

# Official Report

***PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2015-2018) OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN***

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110<sup>TH</sup> Sitting

Friday, 14<sup>TH</sup> December, 2018

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*Assembly convened at 10.39 a.m.*

*Prayers*

*[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]*

## **PUBLIC BUSINESS**

### **GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS**

#### **MOTION**

#### **BUDGET SPEECH 2019 – MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2019**

WHEREAS the Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana requires that Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for any financial year should be laid before the National Assembly;

AND WHEREAS the Constitution also provides that when the Estimates of Expenditure have been approved by the Assembly an Appropriation Bill shall be introduced in the Assembly providing for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet that expenditure;

AND WHEREAS the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the financial year 2019 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2018-11-26

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2019, of a total sum of two hundred and seventy seven billion, four hundred and thirty one million, nine hundred and sixty eight thousand dollars (\$277,431,968,000), excluding twenty three billion, two hundred and eighty seven million, and forty three thousand dollars (\$23,287,043,000) which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the undermentioned schedule, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to further provision in respect of finance.” [Minister of Finance]

*Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.*

*In Committee of Supply*

**Agency 54 – Ministry of Public Security (10.42 a.m.)**

**Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 541 – Policy Development and Administration - \$806,990,000**

**Mr. Rohee:** Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There is 139 contracted employees at the Ministry, out of a total of 257 employees; that is about 48% of the staff of the Ministry of Public Security are on contracts. Could the Hon. Minister provide an explanation to the House with respect to staffing details of these contracted employees, their salaries for the top five of these contracted employees position?

**Vice-President and Minister of Public Security [Mr. Ramjattan]:** I have the one hundred and thirty something names here, but, I will give the top five. Director of National Anti-Narcotic Agency (NANA), Deputy Director, Personal Assistant to the Minister, Head of Drug Information Network, and Head of Strategic Management Department. Would you like to know their basic salary?

**Mr. Rohee:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** The basic salary of the Director of NANA is \$670,000, Deputy Director - \$419,000, Personal Assistant to the Minister - \$350,000, and Head of Drug Information Network - \$321,000. I am just rounding it off, to the nearest whole number because it is \$221 and so on at the bottom. The Head of Strategic Management Department is \$312,000. I could give you the entire list if you want.

**Mr. Rohee:** Follow up: Could the Hon. Minister say what steps the Ministry is taking to be consistent with Public Service rules, which is to bring contracted employees onto the fixed pensionable establishment and to ensure that most of the contracted employees are below the age of 45?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** We are collaboratively working with the Department of Public Service for that aim that we have. In the meantime, because we had vacancies in relation to these positions and we needed the services of these providers, we had to enter into contractual arrangements with them. It is an on-going task of getting them all on the fixed pensionable establishment.

**Mr. Rohee:** Could the Hon. Minister provide the House with a timeline, as to when it is expected to have that process you claim that you are working on accomplished?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I would have to collaborate with the Public Service Commission and a number of people to get a timeline on that. The description, soon, might very well answer the question.

**Mr. Hamilton:** Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Could you indicate what necessitated the increase from 125 to 139 contracted employees?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** The increase in the Budget reflects the appointment of the Head of the Drug Information Network at NANA, one Deputy Director of NANA, the Personal Assistant to the Minister, an Intelligence Officer of NANA, Operations Officer at the Ministry Public Security, Typist Clerk, one Data Entry Supervisor, seven Data Entry Clerks and one full time Community Policing Liaison Officer alone with a driver. Also, this increase is reflected as a result of the 2018 salary increases.

**Mr. Rohee:** Could the Hon. Minister inform the House with effect from what date were these top five employees employed at the Ministry of Public Security on a contractual basis?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I understand that last year November the four NANA officials were employed so we had to add that unto the 2018 salaries. My Personal Assistant was this year.

**Mr. Chand:** Line item 6115 - Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled: Minister, you have an increase in the staff complement by one. Could you advise, what is the designation of the new person? Is it that the increase in the wage/salary allotment for next year spread over this person's salary an increase in pay?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** It is the appointment of one driver for the Ministry. Also, the 2018 salary increases for semi-skilled operatives and unskilled persons. The salary level was approximately \$60,000 for the driver.

**Bishop Edghill:** Under line item 6241 - Rental of Buildings: there was no budgetary allocation for rentals of buildings in 2018, but we spent \$10 million and budgeted for 2019 is \$10 million. Could the Minister tell us which building, or buildings is being rented and for what purpose? Could the Minister, secondly tell us, how was the \$10 million financed? Was it through a supplementary or virement? Thirdly, could the Minister indicate to us what necessitated mid-programme, the rental, when it was not budgeted for?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** It is the budgetary allocation made to facilitate the payment of rent for the NANA building, which is in Parade Street Kingston. The existing building of NANA could not hold the staff, I understand. We needed that building for purposes of ensuring that the staff are in some comfort.

Where did we get the money from? It was provided for under line item 6294 – Other. It was from there that we took it to pay the rental. It was a virement.

**Mr. Rohee:** Line items 6111 – 6117: the question of overpayment of salaries has been a major issue raised by the Auditor General as well as late payment of salaries. Could the Hon. Minister explain, one, the late payment of salaries of staff of the Ministry; secondly, the over payment of salaries to staff of the Ministry?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** There was a problem there and that is being worked on, because we did not get, first of all, the information at our end quick enough and because of that we did not convey the information to the Ministry of Finance quick enough for payments to be made.

The fact of ensuring that we can get the information of the persons who resigned to get that in time, new people who were taken on, new contracted employees and so forth.

*10.54 a.m.*

**Bishop Edghill:** Line item 6294 - Other: The Hon. Minister just told us that he vired \$10 million from this line to media expenses for line item 6241, but it shows that this revised amount is more than what was budgeted in 2018. We spent more. There was no savings there.

Could the Hon. Minister confirm to the House what caused the increase in the revised amount that he spent about \$5 million more than was budgeted? Were all of the activities envisaged under line item 6294 did take place? Where did we did we have an increase and expenditure?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** The activities did take place and it occurred, because we had to expand Special Organised Crime Unit (SOCU) office with nine new officers. The increasing Budget here, you rightly pronounced, was to cater for payments for nine new officers at Special Organised Crime Unit.

**Bishop Edghill:** Line item 6294 - Other: Earlier we were told that line item 6116- Contracted Employees that there was need for some specific vacancies to be filled. The question to the Hon. Minister, why was salaries being paid under line item 6294 and not as contracted employees?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I understand that it is not a salary. It is what is called a 'top up' for working at SOCU. We inherited that top up there in the system.

**Bishop Edghill:** The same line item 6294 - Other: Could the Hon. Minister confirm that these officers that he just referred to are already substantive Police Officers who receives a salary, and this is an additional amount under this line item that they are being paid? Because that is a 'top up'.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I know of some, but I can provide the information to you, because there are some others who would have already retired. I can provide those retirees who had to get their original plus the top up that will cause them to work near and those who ate presently with the police force that had to get the top up to work. I can provide that to you.

**Bishop Edghill:** Sir, just for clarification, same line item line item 6294 - other: Could the Hon. Minister confirm to this House that SOCU is a part of the Guyana Police Force and as such, the persons engaged should be engaged to the Guyana's Police Force even if they are additional allowances given? Why is SOCU being paid under this programme when there is a police programme?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** We continued working with this arrangement here and it is an arrangement that attracts certain people with qualifications in finance and a number of experienced officers who have retired. We have to do that special arrangement, otherwise we are not going to get the good quality enough.

Indeed, SOCU comes under the Guyana Police Force, but for their special organisation, there are special arrangements under the financial crime, the white-collar investigation and all of that. We need to do this. As we inherited, this was what the arrangement was, and we continued with it.

**Mr. Hamilton:** Line item 6294 - Other: Minister, the budgeted sum was \$67,885,000, that increased to \$72,802,000. Could you indicate where the other \$5 million came from? Was it vired? If not, was a supplementary provision brought to the House to allow for this expenditure?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** It was a virement and not through any supplementary.

**Mr. Hamilton:** Could you further indicate which line item was the virement done from?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** It was vired from line item 6272 - Electricity Charges.

**Mr. Hamilton:** Could you confirm that the vired amount came from Electricity Charges?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I could confirm that for you, Sir.

*Programme:541 –Policy Development and Administration- \$806,990,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 541 – Policy Development and Administration - \$633,493,000**

**Mr. Rohee:** Project code 1216600 - Buildings: There is a provision made for \$7 million, could the Hon. Minister inform us what buildings is he referring to? Where are these buildings located?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I am advised that the construction of the Administration Building of the Juvenile Holding Centre in Georgetown is where the \$7 million is going to.

**Mr. Rohee:** I was made to understand from the Minister, when he said, ‘Administration Building’, is the ‘Administration Building’ separate from the part of the building where the juveniles are held?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** No, Sir. It is a part of the Juvenile Holding Centre. We are going to make an attachment that will regard as the Administration Building where the administrators will be.

*Programme:541 – Policy Development and Administration- \$633,493,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Current Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 542 - Police Force - \$13,014,872,000**

**Mr. Rohee:** Line item 6114 - Clerical and Office Support: There is a whopping increase here in salaries as well as staffing strength. Could the Hon. Minister provide the information with respect to this huge increase in salaries? Who are the top five employees that these salaries will be paid to and the increase in the strength?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** This line item caters and got increased because of the payment of salaries, Members of the Guyana Police Force from constables to corporals and also recruits. The increase is also due to the enlistment of new recruits. If we were to total the constables, corporals and new recruits, we are talking about 723 persons.

**Mr. Rohee:** Could the Hon. Minister inform us how many of these ranks have been struck off strength between 2017 and 2018?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** At the present moment we are not able to answer that, but we will to provide it to you.

**Mr. Rohee:** In keeping with the declared policy to engage in the civilianisation of the police force, could the Hon. Minister inform the House how many ranks had been civilianised, so far, and moved to other departments?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** The civilianisation process of what I meant when we talked, had to do with taking civilians to do those jobs such as giving the driver's license and so forth and that would be none. We are not going to take ranks and make them civilian to civilianise them. The ranks will continue to be police men, but they are going to do the core function of the security and so forth. I can give you how many civilians we have now gotten in place to help with traffic and with relation to the driver's license testing and all of that. I do not have that figure right now. We are not going to civilianise constables.

**Mr. Rohee:** Follow-up: The Hon. Minister has made a statement to the effect that the Immigration Department will be administered and run by civilians. How far has that process gone?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** It has not gone very far. We are still working on it. We would have to train those civilians to know about immigration law as the police men that know of it already. It is an objective and we are going to work towards it.

*11.09 a.m.*

**Mr. Rohee:** Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Could the Hon. Minister inform us of this huge salary that only 11 contracted employees are receiving? Could the Hon. Minister give us an indication of the 11 employees, the posts and the ranks, who are receiving this huge salary?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I am going to read out the list of the contracted employees: Mr. Heeralall Mackhanlall, Assistant Commissioner and Head of the Guyana Police Force's Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR).

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, no names.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** The designations are: Assistant Commissioner, Head Office of Professional Responsibility, salary \$317,000 and monthly travelling \$17,000 – that is what he gets; Special Superintendent, \$176,632; the Pathologist gets \$350,000; the Legal Adviser to the police, \$1.4 million; the Financial Investigator, \$468,000; two Forensic Technologists, \$600,000 each; two Financial Investigators \$150,000 each and another lawyer, \$600,000. I can provide this for you along with the names, if you want that.

**Mr. Gill:** First, I would like to acknowledge the presence of our men and women in uniform and thank them for their service.

I have listened to the Minister's explanation for line items 6111 to 6115. I have listened to the Minister's explanation as to the increase of salaries. I am not as happy. We expect a lot from our police officers and so...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, Mr. Gill...

**Mr. Gill:** The question is...

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes. Thank you.



**Mr. Gill:** I would like to ask the Minister to look at the cameras and explain to the police officers why he has failed, so far, to provide the 20% increase that he has promised them? When do you intend to restore the one month's tax-free Christmas bonus for police officers?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I do not think that there is any need for me to answer that question, Sir.

**Mr. Rohee:** Line item 6322 – Subsidies and Contributions to Intl. Organisations: Could the Hon. Minister inform the House, since we never got any information to that effect, which candidate to head the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) did the Government of Guyana support?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I had indicated that that is going to be something the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is going to advise me on and I left it there. If you want the information as to who I am being advised to be the person we are going to support, I can share that with you later. But it is exclusively the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**Mr. Rohee:** Just a follow-up on that and to conclude on this one. I am sure that the Minister is aware that the Head of Interpol has already been elected.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I do not know the name of the person or the country from where that person came because I am a little unaware. But, I am certainly going to get that to you from the Minister of Foreign Affairs. If you knew it, fine. I do not know why you are asking if you knew.

*Programme: 542 – Police Force – \$13,014,872,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 542 – Police Force – \$855,000,000**

**Mr. Rohee:** Project code 1216800 – Police Stations and Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister inform the House with respect to the payment of retentions, this would be payment of retentions for which projects?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** It is a pretty long list. It is the retention for the rehabilitation of senior officers living quarters, Eve Leary; rehabilitation to Springlands Police Station; construction of La Parfaite Harmonie Police Station, Matthew's Ridge Police Station; rehabilitation of Lethem Police Station, New Amsterdam Police Station, and Covent John Police Station. I can share this with you as to the new projects.

**Mr. Rohee:** Mr. Chairman, we were informed by the Hon. Minister of Finance that new divisional headquarters, in keeping with the regional arrangements, are to be constructed – regionalisation, apart from divisionalisation. Based on the fact that we already have police stations in each of the divisions that were mentioned, 1, 4, 5, and 8, could the Hon. Minister explain to the House whether those stations are to be transformed into divisional headquarters of the regions and whether designs have already been prepared? Have consultancies been recruited to prepare those designs and what are the costs?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** There are consultancies that have already been approved. Indeed, because they did not cater for the space and the office arrangements for the divisional headquarters, which are obviously larger and all of that, we are going to ensure that they are being made into those, especially in Regions 1, 4, 5 and 8.

Indeed, yes. It is part of the realignment of the divisions into our regional divisions. So, we are going to have Regions 1, 2, 3, up to 10, rather than “A”, “B”, “C”, “D” up to “F” and “F” takes care of four regional divisions. We want a commander, a senior superintendent or an assistant commissioner to be living there, taking charge of all matters there and not being at “F” Division and nothing happens at Lethem or Mabaruma or Bartica.

**Mr. Rohee:** Since moving in that direction would, of course, envisage heavy cost, has the Minister taken that into consideration? Could he indicate to us where those costs are imbedded in the Budget for 2019?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** The costs are embedded. In relation to the activities that we will be doing it is project code 1216800. We are going to do the construction of the Golden Grove Divisional Headquarters and that will be \$50 million as you can see, and that is estimated. The construction of the Fort Wellington Divisional Headquarters, that would be \$50 million and the Mabaruma Divisional Headquarters, \$50 million. The construction of the Mahdia Divisional Headquarters is another \$50 million.

**Mr. Hamilton:** Minister, could you indicate whether all the buildings and infrastructure work that you had budgeted for in 2018, for \$307 million, were constructed? If not, could you indicate whether all will be constructed by the end of 2018, the 31<sup>st</sup> December?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** The completed ones will be Springlands Police Station, La Parfaite Harmonie, Matthew’s Ridge, Lethem and New Amsterdam Police Stations, and the Divisional

Police Station at Covent John will be completed 100% by the end of the 2018. The others will be rollovers as we call them.

**Mr. Gill:** The same project code 1216800 – Police Stations and Buildings. The Hon. Minister is well aware of the need for women police officers in the hinterland areas. Could the Hon. Minister advise whether the new improvements to the police stations will accommodate facilities to house women police officers?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** It will be catered for. That is why we are doing the rehabilitations.

**Mr. Rohee:** Project code 2405900 – Land and Water Transport – Police: The description of the projects is the same as was in 2017 and 2018, basically. So, what I would like to know is whether what was provided for in 2018 had been exhausted, and therefore, there is need for replenishment of these resources, which are vehicles, motorcycles, engines, boats and bicycles.

The Government of the People's Republic of China had offered the Government, through the Ministry, a host of vehicles. What I would like to know is, with the improvement of the vehicular capacity of the Ministry, has the response time improved to people who are using the 999 system for calls of emergency?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** The 999 might be that you have a special arrangement. But we are talking about 911.

Yes. The time, as I understand, has improved and I can give you an overall average by how many minutes. But in relation to what you are talking about, yes, indeed, double cab pickups and motorcars were there before. And we are asking for more because we want some more. *[Interruption]* Of course, that is exactly why. It is because, as of previous years, we could not have gotten all that we wanted, so it has to be phased in. When we had gotten the two four by four (4x4) the last time, we asked for two more and we are getting that; six or seven motorcars, armoured vehicles, scramblers, flashlights and 200-horsepower engines. That is what we are doing. Some, by wear and tear, would have come out of action that is why we must do this. This is a constant thing.

*11.24 p.m.*

**Mr. Hamilton:** Project code 1216800 - Police Stations and Buildings: You indicated not so long ago that of the \$307.220 million budgeted for projects, only some of the projects were completed.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Some of the projects...?

**Mr. Hamilton:** You indicated that at some stations the work was 100% completed, and some are yet to be completed. The question is, of the stations that were completed, could you give us, as you said, a 100% cost value? For those that will be rolling over, could you indicate to us, what is the cost value of those? The third question, as you have indicated that some of these projects will not be 100% completed by the 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018 why are you indicating in the revised sum that the \$307.220 million will be spent?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I understand the rollover projects had \$307.220 million as being the sum that will take care of them. We are talking here about the new 2018 projects, some of which have been completed. I will list them for you. The first one costs \$18.7 million - you could add up - the other ones cost \$53.9 million, \$37.5 million, \$44.5 million, \$29.6 million and \$29.8 million. The entire list could be provided for you.

In relation to what has not been completed, the people will be paid for that next year through the money that will be coming in as of 2019.

**Mr. Rohee:** Project code 2405900 - Land and Water Transport - Police: Could the Hon. Minister indicate when the aviation unit, that we heard about quite recently, is going to be put in place by the Ministry of Public Security to facilitate the Guyana Police Force (GPF)?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** We are still addressing it and, as you know, that is a major objective of the Guyana Police Force. We will have to start getting very qualified people for aeroplane maintenance and operation – pilots and others. It is an ongoing process, but we are going to get there. I cannot say if we will get there by the end of 2019, but certainly work will start.

**Mr. Hamilton:** I am going back to project code 1216800, Police Stations and Buildings; I asked the question of the buildings and infrastructural works that were budgeted for \$307.220 million...

**Mr. Ramjattan:** That was in 2018.

**Mr. Hamilton:** Yes, in 2018. Were all those projects completed? You indicated that some were completed. That is suggesting to us that the \$307.220 million will not be expended by the 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018, because you said ‘some’ of the projects were completed. The fact that some will not be completed by the 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018, why are you in the document here stating

that the revised provision will be the total sum when all the projects will not be completed? That is the question that I am trying to ask.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** It is a little difficult one for me presently. Just give me a moment. I have been told that all projects in the Legend will be completed. That amount of money includes rollover projects for 2018.

**Mr. Hamilton:** Again, if you had 10 things to do for \$100,000 and you only completed eight, it could not be that you spent the \$100,000. The question is, of the projects that will be completed, what will the sum be? Secondly, for those that will not be completed in 2018, what will the sum be?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I am not in a position to give you that here. I will give you that by Monday. It will explain what is happening here.

**Mr. Hamilton:** So, the acknowledgement is that the \$307.220 million, indicated here as revised, is not a true reflection of the expenditure of 2018.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** It is a true reflection of the 2018 Expenditure. We will give you the expenditures.

**Mr. Rohee:** Project code 2608300 - Equipment - Police:

“Purchase of equipment, arms and ammunition,”

Based on what the Minister of Finance had indicated in his Budget 2019 Speech, a provision is made under this head for the Canine Section and the Mounted Branch to be boosted, could the Minister say that? The Minister of Finance, indicated in his Budget 2019 Speech that it is going to be so but, in your provision, there is no indication. You made provision for equipment, arms and ammunition but there is nothing for the canines and horses.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Let me just state that the Mounted Branch will be the beneficiary of \$20 million and the Canine Section an additional \$10 million. I will not tell you about the arms and ammunitions.

**Mr. Rohee:** I did not ask for that. Continuing the question on project code 2608300, Equipment - Police, reference is made to the purchase of arms and ammunition, fingerprinting, ballistics, photographing, handwriting, communicating, narcotics and intelligence. What is the Minister purchasing in relation to intelligence? Secondly, on the same question, could the Hon. Minister

inform us whether the Special Weapons and Tactical (SWAT) team will be benefitting from any of the procurements listed here?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I understand the entire Guyana Police Force including the SWAT team will be benefitting from the equipment and furniture under this project code, mainly capital. For the Intelligence Unit (IU), the items come up to approximately \$5 million. I will provide you with the items on Monday. It is a pretty long list.

**Mr. Rohee:** Before we close off on Capital Expenditure for the Guyana Police Force, I would like, on behalf of the Opposition and I assume the Government's side of the House, to convey our condolences on the passing of Police Sergeant Joseph Elton Ambrose of St. Ignatius, Region 9. He passed away by way of an accident.

*Programme: 542 - Police Force - \$855,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Could I ask, Sir, that I change over from the members of the Guyana Police Force to the members of the Guyana Prison Service?

**Mr. Chairman:** You can indeed, Hon. Minister. We will allow a few minutes for the change.  
*[Pause]*

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I am ready now Sir, thanks.

### **Current Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 543 - Prison Service - \$2,164,491,000**

**Mr. Rohee:** Line items 6113 - Other Technical and Craft Skilled and 6114 - Clerical and Office Support: Could the Hon. Minister inform this House, in view of the turmoil affecting our prisons, whether he is satisfied with the current strength of the Guyana Prison Service at all the locations?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** No, I am not satisfied.

**Mr. Rohee:** Could the Hon. Minister explain to the House, with regards to his dissatisfaction with the current strength, what steps are being taken to satisfy the needs in respect of ranks at the Guyana Prison Service?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Restructuring the organisation is a big one, increasing salaries - proposing that and how we get the moneys for it - promotional increments and a number of things that go with making the Guyana Prison Service far more attractive and appealing for members. This also includes getting recruits that would want to work in an environment of a prison. These are all things that we are working on.

**Mr. Hamilton:** Line item 6111 – Administrative: Could you indicate for the decrease from 26 persons to 23, those senior persons, what would have been their ranks in the Guyana Prison Service? Secondly, which locations in the Guyana Prison Service would have been affected by the decrease from 26 staff to 23 staff?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** They are a Senior Superintendent, Superintendent and an Assistant Superintendent of the Guyana Prison Service who have all retired during the course of the year. One of them was at the Mazaruni Prison, one was at the New Amsterdam Prison and the other was at the Timehri Prison.

**Mr. Gill:** As a follow-up to Hon. Member Mr. Rohee's question, could the Hon. Minister advise what specific plans he has to stop the chronic smuggling of illegal substances and drugs *et cetera* into the prisons?

*11.39 a.m.*

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Mr. Chairman, it has to do with surveillance systems that we are going to get through this budget, professionalism by the process of continuously training, the leadership of the prison, talking to the ranks not to do that and also the personal judgement calls made by these officers and ranks. That is the best we could do. But, of course, to scrutinise them we would have to get the surveillance equipment so that they cannot be... and we have to have a culture in and around the country that family members should not be paying them the moneys to carry in the contraband in the first place. All of those are considerations.

**Mr. Rohee:** Mr. Chairman, line item 6302 - Training (including Scholarships): There is an allocation of \$50 million. The Minister himself just stated his needs and what is required to fulfil those needs in terms of capacity for the prison service. But a meagre \$50 million has been provided for training. [Mr. Ramjattan: That is not meagre.] It is, because if one looks at the previous years it was almost the same. So, my question is, why the Minister has provided such a meagre sum for training when training is going to be a very important component to build capacity at the prison service.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** The obvious answer is fiscal space, I suppose. I think we did ask for more but that is what was provided. So, we are going to utilise that \$50 million as best as possible to get more professionals.

**Mr. Rohee:** Mr. Chairman, I see the yuletide season is affecting your House. But if I may quickly move *en passant* to line item 6294, Other: We have seen a significant increase from \$17 million to \$24 million. Could the Hon. Minister provide the House with an explanation with respect to this significant increase?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** It is revised by \$7 million and it is to increase support for the development plans for the agricultural sector of the Guyana Prison Service, moving closer towards self-sufficiency in meat, vegetables and greens. We have certain projects that we are going to do; we have gotten an agricultural officer and so on, and this increase of \$7 million to \$24 million we feel will help in that regard.

**Mr. Rohee:** Mr. Chairman, line item 6284 - Other: Quite the opposite occurred here where there has been a significant decrease in the allocation from \$73 million in 2018 to \$25 million in 2019. Could the Hon. Minister explain what is the reason for this significant decrease in the allocation?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** This amount of money in 2018 was supporting the holding bay at the Lusignan and Georgetown Prisons. We are constructing some more permanent structures rather than hiring toilets and things like that, and that is why it is reduced. The rental for those is what carried it up.

*Programme: 543 - Prison Service - \$2,164,491,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 543 - Prison Service - \$1,769,208,000**

**Mr. Rohee:** Mr. Chairman, project code 12116900 - Buildings - Prisons: A huge provision of almost \$1 billion has been made here. First of all, there is a payment of retention. Could the Hon. Minister explain to us what this payment of retention is for? Then we will come to the big-ticket issue which is the Georgetown Prison and what is provided for the New Amsterdam Prison.



**Mr. Ramjattan:** The payment of the retention would be the construction of the Georgetown Prison's 60 inmate units for \$6.144 million; the reconstruction of the Camp Street Prison, \$265 million and the expansion of the Mazaruni Prison for that year \$709 million, and a consultancy of \$77 million. That constitutes the retention.

**Mr. Rohee:** Mr. Chairman, with respect to the Georgetown Prison, could the Hon. Minister inform the House whether a consultancy has been procured to design the new prison, at what cost if so, and what is likely to be the project cost of this new design?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** The consultancy is approximately \$10 million, and we have a design. It is not going to be a complete building as it were. If I could explain, we are dealing with a company out of United States of America (USA) that has provided steel cell prisons for a number of countries in the Caribbean and Latin America. It is a cell modular kind of arrangement whereby you can pack the cells up and go to different heights (two or three storey) and it will be like that. So, it is easily portable too. If, in view of the fact that we now have that and we want to move from Georgetown and go to somewhere in Lusignan or Kuru Kururu or wherever we propose our next prison, these steel cells can be easily removed to those areas. So, it is not going to be a permanent structure there. We decided that there might be some change of plans in the future of having a prison in the heart of the city.

**Mr. Rohee:** Mr. Chairman, in the mid-term report of the Ministry of Finance, it was pointed out that this particular Ministry is on record for the slow spending of resources. Huge amounts of moneys, like \$1.5 billion, was handed to the Ministry but in half of the year less than half of the money was spent. Having regard to this track record of slow disbursement of resources, where the Ministry is not spending the money quickly, which obviously resulted in the problem at Lusignan, how do we anticipate that with these new buildings the money is going to be spent as quickly as anticipated?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** We are going to spend the money, and it is going to be spent within the 12-month period of 2019.

**Bishop Edghill:** Project code 1216900 – Buildings - Prisons: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us if there is any change of design or variation as it relates to the Mazaruni Prison that is under construction?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** There is no change in design as far as I am aware. But initially it was supposed to be a four-storey building and then that was changed by the National Security Committee

(NSC) and the President saying that we would not have water for a four-storey and that it could be a fire hazard. We then had to redesign for a two-storey and expand the area where we are going to have the two-storey building.

**Bishop Edghill:** A follow-up on the same project code. Could the Hon. Minister confirm that this decision for the change was taken before the signing of the contract or after the signing of the contract?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** It was taken after the signing of the contract.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, a follow-up. Could the Hon. Minister indicate if there was a cost evaluation as it relates to the changes, if there would be savings or would it cost more?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** At this time, we cannot envisage savings but around the same ball-park figure that two-storey design will be taken care of with, that amount of money.

**Mr. Gill:** Minister, you have an excellent opportunity. [Mr. Ramjattan: Project code please. Where is that?] Project code 1216900 – Buildings - Prisons. With the destruction of the Georgetown Prison, Hon. Minister, you have a golden opportunity to relocate that prison from where it is and put it somewhere where residents and businesses in Georgetown would feel more secure and safer. Why are you not considering using this money to relocate this prison somewhere else?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** That is the reason we adopted the steel cell modular form that is portable. At the present moment we do not have space where we can have it as secure as Camp Street where we can put a prison that could accommodate about 240 more prisoners. We cannot find that place as yet; plus, when we are doing considerations for having a prison, we to have remand prisoners that will go to court early, in time for their trials and all of that. So, if we put it out too far, we might have a traffic problem and the prisoners cannot arrive at court and so on. So, in the meantime, we had to make the decision. We have made the decision that it would be, more or less, to have it in a modular form at the Georgetown, Camp Street area and that is the reason why. But rest assured that the experts are giving us advice as to where and where we should have a huge modern prison that could take care of 1,000 to 1,200 prisoners in Demerara.

**Mr. Gill:** Hon. Minister, could you advise whether the holding cell at the Brickdam Police Station is in use and if not, why not?

*11.54 a.m.*

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I understand that it is completed. The Guyana Power and Light, Inc. (GPL, Inc.) has to put up the transformer in front of ... [Mr. Dharamlall: That is in 2020.]  
No.

**Mr. Hamilton:** Regarding the Mazaruni Prison, could you indicate to us what percentage of that work has been completed thus far? Secondly, what is the cost value that has been paid and thirdly, based on your assessment, whether that prison is on track to be completed based on the timeline as per contract?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** We have completed about 20% thus far and that is to the extent of over \$5 million. In relation to the timeline, it is supposed to be completed next year. I feel that we are going to finish it by the end of next year. I cannot recall your third question.

**Mr. Chairman:** There are two more questions after the Hon. Member, Bishop Edghill.

**Bishop Edghill:** I would like to return to project code 1216900 – Buildings: Following up on the question that I asked the Hon. Minister about the change of design and variation, could the Hon. Minister confirm that a written instruction was given to the contractor as it relates to the changes? Secondly, was there an undertaking by the Government of Guyana that, should those changes cost more, the Government of Guyana will be paying?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** That is true. There was a written instruction from my Permanent Secretary, and yes indeed. Sir, you said two questions more. I think he asked two questions just now.

**Mr. Rohee:** Project code 2608500 – Agriculture and Equipment: The Minister just told the honourable House that he is pursuing a course of self-sufficiency at the prisons yet, not a cent has been allocated here for the Guyana Prison Service. How are you going to achieve self-sufficiency, at least for 2019, if there is no provision under this project code for the Guyana Prison Service?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** We have the tools, tractors and so on from the previous allocations of 2017 and 2018. Please, do not feel that because nothing is here... Then again, you could also save fiscal space.

**Bishop Edghill:** I am going back to project code 1216900 – Buildings – Mazaruni Prison: A follow-up to what I just asked, could you confirm that the supervisory consultant on this project, in relation to the changes in the variation and design, advised the Ministry by way of writing as it relates to the cost difference before those instructions were given? If you were

building a five storey and you are now building less, maybe for a little longer period, it is supposed to be either cost neutral or...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member...

**Bishop Edghill:** Could you confirm that the supervisory firm did advise the Ministry as to what would be the cost, whether it would be neutral, more or less... before that instruction was given that if the contractor said it would cost more the Government of Guyana would pay?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I understand that the supervisory consultant did advise that it would cost slightly more.

*Programme: 543 – Prison Service - \$1,769,208,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Current Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 544 – Police Complaints Authority - \$21,096,000**

**Mr. Rohee:** It appears that the Police Complaints Authority has gotten a significant increase in its allocation. The number of contracted employees remains the same as it was in 2018 but there is a significant increase in the emoluments under line item 6116, Contracted Employees, could the Hon. Minister explain this apparent anomaly?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** The Police Complaints Authority received a budgetary allocation of \$7.9 million. However, the present staff complement consists of four Investigators, with salaries of \$103,000 each and one Confidential Secretary at \$96,000 per month. This is what caused the decrease here. It is a decrease because we did not have any additional Investigators, Typists or any additional staff there. It was just the four Investigators and the one Confidential Secretary.

**Mr. Rohee:** Line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence: There is a decrease here when it is expected that the Police Complaints Authority would be moving around the country to receive complaints. Could I have an explanation as to why this decrease of \$750,000 to \$500,000 by the...

**Mr. Ramjattan:** The taxi service used to be the cause of the high expenditures. We have gotten a vehicle for the Authority now and that has helped.

**Mr. Rohee:** Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): There is an increase from \$66,000 to \$175,000, could the Hon. Minister explain the significant increase in training; where, for what and for whom?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** It is a decrease under this line item because we are currently evaluating the training needs of the Police Complaints Authority staff. Once that is done I am certain that cost would go up.

*Programme: 544 – Police Complaints Authority - \$21,096,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 544 – Police Complaints Authority - \$2,500,000**

*Programme: 544 – Police Complaints Authority - \$2,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Current Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 545 – Fire Service - \$1,421,670,000**

**Mr. Rohee:** Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There is a decrease in the number of Contracted employees, could the Hon. Minister not only explain this decrease and say what branch or section of the Guyana Fire Service has been affected by this decrease? What is the rank of the Contracted employees, civilians or members of the Guyana Fire Service?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Yes, the decrease is, as a result of the resignation of the Head of the Strategic Management Department in 2018. He was a civilian.

**Mr. Gill:** Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): I noticed there is a decrease in the allocation for training under this line item, could you explain the reason for this decrease?

*12.09 p.m.*

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Axillary firefighting training would not be needed in three out of the five locations, which has caused the decrease under this line item.

**Mr. Gill:** Mr. Minister, could you identify those three locations?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** It is Lethem, Mahdia and Mabaruma because those communities now have firemen and fire stations.

*Programme: 545 – Fire Service – \$1,421,670,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 545 – Fire Service – \$578,130,000**

**Mr. Gill:** Project code 1217000 – Station and Ambulances: The rapid deployment of fire trucks at the Stabroek Market is heavily comprise with the heavy vehicular and pedestrian traffic, could you advise if you have any plans to relocate that fire station?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Not at this time. We have lots of plans but not at this time in relation of relocation there.

**Mr. Rohee:** Thank you Mr. Chairman. Project code 1217000 – Fire Ambulances and Stations: I understand that provision is made here for fire station at Onverwagt, but do we not have a fire station at Onverwagt already?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** We are renting a building from the Mahaica/Mahaicony/Abary Agriculture Development Authority (MMA\ADA), we did not have our own building.

**Mr. Rohee:** On the question of ambulances, could the Hon. Minister tell the honourable House how old are the ambulances that are being procured; what is year and what is the mileage of each?

**Mr Ramjattan:** I understand that the vehicles to be procured would be new vehicles. We want, and we have made, I think, a decision that we are going to have new vehicles procured.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, Mr. Rohee, do you have another question?

**Mr. Rohee:** Yes, just one question. Is that description of the ambulances relevant to the tenders that are being procured as well?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** What has been tendered for are new vehicles.

**Mr. Rohee:** I am referring to procurement of new fire...

**Mr. Ramjattan:** And they are coming from an English firm Angloco Limited. The firm that has always provided...

**Mr. Rohee:** My question was the tenders that are to be procured in 2019, are they new tenders?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Are you speaking about the water tenders?

**Mr. Rohee:** Yes.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Okay, sorry, when you said tenders, I thought you were referring to the tendering process.

**Mr. Rohee:** No, the fire tenders, we are in the business a long time.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Yes, sorry. These are new water tenders.

**Mr. Rohee:** Are they new ones?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Yes.

**Mr. Rohee:** Brand new?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Yes.

*Programme: 545 – Fire Service – \$578,130,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Current Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 546 – Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit – \$319,705,000**

**Mr. Rohee:** Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: For the staffing details, there are zeros. I think it is almost impossible for this honourable House to be asked to support the provision of \$196 million for no staff. There is nothing in the staffing details.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, Mr. Rohee, you do not have a question to ask.

**Mr. Rohee:** That is the question, that is precisely the question. We are being ask with, due respect, to support the provision of \$196,300,000 for no staff.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, I thank you.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** If I may ask and I do not know why this aggression here. There is absolutely no time when we would normally put the amount of staff in relation to Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit (CANU), it is always zero and the army.

**Mr. Rohee:** So?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** So, what, you want us to, now, to change the tradition?

**Mr. Rohee:** So, what?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** So, are you saying now...

*[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon Minister...

**Mr. Ramjattan:** We do not normally do it, Sir, and that has been the tradition I inherited, and I want to keep to it.

**Mr. Rohee:** Mr. Chairman, listen, the Hon. Minister is a part of a Government arrangement, which is talking all the time about a fresh approach. Where is your fresh approach with respect to this? *[Interruption]*

*[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]*

**Mr. Rohee:** I think it is very unreasonable for this House to be asked to approve a sum of money for no staff.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, Mr. Rohee I know you would not want to disrupt the work.

*Programme: 546 – Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit – \$319,705,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 546 – Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit – \$30,000,000**

**Mr. Chairman:** I am sorry, Mr. Rohee is going to ask a question now.

**Mr. Rohee:** Yes, thank you

**Mr. Chairman:** Please proceed.



**Mr. Rohee:** Project code 2609200 – Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit: Provision is being made for \$30 million for vehicle, furniture and equipment. Who is going to drive this vehicle, who is going to occupy this furniture and who is going to use this equipment? Mr. Chairman, this is an insult with due respect. This is an insult for our intelligence. You have no staff, you are being asked... *[Interruption]*

*[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]*

**Mr. Rohee:** ...for a vehicle. Who is going to drive this vehicle, who is going sit on the chair and who is going to use the equipment? These are phantoms?

*Programme: 546 – Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit – \$30,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates. [12.21 p.m.]*

**Mr. Rohee:** If I may crave your indulgence, Mr. Chairman, I would like on behalf of our side of the House to extend yuletide and best wishes to the Joint Services, the Guyana Police Force, the Guyana Prison Service and the Guyana Fire Service, I wanted to include CANU but I am not going to do that, best wishes for the Christmas season and the new year.

**Mr. Chairman:** I thought Hon. Member that when we extend yuletide greetings it is to everyone; those we see and those we do not see, but yours is conditional, I see.

**Mr. Rohee:** And the competent staff of the Ministry of Public Security.

**Mr. Chairman:** I thank you. Hon. Members, I believe at this time, we should take a break and we would return at 1.15 p.m.

*Assembly resumed*

*Sitting suspended at 12.22 p.m.*

*Sitting resumed at 1.34 p.m.*

*1.36 p.m.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, there is an announcement which I wish to make, and so we return to the National Assembly.

It is my very pleasant task to inform you that our efforts at establishing an E-Parliament have made considerable strides since my predecessor in office, the Hon. Raphael G. C. Trotman, first introduced the idea.

Two of the three components, namely; standardised office e-mail and develop video conferencing capability have been achieved. It enables Hon. Members to have their own parliamentary e-mails for rapid contact. Hon. Members, you would have received, today - and this is the main purpose of saying this now - or if you have not then certainly before the end of the day, a brochure which provides information on this new development.

The leader of the project, Mr. Ashley Hinds, has volunteered to be available to assist Hon. Members at mutually convenient times. The information, as you would have discovered, contains an e-mail and a password. That password is a temporary one; Hon. Members will choose their own and if they need guidance on how they may proceed, the purpose is to let you know that Mr. Hinds would be available to assist Hon. Members with that purpose.

I express, on behalf of all of us, gratitude to Mr. Hinds and all of the other members of staff and to the Clerk for taking us where we are now. I thank you.

*Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.*

*In Committee of supply.*

**Mr. Chairman:** We resume our consideration of the Estimates. Hon. Members, there is a typographical error. It should be “Policy and Administration” and not “Police and Administration”.

**Agency 03: Ministry of Finance** (1.39 p.m.)

### **Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 031 – Policy and Administration - \$20,344,381,000**

**Mr. Ali:** In relation to the head, Policy and Administration, I would like to refer the Hon. Minister to Agency 90, Public Debt, and I would like to ask a few questions. The first question has to do with a statement by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The IMF has advised the Government to retire the overdraft at the Central Bank of Guyana. Could the Minister advise us?

**Minister of Finance [Mr. Jordan]:** Mr. Chairman, if I am correct, we are dealing with Agency 03, Programme: 031 – Policy and Administration. I heard something about Agency 90. We are not dealing with that?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Mr. Ali, what we are doing is pertaining to Agency 03: Ministry of Finance and the programmes therein.

**Mr. Ali:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** So, if you could address pages 62 to 63.

**Mr. Ali:** Yes, Sir, but you would agree with me that the Budget is an entire document and that one page may lead you to a reference to another page or another agency.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, I neither agree nor disagree with you, but let us do it the way we know we should do it.

**Mr. Ali:** I am definitely endeavouring to do that. The IMF has advised the government to retire the overdraft ...

**Mr. Jordan:** You are wasting time. We are dealing with Agency 03, Programme 031. Statutory expenditure is not discussed nor voted on in this House.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Mr. Ali, if you do not have anything else to say, I will let someone else try to ask a question.

**Mr. Ali:** If I am allowed, Mr. Speaker ...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, you will listen to me and then you will proceed, we are not having a dialogue. What I am saying is that you know the rules, you know how it is done, and I do not believe that I can accommodate a different approach by you. I cannot accommodate any approach that deviates from the rules. Now, could you please be guided by that?

**Mr. Ali:** Thank you very much. In relation to the Grand Total Appropriation, Current and Statutory, of \$20,344,381,000, can the Hon. Minister say whether any of this sum will be used to address the advice of the IMF, which is to retire the overdraft on the Central Bank of Guyana? Will the Minister tell the National Assembly the size of the overdraft, how much of the treasury bill ...?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, I do not know if these questions are, so to speak ...

**Mr. Ali:** Sir, if you would allow me to ask the question.

**Mr. Chairman:** I thank everyone who thinks that they must put in advice. What I am trying to do is to make sure that we all stay within the ambit of what is expected of us. If any Hon. Member would do otherwise, I would have to ...

**Mr. Ali:** Mr. Chairman, I am assuring you that I am staying there. Could the Hon. Minister tell us the size of the overdraft, how much of the treasury bill is used to finance the Budget deficit as opposed to monetary purposes, and what amount is set aside for this purpose?

In addition to that, a senior Finance Analyst to the Government, Mr. Anand Goolsarran, today in a letter, said that the overdraft is \$210 billion. Does the Minister agree that it is \$210 billion?

I would also like to ask the Minister if any sum here is also set aside to deal with the overdraft of the Consolidated Fund.

**Mr. Jordan:** For the Ministry of Finance, Agency 03, Programme: 031, the Total Appropriated Current Expenditure, which is the same total as the Grand Total Appropriated Current & Capital of \$20,344,381,000, does not include statutory expenditure, for good reason. The Appropriation Bill does not vote on statutory expenditure, and debt is a statutory expenditure with a first claim on the Consolidated Fund. Therefore, I cannot and will not answer any question pertaining to the national debt as it relates to the voting on the Appropriation Bill.

**Mr. Ali:** Line item 6141 – Other Employment Costs: There is a proposed increase of close to 50% in terms of the Budgetary allocation, can the Hon. Minister justify this increase?

**Mr. Jordan:** As in the past, first of all, this amount at line item 6141 takes care of many types of employment-related expenditure. Most of it relates to the proposed salary increase and the rest is consumed by new recruits since agencies are not allowed to vote or provide for vacancies, and sometimes it pays salary in lieu of those who would not have consumed all of their vacation. In last year's case, there was a teachers debunching aspect included.

What I can tell you is that for the 2019 total, the amount proposed there, one thing is for sure and that is how much we have to pay for the two percentage points increase for the teachers that was rolled over into January. That will work out to roughly \$230 million. The rest is our best guest, based on previous percentages.

In the case of this year, for example, the salary increase consumed roughly 58% of the total; the new recruits consumed roughly 37% of the total; and the teachers debunching consumed 5% of the total for 2018. So, if everything holds through, then you could make some rough averages. But I could tell you that until we finish discussions with the Guyana Teacher's Union (GTU) and the Guyana Public Service Union (GPSU), in respect to 2019, it would be presumptuous of me to give you numbers or percentages. We have set aside a total there, and, hopefully, it will be enough for any increases that we agree to with these unions.

**Mr. Ali:** Just for planning purposes and for our own information, what is your anticipation that the salary increase equivalent will be versus new recruits?

**Mr. Jordan:** As I indicated, that is why I gave a guide just now. In relation to this year, there were percentages of 58% and 37%. So, if that were to hold true, then you would have an idea of what the magnitudes might be. But, I am not saying that 2019 will have the same percentages.

**Mr. Ali:** Based on this projection, what would the increase in allocation for salary increases translate to in terms of percentage of salary increase?

*1.51 p.m.*

**Mr. Jordan:** As I indicated, it would be presumptuous of me to suggest to the House that 'x' percent or 'y' percent has been budgeted. As I said, we are awaiting the restart of negotiations with the Teachers and the Guyana Public Service Union and at that time the percentages will be known.

**Mr. Ali:** Okay. Then Hon. Minister, you would agree with me that in planning you must have set aside a projected amount. Forget about percentage for now. What was the projected amount set aside in this budgetary proposal that you have for 2019?

**Mr. Jordan:** As in every other category of expenditure in the Estimates, it all depended on our assumptions for revenue and how different categories of expenditure could be afforded given the revenue profile. What I am saying is that we have a figure roughly at line item 6141 of \$11,552,132 for employment cost and it would take care of all of the various categories of related expenditure that usually come out of this head.

**Mr. Ali:** Hon. Minister, based on a quick calculation, it seems that a projected increase of 25% is on the cards. Would you confirm that my calculation is right or wrong?

**Mr. Jordan:** The Hon. Gentleman I believe is probably good at numerals and numeracy. So, if he says it is 25% I will agree with him. If it is wrong, then- If he says it is 25% then it is 25%. The number is there.

**Mr. Ali:** If it is indeed the 25%, we are in support of that. That is what we have been arguing for all the time. At least your numbers should reflect what we have been fighting for all the time.

**Mr. Jordan:** Let us be very clear. This is a 25% increase in employment cost relative to the previous year. As we indicated, this head takes care of many other employment related expenditure including new recruits, salary in lieu of leave, the teachers 2% increase for 2016, and so on and so forth. It maybe a 25% increase, but it does not translate into a 25% increase in wages and salaries. It is very clear.

**Mr. Ali:** Line item 6281 – Security Services: Could the Hon. Minister advise us on what is the threat that necessitated almost close to a 100% increase in security cost? What threat was the Ministry of Finance envisioning that would have caused such a great increase in security cost?

**Mr. Jordan:** I think, first of all, we have to admit that rates have gone up significantly. With regard to the threats, I think I could name two of them. The first one took place not so long ago, where someone had gone to a certain bank in Carmichael Street and was trailed. When he recognised that he was being trailed he made a dash into the compound of the Ministry of Finance. Unfortunately, he was not saved because the individual came after with a gun, and I think even proceeded to relieve the female sergeant there of her gun while robbing the individual.

About a couple of weeks ago while I was away, I got a call saying that the Ministry's compound was broken into, which was a foreday morning, and significant files and other documents were removed. The security threat is real.

I know you asked that question with the greatest of concern for our staff. I am indicating to you the security threat is very real and we have to beef up security and not only in terms of the human side, but also the way the premises is secured.

This increase is not only for the fact that rates have gone up, but it is also hours and different kinds of guards and so on. Thank you very much for the question. It allowed us also to bring this very important matter to the fore.

**Mr. Ali:** Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to give us an indication of what percentage of increase in rates he was talking about?

**Mr. Jordan:** I think it was last year we increased the rates for security guards and private sector workers. I do not know it offhand, but it is now \$350 per hour. It was moved from \$250 per hour to \$350 per hour.

**Mr. Ali:** This just substantiate that point I made in the Budget debate that the cost of business is increasing all across Guyana and we have to give incentives to address this. It is affecting businesses all across the country.

Line item 6284 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister say what was the additional expenditure that necessitated this increase for 2019?

**Mr. Jordan:** I can say here that it is the ramping up of existing activities as it relates to our programmes...

*[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]*

...on air and in the media including social media. The significant amount is to promote activities relating to the Natural Resource Fund.

**Mr. Ali:** Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Over the last three years, including the proposed allocation for 2019, the Ministry will be spending more than \$90 million on the maintenance of buildings. Could the Hon. Minister say what buildings were being maintained through this period? It is a lot of resources.

**Mr. Jordan:** Could you say over which period of time for the \$90 million?

**Mr. Ali:** The years of 2017, 2018, and 2019.

**Mr. Jordan:** Did you get \$90 million for maintenance?

**Mr. Ali:** I got \$71 million.

**Mr. Jordan:** Okay. First of all, the Budget 2019 has decrease slightly than the Budget 2018 by about \$1,500,000. It is the same building. It is the main building at the Ministry of Finance. It is an old building as you know. We are trying to keep it, not old, but by maintaining it. We have done an injustice to our wooden colonial buildings, but as you pass it is still a joy to

behold. It takes a lot to be maintained if we want to keep it in wood rather than switch it over to concrete.

We tried to do termite treatment, we painted it, re-puttied it and made changes to the roof *et cetera*. As you know we have added other buildings in the yard. We have the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) building, the Management Information Systems Unit (MISU) building, and we have extended the existing building, I think, twice. The maintenance really has to do with that.

Also, as you know the sewerage runs through the Ministry of Finance and I do not know which genius in the past had built something over the sewerage. So, that in itself has its own issues. Generally, it is just to continue maintaining the buildings, by painting the exterior walls of the NPTAB building next year, painting of the eastern and northern exterior walls of our head office building, painting of exterior walls of the building being used by the Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF) and there is a contract for electrical maintenance of the administrative building, head office, and valuation division, and some miscellaneous repairs including carpentry, guttering, plumbing and so on.

**Bishop Edghill:** Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: There was a \$200 million allocation last year and there is a \$200 million allocation again this year for the National Industrial and Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL's) Special Purpose Unit. Since NICIL is a company that is allowed to operate and generate finances and the surplus being transferred to this Consolidated Fund, could the Hon. Minister tell this House why is he funding from the Consolidated Fund moneys for the operation of a Special Purpose Unit at NICIL?

**Mr. Jordan:** When we established the Special Purpose Unit (SPU), which is a temporary arrangement until we finalise the sale of the assets that no longer are within the purview of the Guyana Sugar Corporation Limited (GuySuCo), it comes under NICIL, but it is not a permanent department. Technically to separate the activities of the general NICIL from this particular arrangement, we decided to fund that out of the Treasury.

The other point too is that NICIL would not have been in a position out of its cash flow to fund the activities of the SPU. Taking into consideration some of the recommendations that have been made by the inquiry into NICIL most of the funding that would have gone there, including dividends from the Guyana Oil Company Incorporated (GUYOIL) and so on, are now being



paid directly into the Treasury. The company is not in a position as before to command the sort of resources that it may have commanded prior to 2015. The financing of the SPU is as a result of that. NICIL, we hope, will not need any financing once SPU is wound up.

**Bishop Edghill:** Follow-up: With the Minister's explanation that NICIL is not in a position financially to fund this Special Purposes Unit, could the Minister tell this House would NICIL be in a position to finance the interest on the bond that the Government has guaranteed? It is in a bond of about \$30 billion which, I think, about \$17 billion has already been drawn down on.

**Mr. Jordan:** As it relates to the bond, the total is \$30 billion, but it has two tranches, \$16 billion and \$14 billion. Only the \$16 billion part has been drawn down so far. The interest on the bond is premised on the sale of the assets of GuySuCo that is now within the purview of the SPU.

*2.06 p.m.*

It is my understanding that by March 2019, the company should be in a position to begin making some sales.

Also, the other assets that are in the purview of the SPU, outside of the estates themselves is land. There are supposed to have some land sales going, already there is tremendous interest based on tenders that have been put out. At the moment, Cabinet is reviewing not necessarily those requests, but, we are reviewing the mechanism that will trigger these sales going forward outside of NICIL itself. The company is doing its job, but Cabinet wants to have a mechanism also that could ensure transparency, accountability, and as wide the spatial distribution as possible. In other words, land does not end up being concentrated in one or two persons. The purposes for which the lands are being sold can be monitored after the sale.

**Bishop Edghill:** The same line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Could the Hon. Minister tell this House has NICIL paid any interest, so far, on the \$16 billion that he has acknowledged that has been disburse? Has the company paid the source of funding for the payment of that interest?

**Mr. Jordan:** The company has not paid, and the company is not in default. I think the first payment is due in March 2019.

**Bishop Edghill:** Same line item 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Guyana Revenue Authority, Could the Hon. Minister indicate is this increase only for employment costs or are there major capital investments to be done in the year 2019?

**Mr. Jordan:** The capital aspect will not be in the current subvention. It would be treated under the Ministry of Finance capital vote. In terms of the current expenditure, essentially, this increase is to allow the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) to continue its upgrading work; both in terms of its offices, geographic locations, and staff. It is also to allow GRA to continue the work that it is doing in establishing the Oil and Gas Unit as we rapidly proceed to first oil essentially. There will also be a heavy amount of training that will take place. New regional offices will be opened in Mabaruma, while the Bartica and Lethem offices will be upgraded to offer services similar to those for the head office. Those are essentially here.

**Bishop Edghill:** Could the Hon. Minister tell this House, was any of the \$200 million that was used by NICIL, in 2018, financed the lounge at Ogle which is now in the public domain?

**Mr. Jordan:** Just a quick correction before I get into the answer. The first payment on the bond is due in May 2019, and not March.

No. It is NICIL's funds and not the funds that we have transferred to SPU that were used. The \$200 million that we transferred to SPU were principally used on employment cost, roughly \$122 million, fuel and lubricants about \$100 million, utilities about \$2 million, office supplies about \$2 million, travelling and subsistence about \$3 million, maintenance and repairs to buildings roughly \$59 million, and legal fees roughly about \$32 million. Those are some of the key items.

**Bishop Edghill:** Same line item 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Earlier the Minister told us that this SPU is only for a temporary arrangement that is why he is funding it from the Consolidated Fund and not from NICIL's operations. Could the Hon. Minister tell the House is the refurbish lounge at Ogle the property of NICIL or is it a facility that is being loaned to this SPU for its life? Why was the expenditure made?

**Mr. Jordan:** I do not know what the special interest in the SPU is, because the SPU does not have a legal life of its own. It is NICIL that has the legal life. I am not sure why the hon. Member is harping on SPU. If the Head or any employee of the SPU does something, it has to be done in the name of NICIL. If the correct question is whether NICIL owns the LBI property, my understanding is that that asset was vested as part of the vesting order in NICIL.

I know there are some issues which I really do not want to fuel at the moment between who is ownership. It is NICIL's contention that the vesting order was clear that the LBI compound form part of it. I hope we are not going to *open a can of worms*, because I cannot solve that here. I am just indicating that that is it.

**Bishop Edghill:** The same line item 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: GRA, could the Hon. Minister confirm that GRA Board is properly composed in keeping with the Act and has been functioning?

**Mr. Jordan:** As far as I know the Board is properly composed and the Board has been functioning. In fact, I think two days ago, a new Board for 2019 was discussed at Cabinet and approved.

*Programme: 031 – Policy and Administration - \$20,344,381,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 031 – Policy and Administration - \$4,759,652,000**

**Mr. Ali:** Project code 1202200 – Buildings: It states provision for building. What building is the legend referring to?

**Mr. Jordan:** It is the annex on Croal Street where the old Guyana National Cooperative Bank (GNCB) Sports Club was.

**Mr. Ali:** Could the Hon. Minister say to us what is the plan in relation to this building? The Legend just states provision for building. We need to have some information here. Your total project cost in the profile is \$325 plus million and you are spending this year \$113,711,000. What is the scope of this project?

**Mr. Jordan:** The awarded cost for this building is \$228 million. The difference you see there has to do with the generator for the main office and it includes the purchase and associated electrical works for the generator. The \$228 million for the new building - the existing headquarters of the Ministry of Finance has outgrown space. The number of activities that we have added and staff. What we are going to do at the new building is a three-story building.

First of all, we are going to move the Valuation Division which you know is a very decrepit building at Camp Street. It has limited what we could do with the Evaluation Office. It is like

a step child we have not really paid attention to. We are going to put the offices in better surroundings and be able to recruit better and more qualified staff.

We are going to put in one floor or part of the floor we will use for a document centre. There are so much documentations at the Ministry of Finance thrown all over the place and we have just ran out of space. We will attempt to scan and also put a modern document centre there. We are going to move the training room from the head office and put it there and make it a modern training room with modern facilities for better conferencing and so forth which will ease on the trips and also the phones.

Of course, it is important for sports. We are going to use a small part for a sports club and a little gym to keep people healthy and also to promote social cohesion.

**Mr. Ali:** Project code 3401000 - Low Carbon Development Programme: I see here Hon. Minister that you are going to draw down \$1.4 billion. Would the Hon. Minister agree that this strategy has brought tremendous benefit to our country?

Secondly, could the Hon. Minister say would the components that would be financed from this draw down are the same as were outlined in the Low Carbon Development Strategy? Also, could the member list the components?

**Mr. Jordan:** My Hon. Friend made me smile, because I have in front of me the *Hansard* for last year, and anticipated that this question... The Hon. Member is really good and has a good memory, because it was almost word for word he was repeating from the *Hansard*.

Anything green, as we are going green, any strategy, or any component, and any works that will promote or help us to go green, we cannot scuffle. We have to be in support of anything that is going green.

2.21 p.m.

On this programme for the sum of \$1.4 billion, the institutional strengthening for 2019 is being allocated \$55,300,000; Amerindian Land Titling - \$73,700,000; the Cunha Canal rehabilitation - \$219,800,000; Information and Communications Technology (ICT) access and E-services for hinterland poor and remote communities - \$453,800,000; Sustainable Land Management and Development - \$551 million; Green State Economy Development Strategy \$37,700,000 and the Trustee Administration fee is \$8,700,000.

**Mr. Ali:** I am very happy to see that you stayed faithful to what the People's Progressive Party (PPP) had outlined in that strategy and also the strategies providing the financing for you to develop your own plan.

Project code 1701900- Minor Works: I see that in the legend:

“Provision for community development projects and programmes.”

Could you just give us a summary as to how these projects are identified, the criteria used? What level are they approved?

**Mr. Jordan:** In answering this, similarly, last year, these initiatives are identified either by myself going out on my visits to various communities or my staff who would go out doing project monitoring and so forth. They would indicate to me some of the interventions that we should make. We sit as a team and identify which, because we want to maximize the amount, because as you know it has been fixed there for so many years and the costs are going up so there cannot be too many that we can do. We will then make a decision. I am the one ultimate decision maker where that is concerned.

We do entertain requests from residence, organisations, community groups, Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs), Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs) and line ministries. So far as they come, and they fit the objective we will see how we could accommodate or support.

**Mr. Ali:** Project code 4500800 - Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA): Hon. Minister, you have a sum of \$1,256,650,000 and part of that is the provision of buildings. Early in this Government's term, there was an announcement that the Government will be perusing a new complex to house the GRA's operations. We are expanding into other buildings, but we have not had an update on the plans of having this complex. Could the Hon. Minister give us an update on that, please?

**Mr. Jordan:** We are talking of staff in excess of 1000, so we are talking about a fairly large functional building, which at this time in terms of cost will be challenging to the Government. We are looking at the PPP arrangement. I think a land was identified in the Turkeyen area, concept designs are being developed, and once these are approved by Cabinet, then we would hope to use our PPP framework that we had presented here to solicit proposals for doing the building essentially.

**Mr. Ali:** Project code 4500800 - Guyana Revenue Authority: The amount would be a transfer. In relation to the net off of Value Added Tax (VAT) and returns, is this catered for here? I know in the Budget you said that GRA in 2019 would be given the refund there and then send a net amount over to the Consolidated Fund. If not, how much do you anticipate that net off to be?

**Mr. Jordan:** In terms of refunds, my understanding at the VAT level it is roughly \$2,500,000,000 that would normally be given. For the normal areas, in particular income tax the refunds would normally be about \$700 million essentially.

This will not be here because it is not a capital expenditure. It is a current expenditure. Remember, the idea here is for whatever revenues are collected instead of it going totally into the Consolidated Fund, only the net will be going. If GRA have refunds to do on income tax, then it will be taken out of current revenue and then put the net into Consolidated Fund, which is similar to what happens under the VAT Act and which has been around for quite a while, since the VAT has been put in place.

**Mr. Ali:** One more question, Mr. Chairman. Project code 45000800: Could the Hon. Minister be kind to tell us what is the estimated outstanding amount in relation to VAT refunds as we speak now?

Project code 4502400 - Technical Assistance: Provision for strengthening of the Public Procurement System, could the Hon. Minister say if the Standard Bidding Document would be updated as part of this strengthening? Would the award of contract be totally removed from Cabinet as part of this Institutional strengthening and upgrade? Thirdly, would the information be uploaded on the website in a timely and efficient manner?

*[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, I am not sure what is this new performance. I do not know that we can shout across the aisle such as it is to one another.

**Mr. Jordan:** On the VAT refunds, it averages between \$350 and \$400 million every two months, essentially. Cabinet no longer approves projects. The projects are noted by Cabinet. The Standard Bidding Documents: the general upgrade to the procurement does not only includes Standard Bidding Documents listed on the CARICOM Board, listed on the website and so forth. It also includes a virtual overhaul of the existing procurement legislation. The

consultant has completed the work to overhaul and has recommended that we redo the Act, because the changes are so many as to really render the Act virtually inefficient, if we were to just continue changing it. Work will start in the Attorney General's Chambers on this.

In the meantime, we are going to bring shortly, hopefully very early in January, some new hanging fruits to do with increase in the threshold set aside for the small business, the public procurement planning, and also mandatory registration for companies. I also believe there is some part to do with sanctioning contractors who do poor work.

**Mr. Ali:** Project code 4503000 - Contribution to International Organisations: Hon. Minister, I see under the Islamic Development Bank, you have a capital contribution of \$37,013,000. Could the Hon. Minister say what is the size of the loan to be acquired from the Islamic Development Bank? When is the proposed first disbursement date? What are the projects that the loan or loans would be used for?

**Mr. Jordan:** So far, we only had one loan from Islamic Development Bank for the sum of \$20 million for the Guyana Power and Light Cooperation. I think we are in the process of completing the conditionalities and the disbursement should start in 2019.

**Mr. Ali:** Could the Hon. Minister say, in terms of the medium and long-term frame work, what is the size of the pool of resources that is available for Guyana and what has been signed on to?

**Mr. Jordan:** Right now, it has gone down to \$880 million, because we have taken \$20 million. The sum of \$880 million is an indicative envelope that we can have available to us in this cycle of resources which will take us to 2020 or 2021, I believe. It is not moneys that is holding in a fund waiting for Guyana to borrow. It is potentially what can be made available to Guyana were we to have bankable projects and were we to fulfill other conditions that have to do with the size of our borrowings, outstanding loans, ability to repay, and all of these types of stories. It is not as if we borrowed \$900 million. I do not think our Gross Domestic Product (GDP), right now, allows us to borrow \$900 million as one shot. We are going to identify a couple of projects which we hope can finance down the road.

In the Budget speech we said that we do not have projects that have gone through the rig of a feasibility study and that are available for presentation to international institutions. We have set aside moneys to start some of these feasibility studies on our own and to lessen the need for these studies to be done using foreign financing.

**Mr. Ali:** I know the Hon. Minister of Finance had said earlier that, at a personal level, he would relook at the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project. That project has been shown feasible and independently verified by this Government. I know the Government is also perusing clean, renewable, and cheap energy. Would the Hon. Minister of Finance be willing to look at this as an important project for Guyana to be financed under resources by this Islamic Development Bank?

**Mr. Jordan:** That is a very clever way of bringing a project that is nowhere in these estimates. I want to say, again, that projects that are bankable, have had the feasibility study done, and which can pass the test of both ourselves and the financial institutions, are projects that we are going to put to these financial institutions.

I cannot say about Amaila Falls Hydropower Project or any other project, to be quite honest. This is a matter for the Government of Guyana and the Government of the day. Our position on Amaila Falls Hydropower Project is known. I cannot say that we would be putting that any time soon to the Islamic Development Bank for finance.

*2.36 p.m.*

**Mr. Ali:** Project code 4402900 – Institutional Strengthening: Provisions for studies. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to tell us whether he plans to have a new feasibility study completed for the Demerara Harbour Bridge, seeing that the whole concept of the bridge has changed? Is any provision being made here for a new feasibility study for the Demerara Harbour Bridge?

**Mr. Jordan:** No. The Demerara Harbour Bridge issues are being dealt with by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure (MPI). So, I could not answer that.

There are some moneys here for studies that are outside of the framework of the MPI. There are a number of other areas for which studies have to be done and what we have set aside here is some moneys to do those studies. But anything to do with the transportation area would be done by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure.

**Bishop Edghill:** Project code 4503100 – Contribution to Local Organisations – Linden Enterprise Network (LEN): Could the Hon. Minister confirm that all the activities that were envisaged for 2018, for the \$160 million that was allocated, have been completed? And could he indicate to the House what the \$218.835 million that is being sought for will do at LEN?



**Mr. Jordan:** I can reasonably say that the moneys that we had given to LEN would have mostly been used, because I do not think that they lend all of the money. They would have to keep a little in, and some of the moneys are also used for operational expenditure. The needs are huge in Linden, but we do not have a sufficiency of funding to give them. The additional funding is to meet some of those needs.

Linden Enterprise Network has now gone into lending for housing which is needed all over the country. And there is a huge demand for assistance in the housing area. So, this increase is to help support the expanded activities of LEN.

**Bishop Edghill:** The same project code. Could the Hon. Minister indicate, if the Government's policy for housing is the building of condominiums (condos), how would the Government be funding institutions that are lending money to build houses? That is the first thing.

Secondly, could he state, as of 2018, how many applicants were there for assistance or loans from LEN and how many were beneficiaries?

**Mr. Jordan:** There were about 518 applicants and roughly 475 would have received a positive nod for lending.

On the first part, I am not sure I know of any policy which states that the Government is into the building of condominiums. Among the housing strategies might be the building of condominiums, but I do not know that there is an outright policy that we will only be building condos and not single units. Essentially, this lending in the housing area in Linden, for those who already have completed a half of the house, maybe it is to help them to complete it; those who have the land, to help them to start and so on. But that is the best I can do where this is concerned.

**Bishop Edghill:** The same line item. Could the Hon. Minister say to this House since LEN as envisaged, was to nurture economic activity in Linden, how much of this amount was used for economic and investment activity? How much went to welfare, housing and other things and what is the cap or the ceiling for lending per person?

**Mr. Jordan:** If I were to make a quick attempt at the sectors where the lending went: agro-processing, three loans; auto repairs, two loans; catering/snackette, 18 loans; clothing, three loans; construction, 45 loans; crops, one loan; garment making, one loan; grocery, seven loans; hotel and restaurant, three loans; internet café and document centre, four loans; logging, 10

loans; other manufacturing, 22 loans; other services, 59 loans; other vending, 175 loans; pharmacy, one loan; pig rearing, one loan; poultry, 68 loans; salon and barbershop, 22 loans; tourism, one loan; transportation, 26 loans; and vending, three loans.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, the other part of the question is on the ceiling or the cap, the outer limit of lending.

**Mr. Jordan:** I am advised that \$1 million is the ceiling.

*Programme: 031 – Policy and Administration – \$4,759,652,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Current Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 032 – Public Financial Management – \$5,725,297,000**

**Mr. Ali:** Line item 6262 – Overseas Conferences and Official Visits: Hon. Minister, I see that you have \$300 million set aside here. Could you give us a summary as to the major cost centres, which are your costly Ministries? I know that the Prime Minister’s office will be there.

**Mr. Jordan:** The top three as indeed of last year are: Ministry of the Presidency, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Finance.

**Mr. Ali:** The Office of the Prime Minister is in the Ministry of Presidency.

Line item 6284 – Other: There is a substantial increase in the allocation under this category of your expenditure – more than 100%. Could the Hon. Minister provide a justification for such an enormous increase under this category?

**Mr. Jordan:** One of the major reasons for the increase has to do with the licencing that we have to pay that was previously not paid. We were written to by the owners of the software and I think that some deals have been entered into.

In addition, we also have to pay for the Free Balance Licence and maintenance and that is \$29.7 million. The Integrated Financial Management Systems (IFMIS) upgrade from version 6.5 to version 7, that is \$20.4 million. The Performance Budgeting Module of the Free Balance Licence, \$21.8 million; smart stream subscription, \$22.6 million; one National Data Management Authority (NDMA) fibre Government agencies - this a new migration cost to be met from... that is \$30.5 million; and M365 E3 Office and Desktop Licencing, 500 units, that

will be \$100 million. Of course, consultancy services for IFMIS business transformation, that will be \$33.5 million. Those are some of the critical expenditure that we have. And of course, we have to meet a 2% agency fee which is new to the Guyana Post Office Corporation (GPOC) to cover the cost of providing service, that is the payment of pensions on behalf of the Ministry, and that is \$14.4 million.

**Bishop Edghill:** Under the same line item 6284, Other, could the Hon. Minister tell us if all of the modules as it relates to the IFMIS is currently operational?

**Mr. Jordan:** The answer is no because we opted to do it in phases. For every module we have to buy the licence, keep the maintenance cost and train people. So, it is not as if we have all the modules available. We have to buy each one of them. So, we opted to do it in a phased manner, and we are starting with the ones that are most critical, which is the budget execution module. There are other good modules that will soon attract our attention, like the assent module, and so forth. But like I said, we started with the one that was most important to us.

**Bishop Edghill:** Under the same line item 6284, Other, could the Minister say, in the absence of all of the models, if it is in any way affecting efficient accountability, as it relates to the public purse, as was a major commentary some years ago when it was the Integrated Financial Management and Accounting System (IFMAS)?

**Mr. Jordan:** With evolving technology and so forth, I am sure that there are always better ways of doing the same thing. But in terms of what we have, I will say that we are trying to use that in the most efficient manner. There is room for improvement. For example, there is a method which we are using, right now, that accounts for the assets. It may not be the most efficient, but at the same time we have to have the moneys to buy the assets modules and maintain the assets modules. We have to then train staff on how that is done. So, if there are better mechanisms available for doing the same things, and we can have the cost, I will say we go for it. But in terms of what we have, I believe that we are making the best of what we have, so to speak.

**Bishop Edghill:** I thank the Minister for his answer. The same line item 6284 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister tell this House if the various officers, at the various budgetary agencies and Ministries, have been able to make optimum use of this facility without major obstacles that would be leading to details? Are there plans for training in a continual manner? And under this line item, are moneys set aside for training of officers from those agencies?

2.51 p.m.

**Mr. Jordan:** That was a very important question asked by the Hon. Member. The answer is no. This is because I believe that we have to have a technology policy. What we have sought to do for too many years, is to introduce various types of technology, whether it is off the shelf or somebody comes with something else. We would do some sketchy training and then the owners of the licence leave. We have people whom we train that leave. Several people also are not trainable; therefore, we have to do many cycles of the same training. I believe once people recognise that, they become marketable and they go too.

We have had enormous pushbacks in terms of trying to push our programme. I think this is engaging attention at the highest levels and certainly at our IFMIS Unit. Next year, we are going to try some different approaches. Moneys have been set aside under training. You would have seen that the Training budget has gone up by a fair size, to set up there to try this different approach.

We also believe that budget agencies would have to look closer at the kinds of personnel that they are attracting in these areas. We need some technologically savvy people, people who are not afraid to explore the computer. We have a lot of people who have computers on their desk, but they are afraid to explore this magnificent piece of equipment. We have to look at all of those if we really want to get the best out of some of the new technological streams that we are putting in place.

**Bishop Edghill:** This is my final question under this line item 6284, Other. Could the Hon. Minister tell us how many of the budget agencies and Ministries are able to access this system from their physical locations and how many of them have to go to the Ministry of Finance to access this facility?

**Mr. Jordan:** My understanding is that all the budget agencies are able to access our site except Region 8, which I believe has to come and input the information for themselves.

*Programme: 032 - Public Financial Management - \$5,725,297,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 032 - Public Financial Management - \$216,949,000**

*Programme: 032 - Public Financial Management - \$216,949,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, this brings to an end our examination of the Estimates of Expenditure for 2019. The Assembly will now resume.

*Assembly resumed.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Jordan:** I have to report that the Committee of Supply considered the Estimates of the Expenditure for the Financial Year 2019 and approved of them as printed.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Motion carried.*

#### **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS NOS. 13(N) AND 54**

**First Vice-President and Prime Minister [Mr. Nagamootoo]:** Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I move that Standing Orders 13 (n) and 54 be suspended to enable the Appropriation Bill 2018, Bill No. 15 of 2018 to be introduced at this stage.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Standing orders suspended.*

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Speaker, in accordance with paragraph (2) of Article 171 of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended the Appropriation Bill 2018, Bill No.15 of 2018 for consideration by the National Assembly. I now present the Bill to the Assembly and move that it be read the first time.

#### **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND FIRST READING**

The following Bill was introduced and read the first time:

#### **APPROPRIATION BILL – Bill No.15 of 2018**

A Bill Intituled:

“AN ACT to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of

the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2019, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.” [Minister of Finance]

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Bill read for the first time.*

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Speaker, I move that the Appropriation Bill 2018, Bill No.15 of 2018 be read a second time.

## **PUBLIC BUSINESS**

### **GOVERNMENT’S BUSINESS**

#### **BILLS – SECOND AND THIRD READINGS**

##### **APPROPRIATION BILL 2018 – BILL No. 15 of 2018**

A Bill Intituled

“AN ACT to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2019, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.” [Minister of Finance]

*Question put and carried.*

*Bill read for a second time.*

*Assembly in Committee.*

*Bill considered and approved.*

*Assembly resumed.*

*Bill reported without amendments, read the third time and passed as printed.*

**Mr. Speaker:** I thank the Clerk. Hon. Members, that concludes our efforts in relation to the Budget. Hon. Members would know that we have had two weeks of discussion on the Budget. First it was the Budget Debates where some 67 Hon. Members spoke. We had more than 22 hours of debate. It was 22.7 hours to be exact. Members, I am bound to say, expressed themselves fulsomely, sometimes passionately, and the Speaker sometimes had to try to come to grips with it. All in all, I am bound to say that the Budget was quite well ventilated from where I sit. The discussions on the Estimates of Expenditures followed the same pattern

*3.06 p.m.*

When I was reflecting on this, I wondered sometimes whether there is something that we did wrong and we were being punished for it so that we must keep very late hours to try to grapple with sometimes intricate financial arguments and questions which Members have remembered or have not remembered. But Members expressed it in a certain way and other Members may not understand it in that way. However, I must express to all Members my personal thanks for the assistance I received during the time I have sat in these debates.

Hon. Members, before I conclude what I have to say, there is a matter I would like to bring to your attention. Members would recall that I did indicate, on the first day of the second week of the debate, that I had received a letter from the Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira. I did indicate to Members that it raised some major interests of importance. I did not say to the House the contents of the letter, but I did say to the House that I would hope to proffer a reply to Ms. Teixeira by the end of the week. I have been able to do that today and I hope that by now Ms. Teixeira would have received a letter from me.

Hon. Member, I have taken the decision that this is a matter which I should bring to the attention of the House fully. What I will do is exceptional, and it is exceptionally that I will relate to this House the information which was provided to me and my reply to that information. I say “exceptionally” because correspondence between the Speaker and any Hon. Member in this House has never been a subject by the Speaker for exposition or discussion or display to other Members. That is why I said what I will do now is exceptional. I hope that this is exceptional in the sense that it will never happen again. The letter I wrote to Ms. Teixeira, is in response to one which she wrote and raised some major questions. I had arranged for every member in this House to receive a copy of the letter from Ms. Teixeira and to receive a copy of my reply. I do not know whether you have had it yet, but I am certain that before I am through reading my reply you would have a copy of the letter.

My letter to Ms. Teixeira,

“Thank you for your letter of Monday, 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2018. I regret that I have taken this long to reply. As I have observed when I informed the House on the 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2018 about receiving a letter from you, the matter about which you wrote is one which raises very important issues. Some of those issues go beyond the particular issue which you have raised. They touch other provisions of the Constitution and the Law and the Practice of Parliament as they would have evolved over the years.

I am aware that there has been, since the first year of this 11<sup>th</sup> Parliament, views contrary to the ones which you expressed in your letter. Such contrary views have been expressed by persons learned in the Law and even by Eminent Senior Counsel. For the three years following, to the present year, that view has influenced the practice. On this the fourth year of this Session, that view which was influenced the practice in the National Assembly is being challenged by you in your letter. That challenge, in my view, has now introduced an element of uncertainty in a most important area of the discharge by Members of Parliament of their obligations to the people of Guyana.

You have been kind enough to make reference to the instance of former Prime Minister Hinds but there appears to be no record which makes clear the reason for the conduct of the then Hon. Prime Minister. I hold the view that the absence of records and the reliance, in its place, on memory does not provide a sufficiently strong basis on which I should rely for a definitive settlement of so grave and weighty a matter as the one to which your letter gives rise.

In matters such as these, it has been our wont to have recourse to our Justice System for the solution. I do not recommend resort to our justice system for the solution of a matter of this nature. The concept of Winners and Losers is not one to be embraced here for a permanent solution to this a very important issue.

As Speaker of our National Assembly vested with powers to rule on many matters which come before the House, I hold that such powers should be exercised with circumspection and, in appropriate instances. My reading on this matter, which now exercises the attention of Honourable Members, does not incline me to the conviction that unilateral action in this matter by the Speaker or by any other Third-Party Instrumentality, will lead to a final and permanent resolution.



In seeking a solution, I am mindful of the fact that the Constitution was born of the co-operative endeavours of the Representatives of the people of Guyana acting together to one end. I am aware too, that there are likely to be other Acts of Parliament which may have a bearing on the treatment of this matter.

It seems to be that the better course which beckons in our search for a resolution, may be elsewhere.

It is a truism that the framers of our Constitution, acting in the spirit of prudence, provided a mechanism to treat with such eventuality as the one with which Honourable Members on both sides of this Noble House are confronted, thanks to perspicacity of the Honourable Member and Chief Whip, Honourable Gail Teixeira. Article 119 (A) of our Constitution, provides the following:

“The National Assembly shall establish a Parliamentary Standing Committee for Constitutional Reform for the purpose of continually reviewing the effectiveness of the working of the Constitution and making periodic reports thereunto the Assembly with proposals for reform as necessary”.

The framers contemplated as deep and as wide an involvement of our Society as can be possible in such a review so that they have provided that:

“To assist in its work, the Committee shall have the power to co-opt experts or enlist the aid of other persons of appropriate expertise whether or not such experts or other persons are Members of the National Assembly.”

That provision of the Constitution has led to the creation of such a mechanism which influences, or should influence, our thinking and action where majors matters concerning our Constitution arise, as in this instance, to be controverted, by the National Assembly.

In this mechanism to which I urge all Honourable Members to turn their thoughts and employ their abilities towards a solution, Provision 83 our Standing Orders, and I quote:

“The Parliamentary Standing Committee for Constitutional Reform brings that reality fully to our consciousness.”

Hon. Members, you will recall that when I had reported to you I had received a letter from Ms. Teixeira, I did not read to you its contents. I have now delivered my response to Ms. Teixeira today and I have ensured that a copy of Ms. Teixeira's letter is with the response which I have sent to her. I propose to transmit this matter to the Clerk of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Constitutional Reform with an appropriately worded letter.

I thank you Honourable Members.”

Hon. Members, I thank you for listening; that is what I wish to say to you. I see the Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira is rising. Hon. Member, I am not sure there is room for you to make a comment on an announcement by the Speaker. I will not give you leave to do that. You know you should not. We all know what we should do.

Hon. Members, after what I have said, it leaves now but for me to wish all Hon. Members the very best for the upcoming festive season. It is a time when peace and goodwill should transcend any differences or dispute and allow us to join hands or at least to keep within our hearts the spirit of goodness which Christmas represents. I believe that we do ourselves not well, when we allow a season like this, and there are some other seasons in our national calendar, which bespeak of peace and well regard for our fellow man. This is the one in which we find ourselves now and, perhaps, we must hold ourselves challenged to try to get as close as possible to that feeling of peace even towards those against whom we have animus, because the test is not with how I treat my friends but I treat those who are not my friends. So, my best wishes for Christmas to everyone and I thank you. *[Applause]*

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Speaker, we have a sitting on the 21<sup>st</sup> December, 2018 and so I thought we would reserve our wishes for that day.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Ms. Teixeira, a good stint could be repeated several times, and my good wishes can continue on that occasion. It can continue today, tomorrow or any day even to the 21<sup>st</sup> December, 2018. I thank you.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I move the adjournment of this House to Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> December, 2018 at 2.00 p.m.

**Mr. Speaker:** Our sitting stands adjourned until Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> December, 2018 at 2.00 p.m.

*Sitting adjourned accordingly at 3.21 p.m.*