

COOPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE NINTH
PARLIAMENT (2006-2008)

THIRD PERIODIC REPORT

OF THE

PARLIAMENTARY SECTORAL COMMITTEE

ON

ECONOMIC SERVICES

DECEMBER, 2006 - DECEMBER, 2007

22nd February, 2008

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This third report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Economic Services (PSCES) highlights its activities over the period December 21, 2006 to January 16, 2008 of the First Session of the Ninth Parliament. This report includes issues and concerns raised and discussed at meetings, as well as the Committee's interactions with Members of the Executive and other government functionaries. The report also makes observations and recommendations on matters which came before it.

1.1 The Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Economic Services (PSCES)

The PSCES is one of four Parliamentary Sectoral Committees of the National Assembly that was established in 2003 by Resolution No. 19 of May 2003 of the National Assembly of the Eighth Parliament. Resolution No.19 gives effect to the Constitutional provision of Article 119 B of the Constitution of Guyana.

Standing Order 86 specifically provides for the establishment of this Committee and all of the Sectoral Committees. These Committees have "responsibility for the scrutiny of all areas of Government policy and administration" as provided for in Standing Order 86.

1.2. Nomination of Committee Members

The Committee of Selection in accordance with Paragraph 1 of Resolution 19 of 2003, and Standing Order 86 nominated seven persons to be Members of the PSCES on the 14th December 2006.

1.3 Membership

During the period December 21, 2006 to December 5, 2007 of the First Session of the Ninth Parliament, the Membership of the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on the Economic Services constituted seven Members, four (4) Members from the Government side and three (3) from the combined opposition. In addition there are two (2) alternate Members, one (1) each from the government and the combined Opposition in keeping with the Standing Orders.

Members Nominated on 14th December 2006

Ms. Gail Teixeira, M.P.

Mr. Komal Chand, C.C.H., J.P., M.P

Mr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, M.P

Mr. Dharamkumar Seeraj, M.P

Mr. Mohamed F. Khan, J.P., M.P (Alternate)

Mr. James Mc Allister, M.P

Mr. Anthony Vieira, M.S., M.P

Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P

Mr. Winston Murray, C.C.H., M.P (Alternate)

In accordance with Standing Order 86 (3), during the First Session of the Committee's life, it was agreed between the parliamentary parties that the government representative, Ms. Gail Teixeira, would chair the Committee for the first year. Therefore at its first meeting held on 21st December, 2006 Ms. Gail Teixeira and Mr. James Mc Allister were elected Chairperson and Vice Chairman respectively by Members of the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Economic Services.

At the 7th Meeting of the Committee of Selection held on 27th December, 2007, Mr. Winston Murray, alternate member was nominated as a substantive member to replace Mr. James McAllister who had resigned and Mr. Dave Danny was nominated as the alternate member. Mr. Danny attended his first meeting of the Committee on 16th January, 2008.

Please find attached at *Appendix I* the record of attendance of the Committee Members during the First Session of the Ninth Parliament.

2.0 Function and Mandate of the Committee

The Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Economic Services functions in keeping with the mandate given to it by Paragraph 3 of Resolution No. 19 of 2003, which states that:

“The Committees shall, in the discharge of their scrutinizing role, examine all policies and administration, for each sector, to determine whether the execution of government policy is in consonance with the principles of good governance and in the best interest of all the people of Guyana”.

In order to discharge this mandate the Committee is empowered to scrutinize all areas of government activities within the Economic Services Sectoral Committee’s mandate as proscribed in the Appendices of the revised Standing Orders of the Eighth Parliament. Their mandate also includes summoning the Executive and other Government officials to appear before the Committee and give evidence whenever required. The Committee is also obligated to act on requests made by Parliament to address any urgent issue.

3.0 MEETINGS

This Committee held twenty (20) meetings during the period December 21, 2006 and January 16, 2008 of the First Session of the Ninth Parliament. The Committee Members agreed to meet twice a month at 10:30am on Wednesdays for at least 2 hours. However, the Committee at certain times met almost every week.

Statutory Meetings

Meetings	Dates of Meetings
1 st Meeting	December 21, 2006
2 nd Meeting	January 31, 2007
3 rd Meeting	February 28, 2007
4 th Meeting	March 7, 2007
5 th Meeting	March 21, 2007
6 th Meeting	April 11, 2007
7 th Meeting	April 18, 2007
8 th Meeting	April 25, 2007
9 th Meeting	May 9, 2007
10 th Meeting	May 23, 2007
11 th Meeting	May 30, 2007
12 th Meeting	June 6, 2007
13 th Meeting	June 13, 2007
14 th Meeting	June 20, 2007
15 th Meeting	June 27, 2007
16 th Meeting	July 4, 2007
17 th Meeting	July 11, 2007
18 th Meeting	July 25, 2007
19 th Meeting	December 5, 2007
20 th Meeting	January 16, 2008

4.0 WORK PROGRAMME

One of the important accomplishments of the PSCES was the development of a 5 year work programme covering the life of the Ninth Parliament (2007-2011). Using the agencies under the Committee's purview, the work programme defines the areas of focus of the Committee with timelines over the coming years. This document was adopted by the Committee and lays the framework for the Committee's work in the Ninth Parliament. There was an understanding that some flexibility could be exercised in order to allow the Committee to examine matters of urgent interest.

It is important to note that the work programme focuses the Committee's attention on Government's policies and justification and performance in the given areas of responsibilities

Please see attached *Appendix II* Work Programme of the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Economic Services for the period (2007-2011)

4.1 Areas of Responsibility

The Committee is tasked with oversight responsibility for the following sectors, sub-sector and activities:-

Financial Sector

- (1) Monetary and Fiscal Policies
- (2) National Development Strategy
- (3) Poverty Reduction Strategy
- (4) Millennium Development Goals
- (5) Mid-year Financial review
- (6) Treasury Memorandum

- (7) Budget Documents
- (8) Taxation /Incentives
- (9) Government Accounts and Financial Control (outside of the mandate of the Public Accounts Committee)
- (10) Banking/Credit /Offshore Banking
- (11) Statistics /Valuation
- (12) Economic Recovery Programme
- (13) Government Lotteries
- (14) N.I.S (viability)
- (15) Loan portfolio/ debt scheduling and relief
- (16) Relations with Internal and External Financial Institutions

Agricultural Sector

- (1) Agriculture
- (2) Drainage and Irrigation
- (3) Rice
- (4) Sugar

Fisheries, Livestock and Other Crops

- (1) Fisheries Division
- (2) Livestock Division
- (3) New Guyana Marketing Corporation
- (4) Other Crops Division

Home Affairs

- (1) Licensing of buses/hire car/ goods vehicles

Housing and Water

- (1) Housing
- (2) Central Housing and Planning Authority
- (3) Town and Country Planning
- (4) Water Supply

Transport and Hydraulics Department

- (1) Roads: Planning and Design, Maintenance, Construction
- (2) Works and Construction
- (3) Government Buildings
- (4) Mechanical Equipment
- (5) Electrical Inspection
- (6) Civil Aviation
- (7) Transport Planning Services
- (8) Material Testing
- (9) Shipping and Harbour Services
- (10) River and Sea Defense
- (11) Maritime Transport

Tourism, Industry and Commerce

- (1) Internal Trade and Commerce
- (2) Manufacturing and Industrial Development
- (3) Craft Production
- (4) Provision of Public Utilities
- (5) Consumer Protection
- (6) Public Corporations
- (7) Go-Invest
- (8) Economic Planning
- (9) Development Planning

4.2 Mode of Operation

The Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Economic Services adopted various measures to optimize its scrutiny of government policy and administration.

As a policy, the Committee agreed that questions addressing minor specificities regarding a sector should fall within the ambit of the individual Members of Parliament's prerogative to table Questions with and/or without Notice on the Order Paper of the National Assembly thereby allowing the Committee to focus its attention on the performance of government and its entities that were within the Committee's mandate.

The Committee made written requests for reports and other documents as well as policy and implementation updates from Ministers and Government Officials. In this period the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Agriculture were formally approached.

The Committee also held one hearing on the East Demerara Water Conservancy on 18th April, 2007 and made a visit to the said Conservancy on Friday, 8th June, 2007.

4.3 Access of the Public to Committee Meetings

The meetings of the Committee remained open to Members of the public and the media in keeping with Resolution No. 65 of 2005 and Standing Order 86 (b). In accordance with the Standing Orders, the Committee reserved its right to determine which meetings would be closed when sensitive issues not yet deliberated by the National Assembly and or issues that deal with security were being discussed. In principle, the Committee agreed that whenever such a decision may be taken that the Committees Division would inform the public and media.

The Committee wishes to bring to the attention of the National Assembly that no member of the public used this opportunity in the First Session and only on a few occasions did the media attend the Committee's meetings (13th and 20th June, 2007). Noteworthy is the fact that the media came out fully for the hearing with the Minister of Agriculture which was held on the 18th April, 2007.

The Committee noted that greater efforts needed to be made to encourage the public and the media to make more use of the opportunity of attending this sectoral committee's meetings as well as the other four Committees which were open to the public and media in keeping with the Standing Orders.

4. 4 Documents/Information Requested and Received.

At the request of the Committee, the Committees Division commenced the preparation of a data base of the documents, reports etc which the PSCES examined during the Eighth Parliament and to compile a listing of holdings based on the new documents and annual reports that relate to the Committee's mandate. This was completed and will be updated from time to time.

The Committee requested a number of documents from national and international agencies which it received and used. The only document which it requested and did not receive was a copy of the GUYSUCO's Strategic Plan 1998-2008 which the Committee was advised by GUYSUCO's Chairperson and the Minister of Agriculture that it was not finalized and adopted as yet. (See page 17)

A list of the documents the Committee received on request and those relevant to its work which were tabled in the National Assembly during the First Session of the 9th Parliament is attached at *Appendix III*.

5.0 SECTORAL REVIEW BY THE COMMITTEE

5.1 Agriculture-Drainage and Irrigation

The new Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Economics Services was comprised mainly of new Members, except for Mr. J. McAllister, Mr. W. Murray and Mr. K. Chand, and therefore the first meetings were focused on becoming knowledgeable about the mandate and oversight role and functions of the Committee and the agencies it is responsible to scrutinize.

The Committee noted that the second report of the PSCES of the Eighth Parliament although drafted had not been adopted and laid in the National Assembly. Efforts were made by the Chair and the Committees Division to have the previous Chairperson and Vice Chairman of that PSCES to approve it and bring it to the House. As of December 2007 these efforts had been unsuccessful.

Whilst working on the draft work programme, and, by the fifth meeting the issue of drainage and irrigation and the state of the East Demerara Water Conservancy began engaging the attention of the Committee. The view of a number of Committee Members was that its level was being kept too low.

It was noted that the Ministry of Agriculture is the main government agency with responsibility for promoting agricultural development in Guyana. The National Drainage and Irrigation Authority is a semi-autonomous body which falls under the purview of the Ministry of Agriculture and the East Demerara Water Conservancy also falls under that Ministry.

The Committee decided at its 5th Meeting held on 21st March, 2007 to invite the Minister of Agriculture and his technical experts to come before the Committee to answer some of its concerns with regards to the low level of the conservancy.

5.2 Hearing

The Minister of Agriculture was invited to appear before the Committee on 11th April 2007 at 11:30 pm in the Committee Room No. 1, Committees Division, Parliament Buildings. The date was subsequently changed to 18th April, 2007.

At its 7th Meeting held on 18th April 2007 the Committee interacted with the Hon. Minister of Agriculture Mr. Robert Persaud, M.P., and his technical team comprising of:

- (1) Mr. Walter Willis - Chairman, National Drainage and Irrigation Authority
- (2) Mr. Ravi Narine - CEO, National Drainage and Irrigation Authority
- (3) Mr. Sonny La Fleur - Manager, East Demerara Water Conservancy
- (4) Mr. Lionel Wordsworth - Deputy CEO, National Drainage and Irrigation Authority

Issued Raised by the Committee

Prior to the attendance of the Minister and his Team, the Committee in advance formally sent the Minister a number of questions and requested clarification on these issues as the subject of his presentation:

In his opening statement the Minister stated that “he sees this opportunity as being very relevant especially as we approach the May/June rainy season, where the East Demerara Water Conservancy comes in for a lot of focus”.

	ISSUES	MINISTER'S RESPONSE
(i)	What is the policy which guides and determines the management of the East Demerara Water Conservancy?	<p>The policy of the EDWC is formulated and executed within the framework of three deliverables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Support irrigation demands of the Estates of East bank and East Coast Demerara (b) Supply potable water to Georgetown; and (c) Provides significant flood control <p>In order to effectively deliver these services, management has established operational systems and decision-making principles.</p>
(ii)	Is there a pre-determined gate opening schedule and at what levels are the various gates opened if a schedule is in operation?	<p>In responding to question two, the Minister presented a chart to show the opening and closing of the gates of which he indicates depending on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Hydromet forecast ✓ Water levels in the Conservancy ✓ Rainfall recorded ✓ Water levels in the agriculture areas; ✓ Water level in the Lama canal that is with supplies and feeds to GWI-shelter belt; and ✓ Tidal Level

(iii)	Please provide details of the Conservancy levels from 1 st November, 2006 to 5 th April, 2007?	A chart was provided to Members.
(iv)	(a) Was there a recent crisis as it relates to the level of water in the Conservancy?	There was no crisis as it relates to the level of the water in the Conservancy
	(b) What caused the crisis if there was one?	Same as at item (iv).
	(c). Was irrigation water in any way affected for any period of time?	The answer is no, but I wish to add that the respective levels at any given period were always considered safe and water demand for both rice and sugar and Georgetown water supply was satisfied.
(v)	Could the Honorable Minister advise the Committee on the long term sustainability plan for the East Demerara Conservancy in the light of Global warming.	<p>The Government of Guyana and more particularly the Ministry of Agriculture are in the process of finalizing a GOG/World Bank Conservancy Adaptation Project.</p> <p>The objectives of this project are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ To strengthen the understanding of the EDWC system and coastal plain drainage regimes, while identifying key drainage regimes for follow-on intervention;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Implementing infrastructure investments aimed at increasing the drainage capacity of the EDWC ✓ Strengthening the institutional capacity to manage water levels in the EDWC and to guide intervention aimed at reducing Guyana's vulnerability to floods.
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At the end of the Minister's presentation, the Members of the Committee for over 2 hours questioned and expressed concerns in relation to a wide range of issues regarding the management of the EDWC. These ranged from concerns regarding decisions made in relation to the levels of the conservancy between November 2006 to March 2007, to the integrity of the conservancy and efforts by the government to implement a number of post 2005 reports, and the constraints faced.

These were answered by the Minister and his technical team in a frank and open atmosphere. The Minister and his team asserted that there had been no crisis experienced in the period when the level of the EDWC was at 52GD nor was irrigation water for agricultural cultivation and water supply to Georgetown unduly and unnecessarily affected.

In order to appreciate the full extent and depth of the discussions, the reader is invited to refer to pages 21-81 of the Verbatim Record of the hearing dated 18th April, 2007, at *Appendix IV*

5.3 Visit to the East Demerara Water Conservancy

The Committee indicated its interest to the Minister of Agriculture to make a site visit to the East Demerara Water Conservancy. This was arranged and the Committee visited the Conservancy on the 8th June, 2007 and was able to have first hand information on the ongoing works being done, those completed and the present state of the dam.

Four (4) Members of the PSCES, three (3) officers of the Parliament Office, the manager of the EDWC, Mr. Sonny La Fleur and two media personnel from Channel (9), Mr. Charles Griffith (Manager) and Mr. Lenox Herbert (photographer) were on the site visit to the Conservancy.

The following Members were present for the site visit of the conservancy:-

Mr. Anthony Vieira, M.S., M.P

Mr. Irfaan Ali, M.P

Mr. Komal Chand, C.C.H., J.P., M.P

Mr. Mohamad Farukh Khan J.P., M.P

Officers from the Parliament Office that accompanied the MP's:-

Mrs. Claudia Daniels-Greenidge – Clerk of Committees

Mr. Eton Moses – Documentation and Preparation Officer

Mr. Michael Munroe – Research and Analytical Assistant

On the site visit, the Committee Members interacted with the Manager of the EDWC on issues related to the operation of the EDWC. The Committee Members reported to the PSCES at its 13th Meeting held on the 13th June, 2007 that they did not see any imminent danger of failure of the East Demerara Water Conservancy.

5.4 Follow up on the recommendations of the various studies done on the EDWC by various experts after the 2005 flood.

The Committee in addition examined several reports in relation to the EDWC which arose as a result of the 2005 Floods. These were the ECLAC Report on (Guyana Socio-Economic Assessment of the Damages and Losses caused by the January-February 2005 Flooding) and the Mott MacDonald's Report (Conservancy Flood Management Modelling) and summarized these documents into one composite spreadsheet of recommendations. The PSCES then examined these internally and the view of several Members was that many of these were or had been implemented or were in different stages of implementation.

However the PSCES was of the opinion that its views should be verified by approaching the subject Minister. As a result on 28th June, 2007, the PSCES formally wrote the Minister of Agriculture enclosing the document of the two reports' recommendations and asked whether these had been accepted and if so were they being implemented. The Minister acknowledged the letter and advised that he needed more time to prepare his response. The PSCES awaits his formal response to the specific document.

The Committee's spread sheet of these recommendations are attached at *Appendix V*.

5.5 GUYSUCO Strategic Plan

At its 2nd Meeting held on 21st December, 2006, the new Committee requested copies of GUYSUCO's Strategic Plan 1998-2008, and briefing notes from the Minutes of the previous Committee meetings on the discussions on the GUYSUCO from the Committees Division. The Committee also asked to be informed as to the monies paid to the consultant, Mr. Earl John, who was hired by the previous Committee to examine GUYSUCO's Strategic Plan.

At its 3rd Meeting held on 28th February, 2007, the Chairperson informed the Committee that the Clerk of the National Assembly had advised her that a contracted sum of \$2,497,000 was appropriated for the preparation of a review of the GUYSUCO's Strategic Plan.

Members expressed divergent views on the report and the selection of Mr. Earl John as the consultant. Some Members also expressed disappointment that the previous Committee had not received a copy of GUYSUCO's Strategic Plan.

At its 4th Meeting held on 7th March, 2007, the Committee took a decision to have the Committees Division write to the Chairman of GUYSUCO requesting a copy of their revised Strategic Plan as well as reminding the state agency of its non submission of its Annual Reports for 2003-2006.

At its 7th Meeting held on 18th April, 2007 the Chairperson reported that she had spoken to Mr. Ronald Alli, the Chairman of GUYSUCO with regards to the letter sent by the Committee which was still awaiting his agency's response. Mr. Ronald Alli, then advised that the Board would be meeting soon and a response would be sent via the subject Minister. Mr. Murray then questioned whether this was the practice and the Chairperson informed Members that it was. A letter was received from the Minister of Agriculture advising that the Committee should channel all requests for information through his Ministry. The matter of Committees addressing agencies is still a subject for discussion.

This matter was one of several that engaged the Committee up to its 10th Meeting. In the interim the Committee agreed to verify whether GUYSUCO had submitted its Strategic Plan during the last Parliament. However, one of the Members of the government side on the previous Committee indicated to the Committee that he recalled that the Strategic Plan had been submitted.

At its 9th Meeting held on 9th May, 2007, the Committee was informed via a letter dated 8th May, 2007 from GUYSUCO's Chairman, that GUYSUCO had submitted its Strategic Plan in the second quarter of 2004 and that representatives of its Board and Management made presentations to Members of the Committee and responded to queries. The letter also stated that GUYSUCO was presently updating the plan. The Chairperson had also informed the Committee at the 8th meeting held on 25th April, 2007 that information received from GUYSUCO indicated that GUYSUCO was still in the process of reviewing its Strategic Plan.

At its 10th Meeting held on 23rd May, 2007, the Chairperson read an extract from the record of proceedings of the meeting of the previous Committee and informed the Committee that from all indications GUYSUCO had submitted its Strategic Plan to the Committee. However, the Committees Division could find no record of it.

6.0 FINANCIAL SECTOR

At its 15th Meeting held on 27th June, 2007, the Committee began its review of the Financial Sector. Preliminary discussions were held on the Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme and the National Development Strategy documents.

Members agreed to examine Annex A and B of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme (PRSP) (2005); and the Hansard record on the debate on the National Development Strategy when it was discussed in the National Assembly in December 2006.

The Committees Division was asked to write the Minister of Finance for an update on the status of the NDS as was proposed by the Government of Guyana. This was done. The World Bank Joint Staff Assessment Reports (2nd July, 2004) were also to be studied for discussion.

6.1 National Development Strategy

The NDS and PRSP were discussed and it was recommended that all the broad goals of the NDS be bulleted and prepared for discussion by the Committee page by page.

The bulleted objectives in the PRSP and NDS were prepared and sent to the Minister of Finance requesting an update on their implementation status.

At its 18th Meeting held on 25th July, 2007, the Committee's Researchers were asked to summarize the document of the NDS to capture at a glance the specific information required in order to assist the work of the Committee. Members also promised to study the document to identify why some goals were not achieved.

6.2 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

The Chairperson requested Mr. M. Ifran Ali to prepare a matrix on the PRSP 2004/2005 goals, outcomes, targets and achievements which the Committee would discuss at the next meeting.

It was also agreed that the Joint Staff Assessment from the World Bank should be incorporated into the review on the PRSP.

6.3 Millennium Development Goals

The Committee received a copy of the MDG Guyana Outlook 2007. It was agreed that the Goals and Objectives of the PRSP should also be studied in collaboration with the MDGs. The two latest reports of PRSP and MDG should be examined with a view to commence discussions.

6.4 Hydro Power

A Member of the Committee raised the issue of the importance of the Hydro Power Project and that it should be discussed as early as possible. It was agreed by the Committee that the issue of the Hydro Power Project and alternative energy be placed on the agenda after the recess.

The Committees Division was asked to write the Prime Minister with an interest in obtaining all relevant policy documents on alternative energy sources.

This was done and a correspondence was received from Guyana Energy Agency on the 13th August, 2007, informing the Committee of ongoing projects in the sector as well as advising it to look at the Prime Minister's website where an update was posted as well.

Appendix VI (Letter from GEA)

Discussions on Taxation and Fiscal Policy were deferred for another meeting.

7.0 CONSTRAINTS

7.1

The Committee met on 16th January, 2008 to conclude its draft report and thus signal the handover to the Opposition representative to chair the PSCES.

As this is the second PSCES and the 4th year since the introduction of the expanded committee system in the Guyana Parliament, the Members were of the view that reasonable progress has been made as both the Government and its agencies and Committee Members themselves were now more knowledgeable about the role of the PSCES in carrying out its Parliamentary oversight.

The Committee also was of the opinion that it had accomplished some success in its oversight responsibilities. The serious manner in which the matters before the Committee were addressed and the frank sharing of information were noteworthy. Members came prepared to address their responsibilities and tried to reach consensus in most cases.

However, it should be also noted that the volume of documents the Committee Members have to examine and access responses to were in some cases daunting. It is also clear that the efficiency with which the Committee carries out its mandate needs to be improved. Its role as an oversight body versus a grievance body needs to be underlined.

The Committee also faced a number of other constraints in order to carry out its functions.

The issue of attendance at meetings did not prevent meetings from being held. However, the issue of lateness of Members was of concern as it led to many meetings starting 40-45 minutes late. Notwithstanding this, the Committee held twenty meetings over the period in review. In comparison with the PSCES of the Eighth Parliament (Y2005 and Y2006) there was an increase in the number of meetings held by the Committee. Members, however, need to improve their punctuality.

The Committee, however, made a decision at its 19th Meeting held on the 5th December, 2007 that once there was a quorum as stipulated in the Standing Orders that the PSCES should not cancel the meeting even when there was no opposition representatives present.

At the beginning of the life of this Committee, the late completion of physical works to the present Committees' section was a concern but within a few months this was removed and the Committee is now comfortably operating out of this new facility.

7.2 Access to Government, its Agencies and Officials.

There was general cooperation from Public Officials with regards to requests for information and or documents that came from the Committee. However, the Committee noted that there was a paucity of annual reports tabled in the National Assembly relating to agencies it needed to scrutinize. It was agreed that the Chairperson should raise this at the appropriate forum to have it rectified. This was done and there was an improvement by a number of agencies in the submission of their annual reports. The Committee also recognized that some of these Ministries may not have submitted their reports on time due to constraints they face.

One isolated case was the issue regarding a request by the Committee to the GUYSSUCO Chairman and the subject Minister to obtain a copy of its Strategic Plan 1998-2011. The Committee did however receive a reply advising that it had not been adopted as yet.

7.3 Human Resource Constraints/Upgrade

The Committee noted that the work of the Committee could be significantly improved if there is a system of continuous training and exposure to similar expanded committee systems in other Parliamentary jurisdictions.

There was no specialized training for any of the Secretariat staff. It should nevertheless be noted that the continued capacity building within the Secretariat is necessary for efficiency in the Committee's execution of its work. However, this matter is engaging the Parliamentary Management Committee and the Project Manager of the Fiscal and Financial Management Programme (Parliament component) has advised that funds are available for some training for the Secretariat's staff before the project ends in June 2008.

7.4. Training and Travel by Committee Members

Five Members of the Committee. Messrs W. Murray, A. Vieira, M.I. Irfaan, K. Chand, and M.F. Khan benefited from a joint Public Accounts Committee and PSCES delegation's visit to the Nebraska Unicameral Legislature during the week of 11th April, 2007. This visit was funded through the GOG/IDB Fiscal and Financial Management Project- Parliament component.

All Members of the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Economic Services benefited from the CPA, UK training workshop which was held from 15th to 17th January, 2007 in Guyana.

7.5 Access to Parliament Website and Computerization of Records

The PSCES engaged the Project Manager of the PEU, FFMP on the issue of having an improved website for Parliament with the necessary linkages to documents that would help the Committee in its work. The Committee also inquired about the status of the digitilization of Parliamentary documents and the date of its commencement. The Project Manager informed the Committee that arrangements for the website were already in an advanced stage.

The Committee Members showed much interest in the proposals for an improved website and put forward a number of suggestions so that Members of Parliament could access their committee minutes, legislation and questions and answers easily.

The Project Manager also informed the Committee that two staff Members would also benefit from training in this area (archiving).

8.0 OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

- (i) The PSCES noted the tardy submission of budget agencies' annual reports to Parliament which was impacting on its ability to properly oversight the performance of the government and its agencies. An assessment was done and the findings brought to the Government's attention. This matter was raised with the Permanent Secretaries and has led to some improvement with those agencies under the purview of the PSCES.

The Committee however wishes to reiterate this issue as its oversight work will be hampered if the annual reports of the budget agencies are not submitted in a timely fashion and to encourage the sectoral ministries to make greater efforts to comply.

- (ii) The late receipt of Verbatim records continued to be of concern to the Committee as it affects efficiency and timely follow up especially after a formal hearing with government agencies. It was recommended that other avenues be explored by the Parliament to have an improved system of verbatim recordings.

This matter is engaging the attention of the Parliamentary Management Committee.

- (iii) It was observed that the PSCES appears to overlap a few agencies under other Sectoral Committees such as the NIS. It was therefore proposed that from time to time joint Sectoral Committee meetings could be convened with the mutual consent between the relevant Committees in order to reduce representatives of the same agencies appearing before two Committees separately and thus allowing for better utilization of the Committees' time and resources and those agencies being summoned.

This was brought to the attention of the PMC and the Committee was informed that there was no reason why this could not be implemented when required by exchanges and coordination between the chairpersons of the various Sectoral Committees.

This was brought to the attention of the PMC and the Committee was informed that there was no reason why this could not be implemented when required by exchanges and coordination between the chairpersons of the various sectoral Committees.

- (iv) The frequent level of late coming by Members and non-notification prior to the meetings of non-availability was of concern. Delays in commencing meetings by 40-45 minutes should not be seen as an acceptable modus operandi and Members are encouraged to improve their punctuality as much as possible.
- (v) That measures be put in place to encourage greater participation of the public at meetings that are open to the public. This can be done by sending electronic notices of meetings to the various media houses as well as placing a weekly advertisement in the Sunday newspapers specifying the name of the Committee meeting, date and time of the meeting, and a summary of the item(s) that will be discussed.

9.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Chairperson and the Committee Members of the First Session wish to acknowledge with appreciation the support given to it by the Clerk and staff of the Committees Division and the Parliament Staff in general. The Chairperson wishes to acknowledge with appreciation the support given to her by all the Members of the PSCES of the First Session (2006- 2007).

Appendix I

ECONOMIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

ATTENDANCE RECORD (2006 -- 2008)

NAMES	Dec.		Jan.		Feb.		March		April		May	
	21 st	28 th	31 st	7 th	21 st	11 th	18 th	23 rd	30 th	6 th	13 th	20 th
Ms. Gail Tiexiera, M.P.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.
Mr. James Mc Allister, M.P.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Ex.	Pr.	Ex.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.
Mr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, M.P.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Abs.	Ex.	Pr.	Ex.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Abs.
Mr. Komal Chand, M.P.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Abs.	Ex.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.
Mr. Mohamed F. Khan, M.P.	Pr.	Pr.	Abs.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.
Mr. Dharamkumar Seeraj, M.P.	Pr.	Ex.	Pr.	Ex.	Abs.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Ex.	Pr.
Mr. Winston Murry, C.C.H., M.P.	Pr.	Ex.	Ex.	Ex.	Ex.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Ex.	Pr.
Mr. Anthony Vienia, M.P.	Pr.	Pr.	Ex.	Pr.	Abs.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.
Mr. Kaemraj Rampatian	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Abs.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.
Duration of Meeting	10mins.	1hr. 50mins.	1hr. 30mins.	1hr. 21mins.	45mins.	2hrs. 50mins.	3hrs. 10mins.	2hrs. 30mins.	---	2hrs. 30mins.	1 hr. 55mins.	

Pr. - Present
 Abs. - Absent
 Ex. - Excused

NAMES	June			July			Dec. 5 th	Jan. 16 th
	6 th	13 th	20 th	27 th	4 th	11 th		
Ms. Gail Tiexiera, M.P.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.
Mr. James Mc Allister, M.P.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Ex.	---
Mr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, M.P.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Abs.
Mr. Komal Chand, M.P.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Ex.	Ex.	Pr.
Mr. Mohamed F. Khan, M.P.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.
Mr. Dharamkumar Seeraj, M.P.	Pr.	Pr.	Abs.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Ex.
Mr. Winston Murry, C.C.H., M.P.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Ex.	Pr.
Mr. Anthony Vieria, M.P.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.	Pr.
Mr. Dave Danny, M.P.	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	Pr.
Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan	Abs.	Abs.	Pr.	Abs.	Ex.	Abs.	Pr.	Pr.
Duration of Meeting	2hrs 30mins	2hrs 45mins	2hrs 20mins	2hrs 10mins	1hr 40mins	1hr. 45mins	1hr. 45mins	1hr. 40mins

Pr. - Present
Abs. - Absent
Ex. - Excused

Committees Division
Parliament Office
Public Buildings
Georgetown

TOTAL OCCASIONS PRESENT, EXCUSED OR ABSENT

NAMES	NO. OF MEETINGS	PRESENT	EXCUSED	ABSENT
Ms. Gail Tiexiera, M.P.	19	19		
Mr. James Mc Allister, M.P.	19	14		
Mr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, M.P.	19	15	3	1
Mr. Komal Chand, M.P.	19	14	2	2
Mr. Mohamed F. Khan, M.P.	19	18	4	1
Mr. Dharamkumar Seeraj, M.P.	19	13	4	1
Mr. Winston Murry, C.C.H., M.P.	19	12	4	2
Mr. Anthony Vieria, M.P.	19	16	6	1
Mr. Dave Danny, M.P.	1	1	2	1
Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan	19	11	2	6

Committees Division
Parliament Office
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Georgetown

Appendix II

Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Economic Services
Schedule – Work Programme 2007-2011
Focus on: (a) Policy (Justification)
(b) Implementation

			2008-2011	
	Documents Submitted	Committee Review	Scheduled Meetings	
<u>L- Macroeconomic Matters and Finance Sector Issues</u>				
NDS, PRSP, Budget	PRSP/PRSP Annual Update/Budget ✓ Fiscal & Financial Management 6 months report GRA Annual Report	April – May 2007 October July – August 2007	Minister of Finance and Technical Staff Minister of Finance Commissioner General, GRA	April – May October May
Taxation Matters	Treasury Memorandum	May-June 2007	Finance Secretary, Dep Finance Secretary, Accountant General	October
Government Accounting	Loan agreements	October 2007	Minister of Finance	November
Debt issues	OCI Annual Report	July – August 2007	Commissioner of Insurance	June
Insurance Supervision	NIS Annual Report	July – August 2007	General Manager, NIS	July
National Insurance	National Competitiveness Strategy	July – August 2007	Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce and Technical Staff	July-August
Competitiveness Strategy				

	Documents Submitted	Committee Review	Scheduled Meetings	2008-2011
Securities Council	Securities Council's Reports	July-August	Ministry of Finance /Securities Council	June
2- Infrastructure for Investment and Development				
Investment Code /Practices	GO-INVEST	May-June	GO-INVEST/Minister of Tourism, Industry & Commerce	May-June
Physical infrastructure, transport	Ministry of Public Works (Transport Sector Study)/Ministry of Home Affairs(Police Traffic)	June - July	Minister of Transport and Technical Staff/MinHA/GPF Traffic	June - July
Drainage and Irrigation/ Sea Defences	NDIA	August	Minister of Agriculture and Technical Staff/Min Public Works	May
Communications	NFMU, Office of the Prime Minister	June	NFMU	July
L and Distribution/Availability	GLSC, Guyana Forestry Commission)	October	GLSC, GFC	November
Housing & Water / Town & Country Planning	CHPA & Min. of Housing & Water / GWI	June -July	Minister of Housing and Water, CHPA, GWI	October
Energy Policy - Alternative (ethanol,hydro/solar/wind)	Office of the Prime Minister Min Agriculture	November	Office of the Prime Minister, Guyana Min Agriculture	December
Environmental Protection	EPA	November	Office of the President/EPA	December

	Documents Submitted	Committee Review	Scheduled Meetings	2008-2011
<u>3. The Productive Sectors</u>				
Global warming/disaster Preparedness	Ministry of Agriculture/Office of the President/CDC	November	Minister of Agriculture & Technical Staff/OP/CDC	December
Agriculture	Ministry of Agriculture Reports (Fisheries/non-traditional crops)	August	Ministry of Agriculture and Technical Staff	January
Sugar	MinAgriculture/GUYSUCO	August/October	GUYSUCO/Min. Agriculture	January
Rice	Ministry of Agriculture/GRDB	October	MinAgriculture/GRDB	February
Mining	GGMC/Office of the Prime Minister	November	GGMC/Office of the Prime Minister	March
Forestry	Guyana Forestry Commission	November	GFC	March
Bauxite	Office of the Prime Minister	October	Office of the Prime Minister	April
Tourism	National Tourism Strategy	December	Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce and Technical Staff	May
<u>4. Improving Quality of Services Sector</u>				
Regional Services / Local Authorities	Ministry of Local Government	July	Ministry of Local Government	December
Consumer Protection	Ministry of Tourism, Industry &	October	Ministry of Tourism, Industry &	November

		2008-2011	
	Documents Submitted	Committee Review	Scheduled Meetings
G Post Office	Commerce GPO/Office of the Prime Minister	November	Commerce GPO/Office of the Prime Minister November
Domestic Security Affairs	Minister of Home Affairs/Police /Fire/GRO/	June	Ministry of Home Affairs: GPF/GFS/GPS/GRO/PCA October
5 - Annual End of Year Review of the Committee's work	Draft report	Committee to finalize for submission	Submit to Parliament by First week January of new year

Appendix III

Documents/Information Requested and Received

- (1) Annual Reports from some Ministries and Subvention Agencies that fall within the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Economic Services scrutiny presented to the National Assembly.
- (2) ECLAC Report, 2005
- (3) Report on Cane Grove Breach by Mr. Harold Davis
- (4) Schedule Supplementary Provision on Current and Capital Estimates for 2006-4-13 to 2006-11-17 and for period ending 2006-12-31.
- (5) Treasury Memorandum Pursuant to Resolution No.100/2006 dated 2006-3-16 of the National Assembly on the Public Accounts Committee of Guyana for 2000/2001.
- (6) The National Development Strategy
- (7) Guyana Poverty Reduction Strategy, Progress Report 2005
- (8) Guyana Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper Progress Report and Joint IDA/IMF Staff Assessment July 2, 2004.
- (9) Guyana Revenue Authority-Annual Report for 2004 and 2005
- (10) Enhanced HIPIC Debt Relief Agreement between Guyana and OPEC Fund for International Development of 2005-12-21.

- (11) Draft Report of Conservancy Modelling May 2005-Mott McDonald
- (12) Task Force for Infrastructure Recovery-Guyana Final Report of the Special Adviser dated June 2005.
- (13) Joint IDA/IMF Staff Assessment dated July 2005
- (14) Millennium Development Goals Guyana 2007
- (15) Millennium Development Goals, July 2003
- (16) Mid year report of the Minister of Finance (2007)
- (17) Laws of Guyana
- (18) Standing Orders
- (19) Constitution of Guyana

Appendix IV

PARLIAMENTARY SECTORAL COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC SERVICES

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS of Proceedings of the 7th Meeting of the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Economic Services of the First Session (2006-2007) of the Ninth Parliament of Guyana, held in the Committees Room No. 1, Committees Division, Public Buildings, Georgetown.

10:30H

WEDNESDAY, 18 APRIL 2007

MEMBERS (7)

Chairperson (PPP/C) (1)

(Nominated by the Committee of Selection on 14 December 2006)

(Elected by the Committee on 21 December 2006)

Ms Gail Teixeira MP

Vice-Chairman (PNCR-1G) (1)

(Nominated by the Committee of Selection on 14 December 2006)

(Elected by the Committee on 21 December 2006)

Mr James K McAllister MP

Other Members from the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) (3)

(Nominated by the Committee of Selection on 14 December 2006)

Mr Mohamed Irfaan Ali MP

(Absent-excused)

Mr Komal Chand MP

Mr Mohamed F Khan MP *(Alternate)*

Mr Dharamkumar Seeraj MP

Other Members from the People's National Congress/Reform-One Guyana (PNCR-1G) (1)

(Nominated by the Committee of Selection on 14 December 2006)

Mr Winston S Murray CCH, MP *(Alternate)*

Mr Anthony Vieira MP

Member from the Alliance For Change (AFC) (1)

(Nominated by the Committee of Selection on 14 December 2006)

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan MP

Officers:

Mrs Claudia Daniels-Greenidge	-	Clerk of Committee
Ms Sonia Maxwell	-	Assistant Clerk of Committee
Mr Harry N Jewan	-	Project Manager, PEU, FFMP

Invitee:

Hon Robert M Persaud, *Minister of Agriculture*

10:40H

**7TH MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENTARY SECTORAL COMMITTEE ON
ECCONOMIC SERVICES**

The Chairperson: Let us start the meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS - None

EXCUSES

Mr Mohamed Irfaan Ali has asked to be excused from today's meeting

CIRCULATION OF DOCUMENTS

The following documents were circulated prior to the Meeting:

- (i) Notice of the 7th Meeting dated 12 April 2007;
- (ii) Minutes of the 6th Meeting held on 11 April 2007; and
- (iii) Report on Factors which led to the Breach in the EDWC Dam at La Bonne Mere.

The following document was circulated at the meeting:

- Letter dated 12 April 2007 to the Honourable Minister of Agriculture re: Request for Copies of the ECLAC Report and Inclusion of Another Question for His Presentation

BUSINESS OF THE MEETING:

- (i) Correction and Confirmation of Minutes of the 6th Meeting held on 11 April 2007;
- (ii) Matters Arising;
- (iii) Presentation by the Honourable Minister of Agriculture on the East Demerara Conservancy; and
- (iv) Discussion on:
 - The Draft Work Programme 2007

CORRESPONDENCE

- (i) Incoming
- (ii) Outgoing

Any Other Business

(i) CORRECTIONS AND CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE 6TH
MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 11 APRIL 2007

Corrections:

Attendance Page

Is any body mis-represented here, mistakes or corrections?

[No objection - The Attendance Page, as printed, stands part of the Minutes]

Page 28

[No objection - Page 28, as printed, stands part of the Minutes]

Page 29

[No objection - Page 29, as printed, stands part of the Minutes]

Page 30

[No objection - Page 30, as printed, stands part of the Minutes]

Page 31

[No objection - Page 31, as printed, stands part of the Minutes]

10:43H

[Mr Anthony Vieira arrives]

We are on corrections Mr Vieira.

Page 32

Paragraphs 8.1 (ii) and (iii)

Mr Winston S Murray: Paragraph 8 1 (ii) - Composition of the *Legislature*

Paragraph 8.1 (iii) - Appointment of the staff to the *Legislature*

Correction -

Insertion of the word *Legislature* for the word *Legislation*

The Chairperson: Under (vi), Would it be *Legislature* Performance Audit? Is that correct or is it *Legislation*.

Mr Winston S Murray: *Legislation* is correct.

The Chairperson: Are there any other corrections?

[Page 32, as corrected, stands part of the Minutes]

Page 33

[No objection - Page 33 as printed, stands part of the Minutes]

Can we ask that the Minutes be adopted and seconded please?

Mr Mohamed F Khan: I beg to move the adoption.

Mr Winston S Murray: I second

[The Minutes of the 6th Meeting held on Wednesday, 11 April 2007, were confirmed with corrections on a motion moved and seconded by Mr Mohamed Khan and Mr Winston Murray respectively]

(iii) MATTERS ARISING

Page 29, Paragraph 6.1.1 - Chairman, GUYSUCO

The Chairperson: I did speak to Mr Ronald Ali. I called him. I know that the Parliament Office also had called concerning the response to us. He had said

that they were preparing a response and it would be sent via the Minister of Agriculture, whom they report to. I have not received anything as yet. They said that they were having a Board meeting on not this Saturday; was it the last Saturday? Well, this Saturday gone and that they would subsequently respond, but via the Minister.

Mr Anthony Vieira: Might I ask a question?

The Chairperson: Yes.

Mr Anthony Vieira: Is that normal? If we are asking for information, do we have to channel it through the Minister?

The Chairperson: I am not an expert in this, but what I understand even with the Commissioner of Police and all these others, they go through the Minister. This is the issue in terms of the rules and procedures we have to still develop as a Parliament in terms of a witness guide, because there are rules in most Parliaments to do with how witnesses are called, but the tendency has been to go through the Minister that is not necessarily to seek Minister's approval, but to channel it through him. We wrote directly to GUYSUCCO.

Mr Anthony Vieira: We are, however, exposing ourselves to the possibility of a ministerial filtering process.

The Chairperson: Mr Willis here. Is he with the Minister of Agriculture?

Mr Anthony Vieira: Yes, he has to be. He is the new Chairman of the Lama Conservancy.

The Chairperson: Could you tell him that we would start at 11:30H?

Mr James K McAllister: Mde Chairperson, I just want to comment on the whole issue of the channelling of information through the Minister. I could remember in the last Parliament this issue came up. I think it was related to the Commissioner of Police and there was an issue and eventually we uncovered the Evidence Act which established clearly that the Parliament has the right to summon anyone and to request information from anyone and so therefore it is not a case where the only person we can ask information is the Minister. On that occasion the Commissioner of Police attempted to redirect the Committee to write the Minister asking the Minister to instruct him and it was established that that was not required. The Parliament has the authority to ask any Government Official or Agency to submit information.

The Chairperson: GUYSUCO is not saying that he would not do it. The Chairman said to me that their answer would be channelled through the Minister. They would send their response to the Minister and the Minister would then send it to Parliament. So it is not saying that they are not accepting or that they are not responding.

Mr Anthony Vieira: No, I think is a very important issue. I think that fundamentally since we can actually ask GUYSUCO a direct question, then we have a right to expect that GUYSUCO will answer us without having to go through his Minister. Were the procedures set up whereby you have to go through the Minister then you would have to approach the Minister to approach GUYSUCO in the first place to render the information required. So by virtue of the way the thing is set up whereby these Committees can approach people directly at any Ministry or any of the forty Departments of Government, then I think it would be reasonable to expect that you would not have to wait for

Ministerial permission to obtain information on any matter before the Committee.

The Chairperson: But I warned the Committee that one of the issues that has not been finished and there is a draft manual at the Parliamentary Management Committee which has to circulate to parties for discussion and it has to come to the Parliament. It is the Rules and Procedures governing the issue of persons coming before the sectoral committee. This is not in contradiction to the evidence Act of saying that the committee can call people; it is establishing the rules which are established in most Parliaments when there are committees that can call witnesses for procedural points.

Mr Anthony Vieira: I understand that Madame.

The Chairperson: That is what we do not have right now. This has been a long issue and that is where Public Servants in the English Parliament which was sorted out, on whom you can call on your own whims and fancies and what protection they can get.

Mr Anthony Vieira: I understand completely. I am saying that I am inferring from the fact that we wrote GUYSUCO asking for that information that the protocol would be that we are allowed to ask GUYSUCO to ask the question. Why the answer must come through the Minister of Agriculture if the question does not have to go through him? To me, it is a contradiction and a dichotomy in the protocol. Once you can ask him the question, he must answer. If you cannot ask the question then he would properly direct the question to the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Agriculture then ask us the question.

The Chairperson: I appreciate all of that. All I am saying is that I spoke to the Chairman and the Chairman advised me that their Board was meeting; they would be discussing the request; they had not completed their response and they would be channelling their response through the Minister. I am just reporting that. We can raise it with the Minister. I assume, if we wish to that there is an outstanding issue and could he not discuss it with GUYSUCO? The impression I got from GUYSUCO ... I did not know, in my own role here we wrote GUYSUCO directly, I thought we could not or could of, we just did. So I did not know that they would challenge it through the Minister, but GUYSUCO does come under the Minister. Out of courtesy as a minister in the past, you would ask agencies or at least copy their responses to you so that you would be familiar. In case an agency said something that a journalist would come to you later on and said X and you as a minister knew nothing. So I am not sure that is what GUYSUCO means or whether they means that they will only go through.

Clerk of Committee: Mde Chairperson. We were advised to carbon copy the letter to the Minister.

The Chairperson: Mrs Greenidge is saying that they carbon copied the request to the Minister and apparently this was done in the past.

Clerk of the Committee: Yes.

Mr Anthony Vieira: The people that the Committee is looking at they are channelling it through the relevant Minister.

The Chairperson: They have copied it.

Mr Anthony Vieira: I think the time has come to ask the Parliament the question whether that is understood to be the case. I do not understand why we should be fettered by something like that.

The Chairperson: As I said again that there is a draft manual which speaker has a consultant worked on. He gave Volda and I copies which has to be looked at and I assume it will have to come to Parliament. The Speaker has not officially advised us that this is the manual he wants to work with. Out of courtesy he has given it to Volda and I in the Management Sub-Committee. He gave the two of us and at a certain point we have to clarify with the Speaker if this is officially been given to us in the sense of signalling to the parties to discuss this draft manual, because it has to be tabled in the House and once it is tabled in the House and discussed that will set out the guidelines, if you call a Minister, how long he is expected to answer in writing, as a witness public servants and so on. That is my understanding. As far as I know, it was one of the needs assessment recommendations and the FFMP provided consultants to Parliament to draft a number of documents including that on, so that it will be addressed. In the mean time, I think we are just being ... I believe, it is not that the Committee is saying that we cannot call someone. If GUYSUCO does not answer us, we can decide to summon them here.

Mr Winston S Murray: Mde Chairperson, I just want to say, as I understand it, we are asking GUYSUCO for a strategic plan. That is it. It is a document that has been prepared and is available. I do not know what is going through the Minister, if it is this plan is going through the Minister. It seems to me that this is something that has been commissioned and exists and it is not as though we are asking a set of policy questions. So, that one is a little puzzling to me if my understanding of a plan is right.

The second thing I wish to say is that you added quite gratuitously that they were sending the response through the Minister; you did not have to say that, you ventured that to us, because it is an internal matter. We write the organisation and we expect the organisation to respond. The organisation might have internal procedures that are its own business. We cannot get into that.

The Chairperson: That is true.

Mr Winston S Murray: But we look to the organisation that to respond. So maybe we are pursuing a red herring in the sense that it is to the organisation that we look and they need to tell us when they are going to get this document. As far as we are concerned it is the organisation that is responding. But in the first one, I do not understand why that is going through the Minister. It just seems to me that it is a plan we are asking for; it is not some grave policy matter on which they want guidance.

The Chairperson: In the letter we sent, we asked for the strategic plan and also reminded them that they have a number of annual reports outstanding. So basically as far as we know these are all public documents or whatever. Anyway, that is outstanding on the agenda. I would suggest that maybe as a Parliamentary Committee that we can write a reminder. What date did we send that letter? Is it about a month ago or three weeks ago?

Clerk of Committee: Three weeks ago.

The Chairperson: I think that we should probably write them a reminder saying that we are still expecting an answer.

Mr Anthony Vieira: This must be for all committees, not just this one.

The Chairperson: You mean the sectoral committees.

Mr Anthony Vieira: Yes.

Mr Winston S Murray: Are we still on Matters Arising?

The Chairperson: Yes

Page 29 - Paragraph 6.3.2

Mr Winston S Murray: Paragraph 6.3.2 - I have something to bring to your attention - the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act (FMAA). Under Part 12 at Page 48 - Statutory Bodies - which are bodies that exist under the law? It says, Annual Report - A statutory body shall as soon as is practicable ...

The Chairperson: Is that still Part 12?

Mr Winston S Murray: Yes, it is the same part. Section 80:

As soon as is practicable and in all events not later than four months after the end of the fiscal year established for that fiscal body or if not fiscal year has been established after the end of each calendar year, submit an annual report to the concerned Minister and the concerned Minister shall within two months following receipt of the annual report present the annual report of each statutory body to the National Assembly.

So there is a legal requirement for each statutory body, which could include people like GUYSSUCO and so on in the official system to submit reports to the Minister and for the Minister to submit those reports to the National Assembly.

There is nothing here that says that if they do not submit, who could have, but they ultimately have to come to the National Assembly, in my respectful view, protracted periods to time beyond a reasonable deadline has passed that it is not out of place for the Parliament, since this is the ultimate way it has to come for the highest official of the National Assembly to inquire as to the status of these reports which are required to be lodged in the National Assembly.

In respect of the Budget Agencies ... *[Interruption]*

The Chairperson: Mr Murray, I am sorry to cut you. Can I get a photocopy of that section, just for being expedient right now? Does anyone else wish a copy of that section or just me?

Mr Anthony Vieira: Yes, would like a copy.

The Chairperson: Mr Mc Allister, Komal!

Mr Komal Chand: I have my copy.

The Chairperson: I just do not remember if I have my copy.

Mr Winston S Murray: And I was going on to say that in respect of the Budget Agencies that is done under the direction of the Public Service Ministry and I know in the days when I worked in the Public Service that they issued circulars that would from time to time adjust the format on which these annual reports are done. I had an interesting experience, I sought to get the Permanent Secretary and somebody answered the phone against which the number of the PS was listed and said that there is not Permanent Secretary. So I said, well who is performing the functions of Permanent Secretary. I was told that the Minister was and then I said, apart from the Minister, because I did not necessarily want

to bother the Minister about this matter. I asked who is the highest official that superintends the Ministry? I was told that it is the Minister who superintends everything. I then called for the Minister; the same person answered the phone. So I said, Madame you are in every place and indeed, but I did not get hold of the Minister. Anyway, I found that interesting that the Minister is in charge of everything from the routine matters up to policy matters. Anyhow, I have not been able to get her, because I wanted to get hold of the circular, so that I could have brought it for the benefit of the Economic Services Committee to lay before you of the evidence of the requirements for these annual reports of budget agencies coming to the National Assembly. So I will undertake to do that for you between now and our next meeting.

The Chairperson: So, Budget Agencies are not under the FMA Act

Mr Winston S Murray: No, like the Guyana Revenue Authority

The Chairperson: What I have done, I have been trying to complete the compiling of a list, both from using Parliament's records as well as records I have been able to look at with what we have submitted or we believed we submitted and to try to create a list that gives us some accuracy of which agencies are outstanding and which ones have given up to 2004/2005. I am hoping to finish that and to give it to share that with the Parliament Committee so that can verify whether my documents are right, because the Management Information System at Parliament is not totally up and running or it is not running yet. So sometimes there is a little bit of reconciliation issue, but I would hope that we can share that at the next meeting so that you can see the agencies listed on the Economic Services and what is their status. In fact, I feel bad that a number of the agencies (let me say) in Home Affairs which I worked with. I know that they have

submitted the annual reports to the Minister, but sometimes, as I said in one of the meetings is that the volume of copies - print budgets are problematical and so I have raised that at another level to see if that maybe the problem with some other agencies not submitting, because I think it is 100 copies for Cabinet and over 100 copies for here.

Clerk of the Committee: Yes.

The Chairperson: Then there must be copies for the public use. So Mr Murray, thank you for sharing that section of the FMA Act and bring it to our attention. I think you are right that needs to be signalled to the statutory bodies. What we could probably do, Mr Murray, when I circulate the list next week or the next of what agencies are in compliance - these are the statutory bodies - we may then want to decide what action we may take. That would clearly say what the budget agencies are.

Mr Winston S Murray: Actually there is a list at the back of that very Act identifying the budget agencies.

The Chairperson: Yes. That is good.

Page 30

I spoke to the Minister and therefore according to the Minister whether he wanted more time or whether he was prepared to come on the 18th. He had said, no; leave it on the 18th that was fine. So, I gave him verbally the additional question that we had discussed and then Parliament followed with the formal letter.

Are there any other issues there?

Page 31 ...

Page 32

Nebraska - Are there any issues there?

Page 33 ...

Can we move from Matters Arising to the next item on the Agenda?

We are preparing for this meeting with the Minister, do you wish to take a few Minutes to look at the approach we will take.

(iv) THE DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2007

The Draft Work Programme was the other item on the Agenda which was circulated and we had made some minor corrections and so on, but people still needed time to go and change, amend and so on. So I do not know if any body addressed that or whether we want more time for that

Mr Winston S Murray: May I suggest a little more time, because I myself and I am speaking personally, I have not been really able to look at it.

[Deferred]

Format on Minister's Visit

The Chairperson: Okay, we have the appointment with the Minister; I understand he is walking with three technical persons. Is that right?

Clerk of Committee: They should be here for 11:30h

The Chairperson: So, maybe we may want to address a format on how we will deal with this. I have never been in these types of things before. I think, Mr McAllister, Mr Murray and Mr Komal Chand have been. I assume that the format is when the Minister comes we welcome him; and we re-addressed the questions we have sent him - reiterate the questions giving them a forum to answer - at least the first set of questions that have been asked. I mean the questions that have been tabled officially to give an opportunity to answer those and then to have subsidiary questions. Is that the normal format?

Mr James K McAllister: Yes. Basically the Minister has his representatives. In past what we did, we generally invite the Minister to comment or to make a presentation based on the questions we asked and after that we will then have

follow-up questions from the various Members of the Committee on the broad issues of the subject before the Committee.

The Chairperson: Okay. Do we wish to close this part of our meeting and then take a break and start back when the Minister comes?

Mr Winston S Murray: That is a very good idea.

The Chairperson: So you can eat in peace, relax, address your minds to what you think will be burning questions you would want to ask, Mr McAllister or Mr Vieira.

Mr James K McAllister: I have one question. I am just curious.

The Chairperson: If you can look in the earlier document, the two letters we sent the Minister:

- (i) 4 April that says there are the questions;
- (ii) The supplementary one which is questions put on 12 April.

So we will start with those questions.

Mr James K McAllister: Did we invite the Press?

The Chairperson: Yes.

Clerk of Committee: They are waiting outside.

The Chairperson: Apparently the Press is early. So we can now have a snack and prepare our minds.

BREAK 11:20H -11:30H

(iii) **ORAL PRESENTATION BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF
AGRICULTURE, HON ROBERT M PERSAUD
ON THE EAST DEMERARA CONSERVANCY**

Members of the Delegation:

- Mr Walter Willis* - *Chairman,*
National Drainage and Irrigation
Board
- Mr Ravi Narine* - *Chief Executive Officer,*
National Drainage and Irrigation
Board
- Mr Samuel La Fleur* - *Manager,*
East Demerara Water Conservancy
- Mr Lionel WordsWorth* - *Deputy Chief Executive Officer,*
National Drainage and Irrigation
Board

The Chairperson: Can we welcome you, Mr Minister? On behalf of the our Committee, we wish to thank you for responding to our invitation to present yourself and team and to respond to a number of issues of the Economic Services Committee. As you know this is the new Committee under the Ninth Parliament and I would like to introduce the Members and also we would be most happy to have you present your team and delegation to us.

We have the Clerk of the Committees Division Mrs Claudia Daniels-Greenidge: on my left Mr McAllister who you know well; Mr Winston Murray; Mr Anthony Vieira, Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: on my right there are Mr Komal Chand, Mr Mohamed Farouk Khan and Mr Seeraj. Mr Irfaan Ali who is one of the Members of the Committee has asked to be excused.

This is the Economic Services, we are very happy to have you and your team and we wish to welcome you and to thank you for agreeing to appear before us. Also we invite you to present your delegation to us.

The format will be that there are questions that we presented to you on 4 April in a letter and there is also a subsequent question that was sent by a letter last week. We will address those questions first and after your presentation the floor will be opened for further discussions.

For the Committee Members I ask you to look at those letters that were sent out. Minister would be guided by the questions that we asked him.

Hon Robert M Persaud: Thank you very much, Mde Chairperson and Members of the Economic Services Committee. I am particularly pleased to have been given the opportunity to respond to questions and perhaps further clarification on issues concerning the East Demerara Water Conservancy. I know it has been

an issue that I have heard some public utterances, some informed, others not too informed. So we see this opportunity as being very relevant especially as we approached the May/June rainy season, where the East Demerara Water Conservancy comes in for a lot of focus.

I also noticed that there is a lot of media interest in this matter. I am advised that this is normal with some of the activities, so we are happy too that the media is here so that they too can convey to the public these issues.

I can tell you who are the Members of my team. On my right is Mr Walter Willis, he is here in his capacity as the Chairman of the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority Board. I am quite sure he is known for his engineering expertise in other areas too, but he is solely here as the Chairman of the NDIA Board. On my far left is the Chief Executive Officer of the NDIA Mr Ravi Narine; on my immediate left is Mr Sammy La Fleur, who is the Manager of the East Demerara Water Commission and behind me is the Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the NDIA Mr Lionel Wordsworth.

We are here to answer these questions as well as other issues. I seek your guidance as to how we shall proceed.

The Chairperson: Thank you Minister. Before I hand the floor over to you, can I ask the Press, while the Sectoral Committees are opened to the public and the Press, this is a presentation by the Minister and therefore I would ask the Press to keep more behind me, that you are here for recording purposes. Therefore while I do not want to hamstring you in any way, we do need to recognise that this is a very formal and official setting. Therefore you can keep close on this side of me, because I do not want the cameras to be sticking into people faces and distracting us from some of the issues we are really here for.

The questions that were posed by the Committee let me just go through them:

- What is the policy which guides and determines the management of the East Demerara Water Conservancy?
- Is there a pre-determined date open schedule and at what levels are the various gates opened if a schedule is in operation?
- Please provide details of the Conservancy levels from 1 November 2006 to 5 April 2007.
- Was there a recent crisis as it relates to the level of water in the Conservancy?
 - What caused the crisis if there was one?
 - Was irrigation water in any way affected for any period of time?

The second letter had a question which was more a policy on a larger issue:

- Could the Honourable Minister advise the Committee on the long term sustainability plan for the East Demerara Conservancy in the light of global warming?

So Minister we would leave it to you to the order with which you would wish to answer.

Mr McAllister

Mr James K McAllister: Just one correction 1 (i) should be is there be a pre-determined gate opening schedule.

The Chairperson: Yes, thank you.

Minister when you are speaking or any of your technical supporters could you please put on the mike for recording purposes?

The floor is opened to you.

Hon Robert M Persaud: Thank you very much Mde Chairperson. I will answer the questions as you presented them. It will make it easier for all of us to work.

The first question that was posed -

What is the policy which guides or determines the management of the EDWC?

My response is that the policy of the EDWC is formulated and executed within the framework of three deliverables. These deliverables are:

- (i) Support irrigation demands of the Estates of East Bank and East Coast Demerara;
- (ii) Supply potable water to Georgetown; and
- (iii) Provides significant flood control.

In order to effectively deliver these services, management has established operational systems and decision-making principles. The major function is the

proper management of the intake and relief structures. Members may know that there are twenty-seven intake structures and five main relief structures. The main ones are:

- The Land of Canan;
- Friendship;
- Cunia;
- Maduni; and
- Lama.

The second question posed -

Is there a pre-determined gate open schedule?

And the answer is yes.

(iii) At what levels are the various gates opened if its schedule is in operation?

The opening and the closing of the gates depend on the following:

- Hydromet forecast;
- Water levels in the Conservancy;
- Rainfall recorded;

- Water levels in the agricultural areas;
- Water level in the Lama Canal that is with supplies and feeds to GWI -shelter belt; and
- Tidal level.

The second question that was posed asked for details of the Conservancy levels from November 1 to April 5 and what we have done we have provided information as of yesterday so we have extended that and we have the levels there on the screen and perhaps if Members wish we can take you through those levels or is it clear?

The Chairperson: I think it would be helpful, because it is a little distant.

Mr Anthony Vieira: We need a microscope.

Hon Robert M Persaud: What I will do, I will ask the Deputy Executive officer to take you through from that period and then we will return.

The Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr Lionel Wordsworth: Good morning everyone. As the Minister mentioned the levels that were asked for were from 1 November 2006 to 6 April 2007. From the Chart you will see from November 1 to the 7. April.

I have here at the top a broken line showing the dam at 59GD; a special straight line showing the full supply level of the Conservancy at 56.5GD and the blue line showing the water level ... *[Interruption]*

The Chairperson: Would you like to speak a little louder?

Mr Lionel Wordsworth: ... and the third broken line at 52 GD represents the dead storage level.

Mr Winston S Murray: What storage level?

Hon Robert M Persaud: D-e-a-d - dead storage level

Mr Lionel Wordsworth: What happens as at 1 November into early December, we started to record levels as shown by these vertical blocks here in red. At this point, we could see that the water level in the Conservancy went up significantly and as we went into late January period, in this section here we would see that there were minimal recording of rainfall and at this time it coincides with the irrigation period for rice and sugar along the coast. So at this point, water was released for irrigation purposes while we have the irrigation management control in place and as we come towards March, there was one day of high recorded rainfall. The level peaked down.

During the period 19 February, we pumped water into the Conservancy at the Maduni location - Water pumped from the Maduni Creek into the Conservancy at Maduni. As we approached toward the end of March, we see an increased rainfall being experienced and it can be seen here that the water level started to peak up back going up to 56GD level recorded at Lama. Also what happened is that during this peak down here when irrigation was taking place is that creation has been made for storage in the Conservancy as the approach which we can see here already, the level is going up venturing into the May/June rain.

[See APPENDIX 1 Attached Re: GRAPH SHOWING RAINFALL AND EDWC WATER LEVELS FOR THE PERIOD 1 NOVEMBER 2006 TO 6 APRIL 2007]

Hon Robert M Persaud: That is our answer to question 2.

Question 3 (i) - *Was there a recent crisis as it relates to the level of the water in the Conservancy?*

As we saw depicted on that Chart, it was evidently clear that there was not.

3 (ii) - *What caused the crisis?*

There was no crisis, so we cannot look at what caused the crisis. That does not exist.

3 (iii) - *Was irrigation water in any way affected for the period?*

The answer is no, but I wish to add that the respective levels at any given period were always considered safe and water demand for both rice and sugar and Georgetown water supply was satisfied. At present, as we can see from the chart there the Conservancy is being replenished and with the advent of the May/June rains the Conservancy would have enough water stored to satisfy the next rice and sugar crop. The level of 57.5 GD is targeted to be attained after the

May/June rains of 2007. I must add that the predictions from the Hydromet Department, it is forecast that we will have forty-percent above normal rainfall. That is their predication. The low water value of some 52.6 GD resulted from irrigation water demands from the Conservancy that is why we saw that dip there and water conserving measures were in place. This is not unusual during this period. In addition was replenishing was supplemented as Mr Wordsworth pointed out from pumping at the Maduni end. Good management has ensured that there was no shortage of water. After the recent rains, the level is just above 55.9 and priority of operation has now changed from water supply to one of flood control and creation of storage to ensure that there is adequate water for the upcoming rainy season. A level of 57.5 is targeted to be attained at the completion of the May/June rains and again this will ensure that irrigation and water supply required will be satisfied. The management of the EDWC ensured that during the dry month of March, we had effective measures in place to ensure that there is enough water stored in the Conservancy to supply all water demands for that month. In so doing, there was simultaneously enough storage created in the Conservancy to take care of the upcoming rainy season. Therefore, the Conservancy was not at any risk of not providing adequate amount of water. We all agree, and we recognise as an areas that we have always given attention to, is that there is need for much work to be done to the EDWC for improved performance, but it is not true that the Conservancy is presently not managed effectively within these constraints.

The supplementary question, the Government of Guyana and more particularly the Ministry of Agriculture, we are in the process of finalising a GOG/World Bank Conservancy Adaptation Project. The objective of this project addresses the need for information, what is our long term plan in the context of climate change.

The objectives of this project are:

- (i) to strengthen the understanding of the EDWC system and coastal plain drainage regimes, while identifying key drainage regimes for follow-on intervention;
- (ii) Implementing infrastructure investments aimed at increasing the drainage capacity of the EDWC;
- (iii) Strengthening the institutional capacity to manage water levels in the EDWC and to guide intervention aimed at reducing Guyana's vulnerability to floods.

There are various components of this project:

There is a pre-investment studies for engineering design of this work: The objective of this component is to provide hydrologic base line necessary for contemplating rational interventions aimed at increasing the current discharged capacity of the flood control system and this will be done through detailed topographic, hydrologic modelling of course to low lands; assessment of the EDWC systems integrity; EDWC hydraulic modelling, pre-feasibility studies for coastland/lowland interventions and operational capacity building. That is component one of the project. *[Interruption]*

Mr Anthony Vieira: Might I ask a question?

The Chairperson: You can ask your supplementary question, but the Minister is asking to let him finish his presentation.

Hon Robert M Persaud: Component two looks at investment in specific adaptation measures. The elements component two and the objective of this

component is to counteract the effects of sea level rise, which has decreased due to the GOG's ability to manage water levels of the difficulties we faced in the EDWC's system.. The investments will improve the ability of the government to manage water levels behind the dam during heavy rains by improving internal water flows in the EDWC and increasing EDWC drainage capacity to the Demerara River an eventually the Atlantic Ocean. This objective will be achieved through the widening of key drainage relief canals; improvement of water flow system within EDWC; upgrading water controls structures and the purchase of selected equipment and have those installed.

Component three, that is institutional strengthening and this will be achieved through the refining and updating of contingency plan for flood events; the consolidation of flood control systems and also the project has provision for the management of this intervention. It is expected once this project is completed, we will have the development of a hydraulic engineering foundation critical for flood control management; the identification of at least ten key drainage regimes for furlong intervention and to increase drainage relief capacity of the EDWC to the Demerara River by about thirty-five percent.

Mde Chairperson, based on questions that were submitted those are the answers I wish to provide.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much Minister. Members of the Committee, the Minister has answered the question we posed to him and we will now open the floor for comments from the Members of the Committee.

Mr Anthony Vieira: Mde Chairperson, might I ask what the level is yesterday? What is that level? I cannot see it from here, Madame. What is the actual reading of the GD level?

Mr Samuel La Fleur: 55.85

Mr Anthony Vieira: But that is rising, because during that substantial part of March the level was below 55/60. Would you not say that? Back into March, the level would be lower than 55 - all there the level would be lower than 55, would it not?

Hon Robert M Persaud: Yes, it is clear from the diagram. That is where the dip commence and that is really the peak of the irrigation period and we were supplementing ... *[Interruption]*

Mr Anthony Vieira: Madame, I am not ... thank you, Minister

Hon Robert M Persaud: Sorry, I am trying to give you your answer and that is why we had the pump also installed at Maduni to ensure that there is adequacy of irrigation.

Mr Anthony Vieira: Madame, might I?

The Chairperson: Yes, this is not a presentation.

Mr Anthony Vieira: By referring to a letter that was written by the Guyana Sugar Corporation, it was sent to Mr Walter Willis on 1 February 2007. The letter stated inter alia and signed by Mr Bhim, Chief Executive Officer (Ag.) of GUYSUCO - this is not a letter from a low level management employee, this is from the Acting Chief Executive Officer. It says, GUYSUCO continues to be concerned regarding the continued blowing of water of the Lama Conservancy

through relief outlets despite the Conservancy being well below designed level. These sentiments have been expressed to the East Demerara Water Conservancy Board over the past two months. In other words, GUYSUCO is talking about the blowing of the water since December and has been repeated to the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) meetings by the representatives of both GUYSUCO and the Rice Board. So both GUYSUCO and the Rice Board became concerned that they were blowing the water. Now, later on as it get to it, GUYSUCO said that the critical level to operate the industry is 55.60 GD. Madame, at no time in March when the crop was on was that water at 55.60 GD; it was well below at all times. You could see it very clearly there, but with your permission, Madame, I will continue.

The East Demerara Water Conservancy Board on which GUYSUCO has representation does not appear to be involved in the daily decision making of the Conservancy since the floods of 2005 and therefore it no longer presents an effective platform for any perceived problems to be addressed. These are problems that GUYSUCO might have with regard to the East Demerara Estates. They are predicting that as of now, they are seeing that they are diminished in saying how the Larna Conservancy is operating can have serious consequences for the industry. GUYSUCO was, however, involved in the various studies in the management of the East Demerara Water Conservancy as a result of which an operating manual for the Conservancy was compiled and accepted by all stakeholders. This is the one the Minister was speaking of. There is a manual which says that at this level you blow; at that level you conserve. Indeed, there is such a manual. The current level of the operations of the Conservancy, however, says GUYSUCO, is not consistent with the guidelines of this manual, as neither

the rainfalls nor the levels approached the point where the necessity for such drastic relief measures is warranted.

Madame, there it is that we see a complete failure of December January rains, but nevertheless the Lama water continued to be blown until well into February. The first crop of 2007 will commence on 10 February, GUYSUCO said at Enmore and the East Demerara Water Conservancy present level is 55.60 GD.

The Chairperson: What is the date of that letter, Mr Vieira?

Mr Anthony Vieira: 1 February 2007. It says that the present level of the Lama Canal of 55.60 GD will present serious problems for operations as the intake is non-functional and the current level does not present an adequate differential for the effective functioning of the siphon that was used previously. Madame, GUYSUCO is saying that once the East Demerara Water Conservancy level drops below 55.60 GD it is going to be in big trouble warranting Mr Komal ... I will come to that in a moment.

This exceptionally low level of the East Demerara Water Conservancy at the commencement of the crop could have significant negative effects on both the factory and the general operation of the East Demerara Estates as a whole.

Now Madame, I want to inform the Honourable Minister that I am not aware that anybody irrigates in March. March is the time when the rice is ripening up; reaping starts about that time. The sugar estates need some water to float punts, but nobody irrigates them. So this thing of irrigation, bringing the level down, I am not buying it. It is for sale, but I am not buying it.

The Chairperson: Okay, I assume in the context of what you said, you have raised a question ... Could you, based on what you said ...

Mr Anthony Vieira: I am not finished with my presentation yet, Madame.

The Chairperson: I think the purpose of the interview is not for all of us to make presentations; it is to question the Minister.

Mr Anthony Vieira: Well I am reading GUYSUCO's letter.

The Chairperson: Yes, I appreciate that.

Mr Anthony Vieira: This is the crux of the issue. These people know about this far better than any of us.

The Chairperson: Yes

Mr Anthony Vieira: And they would be far more impartial than any of us here.

Hon Robert M Persaud: Mde Chairperson, can you shed some light on this subject.

The Chairperson: Mr Vieira just to guide you ... I assume from the fact that you present us with the letter that you are asking the Minister to verify or clarify the matters that are raised in that letter. So let us go through stages.

Hon Minister.

Hon Robert M Persaud: First of all, the letter is an internal communication and I do appreciate that letters do get out and is absolutely no harm in doing that and in fact the letter originated from a discussion I had in my office. The letter more or less is of a precautionary nature. GUYSUCO was merely alerting the EDWC Commission of what can happen if certain things are not in place. I am the Minister of Agriculture and GUYSUCO comes as part of my portfolio, so I too have an interest to ensure that rice, sugar and all agricultural areas would have

sufficient water. Likewise NDIA too falls under my portfolio and we have a mechanism and that mechanism is the EDWC Commission of which GUYSUCO is part of and is planning. So the member is talking about this letter. This letter is more or less an internal communication wherein a precautionary opinion was expressed and the matter was dealt with. At no time GUYSUCO faced a crisis or severe difficulty in accessing irrigation.

The second point I want to make is that the rice growing areas in Cane Grove do take a lot of water in March as they did and Enmore Estate too took water in March. So the gentleman may not want to believe the Chart, but he can probably visit the areas and the farmers there will tell him that irrigation was still very active at the Cane Grove end for rice and for Enmore. So that is what I want to say about the letter. The issues were dealt with, but the bottom line is GUYSUCO has not suffered, rice has not suffered. We have the General Secretary of the RPA here in another capacity here and he can tell you that rice has not suffered, because there was no shortage of water. The letter was merely a precautionary one in which I invited that submission. I asked management to put comments in writing so that the EDWC Commission can also take their concerns on board.

The Chairman: Mr Ramjattan signalled and then Mr McAllister.

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: The letter from Mr Bhim indicated that there was the blowing of water in the context of a forecast that there might have been rains as we all would have expected in January and that blowing of the water was to ensure that when the rain falls, it would be safe and not an overflowing. I want to ask this very specific question. Was there the blowing of water from the Conservancy?

Hon Robert M Persaud: Is that your question?

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: Yes.

Hon Robert M Persaud: Well, Mr Bhim's assertion is really his assumption.

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: No, no, no, I am not asking you for Mr Bhim's assumption.

Hon Robert M Persaud: Mde Chairperson, can I answer the question?

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: Well, my question was very simple. Was there any blowing of water from the East Demerara Water Conservancy?

Hon Robert M Persaud: Mr Bhim's assertion was just his assumption that this was being done for the following reason. As I outlined here, there is a number of factors that determine the opening and closing of gates and I adequately addressed that in one of the earlier questions and these are dependent on the forecast, the level in the Conservancy and when all these factors are considered as took place in the January period there was some level of blowing.

Mr Anthony Vieira: Mde Chairperson ...

The Chairperson: Mr McAllister is ahead of you, Mr Vieira; hold your horses.

Mr James K McAllister: I want to ask the Minister a series of questions, before I make a comment.

Minister, I look at your chart, somewhere around February/March ... What was the lowest level we have there?

Hon Robert M Persaud: For which month?

Mr Winston S Murray: Any month.

Hon Robert M Persaud: For the entire chart ...

Mr James K McAllister: ... and when it occurred.

Hon Robert M Persaud: 52.5 GD was around March; between the 4 and 10 March.

Mr James K McAllister: Now, in your presentation earlier, you told us that 52 GD is dead storage and you also said in your presentation that there was no crisis. Could you explain to the Committee, how is it the Conservancy would have been at 52.5 GD, which is half of a foot above dead storage and we had no crisis?

Hon Robert M Persaud: I think you answered the question, it was above dead storage. Hence there was no crisis.

Mr James K McAllister: Minister, I do not know that a crisis is when you are in a disaster. A crisis is when disaster looms and we are talking here about six inches and you can remember you Minister issued public advisories asking people not to waste water; not to water their gardens; not to wash concrete. Obviously, we must have had some crisis and so therefore I would to know ... maybe later on you will tell us ...

Hon Robert M Persaud: Can I answer that part first?

Mr James K McAllister: No. I just want to establish for the records that based on my understanding 52.5 GD is a very serious crisis, because there is no capacity in the Conservancy if rains do not occur. There is no capacity at all to do the things that you said should be done, which include support irrigation and

supplying potable water to Georgetown. Maybe at that level you can treat with flood control, but obviously the other two things that you required to do, you cannot do at that level. So basically, I believe as your statement that there is no crisis is not supported by the information you have presented to this committee.

I want to ask you though, in the first period that is from 1 November coming down, we seem to have the Conservancy running the levels down below full supply level. I noted that you said that at the end of the coming rainy season, you will have the Conservancy up to the full supply level. Could you explain to us why the Conservancy was not up to full supply level at the end of that previous rainy season?

I noted that you did not respond directly to the question about the gate opening. Now, I know based on the Conservancy Flood Management Modelling Report by Mott McDonald, there is a gate opening schedule that provides for all gates to be closed at 55 GD. I would like to ask the Minister ... *[Interruption]*

The Chairperson: Could you give that figure again?

Mr James K McAllister: 55 GD - All gates to be closed at 55 GD - I would like to ask the Minister if any of the gates on the East Demerara Water Conservancy was opened when the level of the Conservancy was below 55 GD and if so, why?

Those are my first round of questions, Madame?

Hon Robert M Persaud: Alright, first round. First of all, we are either in a crisis or not in a crisis and we provided the scientific data that speaks to when there is a crisis and this is based on sound engineering advice and scientific advice. If politicians want to describe what crisis is, well we can do that separately, but we are dealing with a very technical matter here.

The second point is, that specific advisory you speak of was an advisory by the GWI which I understand that they issue from time to time, because we all talk about climate change, we all talk about the cost of producing water, that is done on a periodic basis, do not use this processed water to wash cars and concrete. GWI does that not the NDIA. We do issue advisory and our advice is that if our whether fore cast and we have early warning that there will be heavy precipitation; we will issue an advisory to low lying communities to take precautionary measures. We do that, but that has nothing to do in relation to what supply level there is in the Conservancy, but regarding our weather forecast.

The question was asked why in November, we are seeing on the Chart that we have some dips. The Member may know that during October/November period is when a lot of irrigation is done, so we had that throw off as such along the East Coast. If you noticed that the level went back up as we hit the December/January rains and it is clear from that period.

The other issue was raised, was there any gate opened when it was below 55 GD and our records show that there was none.

Mr Anthony Vieira: Madame, if the Honourable Minister would allow me and you to Mde Chairperson ...

The Chairperson: Mr McAllister, are you finished?

Mr James K McAllister: I will come again.

The Chairperson: Yes, Mr Vieira.

Mr Anthony Vieira: The Minister said that he had one pump or several pumps at Maduni pumping water from Mahaica into the Conservancy. Obviously, he was pumping because he blew the water out or someone else. I am not saying you personally, but somebody irresponsibly blew the water out and it meant, because of that incompetent some person in the nation had to end up paying his taxes to buy fuel to run a pump at Maduni when it would probably not have been necessary.

Hon Robert M Persaud: Mde Chairperson, I am just seeking your protection. I have been hearing words like incompetence and wastage of money. I think, we ought to be very careful. What is the question and what are the facts.

Mr Anthony Vieira: Okay, Madame. I will rephrase it.

The Chairperson: I think the role of the Committee right at this point is that we have invited the Minister to answer issues that are of concern to us.

Mr Anthony Vieira: But I did not say he Madame. I said, there was some level somewhere.

The Chairperson: No, no, the Committee in its judgement will examine the information and may want to have its own views and to conclude that. Right now, we are trying to get the facts.

Mr Anthony Vieira: Let us return to the letter from GUYSSUCO since they are the defining authority and how they use water in the Conservancy. It says very clearly in Bhim's letter that the current operation of the conservancy is not consistent with the guidelines of this manual, which is the operating manual which the Minister quite rightly says that he is using, but I believe that perhaps one of his men is not using it the way he is telling the Minister he is using it.

Because GUYSUCO said, neither the rainfall nor the levels approached the point where the necessity for such drastic relief measures is warranted. The medium term rainfall forecast, this is in February on the coastal areas is also somewhat lower than average rainfall and therefore GUYSUCO is urging caution in the blowing of the water, irresponsibly they claimed. Because they said that when the water level is below 55.60, they experienced the following and now I come to my dear friend Mr Komal Chand.

GUYSUCO is saying that we would like to urge at this time that the East Demerara Water Conservancy should now follow the operating guidelines detailed in the operating manual. In other words, GUYSUCO is saying it plainly, they are not inferring anything. They are saying that you are not using the manual, start using it. Because they alleged that that low level of water will probably lead to not being able to load the cane, stoppages of work and strikes and so on. The present situation presents a risk to the East Demerara Estates achieving the target set for the 2007 first crop. Now, if the Minister and his representatives are saying that we have employed within GUYSUCO people of such low competence that the most important thing like water, they are not competent to tell anyone that the manual is not being followed, the operating level of GUYSUCO, who is better to know, what the operating level of GUYSUCO is optimally set at than GUYSUCO itself. Surely, some other person cannot tell GUYSUCO this is going to be your best operating level. They would know because this is now it works for them in practice. I consider that GUYSUCO is being properly managed. I do believe that it is one of the few industries in Guyana which is definitely properly managed.

The Chairperson: Mr Vieira, you must also recognise that you did ask the question, the Minister answered it in terms of the context of the letter, but in

addition to that there is always ... while GUYSUCO's letter is what you are using to support your argument, that the water conservancy from what the Minister has reported deals with several competing and countervailing forces, the need for water for agriculture; the need for water for human consumption; the control of flood relief. Therefore, while we appreciate GUYSUCO's letter that you have referred to and the Minister explained that it appears to me that the Conservancy deals with what can be not always agencies that have the same objectives. It is the totality of the picture of what I believe the questions of the Committee is dealing with. Were there problems at the Conservancy; were the decisions made justifiable or acceptable. That is what the Committee is concerned about.

Mr Anthony Vieira: If I might be allowed to approach the board, I would like to show the Committee something that is on the board.

Hon Robert M Persaud: I would like to throw some light again on this GUYSUCO matter so that we can move on.

Mr Anthony Vieira: But I would like to go to the board.

The Chairperson: I am not preventing you from going to the board. I have no fear of you going.

Hon Robert M Persaud: But you have raised a point.

The Chairperson: ... but let Minister finishes his response and then you will go.

Hon Robert M Persaud: I appreciate your summary and your recall of my earlier statement regarding the GUYSUCO letter and I do not want the impression to be created as if the EDWC and GUYSUCO had a dispute. EDWC is comprised of GUYSUCO and in fact the communication system that is utilised

by the staff of EDWC is GUYSUCO. So there is constant communication; there is daily communication; so there is an effective working relationship. As I said, the intention of that letter was a precautionary one. If there was a letter which says there was a crisis or GUYSUCO had written saying that they had fallen in problems, you may be assured that the same way Mr Vieira got that letter, he would have gotten that other one, but there never any declaration or was there any point whereby GUYSUCO's operation or the agricultural development or the requirement of that area was affected.. GUYSUCO's letter is merely precautionary. As the Minister for the different agencies, we receive tonnes of precautionary letters telling us if 1, 2, 3 does not happen X will happen and it is what we invite, the different positions, but at the end of the day, the bottom line is that there was no crisis; GUYSUCO's operations were not affected and our installation of a pump at Maduni was a precautionary one. Are we going to wait until there is a problem and then look for a pump? But we have to be proactive and it was part of our proactive to manage the Conservancy that we install pumps and we will do it again if we believe that there is need for that to happen based on the advised of the EDWC Commission.

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: Can I, I want to ask a couple of questions?

The Chairperson: Just let me ask a question; could you give us an idea Minister what are the agencies or how is the EDWC Commission is established? Who are the bodies on it? I will come back to you.

Hon Robert M Persaud: The agencies are primarily NDIA, GUYSUCO, GWI and farmers' representative from rice, because there is significant irrigation work done in that area.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much and who is the head of the Commission?

Hon Robert M Persaud: The CEO ...

The Chairperson: ... Mr Ravi Narine. Okay, Mr Ramjattan.

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: We want to be very pointed to utilise the two or the two and a half hours that we have with the Minister and I think we were ...

Hon Robert M Persaud: That was the deal.

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: Yes, that was the deal. What I want to find out Minister an from the members here, is there what we regard as hydrological engineering capacities within the ECWC presently? Because we have engineers and we have engineers; we have lawyers and we have lawyers; is there hydrological engineering capacities?

Hon Robert M Persaud: Let me ask the Chairman of the EDWC to explain to you what it is and how it is we get things done in a very sensitive way.

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: No, no, no, that is not the issue. If I ask you your name, you will tell me Robert Persaud, do not go and tell me where you live. Is there hydrological engineering capacity?

Hon Robert M Persaud: He will answer your question.

The Chairperson: I think the question has been heard and understood. Mr Ravi Narine!

Mr Ravi Narine: If you are asking that we have a hydrological engineer attached to the Conservancy, the answer is no.

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: Thank you very much. Could I also indicate that that is the expertise ... sorry, who is disconnecting this?

The Chairperson: Not me at all.

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: We need some electrical engineering capacity here.

The Chairperson: I have no control over those things.

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: Sorry, it is not you, it is my fault. Hydrological capacities would be required in managing better the EDWC?

Hon Robert M Persaud: First of all, let me say that the CEO, the Chairman was being generous. He is a hydrological engineer and the Chairman too. So we have that capacity within the NDIA and the Chairman himself is that engineer.

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: But when I asked that just now ...

Hon Robert M Persaud: When you ask, the questions come to me.

Mr Ravi Narine: The answer was that we do not have a specific engineer that works. That is what I was saying. So if you on the staff of the EDWC ...

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: You are the Chief Executive Officer

Mr Ravi Narine: Right! But we do not have a position there that says you are a hydrological engineer, you are employed with the Conservancy. As Minister said, we have the Chairman, myself, of course are trained in that field.

Mr Mohamed F Khan: And the engineers at GUYSUCO.

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: GUYSUCO have them.

Hon Robert M Persaud: I think for the member's clarification, when we talk about NDIA, it is one entity; when we talk about the East Demerara Water Commissioners, we see them as a separate entity, and that is why the answer to the question by the CEO, was no to the EDWC. We have that in the NDIA, but NDIA is part of EDWC.

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: No, well you see the operationalising of the EDWC requires ... that is why my second question; it is not required hydrological engineers and capacity in the actual operationalisation and management of water control in that body?

Hon Robert M Persaud: And in one of my answers, I identified that we have some constraints and that is one of the constraints and we are moving to have someone who will be based with that type of training, living and working in the Conservancy seven/twenty-four.

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: Thank you very much. That is what I am getting at that indeed there is a constraint there.

My other question has to do with this pressure on the EDWC about water management, has that been affected by the non-implementation of the Phase III of the MMA Programme, because a lot of things are interconnected? Isn't that so? I understand there is a couple of phases of the MMA Programme - Phase III - if it was implemented would release a lot of pressure on the Conservancy, it is so?

Hon Robert M Persaud: Alright, I think you are referring to MMA Phase II. I think the impact would be the other way around rather than how you think it is, but let me ask the CEO to expand a little.

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: We are also here for our information.

Mr Ravi Narine: Yes, of course the overall plan to protect the Coast from Demerara River to Berbice River was to implement a flood control mechanism. We have gone ahead and do the Demerara end with the East Demerara Water Conservancy and the Abary end, which is the MMA Phase I. Of course, there is still exposed to the elements to a certain extent the area between Mahaicony and Mahaica. There is no flood embankment that exists in Demerara and the Abary. So, yes, what would influence what we do in the Abary Conservancy and the Lama Conservancy especially during the peak of the rainfall May/June or what occurred in 2005 and discharge had to be done to protect the embankment. Yes, it will affect it, but we wanted to do in the short term with the East Demerara Water Conservancy is to reduce the operation of the Maduni as much as possible when the water level is at the full supply and the rain continues that is in the period December/January/February and May/June, because the less you operate that is the less burden you put into that area. So the whole objective into the short term on the East Demerara Water Conservancy after the ECLAC Report and all those reports was to try to control more of the flood control aspect of the East Demerara Water Conservancy and discharge into the Demerara River. Fortunately we were able to accomplish that I think for the past two rainy seasons in 2006 January, I think that was the last time we had to open the Maduni to complicate things on that side. So I think on the last question that Minister has answered, what we are going to do with the Conservancies to look after (let us take) climate change and all these things into consideration, yes, we will have to look at not only the East Demerara Water Conservancy and the management and everything that we are speaking about, but the totality of it. Because my understanding is that the embankment for the Phase II and Phase III

of the MMA will start not about ten miles in as it exists in the East Demerara Water Conservancy, but it goes about forty miles in and the catchment area of all of the areas that come from Demerara River to Berbice will be stored into that one major conservancy.

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: Before I go to the Minister in relation to what the answer is there, I just want to do a follow-up to get the Maduni Creek better more efficient, five huyacs were purchased to effectively dredge some river. Was that par of the ...

Mr Ravi Narine: Yes, our engineers/ourselves have recommended that probably if we increase the flow into the Mahaica and Mahaicony that would assist, but it is not a simple thing to go and dredge the mouth of the Mahaica/Mahaicony because there is a bar there and if you interfere with that you might complicate things and salt water will come in and destroy the land. So what this study that Minister has spoken about that the World Bank is financing is to answer these questions. What is also happening is that since 1996, I think it was, Guyana has been experiencing these unusual high rainfalls and the climate change variations are now probably here. What we have noticed is that this high intensity short duration rainfall is probably a normal event that is occurring here so the data that we are going to be using to do these modifications, to do these infrastructure interventions, the data that we had experienced probably prior to 1996 might not be that relevant. So in this exercise we will have to compile data that is relevant that these conservancies can indeed adapt to these climate change, because once you do something in a conservancy it lasts forever. I mean this conservancy is over 140 years old, and if you major invest of US \$50,000 million, you have to make sure that when those events occur the Conservancy has enough storage capacity of water.

Another thing that I could like to mention is that the levels in the Conservancy if it drops below 52 that does not really mean that there is not enough water there for the requirements during that period of time. What will happen is it cannot access the land by gravity and you have to pump it. If we could go back in 1983, I think Mr Vieira will recall, we had a drought and the Conservancy fell below those levels and we had to actually take in water in the navigation system, because the requirement for GUYSUCO is basically is to provide enough water in the navigation system for the flotation of the punts - you must have either five or six feet there - so we had to bring in this water. The thing is, we cannot avoid these prolonged dry periods. It is a norm now and we have to have within the limitations to manage that water level. I think we all know the embankment of the East Demerara Water Conservancy is considered fragile. We know that so we have to manage that water level between the full supply level at the dead storage level to ensure that especially GUYSUCO and water supply to Georgetown and that is on a daily basis. I know that Georgetown gets about sixty-percent of its water from the East Demerara Water Conservancy on a daily basis, so we have to ensure that that also is satisfied. So probably some of the falls that you see, GWI is taking off the water too.

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: Thanks very much. That could bring me back to the very important question I want to ask, because Mr Minister this is not necessarily what occurred recently. It is also very important. In your opinion Minister, what do you regard as crisis level?

Hon Robert M Persaud: I think crisis level is when we do not have sufficient water to supply Georgetown and the farming communities. That to me is crisis level.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister. Now we have a line up of people. Mr Vieira, very quickly at the board, then I will give Mr Chand and then Mr Murray.

Mr Anthony Vieira: Mde Chairperson, can you hear me?

The Chairperson: Do you remember Mr Vieira had asked to go to the Board? Are you having a problem of Mr Vieira going ahead of you, Mr Murray?

Mr Winston S Murray: No, no, no, not with Mr Vieira at all.

The Chairperson: Mr Komal Chand is a gentleman. He said that he will go before; Mr Vieira, not for a long period.

Mr Winston S Murray: He recognises that I have to go before him, but I will leave that to you.

Mr Anthony Vieira: I am now not speaking from a GUYSUCO level. Forty-odd years ago, as a Manger in the sugar industry our rainy seasons are December/January and May/June. Those are the normal rainy seasons. Rain can fall before and after in some way, but basically those are some of the defining times that we say that these are our rainy seasons, because we happened to occupied a place on the planet which is called the tropical conversion zone. So we have two rainy seasons when other countries only have one. Madame, this is the only point I would like to make. At this point here when we were half a foot above the supply, in other words we were just half a foot (six inches) above dead level of the Lama Conservancy. You see a slight rainfall which Mr Narine will tell you that is unreasonable and really a fake. This was not supposed to be here and neither these rainfalls. Madame, had these rainfalls not here, we would not have been discussing this; this would have been a whole big national problem. So the question as to what the level was here becomes relevant in the context of

this being an unreasonable and unseasonable precipitation. This was not supposed to happen neither were these rainfalls.

The Chairperson: Wasn't it an act of God.

Mr Anthony Vieira: No, no, no, a rainfall that occurs outside of the normal rainfall or the expectation of a normal rainy season. In other words, at the end of February, one would conclude that the rainy season is now finished unless rain is actually falling and this rain in March and this speaks here of March, there was more rain falling in March than in the months of December and January. This is why I am saying we are always talking about December/January rainfall, but in this case the Minister should thank his lucky stars. In fact, I want to know which church he is going to, *[Laughter]* because we would have been here discussing an absolute disaster and that is the only point I want to make.

Hon Robert M Persaud: Yes, we are and our framers are , we will always be thankful for rain when there is a dry season so we do not blame the rain, we welcome then rain in that context.

Secondly, as the CEO pointed out when we say dead level, it is not drought level. Dead level means that you will not have gravity flow from the Conservancy into the fields and what you will do is to required mechanically as an option that can be exercised. So while the engineers have termed that dead level. It is just a convenient description that they have used in that regard.

Mr Anthony Vieira: The cost of fuel should be maintained. A proprietor for a piece of land to irrigate his crop will have to find \$2 or \$3 million to pump water, when it should be there by gravity.

Hon Robert M Persaud: My prayers were answered.

The Chairperson: I think that the supplementary question was we gave the Minister to do in terms of the plan of global warming and the climate changes show graphically on the document that has been presented; that there is a change in the weather patterns, because normally December/January and in 2005 was a living example of an enormous rainfall and then in 2006, but everyone noticed that in this year there was very little rain in the December/January period maybe that was Walter Willis's intervention to do with Cricket World Cup. Who knows?

Hon Robert M Persaud: We had a new Chairman of the NDIA Board.

The Chairperson: Mr Murray is next and then Mr Chand and then Mr McAllister. Just one thing, we have a snack for our visitors, not for the Press unfortunately. I am sorry about that, guys, but we will probably want to serve that nearer to the end of the discussion.

Hon Robert M Persaud: We will yield our quota to the media.

Mr Winston S Murray: Madame, I would like to look at another aspect of the EDWC and that is the integrity of that conservancy. From time to time, there has been a breach and sometimes major breaches including overtopping and because of that concern, I want to address some issues to the Minister in that regard. I take as my starting point the fact that there were two major breaches back in 2000 and the IDB intervene through funding for emergency works to be done to deal with those breaches. Madame, the overall question that arises for me to ask the Minister on a scale of one to ten, how would he rate the current integrity of that conservancy?

Then I would like to address some specific questions given what I see from a report that deal with the way those two breaches were handled back in 2000. I think and I used this word *advisedly*, there is indictment to pass quite a lot around in terms of what was done then and the reason I why I am going to ask these questions is to try to get an insight into what has been done since then or what is currently being done or what is contemplated to be done in the future to avoid such recurrences. Would the Minister agree and acknowledge and this is not in his time, but as the one who is currently in the office, I think he would be the one who unfortunately has to answer for these things. Now it seems as though the NDIB in constructing the project to deal with these emergencies did not consult with the EDWC and went ahead on its own. Is that correct or is that wrong and that would have affected the nature and relevance of the design and construction of the project? Three contracts were awarded and in respect of the contractor there are issue that arise in respect of the non-compliance of the specifications that were to be met, not unimportant among them, Minister, was the fact that they were not supposed to dig earth to try and build ... as I understand it they were trying to lift the depth of the conservancy, because I think it was Mr Narine who explained at that time there was siltation building up at the bottom so the effective capacity was being reduced and so you were going to lift the sides by some number of inches or feet to increase the capacity as one way of dealing with the problem, but that they dug earth to put on that embankment ... *[Interruption]*

Hon Robert M Persaud: Mde Chairperson, I will interrupt Mr Murray, because I think I am doing this in our best interest. The current matter that he is referring to is a matter that is in court and since we have the media and everyone here, we all should be cautious as to what we can say; it is sub judice. The government

has this contractor in court as a result of that report and the incident that took place - just my word of caution for whatever it is worth.

Mr Winston S Murray: I would not go too much about them, but the question that arises, because I think we all know, so I would not go on to say what I had in mind to say, but I have a right to say to the Committee, but I think you are right. I refrain, I want to respect that caution, but there are some serious issues that arise, because what this thing tells me that even within ... well I am glad to hear and I know that redress is being sought against the contractor, because there are some serious matters of concern about the execution of those contracts, but I want to know, because equally we can say and this has to do with the internal operations of your portfolio, Sir ... well, not internal operations of the portfolio, but operations of entities that come within your folio; it shows that there were serious, serious negligence within the institution. I am not going to make any comment because I do not want to compare the point of Mr Vieira, except for the point that arises for me, for example, there was a VSO supervising the preparation of the tender documents and preparing these documents - a VSO who is just a new graduate just come out of University and we trust this man and give this man this thing to do; lack of supervision; no engineer on site and at the different sites. I want to know, Sir, since then whether there have been any internal disciplinary procedures that have been followed. If so, could you tell me what they are and what has been done and to say what has been done in terms of strengthening the capacity, because that I see ultimately as the indictment here - strengthening the capacity of those institutions so in the future design projects in a sound way and to superintend them adequately so that we will get value for money when we expend large sums intended to bring improvements to one or other projects in this country. That is really my question.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Honourable Minister

Hon Robert M Persaud: Thank you very much Mde Chairperson and thank you very much Mr Murray for those questions.

I am glad that you prefaced your question that this incident took place in 2001 and I cannot give tremendous detailed account as you may require, but I must say that \$50 million was withheld, which was payment that was supposed to be made to the contractor for the job and damages. As I said the Government is currently in court seeking some redress from the contractor on that particular incident.

The Report that was done based on the 2001 incident, which you are describing, I have learnt and then I have been re-assured too that since then a lot of studies, a lot of contemplation and review of that report was done with a view of ensuring that the necessary recommendations and points raised were factored in to the future operations of the Drainage and Irrigation management since then. We have taken a number of steps to improve the efficiency and the institutional strength of the NDIB as was then and one of which was, we moved the Agency into a semi autonomous Agency now and that is why it is called the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority. We have staffed it and the complement of engineers is growing; that complement has been doubled over the past year. Even since I have been the Minister we have employed about three more engineers and I have always insisted that we have full complement of engineers. We have a large component of engineer technicians, but when you go out to the regions, they are commonly referred to as engineers, but I am talking about the persons who have acquired the necessary skills. So we are improving our engineering core. Because of our human resources constraint in our country, we

have good people, but we may not be able to employ them, but they can be at our disposal such as sea defence, GUYSUCO and what we have is an inter-agency arrangement whereby a technical team so as to advise to NDIA on matters. We invite engineers such as Harold Davis (Jnr), Howard George and we had Walter Willis before he became Chairman of that grouping. So we try to bring the expertise now to advise us. Nearly all of our major projects the designs and proposals go to this Committee for them to give us their comments even before we go out for contracting. So the problem where by a VSO was the one who was designing and putting together the document that no longer exists. In fact, we do not even have a VSO in our midst, perhaps we would need some, but we do not need to give them that tremendous responsibility. So I hope that answers that question.

In terms of the integrity of the Dam, we have all recognised that the integrity of the dam is an issue that we need to give adequate attention. All the international studies have said that. In fact, the genesis of this project the GOG/World Bank Conservancy Adaptation Project is because Government and everyone else believe that there is work to be done to sure up the integrity of that dam. So we are not turning a blind eye or just leaving things as it is. In fact, if you visit the conservancy, you will see actively that maintenance work is being done before and during the rainy season on a yearly basis and we spend close to \$50 million or thereabout in maintenance work of the Conservancy Dam. We have a current design whereby we will be widening and buttressing for ten miles from the Flagstaff to the Nancy Area, which is the more critical element on widening that dam. There is a relief canal, we will be retiring that and widen that dam so as to sure up the integrity.

When I went to the National Assembly in December in terms of supplementary, we purchased two long boom excavators and we are waiting on MACORP to deliver those. We have already fabricated the pontoons. They are there waiting for these excavators and we will commence the buttressing. We have the design ready, the engineers have shown me the design, it has gone through, there are persons looking at it and we will be doing it through Force Account. We are not going out to any contractor, because using the core of engineers that we have and the design and our equipment, we will commence those work. As soon as we have more equipment available, because we need the long boom excavators to move the soil from one part to the other part, we will be addressing that particular area.

Mde Chairperson, I hope that I have answered Mr Murray's questions.

The Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr Winston S Murray: I have just a small follow-up.

The Chairperson: A supplementary?

Mr Winston S Murray: I notice Minister, you did not respond at all to the question of disciplinary action, because I do believe in some of these things that one has to set the bar and let people understand that if they do not perform, that they will be expected to face consequences. It sends a message not only for the particular recalcitrant, but beyond that for those who are to come to serve and they understand what they are to meet.

I am happy to hear that you are taking measures and I want to acknowledge that we are pleased to hear of those measures to buttress the integrity of the dam. Specifically, my follow-up is whether in what you are doing, you are going to

correct some of the things that were done by the contractor and not await the outcome of the court that are linked to the integrity of the dam. I do not want to name what those were, because they are known to you, because those were some of the things that were done that would have affected negatively the integrity of the dam. So, I am interest to know whether as part of what you describe as your maintenance and the other things you are doing by Force Account. Those things are being included, because it is important that they be rectified.

Hon Robert M Persaud: Yes, that is in the area that we propose to buttress. The issue of disciplinary action both for the staff and penalties for contractors when they do not deliver, the contract stipulates that both in terms with the contractor - they are financial and audited - but internally for staff, we are now a semi-autonomous agency and that was one of the reasons too for us moving in that area whereby we are not under constraint in terms of moving quickly once a case is made to take action. I think if we check the records of the NDIA, we have taken action on non-performance. Probably before I came, there is an incident under my watch too, where disciplinary action was taken for non-performance, but I do not want to make that an issue, because we have already expanded more on it, but I think in Berbice, yes, we did take action.

The Chairperson: Okay, thank you very much.

Mr Chand had been waiting for a long time and then Mr McAllister and then Mr Ramjattan and then Mr Vieira. Maybe we can organise some juice for the other persons even though we cannot have a snack. We do not want to eat and the Press say that we are eating and not feeding them, but we did not anticipate such a big gathering of Press personnel. I do not know if Mr Vieira organised this. However, we are in a side bar right now , it is just hoped that in future the

Committee meetings are opened to the public and to the Press and therefore we hope that the Press will continue to visit us, not only when we are blessed by the presence of a Minister.

Mr Komal Chand: Mde Chairperson, just about a month ago, I think there was a crisis situation in Georgetown with respect to water that is used by GWI from conservancy. I think there was some disturbance of the sedimentation of the floor of the conservancy causing ...

The Chairperson: ... turbidity.

Mr Walter Willis: Increase in the turbidity of the water.

Mr Komal Chand: Alright, you know the technical words, causing this serious problem. I am wondering if there was no proper supervision. I mean that was a bad situation. There was an advisory by GWI that you could not use the water even if you boil it. We want some explanation on what was done so that in the future we would not have a problem like this.

In the letter that was read by Mr Vieira, mention was made by GUYSUCO about the Board. Their participation and the fact that their position they questioned whether it was taken on Board, I do not know whether the Board meets often, I know that the Chairman was absent for some time and how often the Board meets and there are people who are members of the Board are able to express their position and their views and taking it into account, because Paul Bhim did question that point in his letter.

Hon Robert M Persaud: That's it, is Mr Chand finished?

The Chairperson: Yes.

Hon Robert M Persaud: GWI and the water supply - The difficulties that GWI faced not only in Georgetown but I say in other areas too, *we* are obligated (when I say *we*, I am speaking of EDWC) ensure that there is a constant flow through the Lama system and the GWI had requested of us because of the impending non-rainy season that is after the December/January rain that work be effected to clear that. It was in the middle of those works in the dredging of that area that we had the turbidity that developed, because when the rain came and dredging was taking place, immediately work ceased once that happened and we (EDWC) started to coordinate and collaborate with GWI to ensure that that water which was affected there was removed out of the system. We even deployed a pump at Sophia and we worked with them for several days to clean that water out that was affected.

It is an issue again where the blessing that Mr Vieira spoke to, in that instant, it was not really a blessing, because that was when the work was in its full phase that is the dredging that we were doing to ensure constant supply. The rain came and then that muddied the water that was coming down. So that is in response to the first question that Mr Chand asked.

We are working and engaging GWI to ensure that in the future that perhaps we need better scheduling and we have to learn from this experience too, because EDWC wanted to ensure that the canal channels were cleared at the request of GWI or at their request that we move to do that very quickly. But I do not think that it is an issue of blame-sharing and blame-ascribing; an incident took place, we collaborated and we overcame that incident and it is for us to continue to work together through the EDWC mechanism which the GWI is a part of to ensure that we have much more efficient scheduling.

The issue of the EDWC Board, based on the Minutes and the notes that I have seen on that meeting, yes those concerns were raised and there are matters that will continue to be raised. If one gets a hand on the Minutes of the EDWC, you will see that there are various discussions and various scenarios which are explored and raised by different interest. So the GUYSUCO interest was not ignored, that is why there was not a complaint from GUYSUCO subsequent; look you know that our precaution was there nothing happened, hence we are in a crisis or a danger as such. That did not take place.

It is true that the Chairman was out for very personal reasons and certainly the last Board meeting was held in January and there is one scheduled to be held sometime this month; I am advised, I do not have the date. So February and March, because of the Chairman's absence, but even if the Chairman has to go, we probably have to ensure that a Vice-Chairman is in place, but that does not affect, because Mr La Fleur who is the Manager there, he is in contact on a daily basis with a different interest in terms of coordinating and if there are issues to be addressed. Things are done by round robin and the work of EDWC continues even if there is not a Board meeting.

The Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr Anthony Vieira: Mde Chairperson ...

The Chairperson: No, you are in line, but you are not the next person, Mr Vieira,

Mr McAllister, you are the next person in line. Do you want to defer to Mr Vieira?

Mr James K McAllister: Would I be able to come after him?

The Chairperson: Well, then you have to come after those persons who are after him. *[Laughter]*

Mr James K McAllister: No.

The Chairperson: I think you should take your position now, Mr McAllister.

Mr James K McAllister: I will go now.

Mde Chairperson, I want to return to an issue we were discussing earlier, because this issue of the Minister appearing before this Committee came about as a result of concerns about the capacity of the Conservancy to supply water for Georgetown for potable purposes and for irrigation purposes. I am not quite sure that we have gotten to the bottom of that situation of understanding of what really happens, because it is really a management issue as to how we approach water management in the East Demerara Water Conservancy.

There are two concerns at the two extremes. There are concerns that the managers of the Conservancy on occasions might hold water too high in the Conservancy and then we have rains like we had in 2005, and therefore we lacked storage capacity and we had to release water into the cabals and villages and so on.

Then there is another concern, which we believed occurred a few months ago, when we held the water too low and there was no rain and we ran into a problem whereby we were just about half of a foot above the storage level.

The Minister tells us that to move from a situation where we can have gravity flow to a situation where we do not have to use pumps to try to supply irrigation is not a crisis. I will beg to differ on that score. Having said that I want to bring

the Minister back to a question I think asked by Mr Ramjattan, because he did not really answer this question. He gave some conditions.

The question that Mr Ramjattan asked was at what level would you consider there to be a crisis in terms of GD? Your response then was at the level when you cannot supply. Obviously, that would be a crisis; if you cannot supply that would be a crisis, but we want to know at what level you consider yourself unable to supply for potable purposes in Georgetown and for irrigation purposes on the Coast?

I want to ask the Minister another question; when we were at 52.5 GD, how was the irrigation affected? Did we have the desired levels in irrigation canals? Were we required to pump? Could the Minister also say to us what is the percentage of water that was in the Conservancy at 52.5 GD when compared to the amount at full supply level? What would be the capacity of the Conservancy at 52.5 to supply over what period for potable purposes in Georgetown and for irrigation purposes?

While I am there, I just want to point the Minister to this Conservancy Flood Management Modelling and to read from Page 41, something which speaks to ...
[Interruption]

The Chairperson: What year was that?

Mr James K McAllister: This report is in 2005, for that matter 22 May 2005. If I could read ... Well we do not have Figure 5, but it says:

Figure 5 (1) shows stimulated conservancy water levels assuming maximum conservancy water level control to 57 GD; 56.5 GD and 56 GD;

And it goes on to say that:

In a thirty-four year stimulation period there were four supply failures when the water level was set above 57GD; four supply failures when the water level was at 57 GD and five supply failures when the water level was at 56GD.

Mde Chairperson, we are being told here by the experts that at 56GD in the past we have had supply failures where the Conservancy (I should not say in the past) ... where the experts have determined that in the return period there is likely to be four supply failures when the Conservancy level is paged at 56 GD. We were at 52 ... I know the simulation and that is why I said, they have projected and this is how we do management. We have to do simulation and will know what is likely to happen and what is not likely to happen and based on that we make decisions and so therefore, in the light of the simulations that were done established that at these levels we are likely to have supply failures. Why is it we are saying that at 52.5GD is a desirable level and in fact does not constitute a crisis in the East Demerara Water Conservancy? But I think it is clearly established here that at 52.5 GD, we have a problem. I mean, the Minister, he spoke about politicians for political purposes, he may not want to admit to this Committee that we had a crisis at 52.5 GD and I am quite sure that the engineers in his team, one of whom was my student will tell him privately that we had a crisis.

Hon Robert M Persaud: Was there a crisis?

Mr Lionel Wordsworth: No!

Mr Robert M Persaud: Lionel said, no.

Mr Winston S Murray: Do you think he dare say otherwise? *[Laughter]*

Mr James K McAllister: I know also that the Strategic Emergency Engineering Committee established after the 2005 flood; put forward a gate-opening schedule that should be operated. This gate-opening schedule spoke of determining the opening of the Maduni at 56.25GD. I heard Mr Narine saying that there is movement now in the direction of not opening the Maduni. Could he now explain how this gate opening Schedule that was put up by the Strategic Emergency Committee endorsed by Mott McDonald in their Report, how has this schedule been affective and if it has been changed in the schedule, could you give this Committee an idea of what is the new gate opening schedule at the East Demerara Water Conservancy and if also someone in the team can tell us based on the levels of the Conservancy over the period at what levels if any, which gates were opened and if gates were opened which gate was opened at what point?

Hon Robert M Persaud: Alright, let me go through some of the questions.

Crisis level, I think we have been through that. We are of the strong view based on the output (we are not sitting in any office) and the effects on the agriculture sector and the water needs, there was no crisis.

The second issue is that the Report that you cited looked at simulation and simulations are simulations, so we cannot use a simulation and then look at the reality and say that because of that simulation, the reality you have leads you to a certain conclusion. We do what has worked over the period.

There was sufficient water in the irrigation canals in response to your question during that period, where you saw that there was a drop. So that would answer that question.

The calculations you asked for had we known that those numbers were ... we have the numbers, but our engineers cannot give you the precise and we do not want to provide this Committee with guesstimates. If the gentleman provides his request in writing, I will ask the NDIA and the EDWC to provide that information to him.

The final question regarding the opening of the Maduni, the SLEAK Report which you are referring to that is for an event of a disaster the following interventions will be done:

Regarding the opening of the Maduni outlet, that decision was taken, because we had invested in additional capacity to move water towards the Demerara rather than via the Maduni area. That was the decision taken and that informs Mr Narine's comment that we try as much as not to open the Maduni area, because of its impact on the Mahaica/Mahaicony communities. But let me ask him to expand a bit more and to answer your question directly.

Mr Ravi Narine: Mr McAllister, the SLEAK Report, we have to be very cautious in what it is saying. It says that when the level approaches 58 GD or something like that - 57.5 to 58 that we must evacuate Region 4. Did you see that in the Report? Approaching 58 and 58.5 that the people on the East Coast must evacuate Region 4 ... so, it is a situation that is saying if the 2005 flood event reoccur for example and the Coast is under flood, and the water level in the Conservancy is rising to a level that we will have the over-topping, then of course the integrity of the embankment which we know is questionable, it might

stand a very good chance of breaching and complicate matters downstream. So people should think very seriously of evacuating, but if Region 4 is very dry and we are approaching 58 GD at the end of the May/June rains then that is a very positive level, because that level will have to serve us until the other rainy period. So we have to be a bit cautious in interpreting.

The other interpretation is that ... I do not know if Mr Vieira would agree with me, but I think that at 56 GD in the Conservancy, I do not think that there would be any problem in supplying water requirements for the demand ever. I am probably wrong, but I think that something is wrong there with the simulation. At 52 some people think that we were approaching crisis; there was a crisis, but at that 52, it was quite clear that the water demand from the Conservancy was met even with minimum pumping. So at 56 that is very, very wrong. I do not believe that at 56.

I joined the Conservancy in 1983 and Mr Vieira' father was there and he taught me a lot. At that time it was a standard practice of major discharge of the Conservancy using the Maduni and Lama. Probably at that time for one reason or the other we did not have so many agricultural activities in Region 5. I do not know, but it seems not to be a major issue, Mr La Fluer is here and he can say, but I think with the change of the land use probably in Mahaica/Mahaicony area, there was a drastic increase in agricultural activities especially in the Mahaica area. So probably lands that were allowed to be flooded needed this drainage. So we had to make a policy switch that discharging the water into the Atlantic and into the Demerara basically would not cause flood and the whole system was to divert most of the drainage away from the Mahaica end to the Demerara end and into the Atlantic through shaft and so forth. As I said, for 2005 we had to open and I think for 2006, but what we find that in the May/June

period Maduni is not required to be opened and that goes a far way in saving or protecting the people downstream in Mahaica.

I think we need to go into that Conservancy to see the dynamics of what is happening. I think Mr Vieira will probably appreciate. Okay, we can say open at 56.5 and so on. For example, the phase that we are in here by Hydromet, they predict that we are in a sort of neutral zone, where you can have the rainfall that Mr Vieira pointed out there, but you can have extended dry period and then the La Nina is going to come in May/June. But the thing is, what Mr Vieira has pointed out there is becoming a norm, so you have to be flexible and on the ball to actually rather than saying a figure to make the decision there. Probably that is why we need the hydrological people and so forth. So you have to have the experience of it and you have to have the guidance of it, but I do not think at 52.5 we had a crisis. I can only tell you from my experience in 1982/1983 it fell lower than that. We could not even access water by pumping and we had to actually bring water from the ocean especially for GUYSSUCO. We did not mention that at Enmore we had also installed a pump to supplement the flow and it is still there for GUYSSUCO's requirement. But I agree with Mr Vieira, we want the least cost thing, so if we could avoid pumping ... but we are not taking any chances for example the mobile pump which was at Maduni, we have removed that take that to East Coast around Greenfield, because this thing has to switch here now. The outfalls are going to get clogged up. If you dredge that today, probably by tomorrow it is refilled. So we have to be alerted although we are guided by manuals, some of them probably the politicians make more sense than the engineers in the decision making.

Mr James K McAllister: I am surprised to hear that coming from an engineer. I am not only surprised but disappointed to hear an engineer comes to this Committee to tell us that politicians make more sense than engineers...

The Chairperson: I must protect Mr Narine here, to say that Mr Narine's comment was one in which sometimes was taken as a general sense

Mr Ravi Narine: I know that politicians are good engineers.

The Chairperson: And also there are politicians who would like to be engineers.

Hon Robert M Persaud: That is the problem.

Mr James McAllister: Mde Chairperson, just a supplementary question

Mr Ravi Narine: Mde Chairperson, I retract my comment here.

Mr James K McAllister: Mde Chairperson, I think that is in order. In relation to the comments made by Mr Narine, I appreciate the fact that we have similar situations, but if I can remember from the Mott McDonald Report, the government was once made that the Conservancy does not have the capacity to respond to real time flood situations. And for this reason while we are in the rainfall period that is why we should maintain a certain gate-opening schedule. We do not wait until we have a crisis and then we open. Once the rainfall is continuing and based on what you are saying, we reach 56, we open Land of Canan and if the rainfall is continuing and we reach 56.25 then we open Cunia. That is our understanding of hat might be happening and not because we believe that at 56.25, we have sufficient water. We know that we should go to 57.5. If you are in the storm situation, you have to open at certain periods and so that is why I asked the question about Maduni. I think Mr Narine gave a very detailed

response in relation to the reasons for shifting from Maduni and I agree with that wholly in terms of not moving in the direction of opening and releasing water from Maduni. But what we need to understand is since we have now moved in that direction where we do not want to open the Maduni and based on the signal of the gate opening schedule, they have programmed Maduni to be opened at 56.25 and since we are not opening Maduni at 56.25, what is the new gate-opening schedule? We are just asking, we are not going to open and everything else remain as normal. It has to be that you have made adjustments along the line and I am trying to find out what is the new gate-opening schedule?

Now, the Minister did say that if he had known, he would have walked with some documentation as it relates to the levels of water in the Conservancy at various levels.

Hon Robert M Persaud: Volumes not levels.

Mr James K McAllister: Yes, volumes. I have the documentation here of the same Conservancy - the modelling - we tells that at full supply level, we have 144.07 million cubic meters of water and that at dead storage level which is 52 GD, we have 11.33 million cubic meters of water. Now I would like to have some comment from one of the technical team as to the period for which this amount of water at dead storage level can service irrigation and potable water so that we can have an understanding of the situation we were in at the time when this occurred

Hon Robert M Persaud: First of all, let me clarify the policies for discharging Maduni. Maduni is there and based on when we are at the ... crisis can occur at two points:

- when it is too high; and
- when it is too low.

I would like to know which crisis you are referring to, so Maduni is an option. The ideal as we are seeking to do is to move water to the Demerara and also to discharge to the Atlantic, but at this point, I will outline to you one of the deliverables would be to increase the drainage relief capacity to the Demerara by thirty-five percent, which will permeate the need for us to utilise the Maduni for discharge purposes.

The second element of question (2), you asked what is our current arrangement in light of the policy intervention? Let me ask Mr Narine to answer.

Mr Ravi Narine: Mr McAllister through the Chair, I think the Maduni opening (let us say) for example the May/June rains, we want to close off at about 57.5 dependent on the May/June rains - July/August - say for example in mid June there is a lot of rainfall and the water level is rising; we are replenishing the Conservancy at the same time, because we need to obtain the 52.5. We have to forecast. We know that the May/June rain does not fail and I think the forecast here is saying about 52 inches

The Hydromet forecast was about that within the period. The levels are rising. We know that with the fragile embankment and so on we need to maintain a certain level that does not exceed the full supply, because it is then the embankment becomes threatened. So the first discharge sluice we are going to use approaching the 57 (let us say) in the mid June would be the Land of Canan sluice, because that is the major flow into the Demerara. Then simultaneously you could use Cunia which does not function as efficiently and under this new

project we will increase the efficiency there and friendship. So in the peak of the May/June those would be the three that would click in for the discharge approaching the full supply level. Depending on the forecast and the drop in the level and the waters from the back, because there is a delayed run-off of the back waters replenishing the Conservancy, based on that the number of gates will be decided. Now if we do that and everything is running full discharge, but the backwaters are coming and this level is going (let us say to) 58.5 that is possible, then the Maduni will have to click in. Now what do you? In the middle of the May/June rains Maduni is 58, the Conservancy is discharging and Mahaica/Mahaicony is under flood, because by that time with the rainfall they would be under flood. You can delay it again, (let us say) Mahaica will be flooded by the natural run-off from the backlands even without the Maduni being opened. So, we look at it and sometimes they start to lose their crops, rice or whatever. If eighty/ninety percent is lost, the last option is to open Maduni, because it will destroy what has been already destroyed. So, I will say now, during the rainy period will be opened when the levels are approaching at 58.

Now the reverse happened like the 52 there, approaching the May/June rains, you would want to create enough storage in the Conservancy to accommodate it, because if you look at that chart there - the water level chart to rise - but if we did not have the incidence of excessive rainfall, it would have started to rise at a higher level and probably now it would be approaching 58. It would have been much higher than that and we had to click in the discharge. It could.

Mr James K McAllister: The rise passed at the lower level.

Mr Ravi Narine: Right! If this did not occur and this was here, it would have started to rise.

So you need also to discharge for creating storage so when the rain comes and the run-off comes, that the storage is there. I do not know if that is answering the question. You are guided by the guidelines that you open and close there, but really to get it right, you have to make decisions on the spot and it has to be based on what mode the Conservancy is in if you are supply or you are creating storage for flood or for a combination. We are going into a combination of both, we want to store water for irrigation, but we need to create some more storage there that when the May/June rains actually come, because we do not want to open Maduni, so we want to have a faster run off into the Demerara to create a bit more storage. I think that is what the forecast is trying to give us. Another thing is, because of the rainfall pattern, we actually do not know what is flowing into the Conservancy. This is why Mr Ramjattan said that we should have a hydrologist. These are things that we have to quantify. They say also that water is coming from the MMA Conservancy, but when you go there you really cannot see it, but you have to quantify it. This study that we will be doing to prepare ourselves for the impact of the climate change, we have to get appropriate data that will somehow give a reflection of these climate change variations. So even if we put something in place now, in the scheduling, it has to be monitored; it has to be modified.

Hon Robert M Persaud: I just want to reinforce that it was a scenario that Mr Narine was painting. I do want us to leave here saying that we said that X, Y and Z will happen. Interventions are made depending on certain realities and it is a very dynamic and fluid situation regarding the Conservancy.

The Chairperson: I need guidance from the Committee. It is 13:30h and we started at 11:30h, the Minister was here since about 11:15h, I need guidance of how much longer we are going to proceed.

Mr Winston S Murray: Immediately after my question. *[Laughter]*

Mr James K McAllister: Well put me before him.

The Chairperson: The Minister has been very gracious to give us all this time with his technical people, but we do not want to abuse his willingness to work with us. We want to encourage him; when we want to ask him a question, he would be quite willing to come back, because we have not kept him here all day into the night.

Mr James K McAllister: Mde Chairperson, the Minister is not complaining.

Hon Robert M Persaud: I just received a note that there is a delegation from Cuba waiting for me at the office, because I was slated here for an hour and a half, but I could give ten more minutes of my time if we all co-operate.

Mr Winston S Murray: I have a PAC meeting at two o'clock; at least four of us here are on that meeting.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much.

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: I have a very short question and then Mr McAllister can continue.

This new project that you mentioned Mr Minister about climate change, when will that commence and what is time period for its completion?

Hon Robert M Persaud: The World Bank has committed the resources. As I said, we are negotiating it. It all depends on the conclusion of the negotiations. There are a few sticking points which we are discussing with the World Bank to clarify. They are two and as soon as we clarify those, it will go to the Board and

we are ready to move on it. A lot of the preparatory work has been done, the designs and going out looking for the persons who are going to come here to do the work in the meantime. This is a grant, it is not a loan, but there are two issues we are clarifying. So I do not want to tell you that next month or six weeks, it all depends on how soon we clarify those matters.

The Chairperson: Okay, thank you.

Mr James K McAllister: Mde Chairperson, I just want to make a statement and then correct something that Mr Narine said. Let me do the latter first.

Mr Narine said that if we were at the level where we were before the dip in the Conservancy, with the rains we have had, we would have been at 58 by now. I am looking at the information before me and I am seeing that between dead storage level and maybe where we are now, we are talking just about sixty million cubic meters. Between full supply level and 58, we are talking roughly 200 million cubic meters. Therefore if we were at a higher level the rainfall that we have now would not have taken us to that level.

For that reason, I wish to request that we have the verbatim report of this interaction very quickly, because I still have lingering concerns about what happened that led to some of the things we are seeing here.

would like to have the opportunity to do the necessary research, based on what was said by the Minister and his team as compared to some technical information and to some time in the near future to ask the Honourable Minister, if he has the time of course, to re-appear before the Committee so that we can continue our discourse on this very, very important matter of the management of the East Demerara Water Conservancy. We have seen what has happened when

the water is held too high and I believe also we have seen what is possible if the water is held too low. Therefore, it is an important issue.

Mr Anthony Vieira: I am happy to be able to get my observation in finally - that long line again.

Actually, I was not going to bring it up. I was going to deal with the matter. I was going to deal with the matter purely from the point of view from the agriculture side of the thing. I think that since Mr Komal Chand has brought the thing up, I would like to make my observation. Madame, this is the level of the bottom of trench that brings the Lama Conservancy Water to Georgetown and this was the level of the Lama at the beginning of the period. As the Lama level started to go down, it became impossible for brother took me to see it, because he was having trouble floating punts and because he was in that particular place between Nancy and Georgetown, that is where he gets it. He does not get it directly from the Conservancy, as for example Enmore, LBI and so on. He was having trouble floating his punts.

Hon Robert M Persaud: Just check and see whether he is paying his rates.

Mr Anthony Vieira: Oh, he is paying more than Georgetown. However, the fact is that I saw it for myself that the level of the Lama went below the level of the floor of that trench, in which the leaves from the trees had built up in it. So it was substantially above 52 GD, but this is how close we went, because the normal operating level of the Lama is here, Madame, it went below so they had to excavate it to let the water come out. In the process of excavating it, it created turbulence which led to that muddy water. After the excavation was completed, then they blew it out and replaced it with water from the Conservancy. Basically that is how close we came. In other words, had that little bit of rain not falling in

March that would have continued to go even lower. Now, once it goes below 49, the shelter belt cannot pump it anymore. They could pump from a very low level. Up to 49GD they could pump. So I am saying that we came close. How close, is really a matter of academics. I am saying that somebody should pay a little more attention as to how we control the level of the Lama and we must not let things like the World Cup Cricket panic us, because we think that rain will come and stop the cricket and it is going to flood and the tourist which ultimately did not come would be flooded out and living on the East Coast on the railway embankment. That is really the situation. We did come close and I think that we should just come clean and say, okay we come close, but in future we would not allow it to happen again. I think there is where we ought to go.

The Chairperson: Okay, thank you very much. I think that we have had a very full discussion and there will be verbatim report, which I believe the Committee can also share with the Minister, because to make sure it has accurately reflected what he has presented as well. The Committee Members have a number of opportunities open to them:

- (i) They can invite the Minister at a future date to follow up or on other issues as provided for under the Standing Orders;
- (ii) Also, we can as a Committee ask the Minister to clarify any of the issues in writing. He does not have to come here personally. If we go through the verbatim and there is anything particular that we realise something that is not quite clear.

But I believe that the issues that have been raised, I think we have been well informed by the Minister and his team and clearly individuals in the room will have their own views and whether they thought correct judgements or not were

made. However, the issue of the water management of Guyana is an extremely complex issue and quite a challenge to engineering of the best in many parts of the world. I am sure engineers have disagreements among themselves as do lawyers in terms of interpretation and also certain things. So I think the discussion has been a healthy one, but I think one has to recognise that judgements and decisions are based on views and realities at the time.

The Committee will review its work. Minister, we will be putting up our work programme for the future. We would also ask, as we use the opportunity here if there are agencies under your watch which have outstanding annual reports to the Parliament, we would like to encourage those agencies to comply then it would mean sometimes we may have less need to invite Ministers in, because we would then have documents to look at or we may invite Ministers to deal with specific issues raised in reports. So annual reports by the budget agencies as well as those that may be statutory bodies, we would like ask you if you could encourage those agencies to keep their reports on time and to present them in a timely fashion so that as an Economic Service Committee, all of your agencies fall under us, Irrigation, Water, Agriculture, Fisheries and so we would encourage you to help us in that way.

So Minister, we wish to thank you very for your time and your assistance; your technical team Mr Willis, Mr Ravi Narine, Mr La Fleur and Mr Wordsworth after the poet. So thank you very much. As we have said, we have a snack and we would be quite happy if you would share it with us.

Hon Robert M Persaud: Mde Chairperson, just to say thank you for having us here and be given the opportunity to clarify these issues and I am quite sure and I hope that we have been able to make Members of this Committee much more

informed. I have happy that the consensus position was or I see emerging, it was not a crisis. How close we got to a crisis, w can all debate. It was like a flying aircraft either you hit or you did not hit.

The Chairperson; Thank you very much. Members of the Media. Thank you, very much.

13:35H

[Minister and his team withdraw from the Meeting]

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Visit by the Committee to the EDWC

The Chairperson: I think most of us here have indicated by some means that they would like to go. The Committee has been meeting almost every week. Do we want to suggest a date for that or you want to leave it open for us? Someone said next week. For me, Saturday would be a much better day that during the week, because then you could have whole day. Imagine me spending the whole day with Mr McAllister and Mr Vieira, they will throw me overboard.

[Laughter]

Mr Winston S Murray: That is a good motive ...

Mr James K Mc Allister: ... for rescuing you.

Mr Winston S Murray: We can drive our care to Land of Canan and then jump in the boat. That would be very simple if we just drive there. From the moment you entered the boat you are in the Conservancy.

Mr James K McAllister: I also have an interest in going to the Takatu Bridge.

Mr Winston S Murray: You want to go to Bon Fin.

Mr James K McAllister: No. Construction has begun. That was on our programme a long time if I can remember.

The Chairperson: Let us go back to the issue

Mr Winston S Murray: Everybody seems to like a Saturday.

The Chairperson: Yes, Saturday is better for me. I do not know for the other people.

Mr Winston S Murray: We have to know which Saturday, because we will be in the hands of the authority. We have to tell them a Saturday and ask them what is the earliest Saturday is vacant to accommodate us.

The Chairperson: We also have some events coming up if we push it too soon. We have May Day, which I think Komal and others will be busy. The Saturday after this one is 28th and I think it is Linden Town Day or somewhere around there. As politicians you may have your own agenda on these issues. But as I said, let us work towards a Saturday; if anyone could signal what is a bad Saturday for them in the next few weeks or the next two or three weeks.

Mr Komal Chand: Not the Saturday with World Cup, it should be after.

The Chairperson: Is there anybody else who has a problem? The following Saturday is 5 May, which is Arrival Day. That might be a problem as well.

That is why Mr Ramjattan said that we should meet next Wednesday and I have no problems meeting next Wednesday, but if we come next Wednesday and people are not prepared to discuss it, then we might as well meet on 4 May and give people more time to think. So it is up to you.

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: And not wanting to discuss it very well - admission - and let it pass.

The Chairperson: So at 10:30 on 25 April.

Clerk of Committee: No, 24 April.

The Chairperson: We will meet on a Wednesday, 25 April. We will work on the Draft Work Programme; we have each others e-mail addresses. If you have comments to add or subtract, we can also use e-mail to circulate and raise issues and communicate with each other to do the work programme so that we can try to format it in a way easier. But if we do not have comments we do not know what to do with it.

So 10:30h on Wednesday, 25 April.

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: Are you saying that that work programme is on the e-mail. **The Chairperson:** No, the one I circulated two weeks ago - the draft. Do you have that?

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: I did not get that.

The Chairperson: It is in a matrix.

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: On the internet?

The Chairperson: No, we took each others e-mail.

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: Yes, I know about that. I just want to know if you had put it in electronic form and send it.

The Chairperson: I can do that if people want, but I do not think I have everyone's e-mail. I think I have some of those. The thing is if you want it to be sent electronically, it can be done if it is easier to look at it. No problem, but I was saying through e-mail to be able to say okay or maybe some suggested changes if we want to, but it does not have to be done that way.

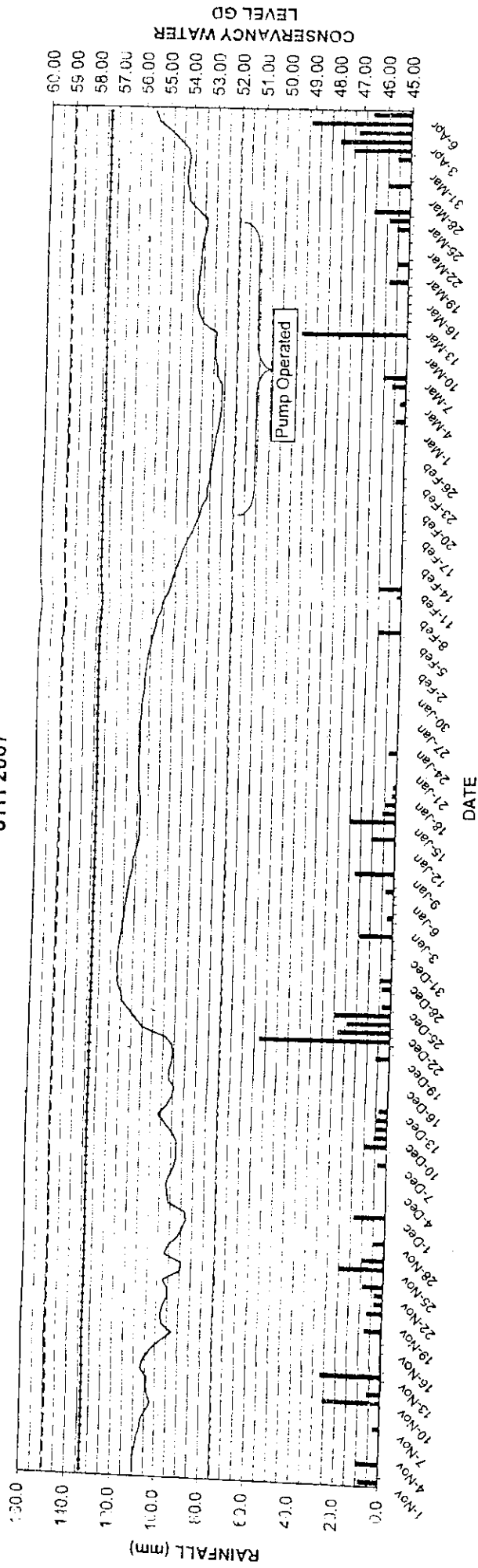
So the next meeting is 25 April at 10:30 - Work Programme. The Committees Division will follow up with the Conservancy people to a suggestion for a visit on Saturday, 12 May, (is that the date I gave you?) and to see what courtesies they would be able to extend to us.

Okay, thank you very much everybody.

Adjourned Accordingly at 13:50h

APPENDIX

GRAPH SHOWING RAINFALL AND EDWC WATER LEVELS FOR THE PERIOD NOVEMBER 1ST 2006 TO APRIL 6TH 2007



Rainfall — Water Level - - - Dam Level 59.00 GD - . . . Dead Supply Level 52.00 GD — Full Supply Level 57.50 GD

RECOMMENDATIONS	STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION	REASONS DELAY (IF ANY)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Water in the EDWC should be retained above 50 GD but should not go higher than 57 GD. ➤ The Lama and Maduni sluices should be opened to avoid excess pressure on the upper section of the dam when the gauges read above 57 GD. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Excavate cross canals with in the conservancy to increase storage and channel more water to specific outlets. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Construct a road at Flag Staff nearest to the public road to access the conservancy dam 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Rehabilitate canals to the Demerara river- Cunha, Kofi and Diamond. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Rehabilitate canals to Atlantic- the Shanks, Plaisance and Nabaclis structures to be constructed, with the latter needing a new pumping station. 		
<p>The development of a (flood) hazard assessment map and disaster management plan for major evacuation routes.</p>		

**Appendix V
Recommendations of the ELAC Report:**

RECOMMENDATIONS	STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION	REASONS FOR DELAYS (IF ANY)	SUCCESS/ FAILURES (IF ANY)	REASONS/ EXPLANATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Water in the EDWC should be retained above 50 GD but should not go higher than 57 GD. ➤ The Lama and Madumi sluices should be opened to avoid excess pressure on the upper section of the dam when the gauges read above 57 GD. 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Excavate cross canals with in the conservancy to increase storage and channel more water to specific outlets. 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Construct a road at Flag Staff nearest to the public road to access the conservancy dam 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Rehabilitate canals to the Demerara river- Cunha, Kofi and Diamond. 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Rehabilitate canals to Atlantic- the Shanks, Plaisance and Nabaclis structures to be constructed, with the latter needing a new pumping station. 				
<p>The development of a (flood) hazard assessment map and disaster management plan for major evacuation routes.</p>				

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develop an integrated and proficient disaster management organization. 							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Repair critical structures-(EDWC) Dam and all outlet structures, as well all crown dams spanning the (EDWC). 							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The development of improved building standard to withstand future floods. 							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The training of two engineers at a top university in Hydrology and Hydraulics, where on completion of their studies they would be responsible for the modeling of the (EDWC) water system. This includes sluice gates, water pumps and discharge canals. 							

Recommendations of the Mott MacDonald report

RECOMMENDATIONS	STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION	REASONS FOR DELAY	SUCCESS/ FAILURES	REASONS/ EXPLANATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hydrographic survey is required for both conservancies EDWC. 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up a Psuedo two-dimensional models for both conservancies. 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional outlets structure be provided on (EDWC). 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reconstruction of the embankment between Flag Staff and Buxton, the alignment to be defined following hand held auger holes to determine the depth of pergasse over the area. 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed site investigations to be carried out along the alignment of the proposed embankment. 				

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stability checks to be carried out on the north section of the embankment between Buxton and Nancy Stop Off, and the east section of the embankment between Flag Staff and Lama. 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The need for early warning systems (more gauges in the conservancy, meteorological forecasting) Transportation (4wheel drive cars, fast boats) Communication (radio, cell phones that can operate in the conservancy during disasters circumstances. 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SEEC committee schedule of gate openings for the EDC operating to a top water level of 56.6ft GD. 				



G E A

MISSION STATEMENT

To ensure the rational and efficient use of imported petroleum-based energy sources, while encouraging, where economically feasible and environmentally acceptable, increased utilization of indigenous new and renewable sources of energy.

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August 13, 2007

Ms. Gail Teixeira, M.P.
Chairperson
Parliamentary Sectoral Committee
on Economic Services

Dear Ms. Teixeira:

Re: Request for Documentation on the Hydro Power Issue in Guyana

I refer to your letter dated July 19, 2007 to the Hon. Prime Minister on the above subject. Guyana Energy Agency has a number of hydropower studies that were conducted, which includes the Amaila Falls Hydro Project among others. There is also an ECLAC report titled "Biofuel Potential in Guyana".

Currently, on P.M's website, there is an update on what is presently happening with respect to hydropower in Guyana. Also, you would be able to extract information with respect to solar energy from the Hinterland Electrification Strategy document.

All for your information and guidance.

With regards


Joseph O'Lall
Chief Executive Officer