
**NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF THE GUYANA
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**Report of the Commonwealth Senior Parliamentary Staff Advisor
To the Guyana National Assembly**

18 February 2005

FOREWORD

I was engaged by the Commonwealth Secretariat as their Senior Parliamentary Staff Advisor to make an assessment of the needs of the Guyana National Assembly and to make recommendations for such changes as would enable it to become the principal institution in Guyana for political dialogue. My specific Terms of Reference were:

- a. To provide ongoing technical and procedural advice;
- b. To assess needs and provide recommendations to strengthen parliamentary practices and systems, including:
 - Functional Review of the Assembly Standing Orders and statutory documents;
 - Assessment of parliamentary committee record keeping;
 - Human resource development for Assembly staff;
 - Functional review of administrative systems;
 - Assess facility needs;
- c. Identify and recommend areas of further international technical and material assistance.

My assignment was part of a *Governance and Institutional Development Division* project funded by the *Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation*. It forms a small part of the Commonwealth Secretary General's good offices engagement with Guyana under which Sir Paul Reeves has acted as his Special Envoy since 2002. Mr James Pender, a former senior official of the Australian House of Representatives, has been appointed by the Commonwealth Secretariat to act as Parliamentary Staff Advisor and continue the project after my departure. We had a week's overlap.

Although my work was disrupted early on by the flood situation in Georgetown, I have been able to fulfil most of the terms of reference and this report contains my analysis and recommendations for further international technical and material assistance. I am grateful to all those who gave time to speak to me and guide me. It was difficult to make appointments to meet MPs, especially Government MPs, because of the floods, so I spoke to fewer than I should have wished. But I am particularly grateful to the Speaker and Clerk of the National Assembly for the time they gave me and the information I received. A full list of those I had meetings with is contained in the Annex at the end of the report.

Sir Michael Davies, KCB
Commonwealth Senior Parliamentary Staff Advisor
to the Guyana National Assembly
Georgetown, Guyana
18 February 2005

CONTENTS

	Page
FOREWORD	1
SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS	3
BACKGROUND	5
WHAT IS REQUIRED	7
Independence of the Legislature	8
The Standing Orders	9
Role of the Opposition	13
Capacity Building for Members	14
The National Assembly's Budget	15
Personnel Issues	18
A Parliamentary Cadre	21
The Office of the Clerk	22
Strategic Plan	23
Legislation	24
Committees	25
The Library	30
Verbatim Report	32
Relations with Civil Society and the Private Sector	34
Accommodation	35
Documents	36
SUPPORT BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY	39
SUMMARY OF PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATIONS	41

Annex: List of Those Met and Spoken To

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Although I was unable to see the Assembly in session until a few days before I left Guyana, I learnt a great deal from those I spoke to, including MPs, the staff of the Assembly and others. It appears to me that the National Assembly of Guyana, though recognised as paramount in the Constitution, is sadly not playing its proper role in governance. The main weaknesses appear to be as follows:

- Lack of independence of the parliament and its management from the control of the Executive;
- Members who are not sufficiently *au fait* with their role within the parliamentary framework;
- An Opposition which is angry and frustrated and therefore does not grasp the opportunities afforded it by the rules of procedure;
- Standing Orders in need of revision;
- A committee system which is not properly functioning;
- Insufficient qualified staff, with ill-defined roles and lack of procedural knowledge;
- No awareness of the National Assembly's responsibility to relate with civil society, the private sector and the wider public.

2. It was represented to me by many of those I spoke to that the electoral system does not encourage a vibrant parliamentary culture. The electoral system is, however, outside my terms of reference.

3. On the positive side there are Members and staff who display eagerness to see the National Assembly live up to its full potential. It is anticipated that the following observations and recommendation will assist in this regard.

BACKGROUND

4. As I understand the situation from many of those to whom I spoke and from my own reading, Guyana has had no tradition, or experience, of a truly working parliamentary democracy. The Assembly was suspended frequently during the years immediately preceding independence. A minority Government was formed in 1964 to take Guyana through to independence (which was achieved in 1966) and beyond. Allegedly electoral fraud ensured that a Government without popular support remained in power until 1992, when elections which were declared to be free and fair saw the return of the present political party to power. Since then the principal Opposition party has boycotted the National Assembly on a number of occasions.

5. Several of those I met told me that during the period from about 1974 to the 1990s the National Assembly suffered, in their words, "degradation". It is not surprising that the tradition of parliamentary government was badly damaged. It will take time to develop.

6. The Parliament Building (still called Public Buildings) was the home of the colonial administration until independence, and housed certain Government offices, including the Prime Minister's office, until after the 1992 elections. Consequently, the staffing of the Parliament Office was very small, reflecting the limited role which the Assembly was expected to play in the governance of Guyana.

7. These two factors, the underlying political situation over a period of fifty years, and the undeveloped staffing of the National Assembly, have meant that parliamentary process has not taken root in Guyana as it has done in other countries.

8. However, the President of Guyana and the Leader of the Opposition indicated that they would now like to work within the parliamentary context and signed a Communiqué to this effect on 6th May 2004. The Speaker of the National Assembly agreed that the Commonwealth Secretariat should supply technical and procedural advice through the engagement of two experienced parliamentary officials.

WHAT IS REQUIRED

9. Section 50 of the Constitution lists Parliament ahead of the President as one of the supreme organs of the State. It is important that this provision is reflected in the part it plays in the political process and that steps are taken to achieve the intentions of the drafters of the Constitution.
10. The development and continuing health of a Parliament depends crucially on two elements. The first is a membership which believes in and supports parliamentary democracy; the second is a cadre of staff who are proud of where they work and are committed to serve the interests of Parliament with complete impartiality. These two elements are inter-dependent on each other. Unless parliamentarians begin to regard Parliament as an important institution of the state, there will be no willingness on behalf of society (who pay the taxes which support public institutions) to provide Parliament with the resources it requires to perform the role which the people living in a parliamentary democracy expect. But if the parliamentary staff do not receive the necessary resources to enable them to give a professional service, then parliamentarians are likely to feel that they are not getting the support they require from the parliamentary system and will use other platforms from which to speak. It is a classic "chicken and egg" situation.
11. The primary responsibility for driving the process forward rests with the Government. One of the great benefits of being in power is that it gives those in power the opportunity to change things for the better for the benefit of their citizens. Improving the workings of Parliament can only be beneficial to the health of the nation.
12. Since the levers of power are in the hands of the Executive, what is now required is a commitment on behalf of Government to treat Parliament as a special case in terms of its independence and its resources. This should be matched by a commitment on behalf of the Opposition that they will accept the role which opposition parties across the world accept, namely, a constructive engagement with Government over policy, opposing where there are true differences and supporting those policies which are in the national interest. Both sides of the political divide should also agree that parliamentary scrutiny of the Executive is part and parcel of a sound democracy. Lack of scrutiny merely allows policies which have not always been properly thought through to be adopted without an understanding of the possible consequences.
13. It appears that, at present, both elements, parliamentarians who believe in the importance of Parliament and in their role as representatives of the people, and a professional and qualified cadre of staff, are missing to a significant degree.
14. Yet in recent months, the Government has authorised considerable expenditure on the Parliament building. Not only has the old Chamber been completely renovated but further work is continuing to create additional accommodation for Members and Committees. The paintwork is being attended to. All this suggests that the Government has the interests of the National Assembly in mind, since there would be little point in this expenditure if the Assembly is to be ignored by the Executive.

15. Additionally, a start has been made towards enhancing the scrutiny of the Executive by the appointment of sectoral committees and the Parliamentary Management Committee. The important thing now is for these committees to fulfil the responsibilities placed on them. More resources will certainly be required but the committees will work effectively only if Members give time to the work and develop expertise in the areas for which the committee of which they are members is responsible: and also if the Government responds to requests from Committees for officials to appear before them, for documents and for other information. What is important is that the appointment of the Committees is seen as having real substance rather than being a process. The work of Committees will be addressed later in this report.

16. As already mentioned, what is needed first is a general acceptance by all the parties in the National Assembly that Parliament requires their committed and active support in ensuring that the Assembly becomes a vital element in a democratic society. It was significant that the National Assembly did not meet immediately to debate the crisis caused by the floods in mid-January; indeed, a sitting of the National Assembly was actually cancelled. It was four weeks after the crisis began before the Assembly was convened. It must be doubted whether there is another country in the world where such a crisis would not have led to an early parliamentary debate.

17. A number of steps will have to be taken to create an atmosphere where best parliamentary practice can begin to take hold. As has already been referred to, Government and Opposition must accept their distinct roles in Parliament. An elected Government has the right to pass its legislative programme, but this does not mean that a Bill endorsed by the Cabinet should be regarded by the Government as unamendable by Parliament. No one political party has all the answers and it is therefore incumbent on the Government to allow proper and, if necessary, extended debate on legislation. Oppositions have the right and, indeed, the duty to oppose the Government. But this should be done in a thoughtful and constructive way. At present, it appears that the Government allows the Opposition few opportunities to debate policy or to consider Bills with sufficient time to propose alterations; at the same time, the Opposition appears to have adopted the position that opposition to the Government can only be achieved by a policy of non-cooperation and by not participating in the business of the Assembly. No parliamentary system can work properly on that basis.

INDEPENDENCE OF THE LEGISLATURE

18. Steps must be taken to establish the National Assembly as an institution independent of the Executive. This is necessary to ensure that the legislature can truly keep the Executive under scrutiny. Historically, the separation of powers came about to enable representatives of the people to express their views on policy formulated by Kings and other unelected rulers. But the principle still applies even when the Head of State is elected.

19. Throughout this report I have identified areas where the separation of powers is not observed in respect of the National Assembly. Meetings of the Assembly are entirely at the whim of the Executive, control of the Order Paper is entirely in the hands of the Executive, the Assembly's budget is too tightly controlled by the Executive, the staffing of the Assembly is not independent of the Executive and committee work is subject to frustration by the Executive.

20. Furthermore, an independent legislature requires information which is accurate, timely and usable. Only in this way can the Members of a legislature have the means of questioning public policy. If the Executive makes it difficult to obtain such information or provides it too late for the purposes for which it was sought, then the legislature is in the hands of the Executive and cannot assert its independence. The difficulty of obtaining census figures from the Government has been mentioned to me on several occasions. This illustrates the importance that freedom of information has in correcting the imbalance between Government and Parliament. The National Assembly should ensure that there is much greater openness with regard to information.

21. It is constitutionally wrong for the Parliament Office, which serves the National Assembly, to be subject to the provisions of the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act 2003 in the same way as Ministries and to be accountable to a Minister rather than to the Assembly. I shall return to this subject later in the report.

THE STANDING ORDERS

22. The Standing Orders have not been revised since 1992, since when there has been a new Constitution. It was drawn to my attention very late in my assignment that the Standing Orders are in conflict with some of the provisions of the new Constitution. If I had had my attention drawn to this early on with precise examples, I would have been in a position to propose the necessary changes to the Standing Orders. I recommend that Mr James Pender should explore this matter further and make proposals for consideration by the Standing Orders Committee.

23. However, there are certain Standing Orders which are clearly not being observed and this has led to some of the problems referred to earlier. Over a very long period some Standing Orders have been ignored, as illustrated below. In future, the provisions of the Standing Orders should be observed or, where necessary, changed.

Standing Orders for Settled Parliamentary Timetable

24. In the first place the importance of Parliament can be enhanced by a settled parliamentary timetable. The Standing Orders are very precise in this matter. Standing Order 8 states that the Assembly shall sit "every day except Saturdays and Sundays". The Standing Orders also provide for a period when the House does not sit. In addition to the long recess which is prescribed in Standing Order 8A, the Assembly has other parts of the year when it does not sit. All parliaments have periods when they do not sit (recesses),

but these are announced in advance. It is accepted that the Assembly does not have sufficient business at present to sit as often as the Standing Orders require. The Standing Orders should, therefore, be amended to reflect that fact, and make provision for a more realistic number of days and for extra sitting days when required, for instance for the budget session.

25. Standing Order 8(2) is drafted in terms to allow the Speaker to re-call the Assembly when it is in recess if he considers it to be in the public interest, for instance to debate the floods. An Opinion of the Attorney General of 1963 ruled that such a power rests only with the Government. It should be pointed out that this Opinion predates the current Constitution which states at Section 69(2) that "sittings of the National Assembly shall be held at such time and place as the Assembly may, by its rules of procedure or otherwise, determine". Given the Government's refusal to accede to the wishes of the Opposition to hold a meeting of the Assembly specifically to debate a national emergency, these provisions should be respected.

26. The practice of adjourning the Assembly *sine die* should be ended. If the Assembly were required to sit, for instance, every Thursday, Members would know when to attend. If constructive parliamentary processes were followed, there should be enough business to fill one sitting day a week. On the basis that this might allow forty days in a calendar year, within these days specific opportunities should be allocated to the Opposition parties so that they can move motions and promote Private Members Bills. One day a month would seem appropriate. Alternatively, the Assembly should also meet on occasional Wednesdays when business other than Government business has priority under the present Standing Orders. Recognised parliamentary time for the Opposition would eliminate (or at any rate reduce) the regular requests for "urgent" debates which have been consistently refused.

27. Specific time should also be set aside for debates on Committee reports and on the Government's responses to them.

28. An alternative way of proceeding would be for the National Assembly to sit intensively for a month and then adjourn to a fixed date for a further period of intensive sittings. This is the way in which a number of smaller legislatures work. The advantages are that for a fixed period the Assembly would attract national attention, engender a sense of purpose and it would make it easier for those Members living far away to attend without lengthy journeys. Committees would continue to meet as necessary whether the Assembly is sitting or not.

29. It should not be left to the whim of the Government when to hold a sitting. It should be well understood that the Assembly will sit on certain days. If the Government do not have business to transact, Opposition business can be taken or the Assembly could adjourn early. The important thing is that the Assembly should meet as notified. It is worth noting here that the Assembly met only nineteen times in 2004. That is hardly an endorsement of its status.

30. A settled parliamentary calendar would allow for the weekly publication and wide distribution of a Notice Paper showing future business, not just for the following week

but further into the future. Not only would this help busy MPs to plan their week but it would also enable representatives of the civil society to interact with Parliament. Members of Parliament should recognise that their mandates come from the people who elected them, albeit second-hand, and that there are organisations outside Government and Parliament who are entitled to participate in the political debate and comment on draft legislation.

Recommendations on Standing Orders for the Parliamentary Timetable:

- **There should be a settled parliamentary timetable with recognised opportunities for the Opposition and also for debates on Committee reports. Sittings of the Assembly should not be at the whim of the Government.**

Standing Orders for Questions

31. The oral question time, which is provided for in the Standing Orders, should ensure that Ministers are subjected to regular scrutiny of their responsibilities and should give the Opposition opportunities to ask questions on behalf of those they represent. But I understand that very few questions are actually asked during the 45 minute question period. It is important that the Opposition make use of the opportunities that the Standing Orders allow.

32. Maybe one reason why they do not table more questions is that the Order Paper containing questions and motions submitted to the Clerk and then to the Speaker and cleared by them as in conformity with the Standing Orders has to be sent to the Office of the President which can (and does) strike out questions and motions which the Office does not like. This is quite wrong and an abuse of the privileges of the Assembly. If Opposition Members cannot ask the questions they wish to ask, they will abandon parliamentary process in favour of other action, as they have done in recent years.

33. I was told by the Clerk that the practice of sending the Order Paper to the Office of the President for approval is one which he inherited when he became Clerk, and he thought accordingly that this was correct procedure. But not only is it wrong according to the terms of Standing Order 6(5) which says that the Clerk is responsible for preparing the Order Paper and of Standing Order 20(3) which says that the Government may alter their own business on the Order Paper but says nothing about their right to alter any other business, but it also flies in the face of proper parliamentary process. If the Government does not like a question or motion on the Order Paper, it suggests that the Opposition is doing its proper job of scrutinising the Government. That is part and parcel of a parliamentary democracy. If the National Assembly cannot question the Government except with the Government's consent, then the whole purpose of Parliament is negated. The Officers of the National Assembly, the Speaker and the Clerk, are responsible for ensuring that questions and motions are in order; if they are in order, they should appear on the Order Paper without ministerial interference.

34. Standing Order 16 requires thirty days notice of a Question before it may be placed on the Order Paper. This length of time means that no question can be asked on any topical event and consequently severely limits the ability of parliamentarians to hold

the Government to account. It should not be necessary to have this amount of notice and I suggest that the Standing Order should be amended to require no more than fourteen days notice. Any Ministry should be able to provide an answer to an Oral question with two weeks notice.

35. At present, the only regular questioning of the Government is in the form of questions which are answered in written form. It is clear that the process of answering such questions is unacceptably slow. If the Government does not wish to answer a question, it does not answer it. This again is an abuse of the privileges of Parliament to which the Government is answerable. Of course, there may be occasions when for the reasons listed in the Standing Orders the question cannot be tabled. But this should be very rare if Members take the advice of the Clerk. If a question is accepted by the Parliamentary authorities, it is not for the Government to refuse an answer. This lack of response inevitably destroys the atmosphere of trust between Government and Opposition. The Assembly should consider establishing a practice whereby answers to written questions are provided within three weeks, except in exceptional cases. But, if the Government are serious in their commitment to working within a parliamentary context, then the speedy answering of questions will show that commitment in practice.

36. There may be a very few occasions when a written question requires excessive research in order to provide the answer. In these instances, the proper course of action is for the reply to say that the "answer can be provided only at unreasonable cost". But the Minister should also seek out and explain the problem privately to the Member who tabled the question. This is part of the courtesies of a properly functioning Parliament, where both sides respect each other and each understand their respective roles.

37. Government backbenchers also should be encouraged to ask questions. I have learned that not a single question has been asked by Government backbenchers since 1992 (and probably before that!). Again that is not the way in which a properly functioning legislative assembly should work. All Members should participate. There is nothing disloyal about Government Members asking questions; indeed, such questions can provide an opportunity for the Government to publicise something popular!

38. Mr James Pender will be able to consider these matters further during his assignment and bring forward precise proposals.

Recommendations on Standing Orders for Questions:

- The Notice required for Questions (and motions) should be reduced from 30 days to no more than 14 days.
- The unparliamentary practice of the Government deciding which questions and motions tabled by opposition Members should appear on the Order Paper should cease.
- Government backbenchers should be encouraged to participate in question time and table their own questions.

Standing Orders for Legislation

39. Since the power to legislate is one of the principal responsibilities of a legislative assembly, it is important that the Standing Orders concerning the legislative process should be drafted so as to allow proper scrutiny to take place. Standing Order 46 (*Appointment of Days for Stages of Bills*) should be amended in two respects. In the first place, the Standing Order should allow more than seven days between the publication of a Bill and its Second Reading to allow all Members to read the Bill and prepare for the debate. I would suggest two weeks would be appropriate. Secondly, the Standing Order should be amended by deleting the provision which allows a Minister to move that the next stage of the Bill be taken forthwith. It would be desirable instead for the Standing Orders to provide that "no two stages of a Bill shall take place on the same day". The practice of committing certain Bills to Select Committees is a very desirable one and in such cases it is accepted that the speedy passage of the Bill does not take place.

40. The Standing Orders should ensure instead that the committee stage of a Bill on the floor of the Assembly takes place several days after Second Reading to allow time for amendments to be tabled and circulated. In this connection, it should be required by the Standing Orders, which are currently silent on this matter, that amendments are tabled in advance of a sitting, so that they can be duplicated and circulated, rather than what happens at present where amendments are proposed during the course of a session. Circulation of amendments in advance would improve the debate on them, because the Government could consider the merits of an amendment in advance and respond more constructively. Amendments proposed during the course of a sitting (manuscript amendments) are likely to bring a knee-jerk rejection from the Government, which, of course, merely debases the parliamentary process and causes resentment in the Opposition.

Recommendations on Standing Orders for Legislation:

- **Bills should only be published after presentation to the Assembly.**
- **There should be two weeks between publication of a Bill and its Second Reading.**
- **The Standing Orders should not allow for Bills to be taken through all their stages in one day**
- **Amendments to Bills should, as a rule, be tabled and circulated in advance.**

ROLE OF THE OPPOSITION

41. Opposing the policies of an elected Government is often frustrating. Oppositions do not have the same resources in terms of staff or money as the Government and it can be hard work marshalling arguments against the provisions of bills which are published only a few days before they are to be debated. Also there are at present few opportunities for Opposition policies to be debated in Parliament. It is very easy in such circumstances to blame the Standing Orders or some other procedural hurdle. An Opposition should instead try to maximise the opportunities which exist, however few. Motions and questions drafted in short, sharp terms are more difficult to rule out of order than those which contain long arguments. Moreover, short, sharp motions do not expose in advance

all the points which can be made in debate and which will require answering. The important thing is to get the motion on to the Order Paper and then, in debate, employ all the arguments which the party feels strongly about.

42. Opportunities already exist within the Standing Orders to scrutinise the Government, if the will is there. I understand that 90% of parliamentary questions are tabled by one Member, who is not a member of the main Opposition party. Opposition Members should also participate in debates, again something which I understand is not fully taken advantage of. The changes that I am recommending should be made to the practice of the National Assembly, notably the ending of the Government's role in deciding what questions and motions may appear on the Order Paper, will further enhance the opportunities for Opposition members to hold the Government to account.

43. But nevertheless the fact remains that when a party is in opposition they will lose parliamentary votes, because they do not have the numbers. As already stated, both Government and Opposition have different roles to play in Parliament. It is important that the Government understands that the Opposition has the right to oppose and the Opposition recognise that the Government has the right to govern. If this is accepted, then the Opposition should receive a better deal from the Government in terms of legislative concessions. Astute politicians realise that one good turn will often yield them dividends on another occasion. "Deals" are done. That is what parliamentary government is all about.

Recommendations on Role of the Opposition:

- **The Opposition should become more persistent in their questioning of Government and utilise the opportunities that already exist for doing so.**
- **All members of the Opposition should participate in debates and question time.**
- **The Government must recognise that the role of an opposition is to oppose. This means that the Opposition should be given the opportunities to do this.**

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR MEMBERS

44. If the National Assembly is to operate effectively as a parliamentary body (something which all sides acknowledge is not the case now), it is highly desirable that Members from all sides of the House should, as soon as possible, have the opportunity to discuss with other parliamentarians how they work in their respective Parliaments. Seminars, workshops and visits to other Parliaments would all help to give Guyanese MPs a better idea of their role in holding the Government to account, something for which both Government and Opposition MPs have a responsibility. Again it must be stressed that it is not disloyal for backbenchers from the Government side of the Assembly to ask questions, participate in debates and to work effectively in Committees.

45. The Parliamentary Management Committee recently postponed a proposed "workshop" offered by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. Among the reasons given was the view that Members themselves should learn the Standing Orders but also that such a workshop would be more useful after the forthcoming general

elections. This was a misunderstanding of what a workshop would provide and also of the immediacy of the need for capacity building now. What Members would learn from such an event would be the "craft" of being a parliamentarian, rather than a greater understanding of their own Standing Orders (although that is always helpful). Standing Orders are for Clerks, not for Members. One reason Clerks are employed is to provide advice to Members on the Standing Orders and on the procedure of an Assembly.

46. At present, as part of the capacity building project funded by IDB in respect of the Public Accounts Committee and the Economic Services Committee, consideration is being given to sending members of the Public Accounts Committee to another jurisdiction so that they can learn from other parliamentarians how they approach that sort of work. Such visits should be extended to other Committees and in respect of other parliamentary activity.

47. I recommend that international support should be directed at making such capacity building available. I also recommend that the Parliamentary Management Committee should reconsider its decision not to hold the parliamentary "workshop" offered by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association last July and publicly announced. There is nothing shameful in participating in parliamentary workshops, at which it is possible to learn from the experience of other Parliamentarians. Workshops, seminars and training programmes are taking place around the world and involve Members from long established Parliaments, as well as newer ones.

Recommendations on Capacity Building for Members:

- Members of the National Assembly should be offered the opportunity to participate in capacity building events.
- The Parliamentary Management Committee should reconsider its decision to postpone the CPA workshop.
- The international community should support the provision of capacity building events for Members of the National Assembly.

THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY'S BUDGET

48. The National Assembly should be given control over its own expenditure and in drawing up its own budget. At present, all expenditure by the Assembly is dealt with by the Ministry of Finance under the provisions of the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act and neither the Speaker nor the Clerk has any authority to alter the amounts spent or to move money between one budget head and another.

49. It is one of the surest indications of the independence of the legislature from the executive that Parliament has a certain degree of independence over its own budget. This cannot be the case if the executive controls all expenditure. Of course, any Parliament must have regard to the national economic situation and should not be unreasonable in what it asks for. Since it is Parliament that votes money for use by the Government and it is where a Government receives its political support, it is constitutionally correct to treat Parliament differently from Government Departments. This means giving responsibility

to the legislature for its own affairs and separating the Executive from the Legislature in the area of parliamentary expenditure.

50. At present, the National Assembly has so little control of its expenditure that the Accounts Section does not even draw up end-of-year accounts. This is left to the Ministry of Finance. Inevitably, the lack of accounts means lack of "transparency". Parliament should account for its own costs, so that the public, the auditors and its Members know how the money is being spent.

51. The Assembly even has to ask the Office of the President for money so that the Speaker can undertake an overseas visit. The Speaker in any Parliament is an important figure and it is not constitutionally correct that he should be dependent on the Executive to say whether he can fulfil representative engagements.

52. Other financial requests by the Assembly are just "struck out" by the Ministry of Finance when the estimates are submitted, without any direct knowledge of what the Assembly requires to undertake its work. A classic example is expenditure on books. Year after year the estimate for book purchase is struck out. Those who do this must be ignorant of the fact that a library needs to buy books each year to ensure that its collection is relevant; this is particularly the case with a parliamentary library. Equally last year, the National Assembly asked for seven computer workstations in its Estimate; it received only one. How can a modern institution work effectively if it is denied the necessary equipment?

53. The National Assembly should be given financial independence in order that the Parliament Office can provide an efficient service for Members. Light control over the Assembly's budget could be retained by Government through the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs who could be made responsible with the Speaker for submitting the Estimate.

54. Change of this sort will require considerable change in the Parliament Office to ensure that there are people and systems in place, both to draw up much more complex Estimates and to provide proper control over expenditure. At present, responsibility for "money" is spread between too many people, none of whom seems to have much relationship with the others. Eleven members of staff are employed on accountancy work of one sort or the other. For the amount of responsibility they have for the finances of the Assembly, this is too many. But this is caused by the extraordinary levels of bureaucracy required by the Ministry of Finance. Money saved on staff numbers could be used to employ those with higher accountancy qualifications, if the Assembly were given financial independence.

55. The Deputy Clerk is Accounting Officer but since all responsibility for accounting for the Assembly's expenditure is in the hands of the Ministry of Finance, she has little responsibility in terms of the normal duties of an Accounting Officer. She shares with the Chief Administrative Officer the role of preparing the Assembly's Estimate with the assistance of the Expenditure Planning and Management Unit (EPMU). She and the Chief Administrative Officer are also responsible for authorising expenditure by means of vouchers, even down to the purchase of a few bars of soap for the stores. The Accounts

Branch (7 staff) is responsible for sending bills authorised for payment by more senior staff to the Ministry of Finance for actual payment and for paying some salaries with cash that is provided by the Ministry of Finance. It can only pay bills on its own initiative for amounts up to G\$9000 (about US\$45). In the case of salaries paid in cash, the staff actually have to go first to the Ministry of Finance to collect a cheque which they then have to cash at the Bank of Guyana and return to the Parliament Building with a suitcase full of banknotes. This procedure is time consuming, risky, antiquated and cannot possibly be cost-effective.

56. In future, there should be a unified Finance Office, with fewer but better qualified staff, where all these various functions are discharged. The Finance Office must be headed by someone with recognised accountancy qualifications who would be responsible for all the estimating and expenditure. Within the Finance Office there should be at least some other staff with basic accountancy skills and qualifications. The Office must be equipped with computers and the appropriate software for its purposes.

57. There is already a person on the staff of the Parliament Office who has undertaken the training towards becoming a fully qualified Chartered Accountant. She will be taking the final exams later in the year and hopes to pass them then. She had extensive private sector accountancy experience before joining the Parliament and would be a suitable person to head a new Finance Office. She should be provided with all the assistance she requires to achieve this qualification.

58. The Clerk of the National Assembly should again become Accounting Officer. The Deputy Clerk should be Principal Finance Officer with some strategic responsibility for the Assembly's income and expenditure. She should not be required to be responsible for such basic work as the provision of refreshments for Committees, as she is now. The Head of the Finance Office (the person with the professional accountancy qualifications) would ensure proper accounts and budgetary forecasts.

59. At the end of each financial year, the Finance Office would draw up the Assembly's accounts and submit them for auditing. Before this the Finance Office would have begun to prepare the Estimate for the next financial year, asking each part of the Parliament Office (Library, Committee Branch, Stores etc) what money they would need for their work in the following year. Having received the requests, the Principal Finance Officer and the Head of the Finance Office would settle the overall Estimate, reducing some of the requests if they seemed too high and increasing others, and submit a budget with which the Speaker was happy. It is suggested that a small committee (3 or 4 persons), chaired by the Speaker, and perhaps called the Finance Committee should be responsible for the examination of the Estimate and the Assembly's accounts (and any other financial matters which might arise). The Finance Committee should not be dominated by Ministers. It must be able to agree a budget suited to the needs of the Assembly and not one tailored to the wishes of the Executive.

60. I was very surprised to learn that some Members of Parliament (and even Ministers) currently receive their monthly salaries in the form of cash. This is not satisfactory for the reputation of the National Assembly. The payment of salaries and wages in cash should be ended quickly, particularly for Members. Not only does the

collection and handling of significant amounts of cash each month pose risks for the staff involved (they told me that they do not like doing it) but it also raises questions about the propriety of what is being done. It may well be the case that the lowest paid members of staff do not have bank accounts and that they must continue to receive cash payments. But this should not be allowed for Members or for any staff with bank accounts.

Recommendations on the National Assembly's Budget:

- **The National Assembly should be given much greater control of its own budget and expenditure.**
- **The Assembly's budget should be submitted to the Ministry of Finance by the Speaker and the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs after it has been agreed by a Committee expressly charged with this responsibility.**
- **A newly formed Finance Office headed by a qualified accountant should be established in the National Assembly to estimate for, control, monitor and account for all expenditure.**
- **Staff in the Finance Office should be provided with the necessary training.**
- **The Office should be provided with computer workstations and the appropriate software.**
- **Financial support should be provided for a staff member to achieve qualification as a Chartered Accountant.**
- **The payment of salaries in cash should be ended except for the lowest paid members of staff.**
- **Advice and guidance will be needed in establishing the Finance Office and this is something which the international community might consider supporting.**

PERSONNEL ISSUES

61. I paid a great deal of attention to the question of human resources, which are inevitably the making or breaking of an efficient institution. I learned that the Clerk of the National Assembly has no power to appoint, dismiss or promote the staff who work for the Assembly. He cannot even move staff from one post to another if it means re-designation of function. This role is undertaken by the Public Service Commission, which has no direct knowledge of the needs of the National Assembly or how the staff working there are performing. This is astonishing. Not only is it unreasonable for any senior manager not to have the authority to manage and, if necessary, dismiss his or her own staff but it also confuses the situation. Delays occur in recruitment and posts are not filled.

62. This leads to a number of undesirable consequences. Some staff, including several in important position have not had their appointments confirmed after several years in post, despite several letters from the Clerk asking for their appointments to be confirmed. Staff do not regard themselves as employed by the National Assembly and therefore they are not as committed to it as they would be if they saw their direct employer being the Clerk. The Public Service Commission imposes staff on the National Assembly without the agreement of the Clerk. There are several vacancies in important positions which remain unfilled after considerable periods. Pay levels which may be suitable for a

particular job in a Government Department are imposed on staff of the National Assembly without regard to the difference in the quality of work that is being done. Promotions are in the gift of the Public Service Commission rather than under the control of the Clerk. This means that people without the necessary parliamentary experience may be promoted when there are staff already working for the National Assembly who are qualified. Only the Clerk can appreciate the needs of the Assembly.

63. I learned that of the fifty-eight staff in post, about half of them are what are called "temporary"—in other words not pensionable and presumably without other employment rights. Such a situation would not occur if the Clerk were given the responsibility for all aspects of staff management. It is the distance that exists between the worker and his or her employer which causes the difficulty. Whatever view one takes of the desirability or not of less control by the centre, it is surely indefensible that parliamentary employees are not treated with consideration as to their employment status. This inevitably works against a feeling of loyalty towards the Assembly.

64. It is not clear to me what provisions exist to ensure that promotion is based solely on merit. Promotion should be transparently based on merit alone and properly constituted boards should be responsible for interviewing candidates for promotion.

65. A number of staff display classic signs of boredom. They do not have enough to do and the quality of the work that they are employed to do is poor. The lack of supervision from above is palpable and there appears to be no recognisable line management for certain sections of the Parliament Office, or it is not being exercised.

66. There are, however, plenty of capable young staff in the Parliament Office but their talents are not being fully utilised. They need opportunities for advancement according to their abilities and the knowledge that they can advance rather than just mark time. This is possible if the Parliament Office has responsibility for its own human resources.

67. A Personnel Office exists in the National Assembly but its responsibilities for staff matters are exiguous. As already stated, the Personnel Office has no responsibility for the recruitment, career progression or even the disciplining of staff. The duties of the Office are more to do with the calculation of superannuation benefits and gratuities for both staff and Members. The compilation of personal Staff files is the responsibility of the Office but these contain the decisions of the Public Service Commission rather than the decisions of their manager, the Clerk. It is worth noting here that these personal files are kept in the Registry and not in the Personnel Office. This is wrong.

68. Clearly, if responsibility for all staffing matters is to be delegated from the Public Service Commission to the Clerk, as I strongly urge, a robust system to discharge this responsibility must be put in place. It will no doubt be argued that similar arguments in favour of delegation could be made for Government Departments but there is, I believe, a very big difference between the institution of Parliament and a Government Department which demands different treatment, and that is the constitutional relationship which should exist between the Executive and the Legislature. This difference is recognised elsewhere in the Commonwealth and in other Parliaments.

69. A Personnel Office with an experienced personnel officer in charge should be established and the office equipped with the necessary computer workstations. The day-to-day management of staff would be undertaken by this office with the Clerk being ultimately responsible but delegating the details to those with proper personnel qualifications. The Assembly will wish to take some interest in the development and welfare of its staff and this could be discharged by a small committee, possibly the Assembly Committee.

70. The Personnel Office would be responsible for all recruitment, training, promotions and discipline. Annual staff assessments should be introduced so that staff know where they must improve. The annual assessments would assist in ensuring that promotions are always on merit. Management would also know better where there are weaknesses in the Office.

71. Career planning and the moving of staff between offices, so that they gain wider experience, would also be part of the Personnel Office's responsibilities.

72. Consideration should be given to altering the working hours of parliamentary staff (other than cleaners and other support staff) so that they conform more to the working hours of the National Assembly and of Committees. It is not necessary, for instance, for committee staff to attend at 8am and it creates difficulties if they finish at 4.30pm. A starting time of 10am and a finish at 6.30pm would partially overcome difficulties for Committees which wish to meet in the late afternoon.

73. A training budget, with sufficient funds, should be included in the National Assembly's Estimates so that a regular training programme can be introduced for staff. Currently staff are sent on training seminars arranged by the Ministry of Public Service but this is haphazard and I learned that some managers had not been sent on management training and those responsible for financial matters had had no training in accountancy. Greater emphasis should be placed on training so that staff feel valued and their service to Members improves.

74. A staff handbook should be drafted once these changes have been established.

75. The disillusionment of the younger staff with the working, or rather the lack of working, of the National Assembly is palpable. If the steps outlined above are not taken, young, capable staff members will leave and the National Assembly will be the loser.

Recommendations on Personnel Issues:

- **The Clerk of the National Assembly should become the employer of the staff of the Assembly and have complete control over all aspects of their employment.**
- **The morale of the Office should be attended to with attempts made to increase the quality of work. Staff must be motivated and the responsibility for this rests with senior managers.**
- **An enlarged Personnel Office should be established to act on behalf of the Clerk on all employment matters and be equipped with the necessary computers.**

- **Personnel training for those in the Office should be arranged, where necessary with donor assistance.**
- **Merit alone should be the criterion for promotion which should not be subject to any political pressure**
- **A training budget with realistic funds should be established and controlled by the Personnel Office. Staff should undergo training regularly.**
- **Consideration should be given to altering the working hours of staff so that they conform more to parliamentary hours.**
- **A staff handbook should be prepared.**

A PARLIAMENTARY CADRE

76. The strength of a Parliament, as has already been mentioned, depends partly on its Members but more on its staff. Members come and go, while the staff remain and serve from one Parliament to the next. The staff provide essential advice to Members, which all Members should make full use of. The importance of creating a cadre of capable and impartial staff who have the confidence and experience to advise Members of all political allegiances cannot be over-emphasised. This can only be achieved by appointing those who are interested in parliamentary work and are likely to remain with the Parliament for some years. It cannot be achieved by imposing staff from outside who are not interested in parliamentary work, as is currently the case with some staff.

77. The development of a parliamentary cadre would strengthen the office of Clerk. It is apparent that at present there are deep suspicions on both sides of the political divide as to the advice which is given to the Speaker. The Clerk himself feels uncertain as to the way in which his advice will be seen from one or other side of the Assembly. This is not a position which any public official should be put in, let alone a parliamentary official. Confidence in the Clerk of the Assembly is an essential prerequisite for sound and impartial advice. He must not be allowed to wonder if his job is safe every time he stands up to politicians, as any parliamentary official worth his salt must do occasionally.

78. Parliamentary work is different from that performed elsewhere in the public sector. The demands are different and the hours are different. It may well be that different pay levels should apply so as to ensure that the right calibre of staff are recruited and retained. It should be recognised above all that parliamentary staff, at any rate those at senior levels, should not participate in party politics. The staff work for Parliament and not for the Government of the day. Some of the staff I spoke to recognise the special positions they hold and are frustrated by the way in which the Parliament Office is unable to establish its professional independence from the rest of the public service.

79. The creation of a cadre would both increase the number of career parliamentary staff available to fill senior positions in the future and also increase the number of experienced advisors on parliamentary practice and procedure of which there are at present too few. It would also increase the number of staff from whom Members could seek advice; it should not be necessary for Members to always go to the Clerk.

80. I know that the Clerk of the National Assembly values immensely the opportunity to meet colleagues at meetings such as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's annual conference. It would be an excellent thing if more of the staff could experience the ways in which other legislatures work and how they are served. Meeting other parliamentary staff, both in the region and further afield, would demonstrate the camaraderie there exists between those who work in a small but important profession. It would enhance confidence to hear from other Clerks about the problems they face and how they deal with them.

Recommendations on a Parliamentary Cadre:

- **The creation of a parliamentary cadre of staff should be given every encouragement.**
- **The Clerk of the National Assembly should enjoy the complete support of all parts of the House and should not be afraid of giving unwelcome advice.**
- **Parliamentary staff should not engage in party politics.**
- **Staff should be exposed to the culture of parliamentary service in other countries.**

THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK

81. I have been able to observe the constant interruptions which the Clerk of the National Assembly has to deal with during the course of each day. A meeting with him has to be held away from his own Office to ensure an uninterrupted period. Without doubt, the Clerk requires additional support, administratively and, particularly, procedurally. The Deputy Clerk should be more involved in the procedure of the Assembly and become familiar with the Standing Orders, so that she could confidently take over if the Clerk were absent for any reason. The current ill-health of the Clerk indicates the risks faced by any Legislative Assembly where there is no-one else qualified to take over if the need arises. It is, I understand, not a new situation. The present Clerk's predecessor, Mr Narain, held the post for some thirty-six years and never trained anyone to succeed him. The creation of a parliamentary cadre, referred to above, would ensure that such a risky situation does not occur again.

82. Additionally, I recommend that a Table Office (to use a term known elsewhere in Commonwealth Parliaments) be created. This could be staffed by a young graduate who wishes to make his career in the National Assembly and who would also become familiar with its procedures and Standing Orders. The purpose of such an Office would be to receive questions and motions from Members and to process them. It could also be the office where Members table amendments to Bills. The clerk in charge would work closely with the Clerk of the National Assembly in ensuring that the questions and motions conformed to the Standing Orders but he would be able to relieve the Clerk of some of the detail and so allow the Clerk to become more strategic in managing the whole Parliament Office. The Clerk would also have more time to give procedural advice to Members. But Members should also start to expect sound advice from the Table Office. They should not always have to visit the Clerk

83. Wider procedural knowledge throughout the Parliament Office should be encouraged, so that there are more staff members able to give advice to Members. Procedural training should be arranged, either within the Caribbean region or through the auspices of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. It would provide greater interest for staff in their work if they understood the intricacies of parliamentary procedure.

84. It would be desirable for the Registry to be responsible for recording procedural precedents. Statistics about the work of the Assembly (e.g. number of sitting days, hours sat, numbers of questions etc) should also be kept. Once there is more procedural support for the Clerk, a procedural manual should be compiled as an aid to the Standing Orders.

Recommendations on the Office of the Clerk:

- **A Table Office should be established where Members can go to table questions, motions and amendments to bills, thus relieving the Clerk of the National Assembly of some of his load.**
- **Procedural knowledge among staff should be widened, with the Deputy Clerk becoming familiar with procedures of the Assembly.**
- **Procedural training should be arranged with other Parliaments.**
- **The Registry should keep procedural precedents and other statistics concerning the work of the Assembly.**
- **A procedural manual should be written when staff numbers allow.**

STRATEGIC PLAN

85. Last year the staff received training from two former members of the United Kingdom House of Commons staff. At the end of the week's training the staff agreed five areas of activity which they would pursue. These should now be worked up into a Strategic Plan with Objectives which the Parliament Office would seek to achieve in a given period. The Objectives would include a number of activities which would be updated each year so as to achieve a rolling programme of work to which the Parliament Office is committed. This would facilitate the drawing up of the financial estimates and allow some bench-marking of success or failure.

86. One specific Objective worth mentioning now would be the aim to place all parliamentary documents (Bills, Order Papers, Hansards etc) on the Assembly's website as soon as possible. This would do more than almost anything else to promote interest in the work of the Assembly and would also be of assistance to Members who could access the documents away from the Parliament Building. Above all, it would enable those with an interest in legislation which affects them or their businesses to have easier access to bills, amendments and verbatim reports than they have now.

Recommendations on the Strategic Plan:

- **The Parliament Office should develop a Strategic Plan for the future.**
- **One Objective should be the placing of all Assembly documents on the Assembly website.**

LEGISLATION

87. The power to legislate and to change the laws of a land is the most precious responsibility that a democratic legislature enjoys. While scrutiny and debate are important, there are other places and institutions where Government policy can be crawled over. But the power to legislate is what makes a Parliament different from any other institution.

88. Reference has already been made to the need to ensure that sufficient time is given so that the scrutiny of bills is improved and that amendments should be tabled and circulated in advance. If these two recommendations are followed, the Assembly will find that it is beginning to fulfil its main purpose. The Government should ensure that their legislative programme is so planned that when bills are introduced, they do not have to be treated as a matter of urgency.

89. The Assembly should consider the need for explanatory notes to accompany Bills when they are published so that the purpose of the Bill and of each Clause is explained in clear language. This would assist both Members and the public.

90. It has been represented to me that when some bills are passed by the National Assembly and sent to the President for his Assent, the Assent is not given immediately. If this is the case, it is a negation of parliamentary government for the stated will of the legislature to be delayed. Assent (or refusal of Assent) should be given immediately. If the Government do not wish legislation to come into force immediately, this should be stated in the bill by means of a Commencement Clause.

91. It is desirable that the Assembly should be notified when Assent is given to Bills but in the case of any Refusal of Assent it should be an absolute requirement that the Assembly is notified.

92. A qualified lawyer should be added to the staff to provide legal advice to Members and assist them in the drafting of amendments. The lawyer should also advise the Speaker and the Clerk, when necessary.

93. A Legislation Office currently exists but it is largely a filing office with little responsibility being placed on the member of staff who works in it. I have recommended that a Table Office should be established and that the clerk in charge of it should receive amendments to bills. This should be sufficient with the present amount of legislation and amendments but in due course a Legislation Office which is responsible for all aspects of legislation could be created if required.

Recommendations on Legislation:

- The scrutiny of legislation should be regarded as the primary responsibility of the Assembly and sufficient time should be allowed for this.
- The Assembly should consider the desirability of explanatory notes on Bills.
- Assent (or Refusal of Assent) to Bills should be given immediately after they are sent to the President and the Assembly should be notified.

- **The Assembly should employ a qualified lawyer who could assist Members with amendments and supply legal advice to the Speaker and Clerk.**
- **A Legislation Office staffed by a clerk with procedural knowledge should be considered in the future, if the work of receiving and processing amendments becomes too much for the Table Office**

COMMITTEES

94. Assessing the work of Committees has been the most difficult part of my assignment because the committees have hardly met during my stay. I hope that Mr James Pender will be in a position to continue this part of the over-all engagement.

95. The Committee Branch currently consists of twelve staff members (including the Head of Committees' secretary), headed by the Head of the Committee Division who is assisted by an Assistant Head. There are at present two Committee Clerks in post with one vacancy, which has remained unfilled for a considerable time.

96. The staffing is currently sufficient because of the lack of Committee work. But there should be more clerks in post who have first degrees and can understand difficult and challenging issues, because it is the clerks on whom the task rests of writing authoritative reports at the end of an inquiry. Committee clerks need to develop the confidence to stand their ground when challenged by Government officials, Ministers and Members. This is not easy but they must remember that they are working for the Committee, and only the Committee is entitled to order them to change the way they work or amend the draft reports they produce. In cases of difficulties they must have the confidence that the Head of Committees and the Clerk of the National Assembly will support them against political pressure.

97. Training in the duties and skills of being a committee clerk is required, including the above point about confidence. This could be delivered either on site by visiting parliamentary officers from elsewhere or by sending Committee clerks on attachments overseas.

98. The Office needs more computer workstations and access to the internet is essential.

99. Up to this point it has not been easy to provide convenient meeting rooms for the additional Committees. The Library has not been ideal and the fact that there has been only one place to meet has made it much more difficult to arrange meetings which suit Members' diaries. But the Assembly is now in the process of providing three new rooms which should mean that all the Committees can meet at times convenient to their members. These rooms will have to be fitted out with recording and amplification equipment. The existing equipment is old and unsatisfactory. The Assembly has requested funds for this purpose in its Estimate for 2005 but it is not at all certain of getting them. If funds are not made available, donors might wish to provide the necessary equipment for all three rooms.

100. The work of a committee requires a less partisan and more informal approach than in the Assembly. All members of a committee should see it as their duty to investigate the subject under scrutiny, without regard to party interests so as to ensure that a valuable report is eventually agreed. The purpose of membership should not be to make sure that the Members from the other party do not "get away with it". If one group of Members is always suspicious of the motives of the other group, no constructive work will be done. And it must be stressed that Members do not have to follow the party line in Committees, as MPs in all jurisdictions are usually required to do in the Chamber. I understand that the Public Accounts Committee has always worked in a spirit of collegiality.

101. In 2003 four Sectoral Committees were appointed with a membership of seven each. They all, except the Foreign Relations Committee, have a long list of Government Departments to monitor. This range of responsibility should have meant that there was more than enough work to keep the committees very busy but two of these committees have not met since March 2004 (almost a year at the time of writing). The Economic Services Committee met once in August 2004 but otherwise had not met since March either. This cannot be what the National Assembly expected when the Committees were appointed. Staff were recruited to serve the Committees and they have been largely unoccupied now for eleven months. I was told of the frustration and boredom among the staff at the situation.

102. I learned that one reason why Committees had not met was that the Government had been unresponsive to requests for witnesses to attend. It is, of course, courteous for a Committee to write to a Minister to ask for the attendance of a witness from the Minister's department. But the Minister should always co-operate in the request and deal with it expeditiously. It should not, however, be necessary for someone as senior as the Commissioner of Police to have to get ministerial approval to attend a Committee. I was also told that Ministers themselves had refused to attend Committees and that documents and other information requested from Ministries were not forthcoming.

103. Guidelines could be agreed for public officials invited to give evidence to Committees. The guidelines should be communicated to the National Assembly so that Committees understand the limits of the questions which can be answered by officials.

104. I was told by a Minister that his colleagues do not understand why they should appear before committees since the Assembly itself exists as a forum in which to question them, unlike the Congressional system where Ministers do not sit in the legislature. But questioning by a committee is a different process, where the questioners and the questioned are able to have a discussion and explore issues more deeply than in the Chamber. In any case, Guyana has a parliamentary system where Ministers do sit in the Assembly and they should be willing to work with the Assembly's committees.

105. If the Committees are to do a meaningful job, they must not be frustrated by the Executive. Instructions should be given to all Ministers that Parliamentary Committees are to be given every possible help, particularly in their early days.

106. Committee work requires the particular commitment of the Chairperson who is responsible, together with the clerk, for ensuring that the committee develops a work programme suited to the subject of the inquiry which the committee is undertaking. The Chairperson must be responsible for the progress of the inquiry. Once the subject of an inquiry is agreed, the clerk should develop and bring forward for the agreement of the committee what evidence should be sought, from the Government, independent experts (e.g. academics, technical specialists, practitioners), representatives of civil society and any private individuals who wish to contribute.

107. It was of concern to me that the Chairpersons of the sectoral committees change every year. As I have already said, the Chairperson has the main role in driving on the work of his or her committee. If they change every year, there is bound to be disruption to the committees' work. Chairpersons should remain in charge of their committees for at least three years and preferably for the whole of a Parliament. Committee work is meant to be a team effort, where party differences are set aside---it should not therefore matter that the Committee is chaired by the same person for a significant period.

108. Since committee work should be a team effort, the membership of a committee should be listed alphabetically in the Minutes (except for the Chairperson who should be listed first), without any reference to party affiliation. In any case, it is unnecessary to give party affiliations since those are well known in the Assembly and the Minutes are not circulated outside. This is only a small point but it would serve to indicate the corporate nature of the membership.

109. I was asked by the Speaker and the Clerk (and by Committee staff) for advice on the best manner of drafting the Minutes of Committees. Minutes should capture the essence of what is discussed, rather than attempt to summarise every intervention made by committee members. Names of interveners in the discussion may be recorded if it is a significant comment but, apart from the person introducing the subject, and the Chairperson at the end summing up the discussion, the Minutes should usually only record the main points made, without attribution. Any other form of Minutes will almost certainly lead to endless corrections of what was said, which is generally a waste of a Committee's time. The amount of information recorded in Minutes will vary depending on whether a verbatim record is being made.

110. I was also asked about the meaning of the word "deliberate" with reference to the decision of the National Assembly that Committees might meet in public. Although agreed by the Assembly, the new Standing Order has not yet been considered by the Standing Orders Committee, so is not yet effective. It is important that this happens quickly so that when the Committees begin to meet after this very long interval, the public may be admitted to their proceedings.

111. I was told that some Committees would like all their proceedings, including their discussions on their report, to be open to the public. But that goes precisely against the concept of "teamwork" in Committees to which I have referred above. A corporate approach to the work of committees would be undermined if perfectly legitimate political disagreements on the subject the committee is considering were to be aired in public. The practice of most Parliaments is that when a committee takes evidence from witnesses,

members of the public and the media are present. That is called a Public Sitting. However, whenever the Committee "deliberates", in other words discusses its conclusions or its future work programme, it meets in private, without the presence of anyone who is not a Member of the Committee, the clerk or advisor.

112. The advice which I have given above does not apply to committees scrutinising Bills. When a Bill is considered in Committee of the whole Assembly, the public and media are present. This openness should be replicated in a committee scrutinising the Bill

113. The Committee Office should become responsible for authorising expenditure on certain aspects of its work. For instance, a budget should be set for committee travel. The costs of employing Specialist Advisors for committee inquiries should also be the responsibility of the Committee Office.

114. One of the reasons given for the paucity of Committee meetings, particularly of the sectoral committees, is that MPs have conflicting demands on their time. Pay of MPs is one issue but not one that I can comment on except to say that, unless MPs are paid sufficiently well to enable them to reduce their outside commitments, there will continue to be problems. I learned that a monthly allowance is paid to Committee members and yet the Committees do not meet. It might encourage greater participation in committee work if the allowance were paid in respect of attendance rather than membership. However, the problems of Members finding it difficult to attend Committees could be eased if all members of the Assembly, other than Ministers, shared the burden of committee work more evenly. In the case of the sectoral committees which are appointed to scrutinise Government policy and administration, the membership should exclude Ministers.

115. Meetings of Committees, and whether they are to sit in private or in public, should be published in advance and the dates of meetings should be adhered to. The sittings could be published in the weekly Notice Paper recommended above. In due course, they should be published on the Assembly's website.

Parliamentary Management Committee

116. The Parliamentary Management Committee is an important development. Its creation deserves praise but, at present, it does not appear to fulfil the purpose which it was set up to do, namely to arrange the business of the Assembly taking all views into account. The Committee was expected to draw up a future programme of work for the Assembly, taking account of the Government's legislative programme, but this has not happened.

117. I commented at the meeting which was arranged so that I could meet members of the Committee that I was surprised that there were Ministers who had no responsibility for the management of parliamentary business on the Committee. It seems inappropriate that busy Ministers have to spend time on the details of parliamentary business for which the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and the Chief Whip are responsible. It is excellent that all the parties in the National Assembly are represented on the Committee but the dominance of Government Ministers (all the Government representatives are Ministers)

gives the impression that the Government "machine" is all important and that the interests of the Assembly as a whole will not be seriously considered. A committee of this kind ought to allow backbench representation. As I have already argued, there is nothing disloyal about backbenchers occasionally contributing to decisions which affect them. That is how party policy evolves.

Public Accounts Committee

118. The Public Accounts Committee has existed for many years and meets regularly (although there was a gap of ten years between 1982 and 1992 when it did not meet). I was told by the Chairman that the Committee works in the collegiate way I have urged earlier in this report that the new Sectoral Committees should work. The Committee has the advantage of the assistance of the Auditor General and other officials.

119. I was told that the principal problem the Committee faces is that the Ministry of Finance does not respond to the Committee's reports. Each year recommendations are made in similar terms to recommendations made in previous years but the Committee never learns whether any action is taken to implement these recommendations. It should be a required practice that the Ministry of Finance should lay before the National Assembly its response to a report of the Public Accounts Committee within three months of the report being made. This is something which the National Assembly should insist on, either by Resolution or, better still, by means of a new Standing Order.

120. I was surprised to learn that the Reports of the Public Accounts Committee are drafted by the Office of the Auditor General. They are then sent to the Head of the Committees Division for his comments and are then considered and approved by the Public Accounts Committee. Although the reports are issued with the approval of the Committee, it is not correct procedure. This practice clearly dates from a time when the staff of the National Assembly was extremely small and there was no-one available to draft the reports. Now that the Committee Division is so much larger, the job of drafting reports of the Public Accounts Committee should be done by the clerk to the Committee.

Recommendations on Committees, as a whole:

- **Committees should meet regularly at stated times.**
- **The Chairpersons should not change every year, since they are the persons who must ensure the direction and energy of their committees.**
- **Committees should set aside party divisions in their work. Towards achieving this, they should initially identify subjects for inquiry which are not politically controversial.**
- **Inquiries should be focussed and capable of being completed in a reasonably short time.**
- **The Government must respond positively and quickly to requests by Committees for witnesses, documents and other information.**
- **Public Accounts Committee reports should be responded to by the Ministry of Finance within three months.**
- **Reports of the Public Accounts Committee should be drafted by the Committee clerk.**

- **Specialist advisors should be available for each inquiry. A budget head should be set for this expenditure.**
- **Dates and times of public meetings of Committees such as the four sectoral committees should be widely published and available on the Assembly's website.**
- **Committee staff should receive training, which can be provided either by visiting officials from overseas or by sending committee clerks to other jurisdictions**
- **More computer workstations should be provided for the Committee Office and access to the internet must be available.**
- **Recording and amplification equipment is required for the new Committee rooms and might be sought from the international community.**
- **The membership of the Parliamentary Management Committee should be changed so that it is not perceived as the tool of the Executive. It is, in any case, desirable that backbenchers should serve on the Committee.**

THE LIBRARY

121. A legislature requires a comprehensive library to support its work, to ensure the ready availability of books and periodicals and to provide briefing material for its Members. A parliamentary library should hold collections of Law Reports, Acts of Parliament, and books on parliamentary practice, politics and international affairs. A Library needs to be staffed by at least some qualified librarians and headed by a senior Librarian. The staff need to have access to research material and the internet, with which they should be familiar and are confident in using. The Library should be the source of all the information a parliamentarian requires to fulfil his or her role in Parliament.

122. The Library of the National Assembly does not currently conform to the standards which a modern parliamentary library should meet. The size of the collection and the amount of room available is not an issue. The Assembly is a small one and the number of sitting days is comparatively low. The library need not be a large one but it must have a collection relevant to the needs of the Members of the National Assembly at the beginning of the 21st century. Once again there is a "chicken and egg" situation. The Library is currently very under-used by Members but it is not an attractive place to visit or to work in. If improvements take place, it is more likely that Members will then use it.

123. I am aware that the present Library is a considerable advance on what was available to the Assembly before 1998. But its collection is too dominated, for instance, by old Hansards (Official Reports) of the British Parliament. If Hansards of the British Parliament are thought to be important, they can be accessed electronically. In due course, back numbers of the House of Commons Official Report will be available in digital format. But at present these volumes in the National Assembly Library take up unnecessary space and should be disposed of. In any case, the humid atmosphere of the Library has caused substantial damage to the volumes.

124. The current library staff do not feel that their work is particularly appreciated. The use made of the Library by Members remains very low. There is no supervision from above and they feel neglected to a greater or lesser extent.

125. It is important that a fully qualified librarian is appointed to manage the Library and direct the staff who, at present, do not possess any library qualifications. There has, I am told, been no librarian in post for six years, for reasons of pay. This has had the most undesirable consequence that the catalogue has not been maintained for the same period. While the existing staff are enthusiastic and, in two cases seeking library training at their own initiative, librarianship is a profession which requires professional qualifications. There should therefore be someone at the head of the staff who can settle policy and ensure that the collection grows in a way that meets the demands of a parliamentary readership.

126. Currently there is no budget for the purchase of books. This means that the collection can grow only haphazardly and very inadequately. I understand that sums have regularly been asked for in the annual estimate the National Assembly submits to the Ministry of Finance but that these have been struck out. This may be because the sums have been categorised as Capital Expenditure when, in my view, they should have been included in Current Expenditure. One of the principal costs of running a library is that of acquiring books as and when they are published. If, as I recommend, the National Assembly is granted much more control over its own expenditure, then provision should be made for the purchase of books in the annual Estimate. In the immediate future a substantial sum would have to be provided, so that the collection can develop. Books are expensive and can only be acquired if realistic amounts are provided. A professional librarian would be able to develop a purchase scheme.

127. Cataloguing to a recognised international standard should begin as soon as there are staff qualified to undertake the work.

128. It would be desirable to establish a relationship with the National Library of Guyana so that books may be borrowed from that Library for use by Members.

129. The Library contains sets of school text books (Latin, French, carpentry etc) in multiple numbers. I understand that these are kept so that schoolchildren who apparently visit the Library can use them. While I applaud the wider use of the Library, the Library staff should monitor the use of these books over the next year to assess the use made of them. Those books not used should be disposed of so that space is created for the parliamentary collection.

130. It would be desirable for a Member of the National Assembly, who is interested in books, to be asked to act as an advisor on the collection and to ensure that the Library meets Members' needs. Alternatively, the Assembly Committee could undertake this task.

131. The air conditioning of the Library should be improved so that the books do not suffer from the humidity.

132. Once new Committee Rooms are available, the furnishings of the Library should be enhanced so that it is more welcoming to Members who are then likely to make more use of it.

133. Initially, one graduate researcher should be appointed so that Members can receive briefing on bills and public policy issues. As the need grows, consideration should be given to increasing the number. Proposals have been made for some university interns to provide research for the Members of the National Assembly but I understand this idea was not proceeded with. But Members can only do their job if they have the information they require. A research capacity within the Library is essential.

134. Newspapers which are currently bound in large bulky volumes and take up much space should be accessed either via the internet or be replaced by microfiche or be acquired in CD Rom form.

135. A Parliamentary Librarian from elsewhere should be invited to examine the Library and give a more professional assessment than I can.

Recommendations on the Library:

- **The Library requires an environment in which books do not suffer damage and where it is pleasant for Members to work.**
- **A fully qualified librarian should be appointed to a new post as Head of Research and Library Services.**
- **A budget for the annual purchase of books should be established. Book purchase monies should be regarded as current and not capital expenditure.**
- **A catalogue should be created.**
- **The current collection should be weeded, so that unnecessary volumes of old Hansards and school text books are removed and replaced with books of greater value to the Assembly.**
- **Newspapers currently kept in bound volumes should be accessed via the internet or kept in microfiche format.**
- **A graduate research clerk should be added to the complement to provide research both for Members and to Committees. A second post should be added once the work develops.**
- **A Parliamentary Librarian should be invited to give further advice on the future development of the Library.**
- **International donor support for the Library will be required.**

VERBATIM REPORT

136. The verbatim reporting of the proceedings of the National Assembly is currently contracted out to a private sector company. The Assembly used to have its own reporting staff but they retired some time ago and it has proved impossible to recruit successors. It is recognised that shorthand and palantype reporters are in very short supply and that it is therefore necessary to use tape recordings to produce a record of what is said in the National Assembly.

137. But I have learned from the Clerk that the performance of the company which is contracted to provide a verbatim report is far from satisfactory and that the report of last

year's budget debate is not yet available. This is nothing short of scandalous. Members have the right to expect the report of the budget session to be available within a few days of the debate being completed.

138. Although it would be a little unfair to compare the situation here in Georgetown with that in other Parliaments, it is worth pointing out that in many Legislatures the verbatim report is produced overnight and is available the next day. In the case of an Assembly which meets only once a week that is not necessary, although it is the ideal to aim for. Nevertheless a situation which allows a private contractor over a year in which to comply with his contract must be wrong. It is surely the case that not enough pressure, particularly financial pressure, has been applied in this case.

139. The Assembly should appoint an Editor of Debates, who would not only be responsible for editing the final report but would be primarily responsible for ensuring that the sort of situation which has arisen in the last year does not arise again. Performance targets should be set for the contractor, which he must meet or have his contract terminated. Penalties for non-performance should be set and applied. Quality controls should also be set and adhered to.

140. It should be possible to provide that the tapes of the Assembly's proceedings are transmitted to the contractor on-line. This would save the time currently spent in taking the tapes physically to the contractor.

141. The Clerk of the National Assembly is keen to have the whole production of the Official Report brought in-House. This would be the ideal and proper thing to do if the Assembly worked full-time. But on the basis that the Assembly continues to sit on only one day a week, except for the budget debate, it would be unnecessarily expensive to employ staff for a whole week when they would be working on only one day. And it must be remembered that the Assembly met on only nineteen days in 2004. Moreover, there are accommodation constraints which suggest that the bulk of the work should be done away from the Parliament Building. The appointment of an Editor with an Assistant should ensure that the verbatim report is produced expeditiously.

142. If no satisfactory contractor can be found in Guyana, consideration should be given to finding one outside the country. These days electronic communication would allow the parliamentary recordings to be typed abroad and then returned electronically for copying and distribution.

143. Committee proceedings will also require a verbatim report where evidence has been taken. This should be subject to a different contract with similar performance targets etc. The Committee Office should be responsible for ensuring that these are met.

Recommendations on the Verbatim Report:

- **An Editor of Debates (or another suitable title) should be appointed.**
- **The Editor of Debates should be responsible for ensuring that contracts for the production of the verbatim report are observed.**
- **Tough performance targets should be applied in future contracts.**

- **It is not recommended that the entire production of the verbatim report should be brought in-house. Even if the Assembly were to meet more than 19 days a year, it is very unlikely to meet sufficiently often to justify the number of additional extra staff.**

RELATIONS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

144. I spoke to many leaders of Civil Society organisations during my engagement. I also had a very useful meeting with representatives of the private sector. They were universal in their views that there were, at present, few opportunities for them, or those they represent, to engage with the National Assembly over policies which affect citizens or business in Guyana. They find it difficult to obtain even basic information from the Parliament Office, which historically has not seen any necessity to do anything other than to provide basic services to Members. I was further told that it is very difficult to present Petitions to the National Assembly. This should not be so since the Standing Orders on the matter are very simple and the rules say absolutely nothing about the content; they merely specify the form of the Petition. The Clerk of the National Assembly has no knowledge of anyone wishing to present a petition. This may be because of the perceived difficulties or it could be that the complaint is unfounded.

145. But the perceived reluctance of Members and staff to develop a parliamentary interaction with civil society must change.

146. Section 13 of the Constitution of Guyana states that the “principal objective of the political system of the State is to establish an inclusionary democracy by providing increasing opportunities for the participation of citizens, and their organisations in the management and decision-making processes of the State, with particular emphasis on those areas of decision-making that directly affect their well-being”.

147. This section is one of the fundamental principles of the Constitution and it will, therefore, be most important for the reputation of the National Assembly, as it begins to take its place at the heart of political dialogue in Guyana, that it is seen to interact fully with leaders of the civil society. A more regular parliamentary timetable, the opening of committee proceedings to the public and the media (which is half-way to being agreed to), more openness in dealings with the public and the wider distribution of parliamentary documents would all help to make the National Assembly and its work more respected.

148. Civil society groups and the private sector have the right to comment on public affairs and on legislation on behalf of those they seek to represent. This is impossible if meetings of the National Assembly are arranged without sufficient notice and bills are rushed through without enough time to consider their provisions. Lobbying groups are an important source of expert advice to parliamentarians. But lobbying is impossible if information about the parliamentary programme is unavailable.

149. To assist the process of informing the public and those with specific interests it is recommended that bills, Hansards and other documents, such as a future Notice Paper,

should be available far more widely than at present. It is suggested that such documents are made available at Post Offices and other convenient locations. It may be argued that the public and others are not interested in the National Assembly and that the cost of such a step would be a waste of money. It may well be wasted money to begin with but the benefits of maintaining a healthy relationship between Parliament and its citizens are incalculable. Gradually the public will make use of these documents.

150. It is certainly important that those with specific interests in the formation of public policy, say on social issues, know what is coming before the Assembly. A more co-operative attitude in supplying information, such as where MPs can be contacted is required. MPs are the elected representatives of the people and in most Parliaments their office addresses and telephone numbers are published in handbooks so that they can be contacted.

151. The Assembly should consider inviting school visits to the Parliament Building on a regular basis. These should be accompanied by a talk about the history of the building and how a Parliament works. Mock Parliaments could be held in the Chamber, with the permission of the Speaker. These cost no money but would, if properly organised, significantly raise the interest of young people in parliamentary process.

152. Consideration should be given to the appointment of an information officer with a view to building a better relationship with the public.

153. Consideration should also be given to the radio broadcasting of the proceedings of the National Assembly. In this way people living a long way from Georgetown would be enabled to hear what their representatives are saying.

Recommendations on Relations with Civil Society and the Private Sector:

- It should be made much easier for civil society and the private sector to interact with the National Assembly.
- Members should welcome the views of civil society and the private sector which will enable them to participate on a more informed basis in debate.
- More information about the work of the Assembly and its Members should be made available.
- Assembly documents, particularly Bills and the verbatim report, should be made available at convenient locations such as Post Offices or bookshops.
- Educational visits to the Assembly should be arranged and consideration should be given to mock-Parliaments.
- The appointment of a public information officer should be considered.
- The radio broadcasting of the proceedings of the National Assembly should be considered

ACCOMMODATION

154. The provision of new accommodation cannot be achieved without both planning and investment. The Speaker has further plans to gain new accommodation within the

parliamentary site. This will undoubtedly be required, if the Assembly begins to become more active, as the proposals in this report argue for. Proposals for additional staff in most parts of the Parliament Office can only be achieved if room is found for them.

155. There is already some overcrowding. The Serjeants at Arms do not have their own room but are provided with small booths in the Registry. A Serjeants at Arms' office should be created.

156. The Committee Office will require additional space so that clerks engaged in drafting committee reports can have a quieter environment in which to work.

157. The provision of accommodation for a Members' bar would be highly desirable because it would provide a place where all MPs could socialise and talk politics in a congenial atmosphere. Much useful business is done in parliamentary bars!

158. Much of the infrastructure of the Parliament Building is not in good condition and many of the air conditioning units are in a poor state. The air conditioning unit in the Personnel Office is so noisy that I found it difficult to conduct a conversation in there. New units are required and it is possible that the international community could assist with a programme of improvement.

Recommendation on Accommodation:

- **The Assembly should continue to develop its accommodation stock, both for staff and Members.**
- **Donor support for new accommodation and for some improvements to the existing rooms should be considered.**

DOCUMENTS

159. The Assembly should consider the setting up of a document centre, perhaps in the present Registry, which would be responsible for the supply of the working documents of the Assembly, bills, order papers, verbatim reports and any other papers laid before the House.

160. At the very least, it would, I am sure, be a good idea if these documents were laid out on a table at the entrance to the Chamber on each sitting day. This would ensure that Members were able to pick up papers as they enter the Chamber. If this idea is considered an unnecessary additional burden on staff, it should be borne in mind that those who work in Parliament are there to serve Members and make their parliamentary work as easy as possible.

161. The Registry should also begin to keep statistics concerning the work of the National Assembly (number of sitting days, length of sittings etc) so that inquiries from outside can be answered.

Recommendations on Documents:

- **A Document Centre should be established and consideration given to providing documents to Members at the Chamber door.**

SUPPORT BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

162. My terms of reference require me to make recommendations for further technical and material assistance by the international donor agencies. Throughout this report I have identified matters where I believe the agencies could provide support. I now draw these recommendations together. The lack of activity by the Assembly will make it a difficult judgement for international donors to decide where to provide support. There would be little point in expensive improvements if the additional staff remain underemployed, on account of the Assembly and its Committees continuing to meet so infrequently.

163. Among the recommendations I am making to enable the National Assembly to become the centre of political dialogue in Guyana, the most crucial do not require anything other than the political will to implement. These are:

- (a) the financial independence of the Assembly;
- (b) an independent parliamentary staff;
- (c) an Order Paper free of Ministerial control;
- (d) a settled parliamentary calendar; and
- (e) Government co-operation with Committees.

164. When there are indications that these are being attended to, then the international community may wish to support the further recommendations I have made with regard to the National Assembly's current needs.

165. However, what should be provided immediately are programmes for the capacity building of Members in their parliamentary functions. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association already provides this sort of thing and the IDB programme execution unit in the Parliament is considering sending Members of the Public Accounts Committee and the Economic Services Committee to other jurisdictions to gain experience. These initiatives need building on to enable more Members to gain wider experience of parliamentary work and of their role in keeping the Executive under scrutiny.

166. Staff training in certain skills such as personnel work, basic accountancy and management, is required and could be provided with support from the international community. The level of training, however, depends to some extent on how much responsibility for financial and personnel functions is transferred to the National Assembly. But it is highly desirable that the member of staff who has so far privately funded her training to achieve qualification as a Chartered Accountant should be assisted both in practical ways and financially to complete the qualification.

167. Advice and assistance in setting up a properly constituted Finance Office is highly desirable.

168. Clerks with procedural responsibilities and Committee clerks should receive training in the roles they play. Procedural training would be best delivered through attachments to other Parliaments but Committee clerks could be trained either on site or overseas.

169. Donors might assist the Parliament Office obtain the additional computer workstations it requires. Last year the Office estimated for seven new PCs but the estimate was slashed to allow the purchase of only one.

170. Details about the needs of the National Assembly for additional computers and specific training were identified in the Speaker's letter of 28th July to the Commonwealth Secretariat.

171. New recording and amplification equipment for Committee rooms might be provided if the Assembly fails to receive the funds it has requested for this equipment.

172. The Library requires improvement but there will be no point in funding this unless the Library is headed by a professional librarian. Assuming that the Assembly can recruit and retain a qualified librarian, the international community should assist with the physical improvements and with building up the book collection.

173. International support for modest improvements to parts of the infrastructure of the Parliament Building might be arranged and perhaps also made available towards the provision of additional accommodation.

SUMMARY OF PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Procedural practices must change and Standing Orders observed, unless altered. In particular, the Order Paper must not be subject to alteration by the Government except in respect of its own business.
- The notice period for Questions should be shortened.
- The Government should answer written questions within a reasonable time or explain why it is not possible.
- A settled parliamentary calendar should be observed and sittings held on a regular basis. Opposition time should be established.
- Time should be allowed for the proper scrutiny of legislation and bills should be presented to the Assembly before publication.
- The Standing Orders should be amended to prevent Ministers moving that Bills be considered in Committee "forthwith".
- Amendments should be tabled and circulated in advance of Committee stage.
- The Opposition should recognise the important role they have in holding the Government to account and engage fully in the parliamentary process in the light of the recommendations made above which should eliminate some grievances.
- Committees should begin to work on a much more regular basis, choosing subjects for inquiry which are focussed and capable of being completed within two or three months.
- Committees should recognise that they are bodies in which party differences should be largely forgotten. To begin with, they should choose subjects for investigation which give rise to as little political controversy as possible.
- Committee chairpersons should not rotate after only one year.
- The Government must be more co-operative in its dealings with committees.
- Capacity building for Members in all aspects of parliamentary work, including committees, should be accepted as an important aspect of parliamentary life. International help should be available to assist Members to visit other Parliaments.
- The National Assembly should be given much greater independence in respect of its own budget. Systems should be established within the Parliament Office to undertake

the estimating, monitoring, controlling and accounting for the Assembly's expenditure.

- The Clerk of the National Assembly should become the employer of all the staff of the Parliament Office. A larger Personnel Office should be established to carry out these additional responsibilities. Motivation of staff members should be a priority so as to ensure that the best staff are retained.
- The aim of the Personnel Office should be to encourage the formation of a parliamentary cadre, so as to professionalise the staffing and widen procedural knowledge. This would lessen the risks associated with the Clerk's absence for any reason.
- Training for all staff should become less haphazard. Training for staff in particular offices should be tailored to their needs and delivered.
- The Parliament Office should draw up a Strategic Plan together with Objectives for future work.
- The Clerk should receive greater support in procedural matters and a Table Office should be established for the receipt of questions, motions and amendments to Bills
- The Committee Office should be strengthened once the sectoral committees start to work more regularly and systematically.
- The Library should be improved environmentally and made more professional. A catalogue should be established. A parliamentary librarian should be invited to make further recommendations.
- An Editor of Debates should be appointed but the production of the verbatim report should remain contracted out. Tough performance targets should be set and enforced.
- Relations with all sections of civil society and the private sector should be improved and steps taken to facilitate access to information about the work of the National Assembly. Bills and other documents should be made available elsewhere, possibly in Post Offices.
- Educational visits to the National Assembly, "mock parliaments" and the broadcasting of proceedings should all be considered.
- New accommodation should be acquired and existing rooms improved.
- A Document Centre should be created and consideration should be given to making documents available at the Chamber door.
- International assistance should be made available as identified above.

ANNEX
List of Those Met and Spoken to

Elected Politicians

HE President Bharrat Jagdeo	Ravi Dev MP
Hon Samuel Hinds MP, Prime Minister	Sheila Holder MP
Hon Reepu Daman Persaud MP	Abdul Kadir MP
Hon Manzoor Nadir MP	James McAllister MP
Feroze Mohamed MP	Stanley Ming MP
Donald Ramotar MP	Winston Murray MP
Robert Corbin MP, Leader of the Opposition	Lance Carberry MP
Clarissa Riehl MP, Deputy Speaker	Deryck Bernard MP
Khemraj Ramjattan MP	Raphael Trotman MP

Staff of the National Assembly

Sherlock Isaacs, Clerk of the National Assembly	Malika Bess
Liloutie Coonjah, Deputy Clerk	Tanzadell Bentinck
Rawle Small	Sherene Warren
Ingrid Ifill (and others in Accounts)	Mahindra Singh
Bibi Baldeo	Saudia Kadir
Maurice Henry	Deslyn West
Oscar Moore	Dhanram Kungbharry
Deborah Cadogan	Etwaroo Jagernath
Claudia Greenidge	Hermina Gilgeours
Debra Gray	Nalini Narine
Sonia Maxwell	Monette Garnett

Civil Society

Joscelyn Dow	Merle Mendonca
Dr Desrey Fox	Vanda Radzick
Haslyn Parris	Rupert Roopnaraine
Michael McCormack	

Private Sector

Yesu Persaud	Eustace Abrams
Bal Persaud	Avalon Jagnandan
David Yankana	L J P Willems
Norman McLean	

Others

Frank Narain, fmr Clerk of the National Assembly
Bishop Randolph George
Mortimer Mingo, Regional Chairman, Region 10
Orrin Gordon, Mayor of Linden
Dane Gobin, IWOKRAMA

Professor Clive Thomas
Dr Prem Misir, Pro-Chancellor
Miles Fitzpatrick
David Singh, IWOKRAMA

International Partners & Donor Agencies

HE Stephen Hiscock, British High Commissioner
Lawrence Lachmansingh, UNDP
Murray Kam, CIDA
Javier Reyes, IDB
Cécil Rajana, IDB
Wayne Fordyce, IDB (Fiscal & Financial Management Program)

Jonny Baxter, DFID
Ana Klenicki, USAID
Earl Brown, RTI
Gloria Richards-Johnson, RTI
Coralie Simmons, RTI