppler Radar Station and all of the weather predictions. Should the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs as a routine, because this is not the first time this is happening, not have planned for this?

Mrs. Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member may be correct in terms of the Ministry of Agriculture having the equipment to project and forecast the weather. Last year no one would have thought that we would have had such a change in weather pattern even with the new Doppler Station that the country has. Therefore, the provision is to address the effects of the La Nina. Our Government, as it has done in the past, addresses the impact of such challenging situations to its people and even to others in the Caribbean when they do have disasters.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, do I have your permission to supplement the answer?

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Dr. Singh: I would simply like to say that I am shocked that the Leader of the Opposition would question the merit of an emergency allocation to meet a disaster situation in the Hinterland of our country.

Mr. Corbin: Cde. Chairman, here we have political grandstanding in this House and I would not allow the Hon. Member to get away with it like I did with the Hon. Member, Mr. Robert Persaud, sometime ago. I am saying that with the nature of our country where one knows certain things will happen, with all of the projections, the Minister of Amerindian Affairs should have had prior knowledge and should have been prepared in advance. I am speaking about the Ministry's budgetary planning; I am not questioning how much. Do not try to make political mileage with me. I have been in this House for thirty odd years and I would not allow the Hon. Member to make a fool of me here!

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman with respect to the supplementary provisions now being sought to meet the discharge of patients to the Amerindian locations, could the Hon. Minister say if this became necessary because there was, probably, more sickness or the lack of or non-availability of management of sickness in the Amerindian Communities?

Mrs. Sukhai: It has nothing to do with the mismanagement of sickness in the Amerindian Communities. It just means that because of our Government's support for returning Amerindians patients, we needed additional money to help them get back home.

Dr. Norton: I will accept the Minister's answer, despite the fact that this is a provision that is asked for every year. That was my reason for asking if there was more sickness or if there was

not proper management. Rather than saying, “To address the challenging situation of the threat to food security in the North and South Pakaraimas Villages,” could the Hon. Minister name these villages for the Hon. House?

Mrs. Sukhai: Region 8 – North Pakaraimas: Cheong Mouth, Paramakatoi, Bamboo Creek, Mountain Foot, Tusenen, Taruka, Monkey Mountain, Karasparu, Itabac, Kanapang, Kamana, Kuruabaru, Waipa and Kopinang. In the South Pakaraimas: Karasabai, Roukamoota, Tiger Pond, Kowsheda, Tipiru, Yurong Paru and Paipang. In Region 9, support was provided to Annai, Yakarinta, Aranaputa and Fairview. In Region 7 support was provided to Kamarang and Warwata.

Dr. Norton: Could the Hon. Minister say why no mention was made of the villages in Regions 1 and 2 which would have challenging situations regarding the threat to food security?

Mrs. Sukhai: Government’s intervention at that point in time was directed to the emergency crisis caused by the La Niña in these areas. Notwithstanding the intervention that was provided by the Ministry of Agriculture to all of the Regions included those on the Coastlands, the rural areas and Hinterland communities across Guyana.

Dr. Norton: Line item 6321- since the National Toshias Council is now in existence for some time now, could the Hon. Minister say why is it that the Ministry is now seeking double the original provision sought as a supplementary for the operation of the Council?

Mrs. Sukhai: The additional provision was needed to purchase furniture for the operationalisation of the secretariat.

3.10 p.m.

Mr. Corbin: Supplementary question: I would not ask again if was not foreseen, if you are interested in having the National Toshias Council function effectively, that you would have had an ineffective plan at the time that you presented your budget that would cause you to come back for three times the amount for something that you know is functioning this year.

I will go to the question under item 6294. The Hon. Minister gave a list of the villages in which emergency assistance was required. Could the Hon. Minister advise this Parliament whether

there is: (a) an available list of the nature and quantity of supplies to these villages, or (b) if you can enlighten us as to how you manage this operation? In other words, what kind of relief would you render? Is it just food? In other words, I would like to get some idea of this relief and what really took place and more importantly, if you have a list of it, so that we could know how this \$8 million was spent.

Mrs. Sukhai: Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Amerindian's intervention in support of addressing the impacts of La Nina mainly dealt with the issue of food supply which was required and requested as priority support from the villages by themselves. Each village received a quantity of rice, bean, oil, sugar, farine, milk and corn meal, particularly for the children, flour and nutritional supplements.

Question put, and agreed to.

Item 2 16-161 Ministry of Amerindian Affairs – Amerindian Development - \$1,500,000

Motion carried

Agency/Programme Code No. 21-211 Ministry of Agriculture – Ministry Administration - \$300,000,000

Mr. M. Williams: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister of Agriculture tell the National Assembly whether this requested sum of \$300 million has already been expended and, if it has not been expended, could he explain the disparity in the spending? By that I mean \$989 million in twelve years versus \$300 million in the five remaining days in the year.

Mr. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, I wish to point out that if the Hon. Member looks very carefully he will see that these are resources that are being made from the Contingency Fund which suggests that these are resources which have been and are being utilized to fund additional works within the Drainage and Irrigation sector.

Mr. M. Williams: Then could the Hon. Minister tell the National Assembly how soon he is prepared to present a report with respect to the projects undertaken for this \$300 million now requested so that the National Assembly could be brought up-to-date with the nature of these and the specific interventions made in this regard?

Mr. Persaud: I will proceed to provide this to the National Assembly immediately; \$8.4 million being spent in terms of rehabilitation of canals in the 52-74 area, \$9.2 million in the Black Bush Polder area, \$5.9 million in Crabwood Creek, \$13 million in the Cane Grove area, \$6.7 million in the Blankenburg-Den Amstel area, \$5 million in Canals Polder, \$10 million in the Vergenoegen-Naamryck area, \$6.6 million within the Golden Grove-Victoria area, \$5 million within the Vreed-en-Hoop-La Jalousie, another \$21 million on the East Coast and various areas along the East Coast – the critical points which are vulnerable to flooding – and I will skip over some. We have also done some at Abary, Perth, Baiabu, the Jaisingh Canal and Industry Canal, close to \$20 million; the procurements of fuel and lubricants for our excavators – we have an enlarged fleet of excavators – \$54 million, \$12 million in terms of the operation of the pumps that we have across the country – close to 75 pumps across the country – and repairs of structures, sluices and access within Region 5 at another \$12 million and we have also provided the M.M.A./A.D.A. authority with close to \$50 million in assisting that region in preparing for the end-of-year rainy season.

Mr. Corbin: A supplementary question, Sir. I am grateful to the Hon. Minister for giving us these details. I think it is very important that we be so provided with these details. However, having regard to his own presentation to the Parliament, at Budget time and at other occasions, about the tremendous works for which the Ministry of Agriculture was doing in advance to prepare for the rainy season, from his own lips, and I can go back to the Hansard on all the works being done on the East Coast, whether this does not reflect sloppy planning on his part. All of the projects that you have listed are in the areas where flooding was going on and according to the Minister's Report to this Parliament, he was well prepared to deal with the flooding in these areas, so I would like to ask him seriously: Was it that your information was inaccurate in terms of what was sent to you as your projection? Where was the flaw really? It could not have been the rainfall because you said that you were prepared for it. Is it that your officials sent in incorrect information because all the sites which you have named are sites which were vulnerable, if we were to believe what you told us, which you were already prepared to deal with? Why do you need \$300 million now to deal with what you told us you were prepared to deal with?

Mr. Persaud: The Hon. Leader of the Opposition asked, “Where is the flaw?” The flaw is in his analysis of the reality. We have always maintained that our drainage system, as it stands today, not withstanding the work that we are doing, cannot fully prevent and, as it were, remove flooding. There will be instances of flash flooding and what we are seeking to do with the resources that we have is to enlarge and enhance our capacity. A lot of these projects that we are doing are a part of maintenance. If the Hon. Member would have listened to my presentation to the public a month and a half ago in terms of preparation for the La Nina, I made it absolutely clear that many steps will be taken to ensure that we minimize occurrences of flooding. However, there are some communities, the topography of our coast and all scientific work done, engineering and otherwise concluded that we cannot stop flooding in Guyana.

Mr. Corbin: We know that.

Mr. Persaud: I am glad that you recognise that fact. In fact, we are trying to minimize and better prepare communities to deal with this eventuality.

Mr. Scott: May I ask the Minister whether Region 2, Lower Pomeroon, was ever considered in your allocations to prevent the flooding and places like Hackney Canal?

Mr. Persaud: Within our earlier budgeted amount we had provided resources for both the upper and lower Pomeroon areas, especially for the Hackney Canal we have a contract that has been awarded there where we will be spending close to \$15 million on rehabilitation. I must say that we made an attempt where we deployed one of our excavators to the Hackney Canal, but the ground condition saw that excavator slipping into that canal. We lost that excavator which is currently at GENEQUIP where the engine is being changed. An effort was made. Those of us who are familiar with that area would know that it is very difficult to operate given the ground condition, but we did vote and there is a contract out whereby we will now be using private excavators to undertake those works.

In addition to that, we have two dedicated excavators which are working both the Upper and Lower Pomeroon to help in that regard; not only in terms of drainage, but to lift the damns as a result of the spring tides that we had about 12 weeks ago, we saw that there were a lot of breaches and overtopping taking place and did some work in that area. We will also be collaborating with the River Defence Unit in looking at how we can make further structural

interventions in making those communities less vulnerable, but those are very vulnerable communities.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, I wonder whether the Minister can inform this House that since in 2007 for this same line-item they sought to have \$292 million and then in 2008 \$300 million and in 2009 \$190. In 2010 for this same line-item we are asking for \$300 million. If it is not about prudent planning then, since the Minister had been insinuating that it is not just flooding but that this is about flash flooding and all the scientific variation in terms of our weather pattern, is it not prudent then to have within his budget a line-item that gives an amount of money specifically to deal with these “emergencies” that he cannot foresee – the flash flooding and all of these things? Is it not prudent, instead of coming here year after year asking for supplementary provision for the very line-item? Thank you.

Mr. Persaud: Having noted the Hon. Member’s suggestions, as exists in our laws, and we are a very lawful Government, this is the best mechanism through which we can attract the necessary resources to undertake these types of work.

Mr. B. Williams: Mr. Chairman for line-item 6321, could the Hon. Minister of Agriculture indicate whether Essequibo Coast was included in this amount and whether or not he is aware that the last rice crop, the entire crop, had failed because of flooding?

Mr. Persaud: I must say that the Hon. Member is completely removed from reality. This year we will record our highest production. This year we have already recorded our highest export of 307,000 tons. Where did the rice come from? It did not come from the Hon. Member’s back yard. It came from the farmers from Region 2, Region 3, Region 4, Region 5 and Region 6. In fact, earlier this year we did not have the problem of flooding, just to recall, earlier this year we had El Nino whereby the problem was drought not flood.

Mr. B. Williams: The Hon. Member has not answered my question. Flooding occurred in relation to the last crop on the Essequibo Coast where the water could not be taken off because of the absence of pumps there. I am asking you whether this expenditure includes relieving the situation on the Essequibo Coast in relation to the last crop for which I was present a couple of weeks ago and water was still on the rice land where the people had just thrown the rice. The water could not be taken off because the farmer said that the Government had removed all the

pumps that had been installed by the P.N.C. Government and sold them. You have to answer that.

Mr. Persaud: There are even Members on the Opposition side who are embarrassed by what Mr. Basil Williams had just said because it is not consistent with the reality. When you broadcast paddy, you require water to be in the fields. If you go into the fields you will find water there. Let me make it absolutely clear that the provisions within our budget and what is being sought for is to support interventions across the country.

The second point I want to make clear is that it was this Government that reactivated pumps that were neglected in the 1980s. I do not want to go and harp on the past. I can start from the pump at Anna Regina. I can tell you what happened at Anna Regina. I can go further to tell you what happened at Lima where pumps in the 1980s were removed. It was not only there. I can tell you what happened at Trafalgar where this Government brought back. I can tell you what happened at Victoria and at Golden Grove and wherever else pumps were deactivated. Right at Greenfield we are putting in a pump where the pumps were removed in the 1980s.

Mr. Chairman, please forgive me but the Hon. Member is totally removed from the reality.

Mr. B. Williams: I think this is gross disrespect from this House. I think the Hon. Member has no idea about what is going on in this country. He has not answered the question about the plight of the Essequibo rice farmers, where three weeks ago, after having thrown the rice, floods came and prolonged and kept the water on the land because of the absence of pumps to remove the water from the land, thereby imperiling the rice crop. Has he dealt with the situation on the Essequibo Coast where the farmers have complained to me? I have seen the flood with my own eyes.

Mr. Chairman: All this excitement is very nice for the season, but we must move on. I allowed it because I think this will get many Members appropriately thirsty for what is to follow, but we must move on at some time.

Mr. Corbin: What item are we on, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: We are still on the same item. This is 21-211. It does not have an item number. It skipped there. I think the "3" there should have been up with that item.

Mr. Corbin: Are you dealing with Item 3, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: No. I have not reach 3 as yet. It is the one immediately before 3. It does not have a number. I think it is meant to be 3, but they did not put a number.

Mr. Corbin: I just had a question mark there as to whether this has anything to do with the Hope Canal and the tragedy which appears to be occurring there – this allocation.

Mr. Persaud: This does not cover activities which are currently ongoing at the Hope Canal Project.

Question put, and agreed to.

Agency/Programme Code No. 21-211 Ministry of Agriculture – Ministry Administration -
\$300,000,000

Motion carried

Item No. 3 Agency/Programme Code No. 21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Crops and Livestock Support Services - \$17,070,000

Mr. M. Williams: Mr. Chairman, thru you to the Hon. Minister of Agriculture, I am sure that you recall that when the Ministry set up a special research unit called the Sigatoka Unit. The officer put in charge of that unit set up a company for himself and used his company...

Mr. Chairman: Hold on, Hon. Member. I will not allow allegations to be made against anybody.

Mr. M. Williams: Very well, Sir. Then could the Minister say whether this sum of \$17 million requested is so done for the correction of a wrongdoing with respect to spending by the Ministry's Crops and Livestock Support Services Unit?

Mr. Persaud: I am a bit confused by the Hon. Member's question because the explanation given to this request is to assist farmers in Regions 8 and 9 affected by the prolonged rainfall. This allocation is in support and also to augment the efforts being made by the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs. I am not sure what it has to do with wrongdoing. I am not sure whether it is wrong to help hinterland and Amerindian communities. Is that the wrongdoing being committed?

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Member was referring to some financial irregularity of some sort and I stopped him and he rephrased the question to say whether this was as a result of a wrongdoing to avoid any particular allegation.

Mr. Corbin: Thank you. I am grateful for the answer given by the Minister except that he has not read the total note and that is what confused me – National Agricultural Research Institute (N.A.R.I): \$9.12 million. I must assume that, although this is assistance to farmers in Regions 8 and 9, \$9.1 million probably has gone to NARI to do research. I do not know. I would like some elaboration. The next one goes to Guyana Marketing Corporation (G.M.C.), \$7.95. I would also like some elaboration there because as far as I know G.M.C. purchases its crops, but this is to assist farmers affected by prolonged rainfall. As such, one assumes that perhaps, there was no crop to sell. I am a little confused. Why would G.M.C. get \$7.9 million to purchase commodities at a time when, according to the note... I am a little confused. I really would like some explanation.

Mr. Persaud: I wish to thank Mr. Corbin for that question because it is very relevant. The reasons why those two entities have been identified for the resources is that they are the implementing agencies that would have been supporting the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs in providing that emergency support.

Why NARI? NARI is in charge of crop development support, not only research. When we come to the NARI Bill next week we will see the enlarged focus and the enlarged role that NARI has been taking on as part of the restructuring that has been happening in the sector.

Why G.M.C.? G.M.C. is the agency that has been looking at procuring planting material. It is also looking at procuring supplies, inputs and so forth to support what we have been having, which is the wider Grow More Food Campaign, but we have utilized this capacity to allow for emergency intervention. Hence, the reference to these two entities and why it is that the resources are being channeled through them to assist the hinterland communities.

As a correction, Mr. Corbin, G.M.C. is no longer, since this Government came into office, involved in the procurement of crops; rather, it is there as a market support entity and also as the key agency that is taking the lead on the Grow More Food Campaign.

Mr. Corbin: I must say that I am a little more confused, Sir. Maybe the fault lies in me again, but the note says to assist farmers affected by prolonged rainfall. Would the Minister have, as he normally does, a list, as he read of these various projects, of how G.M.C. utilizes money? I am very confused. They bought planting material and because there is heavy rainfall one cannot plant anything. I am a little confused about this thing, seriously. As you usually are very prepared, do you have a list so that I can really be enlightened?

Mr. Persaud: \$1.8 million would have been utilized for the purchasing of spray cans, \$1.1 for Fastac – that is to help with acushi ants control – because of the variance of the weather, 1,500 pounds of corn seed were purchased at \$1.5 million, a large quantity of cassava sticks amounting to \$1 million which is to help farmers to go back after they would have had difficulties resulting from the weather. We purchased \$1 million worth of mist blowers, \$500,000 worth of insecticidal powder and 300,000 pounds of yams. We also purchased minca which was worth \$300,000. We purchased \$150,000 in bumper pumps. We purchased a large quantity of rat baits and Region 8 had the problem there with the change of the weather and the rats were eating the crops. We purchased Swing fog machines close to \$3 billion. We have also had to purchase 10,000 pounds of peanuts; even importing these peanuts from Atlanta, Georgia, especially assisting the farmers in the Hinterland Regions – close to \$3 million. We have also helped the rice farming cultivations too in those Regions because several of those communities are engaged in rice cultivation for food consumption and we spent close to another \$500,000.

That, Mr. Chairman for Mr. Corbin, is a breakdown of the expenditure.

Question put, and agreed to.

Item No. 3 Agency/Programme Code No. 21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Crops and Livestock Support Services - \$17,070,000

Motion carried

Item No. 4 Agency/Programme Code No. 46-461 Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation – Public Hospital – \$72,898,000

Mr. Corbin: In Item 4 I noticed that there was need for \$72 million for the increased patient demand for drugs – hypertension, diabetes. Is the Minister in a position to tell us whether there

has been a dramatic increase in these diseases or is it that there is a more effective means of finding out that people have these diseases? What is it telling us? You obviously projected on the basis of your information. Is it that we have an upsurge in these illnesses or is it that we did not detect them before?

Dr. Ramsammy: Mr. Chairman, the diagnostic capacity of this sector has indeed improved, but that is not the reason for asking for more money. This additional amount of money is to ensure that adequate supplies are within the system to take us through the next budget period and make sure that up to the end of March we have enough medicine.

Mr. Corbin: In other words, I am to assume that this is the same trend that you have had before.

Dr. Ramsammy: The number of patients that we are dealing with across the country with diabetes, hypertension, cancer and so on have indeed been increasing in number because we are diagnosing them earlier, but those have been anticipated. We are always in a position, with the budget that we have to not have enough medicine to take us through to the next contract. If you look at all of the years you will see the supplementary funds. This supplementary is not an unusual one.

Mr. Corbin: I know it is not an unusual one. That is why I am wondering about the point I made earlier when I was accused of grandstanding, whether this is a foreseen medical necessity or whether it should not now form part of your routine budgetary arrangement. You know at the end of your budget that if you run the 12 months, you are likely to be out of drugs within the first three months. In terms of your budgetary cycle, it would seem to me, unless the Ministry of Finance vetoed what you originally requested – that is another issue – one would assume that if you are budgeting for that was normal then the proper thing to do would be to put it in the routine budget since it happens every year. This is the point I am making.

Dr. Ramsammy: I think that Mr. Corbin has been in Government and understands that we all make requests to the Ministry of Finance and all the Ministries and the Ministry of Finance has to deal with the anticipated revenues and I could say to everyone that the Ministry of Health, as I am sure every other Ministry, does not get all of what we request from the Ministry of Finance. I do not think that that is a secret. The Ministry of Finance will create its budget based on its own projected revenue and I could tell you that we never get all of the amounts of money that we ask

for medicine, though in each year we are getting more and therefore satisfying more of our needs.

At this time we need to ensure that there is enough medicine in the system that would allow the new budget to come in place and allow us to do our procurement processes. It is not that we did not anticipate. It is that, based on the revenues projected by the Ministry of Finance that we do not always get all of the money that we request.

3.40 p.m.

Item 4 - Agency 46-461- Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation – Public Hospital - \$72,898,000 stand part of the Schedule, put and agreed to.

Item 5 - 48-483 Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security – Labour Administration – 30,850,000

Mr. Corbin: At the risk of being again accused of...

Mr. Chairman: You are very sensitive Mr Corbin. It is politics.

Mr. Corbin: No, no. A different Minister now... accused of being discriminatory in my remarks, I wonder whether the Minister of Labour, would tell us whether he thought of such an initiative for the 51 workers who were dismissed by RUSAL? This matter has been with his Ministry for more than a year and has not yet been resolved. I wonder whether he thought of a similar initiative to bring some relief to them over this long period that his own Ministry (I don't want to use the word procrastinate)... but the Minister is aware of my views since I had a meeting with him and he promised to revisit this matter. So, I am wondering if there is any money left over or, since a supplementary paper is coming again next week, whether he will impress upon the Minister of Finance to put in a supplementary provision for relief to the bauxite workers who were dismissed, and are still awaiting adjudication by the Ministry of Labour. I wonder whether it would not be a reasonable and similar expenditure.

Mr. Nadir: Mr. Chairman, there are two different issues here. The workers who were dismissed last year, as a result of differences, between the Company and the Union, were not retrenched due to an accident. The accident at BARAMA was almost bordering on an issue of urgent national business. But in the case of RUSAL, it was an industrial dispute. Unlike what has been made out by the statement by the Leader of the Opposition, we have remained engaged with the RUSAL workers.

The problem we are having here is the Union being hesitant, not wanting the workers to come in. So far only four of those workers have come to the Ministry to file a case for wrongful dismissal - four of them only. And we are dealing condignly with those four cases. So this is not a case

where the RUSAL issue was a result of an accident that put in jeopardy the livelihoods of 281 workers as in this case. RUSAL is a different matter.

RUSAL also deals with the issue of over 120 of these workers signing a petition to the Trade Union Recognition and Certification Board asking for de-recognition of the Union. It is not an issue of the Company calling for the de-recognition it is the 120-odd workers, writing to an independent body that comprises three members from the labour movement, three members from the employers, and one chairman who was selected after the Minister consulted with both the employers and the union representatives. So that matter resides somewhere else.

It was only in September and October I had cause to call in both the Union and the Company on this matter. And we made it very, very clear to the Company that it cannot derecognise the Union, and that they have to deal with the recognised Union which is the Guyana Bauxite and General Workers Union. The Government of Guyana and the Ministry of Labour recognises that Union as the certified bargaining agent for the workers in that particular bargaining unit. So it is a bit different. Whether there are remainders remaining it is very tight.

Let me give you an example of how we have come up with this \$30.8 million. There are 281 workers at BARAMA who have been retrenched. Directly in the factory at the plant there are about 274; stores and admin staff related to that is another seven, so there are 281 workers. Each one will get an education grant of \$25,000 a month for three months. That will account for \$21,075,000. In anticipation that these workers have to travel to the training sites we have also provided a travelling grant of \$5,000 a month to 281 persons amounting to \$4,215,000. Mr. Chairman that will give you \$25,290,000; and \$5,500,000 is towards paying the training institutions. *(Interruption)* And if the Critchlow Labour College had the facility we would have also considered them. This is how much this Government cares for the workers of this country, all of the workers, be they bauxite workers, sugar workers, BARAMA workers or the teachers or nurses or joint services which got an extra month's pay in addition to the 5 percent.

So this is very similar to a package we offered two years ago to the bauxite workers in Linden when BOSAI met troubles with respect to marketing and had to close the plant for three months. We offered this similar caring package to them. So the budget is very, very tight. As you see we only have \$5.5 million dollars and the average training cost for one person is between \$15,000 and \$20,000. We tried to accommodate most of them in institutions that are closely affiliated with the Government. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

Mr. ?Williams: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister of Labour say; when is the next meeting would be scheduled between the bauxite Union and BCGI? When has he scheduled that for?

Mr. Nadir: Mr. Chairman, I could give another speech but I don't see the relevance to the budget item. But clearly I know that the Trade Union Recognition and Certification Board are meeting, and the Ministry of Labour is also engaged with both, the Union and the Company.

Mr. Williams: Supplementary, could the Hon. Minister say Mr. Chairman, when he expects the BARAMA Company to start production again?

Mr. Nadir: Mr. Chairman, we deal with the labour issues but the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Commerce have been dealing with respect to forestry products and manufacturing. But the estimates vary from five months, for limited start up, to as much as twelve months.

Mr. Williams: Supplementary, Mr. Chairman. Is the Hon. Minister saying that after three months he will be 'loosing these Barama workers wild'?

Mr. Nadir: In fact, Mr Chairman, we will not be losing them. The first week of the accident at 7 o'clock in the morning the Minister, representing the Government, met with the Company and all of the workers. What we promised them is not only this package but more particularly to find jobs for them, to find jobs for them immediately. And already more than 80 of them have been placed in permanent jobs. *(Interruption)* Mr. Chairman, we had to offer to everyone the same package. And if a worker choose to exercise his right to take up the package we were obligated to ensure the worker got the package. At the same time we said to them, and the Minister of Agriculture wrote to all of his colleagues, including GuySuCo and BOSAI, and we sent the list of all the skills that were available. Through the Central Recruitment and Manpower Agency we also registered them and started to look for work for them. In addition to the education and travelling stipend and the training we provided, this caring Government also provided another service, that is, to find permanent employment for them. And not only find employment, but to also channel them to the WOW financing for those single parents, women, who wanted to use that facility. We channelled many of those applications to them. This is the multifaceted approach we have at ensuring that we can deal with all of those workers who lost their jobs because of the BARAMA accident. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, a follow-up question to the Minister. I heard the Minister say that immediately they put 80 workers from the BARAMA Company to work. Does that mean that the 80 workers were not included in the 281 workers he stated this money is for?

Mr. Nadir: Mr. Chairman, I trust we don't have to have a system of instant replay implemented in the National Assembly. I never said immediately. I said as of now. I can't know if the English language says immediately means as of now. *(Interruption)* As of now yes, but as of then was almost two months ago, and we never said so Mr. Chairman. And even if that was the case, the package was offered to everyone. If a worker has a job and wanted to learn IT the worker is entitled to the package. The package was for every single worker; we didn't make a distinction.

You know the other thing that would have happened, the moment we try to make a distinction and start looking at means test, as with the old age pensioners, we would hear about discrimination. We would hear we did not like this group or that group. And of these workers at BARAMA over 88 of them were from Linden. There were workers travelling from as far as

Tuschen, and travelling from as far as West Coast Berbice. So, we offered the package to everyone, and those who in the ensuring period found a job... and most of them did not find jobs in their skilled area, but they took a job in another area because they had pride in themselves, because they wanted to earn something. If I was an industrial mechanic and I got a job as a security I had the pride to work and not to wait on a handout. So many of them did not get the \$120,000 job they had but some got jobs cleaning fish on the East Bank. Should we stop them because they got a job? We said no. This was an educational grant, it was not salary subsistence, and they worked for it by attending classes. That is the difference Mr. Chairman.

Item 5 - Agency 48-483- Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security – Labour Administration – 30,850,000 stand part of the Schedule, put and agreed to.

Item 6 - Agency 51-512 - Ministry of Home Affairs – Guyana Police Force - \$29,996,953

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister indicate to us how much of the \$29.9 million how much is associated with the increased fuel prices? And it would then follow how much for the intensification of the mobile patrols in the city?

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, I do not have that breakdown. (*Mrs Backer: How you mean you do not have that?*) I am saying we do not have that breakdown. If you want we can supply it at a later date but we do not have it. (*Mrs. Backer: Yes!*)

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, could I ask the Hon. Presidential Candidate, the Hon Member, when he is likely to get it? When he puts aside his campaign when could he provide it to the National Assembly?

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, I don't understand what the Hon. Member is saying. It would be provided early in the new year of 2011.

Mr. Corbin: I had not intended to ask my good friend in this Christmas season any questions but under Item 6, Chart of Account 6261, I see an item for \$24 million which does not fall in the normal pattern I have been challenging all along. The legend under remarks states that this \$24 million is really “to meet additional expenses incurred during the ICC 20/20 World Cup competition for the feeding of the ranks inline”. Would the Minister be able to say whether all the outstanding moneys due to the security ranks who worked for both ICC and the other events which were held in Guyana have been paid? Secondly, whether he is in a position to advise us if these costs are computed by the Ministry of Finance? I know it is a tough order to ask you, but we need to know whether they are sent so that the Ministry of Finance can present us a report of the true costs of these events when they are being held. We asked the same type of questions with the World Cup and Carifesta because we can't really know what it costs the nation.

What I am asking first is whether this pays off all the moneys, we owe ranks. And I am happy that they are paid. Secondly, whether these figures are being sent so we can really get a feel... because there may be outstanding moneys elsewhere like the artists for Carifesta who claim they haven't been paid and things like that... so we can know the real cost.

Mr. Rohee: With reference to the ICC Cricket World Cup Mr. Chairman, the moneys that were due to those who provided services were disbursed, people have been paid off. I am not aware of any money being owed to any other security service, private or the regular police force.

In respect of the other dimension of the question you posed, that is a matter for the Ministry of Finance, but we work very closely with them.

Mrs. Riehl: I wish to ask a question of the Hon. Minister. Could he say how many ranks were inline and for how long, in order to use \$24 million? How long and how many?

Mr. Rohee: I am not in a position to say how many ranks were inline but I know enough were in-line to keep the country safe and secure. *(Mrs. Riehl: They had to be in-line to keep the country safe and secure? I thought all the time that is what they do.)*

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, if we may go back to Chart of Account 6231, Item 6 still, the increased fuel prices and the mobile patrol cost that is in the legend, the \$29.9 million that the Minister will tell me about early in the new-year. Could the Hon. Member say to this Hon. House what increased fuel prices were his Ministry met with during 2010? What was the increase in fuel prices in 2010 that lead to this supplementary figure?

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, the increase was from \$167.50 to \$182.00 per litre.

Mrs. Backer: From \$167 to \$182. Could the Hon. Minister say - seeing he has some answers which, is a good change - of these \$273,366,000 which was voted for in the main budget whether intensified patrols in December were catered for in this \$273,366,000?

Mr. Rohee: I am not in a position to say so.

Mrs. Backer: Just a supplementary question. Minister, would you be gracious enough to indicate to this Assembly whether at Christmas there is usually intensified patrol presence in Georgetown.

Mr. Rohee: I think the evidence is there for all to see.

Mrs. Backer: Sir, I am respectfully asking if the Minister could be persuaded to give an answer. I am asking if it is customary that during the Christmas season there is an intensification of mobile patrols within the city. That is the question, Sir.

Mr. Rohee: The answer is yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mrs. Backer: Then Sir, does it not follow that in your main budget of \$273,366,000 there would have been a figure there for intensification of the mobile patrol at this time of the year? If it was there, as it happens every year, the question is why are you coming for it now as a supplementary?

Mr. Chairman: It could have been the intensification for UNASUR Hon Member. There were police ranks all over the place during the UNASUR Conference.

Mrs. Backer: Oh, it was for UNASUR.

Mr. Chairman: I am not answering the question. I am just making an observation.

Mrs. Backer: You are giving him an answer, Sir; a sensible answer.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for that but there were some specific activities held during this period. We had Cricket World Cup, we also had... (*Mrs. Backer: Well then say that.*) May I be allowed to answer your question?

Mrs. Backer: No.

Mr. Rohee: Well, if that is the case then I would not.

Item 6, Agency 51-512 Ministry of Home Affairs – Guyana Police Force - \$29,996,953 stand part of the Schedule, put and agreed to.

Item 7 – Agency 51-515 – Ministry of Home Affairs – Guyana Fire Service - \$5,141,240

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to tell us a little more because we see here a higher incidence of, brush or bush fires. Could he indicate to us which area suffered the most as a result of this higher incidence?

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, this is mainly on the coastland of Region 4, and there were some incidences on the West Coast of Berbice, but basically Region 4.

Item 7 – Agency 51-515 – Ministry of Home Affairs – Guyana Fire Service - \$5,141,240 stand part of the Schedule, put and agreed to.

Item 8 – Agency 53-531 – Guyana Defence Force – Defence Headquarters - \$70,000,000

Item 8 – Agency 53-531 – Guyana Defence Force – Defence Headquarters - \$70,000,000 stand part of the Schedule, put and agreed to.

Item 9 – Agency 76-762 – Region 6, East Berbice/Corentyne – Agriculture - \$6,518,832

Mr. M. Williams: Could the Hon. Minister say whether it is usual for there to be an increase in the usage of water pumps and other similar equipment during a drought.

Mr. Chairman: Sorry, what is the question? I didn't hear the question.

Mr. Robert Persaud: Mr. Chairman, during the El Nino, which is drought-like condition, there is a situation where there is a shortage of water flowing into the irrigation canals, and as a result there has to be a bit more pumping to get the levels up. In the normal situation it is dependent on gravity or normal flow, but once there is a dry season much more is required. The same happened in Region 3. And I am quite sure the Hon. Member would be familiar with that, in terms of how to manage water. Pumps are utilised to get excess water out as Mr. Williams was pointing to. or pumps are utilised to get water in when there is shortage of water as a result of droughts. *(Interruption)* It is just a matter of wise pumping.

Item 9 – Agency 76-762 – Region 6, East Berbice/Corentyne – Agriculture - \$6,518,832 stand part of the Schedule, put and agreed to.

Item 10 – Agency 77-773 – Region 7 Cuyuni/Mazaruni – Education Delivery - \$7,000,000

Item 10 – Agency 77-773 – Region 7, Cuyuni/Mazaruni – Education Delivery - \$7,000,000 stand part of the Schedule, put and carried.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members we have now reached the time of 4 o'clock. Do you wish to continue until a conclusion or do you wish to take the suspension.

(Members unanimously agreed to continue.)

On a motion by the Hon. Prime Minister Standing Order 10(2) was suspended to enable the sitting to continue without being suspended at 4.p.m.

Capital Estimates

Item 1 - Agency 01-011 – Office of the President – Head Office – \$224,640,000; \$26,356,500

Mr. Corbin: Mr. Chairman herein lays another curious allocation. Having been regaled, not only in the Budget speech, about the moneys that would be spent on this ICT equipment and the new centre, and the new building to be put up in the Castellani House compound, we were told that it required \$14 million in 2010, but here we are in the month of December being asked to approve, not half, not double - \$28 million, but \$224 million for something that came to us in the budget to spend \$14 million. I wonder whether we can have an explanation as to whether this was unforeseen expenses, because this is equipment. I suspect that if you have to purchase equipment it has to be ordered, there has to be invoices, tenders and all such. And it does smack of either a deliberate attempt to confuse this National Assembly so we don't know what is happening in intelligence. So this equipment just comes in, and it is being brought as an 'after-shot' so we could not ask questions in the Budget debate. We are told that \$224 million dollars is spent. Could we get some explanation when it was determined that they needed \$224 million, in

addition to the original request to this National Assembly for \$14 million, when we could have queried what was happening.

Ms. Webster: Mr. Chairman, I listened to the Hon. Member and the comments he made. However, I noted that the Hon. Member said when we passed the national Budget we said we required \$14 million. What is happening here is an expansion of this particular programme, and the narrative says that Government is planning to procure and install CCT surveillance systems. And I am sure in the interest of national security and our own security in the country one would deem that this is important. Sir, let me say that what we are doing here is installing CCT systems around the city and the main highways. All over the world this is done. This is not anything that is really new. It is done to protect our infrastructure. You can see CCTV systems on street lights and public highways so that for any damage to traffic lights, and drivers committing offences and so on, we will be able to have records of what transpired. So in answer to the Hon. Member's question, this is being done in the interest of national security.

Mr. Corbin: Supplementary question, Sir. It appears that the Hon. Member believes I was challenging the nature of the expenditure and the items on which this expenditure would be utilised.

4.10 p.m.

That was not my question at all. In the same way the Hon. Member Mr. Nadir seems to be upset when we were asking whether equality of law should not be applied to other workers. When the Hon. Member Ms. Lawrence asked, he had interpreted it to mean that we are objecting to the payment of Barama workers. This National Assembly deserves proper explanation for every cent that is being spent and that is what we are doing here. It is not a favour. It seems that we are offending people when we ask for details. My question is, not whether the objective of the National Intelligence was not a brilliant idea. We were told that a big building is going to be placed in the gardens. Mr. Luncheon was on television telling the nation this. So, that is not the issue.

Every nation has intelligence. Special Branch has been tapping lines a long time ago before all of this going on. We heard the cameras at the Harbour Bridge already, that they do not want tickets.... That is not the issue. My issue is the one I raised, whether at the time you are planning this intelligence centre, was there no plan as to what would be the functions and the equipment that are necessary. You cannot get sensitive equipment overnight. You have to order it. You have to get an invoice, and if you are following Government procedures you have to have tenders. You are supposed to have the best tender and then you are to go... My point is, to come in December to tell us that you need \$224 million, has some dire implications. Either there has been a deliberate attempt to avoid this National Assembly, knowing when the budget came, about what was being proposed so we could explore the issues more, or there has been a serious lack of vision and planning for the National Intelligence Centre. Like the Hon. Member, we know that

this happens all over the world, therefore you have to know this when you are setting up the centre. Which one is it? This is what I am asking; how come this has suddenly come on you? Did you deliberately hold back this information in the budget, or was there an emergency which could give account of this sudden need for \$224 million when you originally asked for \$14 million? Unless we are making jokes; we are a laughingstock here.

Ms. Webster: Mr. Chairman this is not a deliberate attempt. This particular programme was being done in a phased manner. I want to assure the Hon. Member that it is not a deliberate attempt to come to the National Assembly at the end of the year and ask for monies. I also want to give assurances that the procedures for the procurement of the equipment will be done in a very transparent manner.

Mr. Corbin: Supplementary.

Mr. Chairman: Ask a question please this time Mr. Corbin.

Mr. Corbin: The question is, whether the tenders have already gone out. I thought this equipment was already acquired. From the last answer, the Hon. Members seems to have opened the flood gates there. She said “will be done”. Is the Hon. Member saying that they are now going out for tenders? If so, will you be able to finish this in the nine or so days left in the year to follow all these procedures.

Ms. Webster: Mr. Chairman, time and time again we have been told in the National Assembly that we come here after the fact. Mr. Chairman, I can assure the Hon. Member that the process is going to be done in a very transparent manner. I do not want to say much more, but it is going to be very transparent and in accordance with procurement procedures.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I put the question that Item No. 1...

Mrs. Backer: Sir, not on that one; this is on the other one which in the same Agency Code – National Parks Commission – this is a direct question sir. Which car park in the National Park is to be paved with this money, or with part of this money?

Ms. Webster: Mr. Chairman in response to that question asked by the Hon. Member, it is the car park by the Bureau School of Arts, and the track around.

Mrs. Backer: Could the Hon. Minister indicate whether the money will be expended in the next eight or nine day that is left in year or if work has commenced.

Ms. Webster: Mr. Chairman, yes, the money will be expended and work will commence shortly.

Mrs. Backer: I go to the park five days a week, so I know the park. I do not think the Minister goes there as often. Could she say when this will start? I am personally interested in when it will start, because persons have to park on road now because of its bad condition.

Ms. Webster: Mr. Chairman in response to the question, there was a tender process and a contract was just awarded. I am not sure that a contract has been signed as yet, but as soon as the contract is signed.

Mrs. Backer: Last supplementary question Sir. Could the Hon. Minister say, of that \$26.3 million, what portion of it will be going to the car park?

Ms. Webster: Mr. Chairman, I think the contract was done based on the square foot, so I would not be able to provide those details now. But, it was done for the overall project, the car park and the area around the park.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I now put the question that Item No. 1 – Agency Code No. 01-011 stands part of the estimates.

Item 1 – Agency Code 01-011 – Region 4, Office of the President – Head Office – \$224,640,000; \$26,356,500 stand part of the Schedule, put and agreed to

Item 2 – Agency Code 03-031 – Ministry of Finance – Administration \$76,000,000

Mr. Corbin: Mr. Chairman, I would like to just get some information; whether a requirement for counterpart funding indicates that we have received more than was originally anticipated from the funding source which required us to provide more counterpart funds in Guyana, which may be according to a ratio. So, that it could not have been envisaged in advance; in other words, there has been more received than was anticipated. I am just seeking clarity.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I would direct the Hon. Member's attention to Financial Paper No. 4 of 2010 which we are shortly to consider. Were the Hon. Member to turn his attention to that paper he would see that under Item 1 of that paper there are in fact additional foreign inflows that are being disbursed this year under this same project. So, this is the corresponding counterpart.

Mr. Corbin: So, you did not anticipate it?

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, in answer to the question about anticipation, what has in fact transpired is that the project has been anticipated at a pace more rapid than originally anticipated.

Item 2 – Agency Code No. 03-031 – Ministry of Finance – Administration \$76,000,000 stands part of the Schedule, put and agreed to.

Item 3 – Agency Code 13-133 Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development – Regional Development \$38,000,000

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, will the Hon. Minister tell us which municipalities will benefit from the purchase of these trucks, how many trucks will be purchased and when are we likely to receive these trucks?

Mr. Chairman: Three questions Hon. Member.

Mr. Lall: The five municipalities. We will not be providing any to Georgetown from this set. Georgetown is this year purchasing its own trucks. Five other municipalities will benefit. I believe two of the trucks are here, but the inclement weather overseas has caused some problems with shipment. We are hoping that they should have been here by the end of this year.

Mrs. Lawrence: How many trucks?

Mr. Lall: Ten.

Mrs. Lawrence: And which municipalities?

Mr. Lall: The five municipalities outside of Georgetown.

Item No. 3 – Agency Code No. 13-133 Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development – Regional Development stands part of the Schedule, put and agreed to.

Item 4 – Agency Code No. 16-161 Ministry of Amerindian Affairs – Amerindian Development \$198,000,000

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, we are now asking for supplementary, double the amount that was voted for the Amerindian development fund, could the Hon. Minister tell us in terms of figure for this Amerindian Development Fund what figure of the twenty percent royalties that was paid into this fund by the GGMC.

Ms. Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, this is not relevant to the issue at hand— asking about the royalties.

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, just a follow up. We are asking for double. If probably we had this twenty percent royalties we might not have need to ask for anything. This is my question; could the Hon. Minister say to us how much was paid into this fund.

Mr. Chairman: I really did not follow your question Hon. Member.

Dr. Norton: The Amerindian Act, Chapter 51:03 says that the GGMC must pay twenty percent of royalties to the Amerindian funds.

Mr. Chairman: I am aware of that.

Dr. Norton: They are now asking for double of that which was voted for. My question is how much, in terms of figure, of the royalties was paid to the fund.

Mr. Chairman: How much of this figure consists of royalties and how much consists of Government allocation? Yes Hon. Member, are you aware of that figure?

Ms. Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, the voted provision which we are seeking approval here does not entail the royalties. What it entails is Government intervention support, Amerindian projects and programmes to make their lives better.

Item No. 4, Agency Code No. 16-161 – Ministry of Amerindian Affairs – Amerindian Development \$198,000,000 stands part of the Schedule, put and agreed to.

Item No. 5, Agency Code No. 21-214 Ministry of Agriculture – Hydro-meteorological Services \$3,000,000

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, I would ask the Hon. Minister to explain to me that since 2008 we have had this project with regards to the Radar Tower. I am wondering why is it now in 2010 we are seeking to buy a UPS radar? Why was this not foreseen when the consultant would have given in their proposal?

Mr. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, there was in fact a UPS system built as part of the radar project, but on July 28th we had a major lightening event within that area, not only was the radar totally disrupted, but even the protection system that you had was affected, and the same too at C.J.I.A. (Cheddi Jagan International Airport). This is just to replace a damage caused by the natural occurrence.

Item No. 5, Agency Code No. 21-214 Ministry of Agriculture – Hydro-meteorological Services \$3,000,000 stands part of the Schedule, put and agreed to.

Item No. 6, Agency Code No. 23-233 Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce – Commerce, Tourism, Industry and Consumer Affairs \$3,454,414

Item No. 6, Agency Code No. 23-233 Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce – Commerce, Tourism, Industry and Consumer Affairs \$3,454,414 stands part of the Schedule, put and agreed to.

Item No. 7, Agency Code No. 31-312 Ministry of Public Works and communications – Public Works \$8,600,000 & \$67,536,700

Mr. Corbin: Would the Minister tell us what will be the real cost of this Supernaam Stelling and what was the original cost at the time this project was first announced.

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, I endeavour to have that information provided in due course to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Corbin: Is the Minister by that answer advising us that he does not have the information and will have to calculate it, or that the information is available but not with him now?

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, I am merely stating or suggesting, or let me state that the construction of the Supernaam Stelling was not under my Ministry. All the information related to it, in facts

there were parts of the overall package which was done under the Ministry of Local Government with regard to the development of various communities on the Coast, it is in different areas of that package. So, we will have to extract the figures and then present it in addition to these figures we are requesting.

Mr. Corbin: Is the Minister aware that there were extensive news reports, that his Ministry, under his supervision, had taken over the construction or repair works of this Stelling and had bungled it. I do not know whether those reports are accurate, but what I want to know is whether these remedial works are related to the alleged failure of the original contractor or related to the alleged bungling thereafter by the Ministry of works. That is why I asked about the cost, so that we can be enlightened on how the tax payers' money are being spent on this Stelling that is already an eyesore.

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, I am not aware that the Supernaam Stelling is an eyesore. I would merely say that the Ministry took over a project which required remedial works. It turned out that in spite of the initial remedial works which were done, that more work is necessary, and we are doing those works. I reject any suggestion that the Ministry of Public Works bungled anything in respect to the Supernaam Stelling.

Mr. Corbin: I hope the Minister did not say that I am so accusing you. I was asking you whether you are aware of there being such reports in the media, and I was providing an opportunity for you to clarify the situation in the Parliament. You somehow though have not done an adequate job of clarifying for me. Let me then rephrase the question. This remedial works, is it to remedy works which were done by the Ministry of Works, or is it to remedy works which were allegedly done improperly by the contractor.

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, I repeat, the Ministry took over a project which required remedial works. On making some of those remedial works and putting the facility into operation we discovered that additional works had to be done, and we are so doing. I repute, that I am rejecting an suggestion that the Ministry of Public Works or any agency under my purview bungled anything out there, and I am also stating that we never supervised the construction of the facility.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman through you, would the Hon. Minister then accept that the ledger really should say "to facilitate re-remedial works". Because, this is the second time now Minister that your Ministry is doing remedial works. Do you agree with me sir?

Mr. Benn: The ledger is accurate, "to facilitate remedial works in the Supernaam Stelling". I do not think there is anything more to be said with respect to the ledger.

Mrs. Backer: One other question supplementary. Could the Hon. Minister say whether he has any projection date that he can give the people in Regions Two and Three as to when Supernaam Stelling will become operational?

Mr. Benn: We expect by the end of January that the facility will be in operation.

Mrs. Backer: Of what year, Hon. Minister?

Mr. Benn: The end of January that is coming up.

Mrs. Backer: We have had an incident with the Hon. Prime Minister and years, so I am just asking what year you are speaking of Sir.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, would the Hon. Minister inform the House, how many bridges were budgeted for with regards to Moleson Creek.

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, we did not have a budgeting for the bridges along Moleson Creek. We repaired one bridge out of funds under our bridging project. From the funds that were available then, this was the bridge which had collapsed. We are making sure now that we repair two other bridges so that we do not have a similar recurrence on these two other bridges.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, would the Minister indicate whether the rehabilitation work that is being done is a matter of wear-and-tear or whether it is a matter whereby a private citizen damaged the bridge.

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that in relation to the bridge which failed already, that that matter is subjudicate. In relation to the other two bridges, it is an issue of the current condition of those two bridges.

Item No. 7, Agency Code No. 31-312 Ministry of Public Works and communications – Public Works \$8,600,000 & \$67,536,700 stands part of the Schedule, put and agreed to.

Item No. 7 – Agency Code No. 31-313 Ministry of Public Works and Communications – Communication & Transport \$90,000,000

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, through you, could the Hon. Minister assist us; the ledger is very bald, it just says “purchase of equipment”. Could we get a little more information as to what equipment is being purchased?

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, the purchases which are referred to, refers to the acquisition of VOR, which is a very high frequency Omni-directional radio distance measuring equipment. These are a number of navigation aids which are required so that we have complete and safe coverage of our airspace, and be able to land aircrafts safely at our two principles airdromes.

Mrs. Backer: Is the entire \$90 million, Minister, going towards the VOR that my colleague Mr. Neendkumar has intimate knowledge of?

Mr. Benn: Yes, Mr. Chairman. It relates to the purchase of two specific items, the Very his frequency Omni-directional system and also with respect to a distance measuring system.

Item No. 7 – Agency Code No. 31-313 Ministry of Public Works and Communications – Communication & Transport \$90,000,000 stands part of the Schedule put and agreed to.

Item No. 8 – Agency Code No. 41-414 Ministry of Education – Training and Development \$147,439,350

Mr. Corbin: This resource development centre is obviously on to a laudable, provision of an education television broadcasting service. My only question to the Minister is when was this brainchild delivered? Because, the original plan in February at the Budget is \$16 million – and this illustrating the point I am making – and we come here in December and we are now told we need \$147 million, for what? Could the Minister explain to us, why if you are planning for this item, whether these are not foreseen thing? No one is going to object to us having a television centre. I think we will all be happy to know that the students of Guyana can get better education. My whole issue today has been the kind of treatment we are meeting out in this Parliament. For this equipment you have to have – the same question I made about the ICT equipment – you will have to send up tenders, you have to have a plan, what you project. Why is it in December we are being told in a supplementary budget about this when we should have been told in the original budget. What is responsible for all of this money at this time?

Mr. Baksh: Thank you Mr. Corbin for those complementary remarks of the need for an education television broadcasting service. We have always had the plan for a multimedia centre at N.C.E.R.T. (National Council of Education Research and Training), it was always there, but we have moved so quickly in getting the requisite infrastructure in place. We have put on another wing at N.C.E.R.T. I did not realize that it would have been completed so quickly and with such efficiency. Also, we were fortunate in recruiting an overseas Guyanese who has returned to this country with the requisite skills. In order ensure we advance technology mediated and enhance learning for our schools and our country we speeded it up.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the Hon. Minister can give us some details of what they anticipate this programme will entail.

Mr. Baksh: Some objectives, the ETBS – that would be a household name from now on – will produce and disseminate television programmes and audio-vision learning materials.

4.40 p.m.

(i) “To broadcast on a dedicated public broadcasting channel...”

[**Mrs. Backer:** Is it on every channel?] No. We will have a separate channel.

“...to expand the distant learning capability of National Centre for Educational Resource Development (NCERD), Cyril Potter College of

Education (CPCE), Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions and the University of Guyana to include video television and the internet.

(ii) To develop and disseminate television and e-learning materials to be accessed through television sets and computers by educational institutions and home-based individuals from anywhere and at anytime.

(iii) To facilitate educational television broadcasts for Government Ministries, social service organisations, public information campaigns, etc., using educational formats in keeping with addressing diverse learning needs that go beyond the basic interview, panel discussion and documentary format.”

Ms. Ally: Could the Hon. Minister say how soon this programme is expected to begin, and if he can give us some insight as to the management of this project?

Mr. Baksh: Quite good questions, unlike at the budget debate. We are expecting it to be operational by the end of the first quarter of 2011. In terms of the structure, the station will be located at NCERD - the National Centre for Educational Resource Development.

Mr. Corbin: I am happy that the Minister elaborated, because bells began to ring in my head as he elaborated, and that is why it is useful that these should come in the main budget, where we can see the project profile and all the details, and we can explore them much better.

I would like to ask the Minister, based on what he has just said, whether he believes that this unit should not have some supervisory authority, in the sense that he is saying this unit, although it is being based in the learning centre, is not only going to be beaming information to schools - according to the Minister - but this is something that will be beaming, what that unit deems as educational material, to the nation, on various areas, and whether the correct placing of it, in the Ministry of Education, void of any other oversight, might not expose it to risk of being political manipulated for propaganda.

These are the realities of the world, and it must send some bells. I was commending him, because I initially thought that this was going to be an expansion of the broadcast to schools type unit that is heard on the radio everyday, but in his explanation it is wider than that, because he said

various subjects, and so on. So it is going outside of the target audience of the school, and the Minister is targeting Guyana and the Guyanese population. So bells are ringing in my head and I wonder whether there is a document which this National Assembly can be presented with. I am glad that Ms. Amna Ally asked the question about the management. What oversight is there to see that it is not going to be misused?

Mr. Baksh: A Management Committee will be set up - an Oversight Management Committee - to ensure that the goals and purposes of the ETBS are carried out.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, through you, Sir - I just want to be clear - are you saying that there is going to be a separate designated channel on television just for this purpose?

Mr. Baksh: That is what was said just now. It is a special channel.

Mrs. Backer: I just want to be sure. Will it be using the operation of Channel 11? In other words, will it be a separate entity as how there is Channel 65 and Channel 28 at different locations? Or will it be operating within Channel 11's compound and using its equipment? That is what I want to know.

Mr. Baksh: It is at NCERD, as I said. It is a separate channel dedicated to education in all its aspect and to open education not only to the school system, but to communities, as you know, to the Discovery Channel type of programmes that you are familiar with. We have the model from the United Kingdom which we are looking at, in terms of operationalising this public broadcasting service.

Ms. Sampson: I would just like the Minister to indicate what will be the provisions for the far reaching areas, in terms of the Hinterland Regions, and so forth? How do they access it?

Mr. Baksh: I had mentioned that already in my opening remarks, because it will cater for all of Guyana, the Hinterland Regions - the whole of the country. It is a very important development in education for this country.

Item 8 41-414 Ministry of Education - Training and Development - \$147,439,350 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 8 41-415 Ministry of Education - Education Delivery - \$44,000,000 and \$129,9000,000

Ms. Ally: Could the Hon. Minister tell us which Information Technology (IT) labs he is talking about? What is being provided for these IT labs and what proportion is for the nursery, primary and the secondary schools?

Mr. Baksh: These are for secondary schools laboratories. I do not want to hold up the House to read out all the schools. I have the whole listing of all the schools here. There are fifty schools in total, we have almost completed them, and they will be, of course, equipped with computers and other furnishings, and so on

Ms. Ally: Since it is a long list of schools, I wonder if the Minister could provide the list to us at a subsequent time.

Mr. Baksh: It covers, and I must tell the Hon. Member, all the Regions. [**Mrs. Backer:** All eleven Regions!]. Yes.

Mr. Corbin: I must commend the Minister, if the trends of his answers are the same as the previous one, in relation to the need to move from the original requested sum of \$30 million to \$129 million required in supplementary provisions, under “School Furniture and Equipment”. The point I am making here is if indeed, again, he did not anticipate, and I am assuming that that is the answer for this increase, why was it so difficult to project when you are planning for school furniture and equipment that he would need to move to this \$129 million supplementary provision when he had put originally in the budget \$30 million? It is happening too often here, in this Financial Paper, by accident. It does not strike me that if he is planning for furniture... I mean it could have been unforeseen that he could achieve a certain target, but to move from \$30 million to \$129 million requires some kind of explanation.

Mr. Baksh: I will provide that explanation to the Hon. Member. [**Mr. Corbin:** Is it unanticipated progress again, right?] Yes.

In September, 2009, we could not anticipate the overwhelming response to the Secondary Competency Certificate Programme (SCCP) in the schools. So there was a rapid expansion, in terms of the numbers of schools which we could not have anticipated. The number of schools addition: we moved from twenty-two schools to thirty-five schools in September of 2010. [**Mrs.**

Backer: That is not even a hundred per cent...] No. We have to equip the centres and the schools - the industrial technology departments of the schools.

Also, there is almost a triple in the number of students who have been opting for the SCCP. Also the numbers who have opted to do the technical and vocational stream at the Caribbean Secondary Education Certification (CSEC) exams is growing, and therefore it could not have been anticipated.

Mr. Corbin: Would the Minister then agree with me that there is some grave deficiency in the Education Planning Unit, or Section, that these developments could take place without any anticipation in the education sector? Because if you are planning for education development you would do your planning, you would look at trends and do surveys, and all of that. Would he agree with me that it does suggest that he may need to improve the Planning Unit so that these projections can be more realistic in the future?

Mr. Baksh: I do not agree with the Hon. Member because we do have a very efficient planning department within the Ministry of Education. Also, we could not have anticipated this; it is a question of parental choice. Many parents were reluctant to have their children doing the SCCP programme because - it is a competency-based programme - of the way we have delivered the programme. So many more schools and parents have opted to allow their children to go to this SCCP Technical/Vocational (Tec. /Voc.) stream in the school system. Remember the SCCP is quite new, so I could not have trend analysis for this. [**Ms. Ally:** How many years is it there?] The SCSCP started in September 2009. [*Interruption*]

Ms. Ally: Could the Hon. Minister say whether there is a macro plan for the satisfaction of the entire school system as it relates to school furniture and equipment? Because every where you go, in every Region, there is much dissatisfaction about furniture needs. If there is such a plan, why is it that he has now come to the Assembly to ask for four times as much as was budgeted for the year's programme?

Mr. Baksh: This programme comes directly under the Ministry of Education; it is a centralised programme. In terms of other equipment and furnishings these come under the Region, each Region would have to plan its budget for that. This programme comes directly under the Ministry of Education, and as I have explained there is no trend analysis to follow and the

overwhelming response of parents to this programme we can see it doubled next year. So we are planning again for that.

Ms. Sampson: Considering the fact that we are putting a lot of emphasis on the Tec./Voc., equipment are put in schools – more equipment - do we have the proper schools, in terms of physical arrangements? I say this, because, more than three or four budgets ago, money was voted for the Kingston Practical Instruction Centre (PIC) to be upgraded and some repairs to be done and that school is falling apart. If equipment are put in there, I mean, it is not going to be safe.

Mr. Baksh: The Kingston PIC is housed in a building that does not belong to the Ministry of Education, so that we could not have spent money to rehabilitate the building. We are looking at the removal of the PIC from that location.

Ms. Ally: We are talking about great investment in this case. Could the Minister say whether there is any plan to train teachers with the relevant skills in order to administer the relevant programmes?

Mr. Baksh: The Hon. Member is asking some quite interesting questions - very good questions. Yes. We do have plans. We will be mounting, next year, a Technical Teachers Training Programme, both an in-service programme for persons who are practising and need the teaching methodology aspects of it, and also a pre-service for new persons coming in. That will be a two-year programme. Already there is a consultancy coming through the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) to help us design the programme and we will get support from the CDB loan which the Government has acquired to mount this programme.

Item 8 41-415 Ministry of Education - Education Delivery - \$44,000,000 and \$129,900,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 9 44-444 Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport – Sports - \$75,530,726.

Ms. Selman: Could the Minister say how much of the provision being sought is for the completion of the swimming pool? How much is for related infrastructure and when will the swimming pool be completed?

Dr. Anthony: The swimming pool itself is completed. This is for additional works. What we will be spending the money on, right now, is a grass mound that was in the original provision. In discussion with the swimming fraternity the grass mound will be totally inadequate. So what we want to do with that grass mound is to have a proper bleacher and we will do that out of concrete. But the pool itself is functional and can be used.

The other thing we will be doing is the site. It is very low and when it rains it is basically under water. So we would be filling the site up and tarmacking the area so that people can have good parking.

In addition to that, there are also moneys which we have set aside to do the external drains and walkways in concrete, and things like that. Those things were not originally budgeted for.

[**Mrs. Backer:** When will it be officially...] It should be by the first quarter of next year. I want to be cautious.

Mr. M. Williams: Just a follow-up question through you, Sir, to the Minister. Does this sum include provisions for the warm-up pool or is that provided for some place else? And in terms of the first quarter completion, is that somewhere at the start or the end of the first quarter?

Dr. Anthony: The warm-up pool is not provided in this, because it would be a larger of sum money. So that is not provided here. When we started this project we were talking about phase development, so that warm-up pool would have to be in another phase.

In terms of the additional works that we want to do, I would estimate that by the end of January those things would have been completed so that we can have an opening. But given my experiences with this particular project that a lot of times deadlines which are given by contractors, they have not delivered to those deadlines. That is why I want to give a time frame that I know we will be able to complete it within, rather than setting a date and having to breach that date.

Item 9 44-444 Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports - \$75,530,726 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 10 45-451 Ministry of Housing and Water – Housing and Water - \$23,900,000, \$35,600,000 and \$2,000,000

Mr. Scott: Dealing with the Hinterland water supply: It was projected to finish by January to December. It is now December and I see the Minister is asking for an additional sum of money. Could he say how far his plan has gone for the first set of money which was \$60 million? Has it almost completed or finished?

Mr. Ali: As the Hon. Member would be aware that this provision is sought under the Contingency Fund and as such the additional works in the provision for the construction of a water source facility and photovoltaic system in areas such as Surama, Toka, Tiger Pond, Aramarau, Annai, Massara, Parishara, Asura, Karasabai and Nappi and the insulation of an electric pumping system and electrical pumps in areas such as Mocomoco, Queriman, Tipuru, Koko-Koko, Chinowieng, Philippi, Maraikobai and Matthews Ridge are areas that would have benefited from the expanded programme. The result of this expanded programme is the very strong proactive planning and implementation of the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) by the Ministry of Finance which saw projections for another two years of photovoltaic systems coming from Japanese – coming much in advance of that time - and this is a direct result of the activism by it in bringing those negotiations forward, and we must compliment it for this.

Mr. Scott: Would the Minister say then, Sir, that, based on the project profiles, he has misled the House, in that those things...?*[Interruption]* It is a question I am asking. He can say yes or no. But those things that he has just outlined are no where to be found in the project profile that he gave us at the beginning of the agenda, when in the budget debate he was asking for \$60 million. In fact, he was specific in outlining what he was going to spend for \$60 million, January to December, and he named the places. He had even left out the Pomeroon areas where the people asked for a well, but he named Paramaktoi, and so on. He was very specific here. What we want to know is whether, that money that he asked for these specific areas, the work has been completed. Then we will be able to understand his request for any additional sum of money which he may want to spend somewhere else.

Mr. Ali: I would not accept the view that any of us, on this side of the House, or myself, would have misled the House at any time in presenting the facts. Let me say, Mr. Chairman, that I said in my answer that it is the expanded programme as a result of the strong implementation of the PSIP. An expanded programme would also include the fact that we have completed our original programme. If the Hon. Member wants I can read through the entire list of the original

programme that has been completed. The programme was expanded as a result of the strong work from the Ministry of Finance in advancing things forward that would have been three years from now.

Item 10 45-451-Ministry of Housing and Water – Housing and Water - \$23,900,000, \$35,600,000 and \$2,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 11 53-531 Guyana Defence Force – Defence Headquarters - \$40,000,000

Item 11 53-531 Guyana Defence Force – Defence Headquarters - \$40,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 12 55-551 Supreme Court – Supreme Court of Judicature - \$6,183,215

Mrs. Riehl: Would the Hon. Minister say how much this Family Court will cost when it would have been completed? How much of the taxpayers money will have to be used? Because there are the voted provision and an additional provision, and this project started with the 2008 Budget. Some amount was budgeted since 2008. How much, in total, would the building cost?

Mr. Ramson: Cde. Chairman, I rise merely because I do not believe the Hon. Member has quite a focus on what the current request is concerned about. There has additional works to be done in relations to the supply of electricity and because of the extraordinary requirements for a larger voltage wiring, and other equipment, the installation costs have risen by that amount, and that is separate from the construction of the Court itself. The construction of the Court is completed, but this is what was not budgeted for, in relations to the type of wires and other electrical appliances that are necessary in order to make the Court itself functional. That is how I understand the request. The system is completely separate.

Mrs. Riehl: When a building is constructed such as the Court's building, one would anticipate that it would need electricity. Why was this not catered for in the original budget?

Mr. Ramson: That is why I made the prefatory remarks that I do not believe the focus was on the application for the extra money, because when the Court was originally designed – that is the Family Court - it was contemplated that one's amiable supply would be sufficient. But because of the requirement for the children and the personnel who will be using that particular building

and the additional equipment that was necessary to keep everyone comfortable... It is really public friendly, that particular Court. It is unlike the Supreme Court in general where persons would understand that they have to put up with certain inconveniences; but this particular Court must be more public friendly oriented. The supply of the electricity has attracted a larger bore of wires and other equipment so as to accommodate that unforeseen expediency.

Mrs. Backer: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to the Hon. House if there is any projected date for the actual start off - the beginning of the Court to the function to the benefit of the citizens of Guyana?

Mr. Ramson: I regret to say that that is not within the remit at this time of this supplementary provision for consideration.

Item 55-551 Supreme Court – Supreme Court of Judicature - \$6,751,023 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we can move to the next Financial Paper - No. 4.

FINANCIAL PAPER NO. 4 OF 2010

BE IT RESOLVED:

“That this National Assembly approves of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 4 of 2010 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the (Capital) Estimates totalling \$4,942,976,930 for the period ending 31st December, 2010” [*Minister of Finance*].

CAPITAL ESTIMATES

Item 1 03-031 Ministry of Finance – Ministry Administration - \$235,000,000 and \$14,462,958

Item 1 03-031 Ministry of Finance – Ministry Administration - \$235,000,000 and \$14,462,958 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 2 21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Crops and Livestock Support Services - \$186,000,000

Mr. M. Williams: Mr. Chairman, through you, to the Hon. Minister. Hon. Minister I am sure you are aware that up to September 15th less than twelve per cent of the capital budget, with respect to Crops and Livestock Support Services, would have been expended. Could you tell the National Assembly, therefore, what would have emerged within the last two and a half months that would have been unavoidable and unforeseeable to require the spending of some \$802,000,000, in total?

Mr. R. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, I do not think the Hon. Member understands really what he is reading, because it is very clear, and I say that out of respect too, if he looks at the “Remarks Section”, that this is to provide additional inflows. The Agri. Support Services Project (ASSP) is a foreign funded project and this project we have already gone passed what was our budgeted allocation, meaning that project is performing ahead of the schedule. Hence, more resources are required whereby this inflow is being sought here.

5.10 p.m.

Mr. M. Williams: Am I to understand that the Hon. Minister is suggesting that the ASSP Project had not, in fact, expended more than twelve per cent of its capital budget in September? Is he saying that that is not so? If he is saying that is not so, could he suggest, then, why it was that an emergency meeting would have been called to find ways in which to dispense with the money within two months?

Mr. R. Persaud: I am unaware, because expenditure cannot be at twelve per cent and currently exceeding one hundred per cent. It is totally a fiction of the gentleman’s imagination and I wish to reiterate that this project we have had – not only implementation according to the budget - in fact, exceeded the targets, hence the need for additional inflows.

Item 2 21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Crops and Livestock Support Services - \$186,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 3 31-312 Ministry of Public Works and Communications – Public Works - \$187,110,000

Item 3 31-312 Ministry of Public Works and Communications – Public Works - \$187,110,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 4 41-415 Ministry of Education –Education Delivery - \$140,059,749

Ms. Ally: Could the Hon. Minister say what are the areas of development? What new housing areas will work be effected, and in what area will improvement works be carried on?

Mr. Baksh: Yes. This is the Education For All Fast Track programme.

Ms. Ally: It is Chart of Account 1900900

Mr. Baksh: It is Agency Code No. 41- 415.

Ms. Ally: Yes.

Mr. Baksh: That is Education For All Fast Track Initiative.

Ms. Ally: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: It is the next item, Hon. Member. The Hon. Member is asking you about the next item – Chart of Account 1900900.

Mr. Baksh: That is not put as yet.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, we are at Agency Code No. 41- 415. With Agency Code No. 41- 415 - Ministry of Education – Education Delivery - it has two items.

Mr. Baksh: No. It is one item.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, it has two items – Chart of Account 4502200. Sorry, it is one item.

Ms. Ally: I withdraw.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, you have withdrawn.

Item 4 41-415 Ministry of Education –Education Delivery - \$140,059,749 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: We have now come to your item, Ms. Ally.

Item 5 45-451 Ministry of Housing and Water – Housing and Water – \$3,730, 000,000 & \$92,200,000

Mr. Chairman: This has four separate items. Indicate your item, please.

Mr. Scott: Chart of Account 1900900: I have noticed that the Minister is requesting \$3.7 billion on his budget presentation, which is five hundred and forty-nine per cent extra over what is projected and planned for. Could he say if this money has been spent for this year? If so, where was it spent?

Mr. Ali: The budgeted provision of 680 million dollars was expended long before the end of this year as a result, again, of the rapid implementation of the housing programme in this country. The supplementary request, as I said, in my budget presentation earlier this year, for those who were listening will remember, that our intention was to further expand the housing programme within the project area of the East Bank development. That, of course, was subject to the availability of resources. So the projection of the overarching plan of the macro plan for the housing development we were all well aware of that. But that plan was implemented, as we are aware, on a resource availability basis. The additional inflows would see infrastructure work on the expanded Eccles section of the land, and would also see a provision for the acquisition of additional land from GuySuCo to further augment and expand this exciting period of housing and home construction in this country.

Of course, Mr. Chairman, the plan is to ensure that we have an integrated development package that is more fully described as the East Bank Development Project. That project, of course, has various components. Housing is not an isolated segment of the component, but there is a need for water infrastructure, electricity infrastructure, road, networks and so on, in addition to the softer social component that is required so that people can move to their homes and not only the acquisition of lands.

Mr. Scott: I am very happy to hear that money was spent on water, roads and other infrastructures, which is taken our advice that we have given. Yet, at the same time, the Minister must be aware that Diamond Housing Scheme still does not have any roads except the main road. What percentage of this \$3.7 billion, however, has been so far spent on the existing housing schemes?

Mr. Ali: I am not aware that any of our housing schemes does not have any roads except the main road. We are making the statement here in the National Assembly, and I hope the media would allow this statement to go public where a Member of the National Assembly is saying that the only road that exists in the Diamond Housing Scheme is the main road. I cannot imagine that a statement like that would have been made here. We are aware of the necessity of advancing the infrastructure to a higher stage, and it was said publicly that the policy is that wherever the occupancy rate exceeded the seventy-five per cent which is required in the policy framework then we will move to the final course of paved road, and that is a continuous programme. It would be seen that there is the rural and urban development road framework programme that falls within the infrastructural development. This is indeed a continuous task and we are committed to that task.

Mr. Scott: I was in Diamond Housing Scheme last week, and I was driving. I had a very rough time negotiating what should have been called roads. I can say with authority that it does not have roads. The question, however, remains: what percentage was spent on existing housing schemes? That has not yet been answered.

Mr. Ali: I think that I have adequately addressed the issue on the supplementary provision.

Mr. M. Williams: I am reflecting on what the Hon. Minister said, before this last response, that wherever there is seventy-five per cent occupancy rates the Ministry will move to final phase of road construction. Is that to say, Hon. Minister, that there is a deliberate policy of doing partially constructed roads and then coming back for budgetary allocations at a later date to take the road to another level? And secondly, if that is so, when will the housing schemes in Tuschen and Zeelugt be revisited since all those partially constructed roads have now deteriorated to, well, trail-like facilities?

Mr. Ali: I am not aware of these wild allegations. What I am aware of is that I am very happy that some of the Hon. Members here can today drive through in some of these housing schemes, because at one time in this country we could not drive from Georgetown to the international airport. So I am happy now that in the housing scheme we can drive through. Secondly,...[*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: Order Members, Government and Opposition, please.

Mr. Ali: We allow the Opposition Members to ask question and when we respond they do not want to listen. We must also agree that the housing programme has been accelerated and expanded from a baseline position in 1992 when there was no housing programme. We have to admit these facts. Also, Mr. Chairman, I said to the Hon. Member, Mr. Mervyn Williams, that policy is an incremental policy. In any development policy there cannot be infrastructure which facilitates a housing development with roads having their final paving, because there is need for time to be given for homes to be constructed; trucks would have been passing through the area, so it has to be an incremental development pathway. That is what we have embarked on.

Mr. M. Williams: Mr. Chairman, there is an abandoned...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, let me just caution you. At the end of the long and difficult discussion and questions, we want to keep our questions relevant. We just went to Tuschen and the roads are in a bad state at Tuschen. Mrs. Backer obviously knows what the states of the roads were because she became very agitated. So let us confine our questions to the matters at hand and do not go off at a tangent, and all kinds of thing.

Mr. M. Williams: Sir, I am just following on the Minister's response with respect to the Chart of Account 1900900 to say that...

Mr. Chairman: To ask...

Mr. M. Williams: To ask whether... [**Mr. Neendkumar:** A-s-s - Ass] There is a gentleman spelling his name across there Sir, I forgive him.

Mr. Chairman: Dr. Ramsaran, I have been noticing you, you are disrupting these proceedings. I duly warned him.

Mr. M. Williams: Never mind, Sir. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Scott: It is very important when we, on this side of the House, ask questions. It is because we intend to see that value for money is obtained. Hence, when we ask how is the money of \$3.7 million being disposed of..? What percentage is being allocated to an existing housing scheme? What is intended to be done for new housing schemes and where? What is the project profile? What are the plans? Let us in the House know so that we could come on board. A housing

scheme cannot be built without having roads in advance. There cannot be a scheme without having a plan for fire stations and so on. House lots cannot just be put. So the question remains what percentage has been spent on existing housing schemes? I have not been given the answers as yet.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I cannot force the Minister to answer the question and repeating it all the time is not going to get an answer. I would recommend to you to speak to the Clerk and he will guide you as to how to get those questions framed so that the answer can be provided in a proper way.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, while I heard your advice, I have elaborated on the purpose...

Mr. Chairman: I am not agreeing with the Hon. Member that you did not answer the questions.

Mr. Ali: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: I am saying if that is his assertion there is nothing I can do about it.

Mr. Ali: Thank you.

Item 5 45-451 Ministry of Housing and Water – Housing and Water agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, in your narrative, can you refer to both papers?

Dr. Singh: I will Sir, and in that regard I will indicate, Mr. Chairman, that my signification at the start of this House, in relation to the approval of Cabinet, would have applied to both Financial Papers rather than the one to which I referred to originally. In the same regard, Mr. Chairman, I beg to report that the Committee of Supply has approved of the proposals set out in Financial Papers No. 3 and 4 of 2010 and I now move...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, just excuse me. Sorry, I jump the gun a little bit. There is something that I have to say. Hon. Members, this completes consideration for all the items I will now put the motion... I think we have to resume.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I belief this is considered in Committee and the Committee having voted...

Mr. Chairman:

Question

“That this Committee of Supply approves the proposals set out in Financial Papers No. 3 and 4 of 2010 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$ 1918,999,270 and \$4, 942,976,930 for the period ended 31st of December 2010 and the 31st December, 2010.”

put, and agreed to.

Assembly resumed.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I beg to report that the Committee of Supply has approved of the proposals set out in Financial Paper Nos. 3 and 4 –Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$1,918,999,270 and \$4,942,976,930, and I now move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee in the said Resolution

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, there is one final item for us to do and that is to approve the Supplementary Appropriations Bill. I ask Hon. Members to bear with me while we go through that.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, with your leave I move that Standing Orders No. 13(n) and 54 be suspended to enable the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 2 for 2010) - Bill No. 22 of 2010 to be introduced at this stage.

Question put, and agreed to.

Standing Orders suspended.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND FIRST READING

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

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (NO. 2 FOR 2010) - BILL NO. 22 of 2010

A Bill intituled:

“AN ACT to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2010 estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.” [*Minister of Finance*]

Dr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with paragraph (2) of article 171 of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 2 for 2010) - Bill No. 22 of 2010 for consideration by the National Assembly and I now move that it be read for the first time.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read for the first time

BILLS SECOND AND THIRD READINGS

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (NO. 2 FOR 2010) - BILL No. 22 of 2010

A Bill intituled:

“AN ACT to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2010 estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.” [*Minister of Finance*]

Dr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with paragraph two of article 171 of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 2 for 2010) - Bill

No. 22 of 2010 for consideration by the National Assembly and I now move that it be read for the second time.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 2 for 2010) – Bill No. 22 of 2010 be read a third time and passed as printed.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and, passed as printed.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, this brings us to the end of our business for today. We have expressed our felicitations at the last meeting, at the last session of the National Assembly. I would just like to repeat that once again and to wish all Members season greetings. I am told that we did not. My memory is fading rapidly.

Leader of the Opposition [Mr. Corbin]: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Members of the Opposition I would like to take this opportunity to wish you, your family, Members of the staff of the Parliament Office, who have worked very hard all through the year, Members of the Government side of the National Assembly, the media and all those who have contributed to the work of this National Assembly of the last year. We all know that Christmas is not just a normal holiday season, but it is one which is Christian in origin and brings into play the birth of the Christ which offers hope to all mankind. It is associated with peace and goodwill to all men. I hope that as we commemorate this season we will not forget its true meaning and work continuously to bring some cheer to the needy and those in Guyana.

I conclude by saying on behalf of the Members of the PNCR, and Members of the Opposition, I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a very productive and successful 2011. Thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I would like, too, on behalf of the Government side, to extend best wishes to yourself, all those who work here, at the Parliament Office, supporting our activities. I would like to extend similar wishes to the media and their attempts to report what we do here in the National Assembly. My hope is that this Christmas time we will truly drink deeply of the goodwill and fellowship which we extend to each other. I hope that sense and feeling of goodwill and fellowship would be with us throughout the coming year.

If I am to be allowed I would like to move that this sitting be adjourned until next Thursday, the 30th of December, 2010.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I think that this session today, despite a bit sharp, but friendly exchanges, is an example of what we can achieve if we work hard. I would also like to join with the Hon. Members to thank the Clerk, Members of the National Assembly, and the members of the staff of the Parliament Office. As I repeatedly said, only some of whom you are familiar with who have duties in the House, but there are a large number of members who work very hard and very long hours to keep us in business, to help us to do what we do here.

It is peculiar that we have had very little issues relating to the press, unlike many other countries where the press caused some difficulties in terms of reporting. We have had very little of that, and therefore we owe the press much gratitude for bringing our business to the public. We have to note that Parliament does not have a Communications Division, which, in due course, I hope it will have it. It ought to have such a division, but we are not there as yet. We should be the persons who should be responsible for disseminating our own business. In the meantime the press does that for us and we should be very grateful for that.

I would like to thank Members for their contributions during the year, not yet finished, and look forward for their continuing support of the National Assembly. I noticed, a few weeks ago, that there was a very large brawl in the South Korean Parliament. There were fights - I am not encouraging you; I am just telling you where we are - and some of the Members had to be hospitalised. Mr. Corbin is looking at me as if he is trying to learn that experience. I think that we are doing very well here, in Guyana. We are conducting ourselves well. I wish all Members a Merry Christmas.

The Assembly shall now stand adjourned until the 30th of December, 2010. Thank you very much.

Adjourned accordingly at 5.36pm