

# National Assembly Debates

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2006-2008) OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN Part I of II**

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49<sup>th</sup> Sitting

14:00h

Monday 10 March 2008

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## **MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (71)**

### ***Speaker (1)***

**The Hon Hari N Ramkarran SC, MP -**

*Speaker of the National Assembly*

### **Members of the Government (42)**

#### **People's Progressive Party/Civic (41)**

#### **The United Force (1)**

**The Hon Samuel A A Hinds MP**

*(R# 10 - U Demerara/U Berbice)*

*Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and*

*Communications*

**The Hon Clement J Rohee MP**

*Minister of Home Affairs*

**The Hon Shaik K Z Baksh MP - (Absent)**

*Minister of Education*

**The Hon Dr Henry B Jeffrey MP**

*Minister of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation*

**The Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy MP - (Absent)**

*(R# 6 - E Berbice/Corentyne)*

*Minister of Health*

**The Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett MP**

*(R# 9 - U Takutu/U Esseq)*

*Minister of Amerindian Affairs*

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\*The Hon Dr Ashni Singh MP

*Minister of Finance*

\*The Hon S Rudolph Insanally OR, CCH, MP - (AOL)

*Minister of Foreign Affairs*

The Hon Harry Narine Nawbatt MP

*Minister of Housing and Water*

The Hon Robert M Persaud MP

*(R# 6 - E Berbice/Corentyne)*

*Minister of Agriculture*

The Hon Dr Jennifer R A Westford MP

*(R#7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)*

*Minister of the Public Service*

The Hon Kellawan Lall MP

*Minister of Local Government and Regional Development*

\*The Hon Doodnauth Singh SC, MP

*Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs*

The Hon Dr Frank C S Anthony MP

*Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport*

The Hon B H Robeson Benn MP

*Minister of Transport and Hydraulics*

\*\*The Hon Manzoor Nadir MP

*Minister of Labour*

The Hon Priya D Manickchand MP

*(R# 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)*

*Minister of Human Services and Social Security*

The Hon Dr Desrey Fox MP

*Minister in the Ministry of Education*

The Hon Bheri S Ramsaran MD, MP

*Minister in the Ministry of Health*

\*Non-elected Minister \*\*Elected Member from TUF

The Hon Jennifer I Webster MP

*Minister in the Ministry of Finance*

The Hon Manniram Prashad MP

*Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce*

## BUDGET ESTIMATES 10 MARCH 2008

Mr Donald Ramotar MP

The Hon Gail Teixeira MP

Mr Harripersaud Nokta MP - (AOL)

Mrs Indranie Chandarpal MP, Chief Whip

Ms Bibi S Shadick MP

*(R# 3 – Essequibo Is/W Demerara)*

Mr Mohamed Irfaan Ali MP

Mr Albert Atkinson JP, MP

*(R# 8 - Potaro/Siparuni)*

Mr Komal Chand CCH, JP, MP

*(R# 3 - Essequibo Is/W Demerara)*

Mr Bernard C DeSantos SC, MP

*(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)*

Mrs Shirley V Edwards JP, MP

*(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)*

Mr Mohamed F Khan JP, MP

*(R# 2 - Pomeroon/Supenaam)*

Mr Odinga N Lumumba MP - (AOL)

Mr Moses V Nagamootoo JP, MP

Mr Mohabir A Nandlall MP

Mr Neendkumar JP, MP

*(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)*

\*\*\* Mr Steve P Ninvalle MP - (AOL)

*Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport*

Mr Parmanand P Persaud JP, MP

*(R# 2 - Pomeroon/Supenaam)*

Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury CCH, JP, MP

*Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Water*

\*\*\*Non-elected Member

\*\*\*Mrs Pauline R Sukhai MP

*Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of*

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*Tourism, Industry and Commerce*

Mr Dharamkumar Seeraj MP

Mr Norman A Whittaker MP

*(R# 1 - Barima/Waini)*

**Members of the Opposition (28)**

**(i) People's National Congress Reform 1-Guyana (22)**

Mr Robert HO Corbin

*Leader of the Opposition*

Mr Winston S Murray CCH, MP

Mrs Clarissa S Riehl MP

*Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly*

Mr E Lance Carberry MP

*Chief Whip*

Mrs. Deborah J. Backer MP

Mr Anthony Vieira

Mr Basil Williams MP

Dr George A Norton MP

Mrs Volda A Lawrence MP - *(AOL)*

Mr Keith Scott MP

Miss Amna Ally MP

Mr Dave Danny MP

*(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)*

Mr Aubrey C Norton MP

*(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)*

Mr Ernest B Elliot MP

*(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)*

Miss Judith David-Blair MP

*(R# 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)*

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Mr Mervyn Williams MP

*(R# 3 - Essequibo Is/W Demerara)*

Ms Africo Selman MP

Dr John Austin MP

*(R# 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)*

Ms Jennifer Wade MP

*(R# 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)*

Ms Vanessa Kissoon MP

*(R# 10 - U Demerara/U Berbice)*

Mr Desmond Fernandes MP

*(Region No 1 – Barima/Waini)*

Mr James K McAllister MP

**(ii) Alliance For Change (5)**

Mr Raphael G Trotman MP

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan MP

Mrs Sheila VA Holder MP

Ms Latchmin B Punalall, MP

*(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)*

Mr David Patterson MP

**(iii) Guyana Action Party/Rise Organise and Rebuild (1)**

Mr Everall N Franklin MP

***OFFICERS***

Mr Sherlock E Isaacs

*Clerk of the National Assembly*

Mrs Lilawatie Coonjah

*Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly*

**14:15H**

**PRAYERS**

*The Clerk reads the Prayers.*

**PUBLIC BUSINESS**

**(i) GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

**MOTION**

**ITEM 1 - BUDGET SPEECH 2008 - MOTION FOR  
THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF  
EXPENDITURE FOR 2008**

The Assembly will now resolve itself into Committee of Supply to resume consideration of the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2008

**In Committee of Supply**

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**The Chairman:** We are now in Committee of Supply and we will proceed in accordance with the Sub-Committee's Resolution and Schedule. Members are invited to turn to Volume 1.

*Pages 198 and 199*

**AGENCY CODE 48 - MINISTRY OF LABOUR,  
HUMAN SERVICES AND SOCIAL SECURITY,  
PROGRAMME 481 - Ministry Administration**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$119,036,000 for  
Agency Code 48 - Ministry of Labour, Human  
Services and Social Security, Programme 481 -  
Ministry Administration -  
stands part of the Estimates**

The Honourable Member Mr Williams

**Mr Basil Williams:** Might I respectfully refer the Honourable Minister to the Staffing Details COA 6112 - Senior Technical and ask the Honourable Minister, to confirm that the positions for Senior Technical personnel, no position has been filled. My question is: are the Senior Technical positions now filled by the contracted employees?

**Hon Manzoor Nadir:** Mr Chairman, the answer is no.

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**Mr Basil Williams:** A follow-up, Mr Chairman - Could the Honourable Minister disclose what these positions are in relation to contracted workers.

**Hon Manzoor Nadir:** Mr Chairman, just as a matter of the business, normally I understand that if there is a zero against a head, no question is asked to that head, because we are not asking for any allocation to be made, but if we come down to contracted employees later down, we have no problems in giving all the details.

**Mr Basil Williams:** I understand that the Honourable Minister misconstrued me. I am now dealing with contracted workers and I am asking if the Honourable Minister could disclose what these positions are in relation to the contracted workers - COA 6116 - Contracted Employees.

**Hon Manzoor Nadir:** Mr Chairman, in terms of the contracted employees, those positions reflected under COA 6116 are:

- The Permanent Secretary;
- Legal Officer;
- Confidential Secretary and we have three of them;
- A Building Superintendent;
- A Public Relations Officer;
- An Administrative Assistant;



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- Six Drivers;
- Administrative Assistant to Trafficking in Persons Unit;
- A Technical Officer in Trafficking in Persons Unit;
- The Administrative Assistant on the National and Commission on the Rights of the Child;
- The Coordinator on the National and Commission on the Rights of the Child; and
- Two Security Officers one for each Minister.

**Mr Basil Williams:** Mr Chairman, could the Honourable Minister confirm that these sixteen contracted workers earn more than half the total wages Bill for this head of a total workforce of sixty-four workers? The sixteen contracted workers earn more than fifty percent of the total wages bill which is \$55,431,000.

**Hon Manzoor Nadir:** Mr Chairman, the numbers are quite visible \$33,000,000 out of \$55,000,000. He is accurate.

**Mr Basil Williams:** Mr Chairman, could the Honourable Minister also confirm that the bulk of the workforce forty-eight workers out of the sixty-four earn less than the sixteen contracted workers?

**Hon Manzoor Nadir:** Mr Chairman, yes.

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**Mr Basil Williams:** Mr Chairman, could the Honourable Minister confirm that such a situation reduces the attractiveness of the traditional Public Service.

**Hon Manzoor Nadir:** Mr Chairman, no, it does not. In fact with the contracted employees we have been able to acquire some skills at very reasonable prices. Let us take for example Legal Officer at \$141,000 still that might be inadequate. The Attorney General was arguing for significant increases in the sums of the Attorneys attach to his Chamber, but I do not subscribe to the view that this detract the attraction of careers in the Public Service.

**Mr Basil Williams:** Mr Chairman, could the Honourable Minister answer having agreed that more than fifty percent of the wages bill go towards the payment of the sixteen contracted workers whether the cost of employing persons in the traditional Public Service scale is less or more than the contracted workers?

**Hon Manzoor Nadir:** Mr Chairman, in some cases they are more and in some cases they are about the same and in fact what we have been asking the Permanent Secretary to do is those contracted employees who fall within the scale we should we should try our best to ensure that they come under the traditional Public Service. So we are going to be moving in that direction, Sir. There are instances where we have no choice, but to contract some people. Let us take for example the drivers; the drivers prefer to work under contract and get a gratuity, rather

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than to wait thirty years to get a pension. So we want to ensure that those persons who we can accommodate under the created positions within the Public Service are correctly placed there and to reduce as far as we can the number of contracted employees that we have within our Ministry.

**Mr Basil Williams:** Mr Chairman, we are winding-up on this issue. Could the Honourable Minister confirm that the forty-eight workers from the traditional Public Service are employed by the Public Service Commission?

**Hon Manzoor Nadir:** The question asked, the appointments have been handled by the Public Service, so I guess if that means that they are employed by the Public Service Commission, yes, but every appointment including contracted employees go through a system that has the position approved.

**Mr Basil Williams:** The Honourable Minister tried to anticipate the next question, but could he specifically confirm that contracted workers are employed by the Public Service Ministry and not by the Public Service Commission?

**Hon Manzoor Nadir:** The answer is yes.

**Mr Basil Williams:** Thank you, Mr Chairman.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr Murray

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Mr Chairman, could the Honourable Minister kindly indicate to the National

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Assembly the emoluments of the first three or four categories of persons he named under contracted employees? *[Interruption]*

**The Chairman:** Am I seeing Mr McAllister? I apologise Mr Murray. Had I seen Mr Mc Allister at the Announcement stage, I would have welcomed him? *[Applause]* I would like to welcome you back, Mr McAllister and I apologise for missing you earlier.

Yes Honourable Member

**Hon Manzoor Nadir:** Permanent Secretary \$378,888; Legal Officer \$141,829; Confidential Secretary \$56,705; Senior Superintendent of Buildings \$95,568.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr Murray

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Mr Chairman, could the Honourable Minister say whether his proposal to put contracted employees within the traditional Public Service as far as is practicable, would include persons at the levels of the Permanent Secretary and Legal Officers that he just mentioned?

**Hon Manzoor Nadir:** Mr Chairman, we are going to look at all of the positions.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Nothing is excluded Mr Minister.

**Hon Manzoor Nadir:** No, Sir.

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**Mr Winston S Murray:** Mr Chairman, could the Honourable Minister indicate under Account Codes 6111 through 6115 whether the sums budgeted for 2008 include the revised salaries for 2008 consequent upon the nine percent increase awarded for the year 2007?

**Hon Manzoor Nadir:** Yes, Mr Chairman, the nine percent is included, but for example in Account Code 6113, if you compute 2007 revised as against 2008 actual, you will see that the figures look the same. The issue there is that there is the movement within the categories of people and some of them are coming in at a lower part in the scale. So these adjustments that we have in 2008 do reflect the nine percent increase for those staff members.

**Agency Code 48 - Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, Programme 481 - Ministry Administration - \$119,036,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates**

**The Chairman:** *Pages 200 and 201*

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**AGENCY CODE 48 - MINISTRY OF LABOUR,  
HUMAN SERVICES AND SOCIAL SECURITY,  
PROGRAMME 482 - Social Services**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$2,951,557,000 for Agency Code 48 - Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, Programme 482 - Social Services- stands part of the Estimates**

**Agency Code 48 - Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, Programme 482 - Social Services - \$2,951,557,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates**

*Pages 202 and 203*

**AGENCY CODE 48 - MINISTRY OF LABOUR,  
HUMAN SERVICES AND SOCIAL SECURITY,  
PROGRAMME 483 - Labour Administration**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$ 179,227,000for Agency Code 48 - Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, Programme 483 - Labour Administration - stands part of the Estimates**

The Honourable Member Mr Williams

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**Mr Basil Williams:** Mr Chairman, could the Honourable Minister confirm in relation to Staffing Details COA 6116 - Contracted Employees - that seventeen contracted workers occurred here out of a total workforce of eighty-three?

**Hon Manzoor Nadir:** Yes, I can confirm that seventeen out of eighty-three - the staff - contracted employees.

**Mr Basil Williams:** And could the Honourable Minister confirm that the salaries of these seventeen contracted workers in total is \$34,209,000 as against the salaries of the sixty-six workers, which would be \$31,305,000.

**Hon Manzoor Nadir:** Mr Chairman, yes, we can confirm that.

**Mr Basil Williams:** Mr Chairman, could the Honourable Minister confirm that this state of affairs undermines the traditional Public Service.

**Hon Manzoor Nadir:** No, Mr Chairman, it does not, in fact what it has done it has help us to retain valuable skills and we are going to be engaged in a programme where we are encouraging more of our traditional public servants to pursue career in Labour, Occupational Safety and Health.

**Mr Basil Williams:** Could you confirm the categories of workers under Account Code 6116 - Contracted Employees?

**Hon Manzoor Nadir:** Yes, Mr Chairman, we have:

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- The Chief Labour Officer;
- Labour Occupational Safety and Health Officers; we have a number of them. We have had to re-hire after they had been retired;
- Adviser on Empowerment;
- Senior Community Development Officer;
- Confidential Secretary;
- Typist Clerk;
- Two drivers; and
- An Office Assistant.

**Mrs Clarissa S Riehl:** Mr Chairman, I wish to ask a question on Account Code 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - Could the Honourable Minister say what are some of these organisations that they contribute to?

**Hon Manzoor Nadir:** Mr Chairman, in terms of the contributions to National and International organisations Page 420, I would also list some of them

- The British Safety Council;
- The International Labour Organisation;
- The National Safety Council

On Page 416 has:



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- The Board of Industrial Training, which is getting \$60,000,000 and out of the \$60,000,000, \$50,000,000 is specifically for National Training Project on Youth Empowerment;
- The Labour Market Information System or LMIS - \$900,000;
- Occupational Safety and Health - we have a National Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health. They get a subvention of \$800,000.

**Agency Code 48 - Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, Programme 483 - Labour Administration - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates**

**The Chairman:** *Page 454*

**AGENCY 48 - MINISTRY OF LABOUR, HUMAN SERVICES AND SOCIAL SECURITY - CAPITAL EXPENDITURE, Agency Totals**

Question is proposed that the sum of \$372,100,000 for Agency 48 - Ministry of Labour, Human Services and

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Social Security - Capital Expenditure, Agency Totals - stands part of the Estimates.

The Honourable Member Mr Murray

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Mr Chairman, the only major of expenditure it seems to me here is Project Code 1206800 - Buildings. Could the Honourable Minister explain when he says completion and rehabilitation of buildings, which buildings is he talking about completing, because it is not mentioned in the body of the Profile?

**Hon Priya D Manickchand:** Rehabilitation of the Mahaica Hospital - \$2,500,000; Construction of rest rooms at the Palms - an inclusive term for a staff friendly environment for the persons who will be there that is the staff - \$6,000,000; Retention fee for the Palms \$1,327,000; Construction of the new building at \$355,000,000.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Sorry, what is the last one; I missed it.

**Hon Priya D Manickchand:** New building which will be constructed.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** That is specifically what I am asking about. The Minister has repeated this term new building. I am asking specifically, what is this new building that will be constructed at an enormous cost. Could we pleased be told and whether the building would be completed in 2008?

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**Hon Priya D Manickchand:** We expect the building to be completed in the last quarter of 2008 and the building is going to be housing the Ministries of Labour, Human Services and Social Security.

**Agency 48 - Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security - Capital Expenditure, Agency Totals - \$372,100,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates**

*The Chairman: Pages 228 and 229*

**AGENCY 52 - MINISTRY OF LEGAL AFFAIRS,  
PROGRAMME 521 - Main Office**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$13,000,000 for Agency 52 - Ministry of Legal Affairs, Programme 521 - Main Office - stands part of the Estimates.**

**Agency 52 - Ministry of Legal Affairs, Programme 521 - Main Office - \$13,000,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates**

*Pages 230 and 231*

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**AGENCY 52 - MINISTRY OF LEGAL AFFAIRS,**  
**PROGRAMME 522 - Ministry Administration**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$33,149,000 for Agency 52 - Ministry of Legal Affairs, Programme 522 - Ministry Administration - stands part of the Estimates.**

The Honourable Member Mrs Riehl

**Mrs Clarissa S Riehl:** Mr Chairman, I wish to ask the Honourable Attorney General who is the contracted employee under Account Code 6116. There is one to be; one new contracted employee, who is that functionary?

**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** I am advised that that is a driver who is employed at the Ministry.

**Mrs Clarissa S Riehl:** Mr Chairman, Account Code 6281 - Security Services - Honourable Attorney General, I see that there is a steep increase to \$4.5 million, could you explain the increase? And that is a two-prong question and is it the same security service that functioned last year that you have now? There is a steep increase to \$4.5 from \$1.3 million.

**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** Mr Chairman, I am advised that the two services MMC and RK Services.

**Mrs Clarissa S Riehl:** The second question - are these the same two companies that were employed last year?

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**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** MMC is now an additional facility.

**Mrs Clarissa S Riehl:** So RK was there last year.

**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** Yes.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mrs Holder

**Mrs Sheila VA Holder:** Not to worry.

**The Chairman:** I am sorry, my apologies Madame.

**Agency 52 - Ministry of Legal Affairs, Programme 522  
- Ministry Administration - \$33,149,000 - agreed to  
and ordered to stand part of the Estimates**

*Pages 232 and 233*

**AGENCY 52 - MINISTRY OF LEGAL AFFAIRS,  
PROGRAMME 523 -Attorney General's Chambers**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$71,008,000 for  
Agency 52 - Ministry of Legal Affairs, Programme 523  
- Attorney General's Chambers - stands part of the  
Estimates.**

The Honourable Member Mrs Riehl

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**Mrs Clarissa S Riehl:** I wish to ask the Honourable Attorney General, I see there is an increase in the contracted employees from one last year to three - could the Honourable Attorney General say who are these two new functionaries added to the Chambers?

**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** Mr Fung-a-Fat reached the retirement age and as a result his services have been retained on contract. In addition, the driver to Mr Dhurjon is the other one and of course Mr Dhurjon.

**Agency 52 - Ministry of Legal Affairs, Programme 523 - Attorney General's Chambers - \$71,008,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates**

**The Chairman:** *Pages 234 and 235*

**AGENCY 52 - MINISTRY OF LEGAL AFFAIRS, PROGRAMME 524 - Office of the State Solicitor**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$10,410,000 for Agency 52 - Ministry of Legal Affairs, Programme 524 - Office of the State Solicitor - stands part of the Estimates.**

The Honourable Member Mrs Riehl

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**Mrs Clarissa S Riehl:** Mr Chairman, Account Code 6281 - Security Services - I see the years before there was no budgeted sum for security for the Office of the State Solicitor and seeing that the State Solicitor's Office is in the Attorney General's Chambers, I am wondering why there is a special figure now for security service since it is one chamber.

**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** I am advised that technology is overtaking us and it is likely that a camera in addition to MMC will be utilised.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mrs Holder

**Mrs Sheila VA Holder:** Maybe I can get my question in to the Honourable Attorney General.

**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** Account Code please.

**Mrs Sheila VA Holder:** The same Account Code as the Honourable Member Mrs Riehl spoke about. I just want to get a sense of caused this additional need for the security? You are talking about an additional security service as well as an electronic security system.

**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** I would probably say that it is *ex abundante cautela*. [Laughter]

**The Chairman:** I am receiving a buzz here Honourable Attorney General that the official language is English. Maybe you will like to translate it for us. If you will permit me...

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**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** You are permitted, Sir.

**The Chairman:** Out of abundant caution

**Agency 52 - Ministry of Legal Affairs, Programme 524  
- Office of the State Solicitor - \$10,410,000 - agreed to  
and ordered to stand part of the Estimates**

*Pages 236 and 237*

**AGENCY 52 - MINISTRY OF LEGAL AFFAIRS,  
PROGRAMME 525 - Deeds Registry**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$44,673,000 for  
Agency 52 - Ministry of Legal Affairs, Programme 525  
- Deeds Registry - stands part of the Estimates.**

The Honourable Member Mrs Riehl

**Mrs Clarissa S Riehl:** COA 6116 - Contracted Employees - I see the Staffing Details say that from a position of having none you are now having four in 2008; who would those four functionaries be, because you have to pay them \$2.5 million? What are their emoluments which add up to \$2.5 million?



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**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** I am advised that their salary scales are between \$30,000 and \$34,000 per month and they are typists and clerical assistants.

**Agency 52 - Ministry of Legal Affairs, Programme 525 - Deeds Registry - \$44,673,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates**

**The Chairman:** *Page 457*

**AGENCY 52 - MINISTRY OF LEGAL AFFAIRS - CAPITAL EXPENDITURE, Agency Totals**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$335,500,000 for Agency 52 - Ministry of Legal Affairs, Agency Totals - stands part of the Estimates.**

**The Honourable Member Mrs Riehl**

**Mrs Clarissa S Riehl:** Honourable Attorney General, I see under Project Code 1500300 - Strengthening of the Registry - the Legend says computerisation of the records; who is to do this computerisation and was it tendered out - \$7.5 million?

**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** It is expected that the tenders would be circulated; we have not been able to do that at this point in time.

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**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr Basil Williams.

**Mr Basil Williams:** Mr Chairman, with respect to the said item Project Code 1500300 - Computerisation of Records - could the Honourable Attorney General tell us whether the intention is at the end of the day to enable practitioners to access these computerised records from their Chambers?

**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** I do not think at this point in time we will facilitate that. It is merely to improve the efficiency on the operations of the Registry especially with respect to intellectual property.

**Agency 52 - Ministry of Legal Affairs - Capital Expenditure, Agency Totals - \$335,500,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.**

**The Chairman:** *Pages 244 and 245*

**AGENCY 55 - SUPREME COURT, PROGRAMME 551 - Supreme Court of the Judicature**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$499,572,000 for Agency 55 - Supreme Court, Programme 551 - Supreme Court of the Judicature - stands part of the Estimates.**

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The Honourable Member Mr Murray

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Mr Chairman, could the Honourable Minister say whether the sums allocated under wages and salaries under the various accounting subheads include the increase that has been awarded in 2007 carry forward for 2008?

**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** The salaries would include the increases which were paid and will be paid in future. They are emoluments to Judges and auxiliary expenses.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr Murray

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Thank you Mr Minister. Account Code 6261 - Local Travel and Subsistence - Is the Minister aware that the sum of \$8.4 million for travel and subsistence coupled with the previous years amounts to more than \$16 million, which could have bought somewhere in the region eight motor vehicles and whether consideration was given on a cost benefit basis to determine whether it would have not been more economical to acquire some motor vehicles than to spend such enormous sums of money on taxis?

**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** I suppose my learned colleague's enquiries are based on his belief that it is the use of taxis. I know that the use of taxis has been used in the Registry, but I do not believe that taxis are used in the Supreme Court as such and the question about the more effective use to allocate sums for the purchase of vehicles

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is a matter which I suppose those in charge of the Administration will probably consider.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Sir, is the Minister aware that the Auditor General in his 2005 Report raised the issue of the amount of money being expended under this head and in fact in the year 2005, all of it under this head was spent on taxis and is the Minister aware that certain insinuations are being made about the ownership of these taxis and their use and their exorbitant sums related thereon; and if he is not aware, will he endeavour to inquire whether this is in fact the case, and if he is aware could he say what is being done by the Ministry to curb what appears to be an impropriety possibly occurring here?

**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** Mr Chairman, I recently became aware of these allegations and steps have been taken to investigate the accuracy of the allegations and in fact suggestions have been made to deal with the officers involved.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Thank you.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mrs Holder

**Mrs Sheila VA Holder:** Mr Chairman, I think the obvious question that everybody is asking here, which taxi service is the beneficiary of this large sum?

**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** I am not in a position to name the taxi service, Sir, but of course there are allegations as I said to the impropriety and it is being investigated.

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**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr Williams

**Mr Mervyn Williams:** Mr Chairman, would the Honourable Minister be kind enough to say whether the taxi service is owned by someone employed ... I am talking about Account Code 6261 - whether the owner of the taxi service is an employee within the Supreme Court?

**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** As learned colleague said, it is being rumoured that way, Sir.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mrs Holder

**Mrs Sheila VA Holder:** Mr Chairman, perhaps the pertinent question to ask the Honourable

Attorney General, is he prepared to find the name of the owner of the service for the benefit of the House?

**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** Not at this point in time, Mrs Holder.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr Murray.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Mr Chairman, with your permission, I now wish to address Account Code 6284 - Other - can the Honourable Minister say what constitutes this Other, which is more than fifty percent of the specific categories under this other goods and services purchased? Hence my question, could you say what comprises essentially this Other that could not be categorised under

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one or other of the specific line item which is more than fifty percent of the total vote under that category?

**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** The information which has been supplied states that these are the specific items. I am advised:

- Law books and volumes \$10,000,000;
- Payment to mediators \$5,000,000; and
- Of course one of the rumoured areas typing of shorthand notices and typing services; binding of volumes, advertising, miscellaneous \$10,000,000.

Mr Chairman, as I stated before, there are allegations of impropriety in this area and these allegations are being investigated and based on those investigations, I expect steps will be taken to remedy the situation. I can assure the House that in so far as it is within the competence of the Ministry that will be attempted.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** I want to thank the Minister for his explanation and in view of that I would not ask any other question. I hope his inquiry meets with success.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr Trotman

**Mr Raphael GC Trotman:** May I, however, in view of the Honourable Member's answer, still ask in terms of the mediators who are being paid whether he is in a position today to say whether these are the trained mediators or mediators who have been brought in from abroad,

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because it seems to me that someone is trying to embarrass you Mr Minister. Are these the locally trained and functioning mediators who have been working for free for the last four years?

**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** Mr Chairman, it is the first time that I am being informed that mediators have been offering their services free. Mrs Backer, I am informing you that it is the first time I have been advised that mediators are offering their services free and if that is so, I am surprised that still payment of \$5,000,000 would have been made to other mediators other than those whose services were offered free.

**Agency 55 - Supreme Court, Programme 551 -  
Supreme Court of the Judicature - \$449,572,000 -  
agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates**

**The Chairman:** *Pages 246 and 247*

**AGENCY 55 - SUPREME COURT, PROGRAMME  
552 - Magistrates' Department**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$254,298,000 for  
Agency 55 - Ministry of Legal Affairs, Programme 551**

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**- Magistrates' Department - stands part of the Estimates.**

The Honourable Member Mrs Riehl

**Mrs Clarissa S Riehl:** Mr Chairman, COA 6116 - Contracted Employees - I see you have five, would the Honourable Attorney General state whether these are magistrates working under contract? If not, who are these contracted?

**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** Could you just repeat the Account Code?

**Mrs Clarissa S Riehl:** The same contracted employees - Account Code 6116 - I am just asking whether they are magistrates under contract, because I know you have a few or whether they represent some other category.

**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** The information which is being supplied by the Registrar indicates those contracted employees are as follows:

- One Administrative Officer;
- One Principal Personnel Officer; and
- One Confidential Secretary.

That is the information which has been supplied.

**Mrs Clarissa S Riehl:** That is only three, Sir. I see you have five here.



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**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** That is the information I have, Madame.

**Agency 55 - Supreme Court, Programme 552 - Magistrates' Department - \$254, 298,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates**

**The Chairman:** *Page 459*

**AGENCY 55 - SUPREME COURT - CAPITAL EXPENDITURE, Agency Totals**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$82,500,000 for Agency 55 - Supreme Court - Capital Expenditure, Agency totals – stands part of the Estimates**

**The Honourable Member Mrs Riehl**

**Mrs Clarissa S Riehl:** Mr Chairman, Project Code 2403900 - Land and Water Transport - I see here \$4,000,000 earmarked for the purchase of vehicles, I want to know whether that is accurate whether it is vehicle pr vehicles and what type of vehicle and what would this vehicle be used for, because I know the Supreme Court has a vehicle or at least one; there may be more. In answer to what Mr Murray had asked earlier about taxi service, I know the Supreme Court already has a vehicle or vehicles and I see there is \$4,000,000 to purchase

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vehicles; could you please state firstly, whether it is a vehicle or vehicles as the Legend stipulates and if so, what type of vehicles and what they would be used for?

**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** The statement indicates that a vehicle will be purchased for \$4,000,000; it is one vehicle.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr Murray

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Could the Honourable Minister say whether the three items listed under description of project in Project Profile 202, which explains Project Code 1201400, whether those three items comprise the totality of the project for 2008? I ask the question, because it says the project includes; so is there something in addition to the three items listed there and if so what, if not could the Minister kindly what respective amount will be spent on the three categories therein identified?

**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** Mr Murray, this is with respect to Project Code at Page 459?

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Yes, Sir, the first one buildings.

**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** At this point in time, Sir, I am not in a possession of the necessary information to respond to this inquiry

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**Agency 55 - Supreme Court - Capital Expenditure,  
Agency Totals - \$82,500,000 - agreed to and ordered to  
stand part of the Estimates.**

**The Chairman:** *Pages 250 and 251*

**AGENCY 56 - PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS,  
PROGRAMME 561 - Public Prosecutions**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$75,824,000 for  
Agency 56 - Public Prosecutions, Programme 561 -  
Public Prosecutions - stands part of the Estimates**

**Agency 56 - Public Prosecutions, Programme 561 -  
Public Prosecutions - \$75,824,000 - agreed to and  
ordered to stand part of the Estimates.**

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**AGENCY 56 - PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS -  
CAPITAL EXPENDITURE - Agency Totals**

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**Question is proposed that the sum of \$4,000,000 for Agency 56 - Public Prosecution - Capital Expenditure - Agency Totals - stands part of the Estimates**

**Agency 56 - Public Prosecution - Capital Expenditure - Agency Totals - \$4,000,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates**

We can now move on to the next Ministry

*Pages 92 and 93*

**AGENCY 14 - PUBLIC SERVICE MINISTRY,  
PROGRAMME 141 - Public Service Management**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$238,491,000 for Agency 14 - Public Service Ministry, Programme 141 - Public Service Management - stands part of the Estimates.**

The Honourable Member Mr Williams

**Mr Basil Williams:** Mr Chairman, could the Honourable Minister confirm ... I respectfully refer the Honourable Minister to the Staffing Details on Page 93 and ask her to confirm that out of a workforce of fifty-one, the traditional public servants are twenty-eight and contracted workers twenty-three.

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**Hon Dr Jennifer RA Westford:** Mr Chairman, I cannot confirm that; all fifty-one of these workers are public servants.

**Mr Basil Williams:** Mr Chairman, if I could rephrase my question, I am not sure the Honourable Minister understood. I ask her to confirm that under COA 6116 there are twenty-three contracted workers out of a workforce of fifty-one and the remaining workforce is twenty-eight out of that fifty-one.

**Hon Dr Jennifer RA Westford:** Confirm!

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Could the Honourable Minister inform this National Assembly that what she implied in her first answer was that contracted employees are part of the traditional public service. Is that your answer Minister?

**Hon Dr Jennifer RA Westford:** Confirm!

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Minister through you Mr Chairman, if that was so could the Minister go further and confirm that these contracted employees were in fact appointed by the Public Service Commission as is the requirements for ordinary public servants to be.

**Hon Dr Jennifer RA Westford:** Mr Chairman, you do not have to be appointed by the Public Service Commission to be deemed a public servant.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** I beg to differ with the Minister; is the Minister aware that there is law which

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directs the Public Service Commission as the agency to appoint public service and officers in the public service. If she isn't then let her say so.

**Hon Dr Jennifer RA Westford:** On the pensionable establishment yes, Mr Chairman.

**Mr Basil Williams:** Thank you Mr Murray. Can I then phrase it this way; out of the fifty-one workers reflected here in your Ministry twenty-three are contracted workers and the remaining are from the traditional public service. Do you agree with that comment?

**Hon Dr Jennifer RA Westford:** No, I don't.

**Mr Basil Williams:** Is your position therefore different from the Honourable Minister Nadir who earlier confirmed that contracted workers are employed by the PSM and traditional public servants are employed by the PSC.

**Hon Dr Jennifer RA Westford:** I do not know what Minister Nadir said, because I was not in the House, but if he did say so that is an error. Contracted workers as well as persons who are on contract gratuity are all members of the traditional public service.

**Mr Basil Williams:** Mr Chairman, could the Honourable Minister confirm that if she has out of a workforce of fifty-one a category called contracted workers of twenty-three that she in fact has a parallel workforce or a parallel public service.

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**Hon Dr Jennifer RA Westford:** I do not.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mrs Riehl

**Mrs Clarissa S Riehl:** I wish to ask the Honourable Minister as a follow-up to the same item of contracted workers, in view of her earlier answers whether contracted workers would also benefit from the nine percent increase.

**Hon Dr Jennifer RA Westford:** Yes, they will benefit.

**Mrs Clarissa S Riehl:** I wish to ask the Honourable Minister further, whether the contract does not stipulate the person's salary if they are contracted - if their salary is not stipulated up-front, how then can they keep varying these contracts every year? How is that possible if she can explain?

**Hon Dr Jennifer RA Westford:** Mr Chairman, I do not understand what the Honourable Member is trying to say or ask.

**Mrs Clarissa S Riehl:** What I am trying to ask Honourable Minister, if a person comes under contract, he will know what his salary is so it is not subject to variations all along the way of increases like the normal public servant who comes from the PSC.

**Hon Dr Jennifer RA Westford:** Your perception or your understanding is very erroneous, Honourable Member.

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**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mrs David-Blair

**Mrs Judith David-Blair:** Mr Chairman, I am kind of confused, earlier last week I asked a question in terms of the nine percent increase for contracted workers and I was told in this Parliament that contracted workers are not entitled to the nine percent? I asked the question ... it was security guards. *[Noisy Interruption]*

**The Chairman:** Allow the Minister to answer.

**Hon Dr Jennifer RA Westford:** It was not directed to me, Sir.

**The Chairman:** I do not know. Was there a question?

**Hon Dr Jennifer RA Westford:** No, there was not a question.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr Williams

**Mr Basil Williams:** Mr Chairman, could the Honourable Minister confirm ... we are still dealing with the Staffing Details with specific reference to COA 6116 - Contracted Employees - would the Honourable Minister agree that the higher salary enjoyed by the contracted employees can negatively affect the morale of the workers in the traditional public service status?

**Hon Dr Jennifer RA Westford:** First of all, Mr Chairman, I do not subscribe to the thought by the Honourable Member that contracted workers are paid



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exceptionally high salaries, so I would not be able to say that it is confirming to the morale.

**Mr Basil Williams:** The high salaries are in comparison to the rest of the labour force on the establishment, so you have for example in this particular case which I have not put to you yet. You have out of fifty-one workers the twenty-three contracted workers earn \$31,225,000 out of a total wage bill of \$50,000,000 and the remaining twenty-eight earn only \$19,000,000.

**Hon Dr Jennifer RA Westford:** Mr Chairman, maybe when the Honourable Member gets to the other question of asking me what are the categories and salaries of the those contracted workers, he will understand why the level is at that size.

**Mr Basil Williams:** I am not sure if our roles are exchanged, but could the Honourable Minister answer me and confirm whether the intention of the Government is to assimilate contracted workers into the traditional public service?

**Hon Dr Jennifer RA Westford:** Mr Chairman, I have repeated said and I think I heard some of my colleagues saying that throughout this debate here that the public servants have a choice and they can determine whether they want to be employed on the pensionable establishment or to be employed on a contract gratuity basis. So I therefore cannot see how it is being contended

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that the Government has a plan in assimilating contract gratuity workers into the public service.

**Mr Basil Williams:** Mr Chairman, in that regard can the Honourable Minister confirm that the position just outlined by the Honourable Minister of Labour in this Honourable House that it is the intention of the Government to assimilate contracted workers into the public service if that is accurate or not and whether she was outside of the House?

**Hon Dr Jennifer RA Westford:** Again, Mr Chairman, I did not hear what the Honourable Minister of Labour said, so I really cannot answer that question.

**Agency 14 - Public Service Ministry, Programme 141 - Public Service Management - \$238,491,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.**

**The Chairman:** *Page 437*

**AGENCY 14 -PUBLIC SERVICE MINISTRY - CAPITAL EXPENDITURE, Agency Totals**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$ 13,500,000 for Agency 14 - Public Service Ministry - Capital Expenditure, Agency Totals - stands part of the Estimates.**

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**Mr Winston S Murray:** Mr Chairman, could the Honourable Minister kindly inform this National Assembly ... I am addressing here Project Code 1207300 - Buildings - whether there are other projects apart from the two identified under description in project profile 49 which are included under this Legend of construction of fence, washroom, guard hut and rehabilitation of roof?

**Hon Dr Jennifer RA Westford:** No Mr Chairman.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** If there is not any other, would the Honourable Minister agree that it is erroneous to say that the project includes since the word *includes* suggest that there are other elements and in which case that should be the project *entails* and could the Minister thereafter say what is the sum of money earmarked for the construction of fence, guard hut and washroom and what is for the rehabilitation of the roof.

**Hon Dr Jennifer RA Westford:** Mr Chairman, I think I heard the Honourable Member asking the same question about *includes* to the Honourable Attorney General, so I think it is probably a matter of sentence construction or I agree with you, English.

To answer the second part of his question, the construction of the;

- Fence is \$3.2. million;
- Guard Hut is \$700,000;

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- Washroom is \$300,000, and
- Rehabilitation of the roof of the Training Division is \$2.3 million.

**Agency 14 - Public Service Ministry - Capital Expenditure, Agency Totals - \$13,500,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.**

**The Chairman:** *Pages 118 and 119*

**AGENCY 23 - MINISTRY OF TOURISM, INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE, PROGRAMME 231 - Main Office**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$ 333,407,000 for Agency 23 - Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, Programme 231 - Main Office - stands parts of the Estimates.**

The Honourable Member Mr Danny

**Mr Dave Danny:** Account Code 6116 - Contracted Employees - Can the Minister say who are the contracted employee and their emoluments?

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**Hon Manniram Prashad:** Mr Chairman, the contracted employees are:

- One Tourism Liaison Officer;
- One Secretary to the Parliamentary Secretary;
- Two Machine Operators; and
- Two Driver Mechanics.

**Mr Dave Danny:** Can you state the emoluments for the different categories?

**Hon Manniram Prashad:** Mr Chairman, this amount includes the nine per cent increase; the Tourism Liaison Officer - \$154,000; the Drive Mechanic - \$40,000; the Machine Operator - \$42,000; and the Confidential Secretary - \$50,000.

**Mr Dave Danny:** Mr Chairman, Account Codes 6113 and 6115 there is a decrease from 2005 to 2007; can the Minister say if the minus there has been observed from the contracted workers?

**Hon Manniram Prashad:** No, that is not so.

**Mr Dave Danny:** Could you say the reasons why the decreases?

**Hon Manniram Prashad:** One machine operator was dismissed.

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**Mr Dave Danny:** Account Code 6281 - Security Services - I see here there is a movement from \$16,659,000 to \$40,695,000; could the Minister say the reason for the increase and who are the security firms? - Page 119.

**Hon Manniram Prashad:** This increase is due because of the Guyana International Conference Centre is now under the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce. So this huge increase is because of the new guard service - Federal Management Security.

**Mr Dave Danny:** Account Code 6302 - Training (Including Scholarships) - Could the Minister state what category of workers are included in this training, bearing in mind there is a vast increase from \$50,000 to \$170,000?

**Hon Manniram Prashad:** Mr Chairman, the training of four persons at the Institute of Distance and Continuing Education

**Mr Dave Danny:** Mr Chairman, Account Code 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - Can the Minister say who are the beneficiaries (organisations) of these monies here?

**Hon Manniram Prashad:** Mr Chairman, that information is in detail on Page 415

**Mrs Deborah J Backer:** Sir, On the very Account Code 6321, when we turn to when we turn to Page 415, we see

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that the Guyana Consumers' Association has been given \$500,000 and the Consumer Movement of Guyana \$400,000, could the Honourable say what informed the decision of his government to give both organisations that perform the same functions separately; would it not be better Minister in the case like you did with the trade unions to try to have them to try to come to some understanding as a condition precedent to continue to get a grant?

**Hon Manniram Prashad:** Mr Chairman, the point is noted, but I am advised that the \$400,000 against the \$500,000 for the two established Consumers' Associations is because this one is a new one ...

**Mrs Deborah J Backer:** Which one is new?

**Hon Manniram Prashad:** The Consumer Movement of Guyana is a recent one and I suppose in time it will fall in line with the other.

**Mrs Deborah J Backer:** Minister, in fact I was inaccurate, because there are three associations, because we also have the Consumer Advisory Bureau, so what is the rationale, because we have three organisations getting \$1.4 million and they are carrying out the same service, would it not be better, Sir, to use your not inconsequential influence to cause them to merge as you are seeking to do with the trade unions as a condition precedent ... this is what they are saying that they have to merge and come to an understanding before the Critchlow Labour College

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would get any money? Why are you giving three bodies money to do the same thing?

**Hon Manniram Prashad:** Thank you very much, Honourable Member. Mr Chairman, this shows government's inclusiveness, because the two established Consumers' Associations would rather see the recent formed one not get anything. So this is inclusiveness.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr Danny

**Mr Dave Danny:** Account Codes 6284 and 6294 - Other - Could the Minister state what is Other here.

**Hon Manniram Prashad:** Account Code 6284 under Other caters for the increase – purchase of a new carpet and curtains for the Main Office. In addition the Guyana International Conference Centre intends to start printing and distributing brochures, fliers, et cetera; it caters for internet charges, rental fee, photocopier, advertisement, subscription to Tourism Magazines; payment of consultant. This Code also caters for bank charges, garbage disposal, sewage, photocopying, sanitex services, washing of external windows and other services essential for the hosting of national events. Mr Chairman and Honourable Members, bearing in mind we are now dealing with a new entity the Guyana International Conference Centre which has come under the Ministry.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mrs Holder



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**Mrs Sheila VA Holder:** Mr Chairman, I would like to refer the Honourable Minister to back to Account Code 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - specifically the two Consumers' Associations, will the Honourable Minister indicate to the House whether or not there are any requirements for drawing down this subsidy. I had asked this question some years ago, any requirement and was assured by the previous Minister that the requirement related to the submission of reports and audited accounts; do these still obtain?

**Hon Manniram Prashad:** Mr Chairman, these requirements still obtain.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr Trotman.

**Mr Raphael GC Trotman:** Mr Chairman, through you, will the Honourable Minister say what precisely are the requirements for an agency or a body to receive subventions that have been voted for by this House?

**Hon Manniram Prashad:** Mr Chairman, audited accounts and financial reports.

**Mr Raphael GC Trotman:** Those two.

**Hon Manniram Prashad:** Basically yes.

**Agency 23 - Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, Programme 231 - Main Office -**

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**\$333,407,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates**

**The Chairman:** *Pages 120 and 121*

**AGENCY 23 - MINISTRY OF TOURISM, INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE, PROGRAMME 232 - Ministry Administration**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$41,178,000 for Agency 23 - Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, Programme 232 - Ministry Administration - stands parts of the Estimates.**

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr Dave Danny

**Mr Dave Danny:** Account Code 6116 - Contracted Employees - Can the Minister state the categories of the contracted employees and the emoluments.

**Hon Manniram Prashad:** One Senior Personnel Officer; two Typist Clerks and one Handyman.

**Agency 23 - Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, Programme 232 - Ministry Administration \$41,178,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates**

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**The Chairman:** *Pages 122 and 123*

**AGENCY 23 - MINISTRY OF TOURISM,  
INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE, PROGRAMME 233  
- Commerce, Industry and Consumer Affairs**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$41,037,000 for  
Agency 23 - Ministry of Tourism, Industry and  
Commerce, Programme 233 - Commerce, Industry  
and Consumer Affairs - stands parts of the Estimates.**

**Agency 23 - Ministry of Tourism, Industry and  
Commerce, Programme 233 - Commerce, Industry  
and Consumer Affairs \$ 41,037,000 - agreed to and  
ordered to stand part of the Estimates**

**The Chairman:** *Page 442*

**AGENCY 23 - MINISTRY OF TOURISM,  
INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE, Agency Totals**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$274,355,000 for  
Agency 23 - Ministry of Tourism, Industry and  
Commerce, Agency Totals - stands parts of the  
Estimates.**

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**Agency 23 - Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, Agency Totals - \$274,355,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates**

*Pages 100 and 101*

**AGENCY 16 - MINISTRY OF AMERINDIAN AFFAIRS, PROGRAMME 161 - Amerindian Development**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$210,721,000 for Agency 16 - Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, Programme 161 - Amerindian Development - stands part of the Estimates.**

The Honourable Member Dr Norton

**Dr George A Norton:** Mr Chairman, here again Staffing Details COA 6116 - Contracted Employees - Could the Honourable Minister kindly name the five categories of contracted employees?

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** Mr Chairman, one Project Officer; one Senior Project Officer, one Office Assistant, one Drive and one Assistant Credit Officer.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Dr Norton

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**Dr George A Norton:** On the Staffing Details again, COA 6111 - Administrative - Could the Honourable Minister say the increase in Administrative - what category is that?

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** Procurement Clerk

**Dr George A Norton:** Mr Chairman, Account Code 6255 - Maintenance of Other Infrastructure - What other infrastructure are you referring to here?

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** They are bridge and fence at the Amerindian Hostel

**Dr George A Norton:** Account Code 6302 - Training (Including Scholarships) - What portion is for training and what part is for scholarships?

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** It would just be about \$6,000,000 for Training and that is for the Village Councils and the remainder for the Hinterland Scholarship Programme

**Dr George A Norton:** Just a follow-up on that, there is no training which would include administration for different officers and so on.

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** No, but we try to do that internally using the staff in the Ministry.

**Dr George A Norton:** Mr Chairman, could the Honourable Minister say the part that deals with scholarship only includes hinterland scholarship?

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**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** Yes, that is correct.

**Dr George A Norton:** And that this hinterland scholarship includes secondary, tertiary, technical as well as that into the University of Guyana?

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** No, it includes the secondary and technical scholarships for institutions such as the Guyana School of Agriculture, Guyana Technical Institute, Carnegie. The tertiary scholarships are dealt with by the Public Service Ministry.

**Dr George A Norton:** Could the Honourable Minister say what is the total number of hinterland scholarship at this moment and what percentage is that regional?

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** 295 students and 45 are regional

**Dr George A Norton:** Could the Honourable Minister say on an average the cost for one hinterland scholarship at the secondary level and if there is a difference between those in Georgetown and those at the regional level ?

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** The benefits are the same for the regional and the students that are in Georgetown. We do not have a compilation of the figure, but per month it is going to be somewhere around \$12,000 for the guardian allowance; we also give a uniform allowance yearly and we give a pocket allowance to the students of \$2,600 as well.

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**Dr George A Norton:** Mr Chairman, could the Honourable Minister say whether they have budgeted for an increase in these allowances for this year?

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** Yes, we are hoping that we could accommodate some increases this year.

**Dr George A Norton:** Mr Chairman, just because we want to know that our money is well spent and budgeted for, could the Honourable Minister give for instance how many new hinterland scholarships are budgeted for this year?

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** It is going to be fifty-five, but it is dependant on the performance of the students as well at the Grade six examinations, but whatever is that amount if it is forty, we will add fifteen technical scholarships.

**Dr George A Norton:** Just to finish off, could the Honourable Minister say to this House a brief summary of the CXC results like five passes with Grade three and above mentioning the most outstanding school especially the A level results

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** I do not have that with me, but I can provide that to you probably by next week.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mrs Holder

**Mrs Sheila VA Holder:** Mr Chairman, I would like to refer the Honourable Minister to Account Code 6302 -

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Training (Including Scholarships) - and inquire what is the procedure for accessing training for hinterland students.

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** Mr Chairman, we do not do training as such for hinterland students, we send them to the various secondary schools and the technical institutions. The training here is for the Village Council and we have done about two years of training with them. What we do, we work with the newer councils or do some refresher training for them and it is basically on a demand basis.

**Agency 16 - Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, Programme 161 - Amerindian Development - \$210,721,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.**

**The Chairman:** *Page 439*

**AGENCY 16 - MINISTRY OF AMERINDIAN AFFAIRS - CAPITAL EXPENDITURE -Agency Totals**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$183,851,000 for Agency 16 - Ministry of Amerindian Affairs - Capital**



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**Expenditure, Agency Totals - stands part of the Estimates.**

The Honourable Member Dr Norton

**Dr George A Norton:** Mr Chairman, on details of Capital Expenditure, Project Code 1209600 - Buildings - could the Honourable Minister say where is the local of this hostel?

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** We are looking at three different locations at the moment. By the next week or so we would know exactly where it will be, but I can tell you it will be between the borders and Houston and Liliendaal. We are not going to go further out.

**Dr George A Norton:** Mr Chairman, could the Honourable Minister say if they are looking for a location that will take into consideration the possibility of playing field, gardening and so on?

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** We will definitely like to have all of those and that is why we are looking at different locations, but we have no guarantee at this time that we are going to be able to have all of those; for instance the playfield at the same location, but definitely an area where they can have gardening and enough space.

**Dr George A Norton:** Mr Chairman, could the Honourable Minister state the capacity of this building in terms of the number of students?

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**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** We are looking at about 150 at the moment for the building.

**Dr George A Norton:** Mr Chairman, on the same building, could I kindly ask the Minister if provisions could be made for computer rooms and libraries?

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** Yes, definitely, in fact what we hope to do is to move scholarship department from where it is to the Amerindian Hostel and place it at where this new hostel will be - the students' hostel - so yes.

**Dr George A Norton:** Thank you very much. Project Code 1400100 - Amerindian Development Fund - could the Honourable Minister state what are the villages earmarked for the land demarcation.

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** The Villages are Paramakatoi, Quebana, Asakata, Waini, Three Brothers, Warapoka, White Water, Yakarainta, Isenaru, Kaburi, Kaibarupai, Maicobie, Waipa and possibly Konashen

**Dr George A Norton:** Therein the Amerindian Development Fund, could the Honourable Minister say where is the public address system earmarked for?

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** That would be for Morocobai Village.

**Dr George A Norton:** Mr Chairman, could the Honourable Minister say for the amount budgeted for the

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Bena Hill Institute, some of the programmes they have for this year?

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** Bena Hill Institute is basically focusing on natural resource management and so a lot of their programmes are around wild life management - natural resource management in general

**Dr George A Norton:** Project Code 2403000 - Water Transport - Amerindian Affairs - Mr Chairman, could the Honourable Minister say the outboard engines and boats are for which villages?

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** The boats are for Sand Creek, Rupanau, Kangaruma and Waramadong and the engines are for Barasaina, Black Water, Saint Amsaince, Morokaikuru, Tobago, Bethany, Kanapang, Itabac, Sand Creek, Quaimata, Rupanau and Karasabai

**Dr George A Norton:** Mr Chairman, taking into consideration the quantity of outboard engines that are earmarked and the amount budgeted, could the Minister say the horsepower of these engines?

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** Yes, they are fifteen horsepower and eight power and the long foot is 460 and the short foot is 453.

**Dr George A Norton:** Thank you very much Mde Minister. Mr Chairman, could the Honourable Minister say why the choice of aluminium boats as compared to the wood boats?

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**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** Because this is what is requested by the communities and in the case of Sand Creek, this is the type of boats they said that they used in the area.

**Dr George A Norton:** Mr Chairman, if I remember carefully, Sand Creek is catered for by the Regional Development and not Amerindian Affairs. Is that so?

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** The one catered for in the Regional Development budget is assigned to the District Development Officer and the one we have here is assigned to the Village Council.

**Dr George A Norton:** Project Code 2403100 - Land Transport - Could the Honourable Minister say what type of vehicle is programmed for and which area or village.

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** Yes, here is where we have the five ATVs for Tusening, Paramakatoi, Monkey Mountain, Kanapang and Kaibarupai and the purchase of a double cab pick-up for Georgetown.

**Dr George A Norton:** Mr Chairman, could the Honourable Minister say under Project Code 2506400 - Office Furniture and Equipment - would this mean the furnishing of the Village Offices?

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** No, this would not mean the furnishing of the Village Offices; we have an arrangement with the Councils where we provide a sum

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to assist them to construct the Village Offices and furnish them. It is a partnership.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mrs Holder

**Mrs Sheila VA Holder:** Thank you Mr Chairman. I would like to refer the Honourable Minister to Profile Page 54 - Amerindian Development Programmes - I am interested in the Minister telling me what specifically is the quantity of the subvention to the North Rupununi Development.

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** It would be \$6,000,000. *[Applause]*

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr Murray

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Mr Chairman, Project Code 1400100 - Amerindian Development Fund - Would the Minister agree that if all these things she is going to purchase and hand out ... *[Noisy Interruption]* ... purchase and give ... Sir, aren't they going to be given? If they are sewing machines, aren't they going to be given; aren't they going to be handed over ... *[Interruption: 'Not hand outs.']* Okay, I take my words back; they seem to object to hand out. *[Noisy Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Alright, Honourable Members

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Since there is a number of items here that will be handed over to various communities with the intention of achieving improved

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standard of living for Amerindians, would the Minister not agree that there should be some measurement as to have improvements have taken place in the lives of Amerindians during the 2008 and could she tell this Honourable House will she measure the improvements that have taken place in the life of Amerindians during 2008 by these hand-overs or hand-outs as I prefer to say?

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** It would be very easy to measure - land demarcation - how many people have their lands demarcated.

In terms of the subvention to Bena Hill of \$6,000,000, whether those programmes that the subvention was earmarked to look at, whether they have been done - the construction of the Rest House at Shea whether that was done; the construction of the Village Offices whether that was done and whether the villages are administering the affairs in a better manner. Certainly there are ways in which we can measure this, but probably you can visit from time to time and you will be able to see.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Mr Chairman, I heard the Minister say by the construction of the building and by the insertion of these various things that the development ... are you not aware of what is going on Sir, have you been asleep? Does the Minister not agree that these are not achievement of objectives; these are achievement of the construction; the objectives are achieved when you see the improvement in the standard of living or in their

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lives? How will she measure that? That is the issue.  
*[Applause]*

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** Through you Mr Chairman, every single item on this list was requested by a community and they have to know what they need and I would imagine that they see these items as improving their lives in one way or the other and over time and this is why we are responding to their requests.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Mr Chairman, I think that is a pathetic answer. While the Government is responding to a need, how does the government ensure that it is getting value for money? You keep talking about this, but you do not want to face up with the reality. How do you measure achievement vis-à-vis expenditure? That is the objective not by the request for money that is not measurement in itself.

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** Mr Chairman, we have hired thirteen Community Development Officers and they are placed throughout Guyana and what they would do is to submit reports whether it is the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs or other Ministries, they work with their village councils on different projects and some of these things will come out from that and I think that all of us would agree in this House that there is no other time that we have seen Amerindian development like we have seen now. *[Applause]*

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr Williams

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**Mr Mervyn Williams:** On the same Project Code - Honourable Minister, I just overheard the Hon Neendkumar suggesting that to this House in a very quiet way at the back that measurement of the improvement of the quality of lives of the Amerindian people is ...*[Noisy Interruption]*

**The Chairman:** Honourable Members, please let us hear the question.

**Mr Mervyn Williams:** The question relates to Project Code 1209600 - Buildings - that is the same Project Code when I started and I shall repeat Honourable Minister. The Honourable Neendkumar just mentioned that the development of Amerindian people's lives could be measured by the votes gained. Would you agree with that, Mde Minister?

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** I think the Minister of Amerindian Affairs - that is me - and so if you were distracted and listening to Mr Neendkumar, I am very sorry about that. *[Noisy Interruption]*

**The Chairman:** Please have some order.

**Mr Mervyn Williams:** The question is: does the Minister agree with that?

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** I would not completely agree to that, but I think the painting is on the wall. *[Applause]*

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr Norton



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**Mr Aubrey C Norton:** Mr Chairman, under the same Project Code, I would believe that if we are judging progress and development of people, there must be some objective criteria to determine whether it is achieved. Could the Honourable Minister outline the objective criteria that would be used to say that the lives of the people will be developing?

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** Could you repeat the question?

**Mr Aubrey C Norton:** I said, Mr Chairman through you to the Honourable Minister, in every society objective criteria are established as to what constitutes progress and development of people. Could the Honourable Minister say in terms of the said Project Code what are the objective criteria that have been identified to determine whether the particular project is efficacious?

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** I would respond to that by saying that whatever our Government or our party has outlined as where we would like to see all of our people in Guyana, but what we do in terms of the Amerindian communities, because there are some peculiarities, there are certain issues that you have to address differently, so I would not want to say that the objective is very different to the development of everyone else in Guyana and that is that we move from stage to stage as we go along.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr Norton

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**Mr Aubrey C Norton:** Mr Chairman, I would really like if the Honourable Minister could say what are the objective criteria? If she can tell me that I would be satisfied, if she cannot then ...

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** Well I think, Mr Chairman, as I mentioned before, it is to improve the lives of the Amerindian people by making certain inputs and it is not only from the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, but all of the other Ministries as well.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Dr Norton

**Dr George A Norton:** Mr Chairman, Project Code 1400100 - Amerindian Development Fund - I take it Honourable Minister that the villages that you mentioned for land demarcation after that has been completed, they would be entitled to their land.

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett:** No, Honourable Member. Through you Mr Chairman, these are the ones that already have absolute grants and so they already have legal ownership. We are demarcating those and at the same time we are looking at others like River View and completing those negotiations.

**Agency 16 - Ministry of Amerindian Affairs - Capital Expenditure, Agency Totals - \$183,851,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates**

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**The Chairman:** *Pages 106 and 107*

**AGENCY 21 - MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE,  
PROGRAMME 211 - Ministry Administration**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$901,461,000 for Agency 21 - Ministry of Agriculture, Programme 211 - Ministry Administration - stands part of the Estimates**

The Honourable Member Mr Vieira

**Mr Anthony Vieira:** Mr Chairman, I am going to refer to Account Codes 6111 to 6115 and I am going to make the point that has been made already and it is a general point not a specific agricultural point, but it seems to me that in the traditional workforce, there are going to be two extra employees in 2008 and the traditional budget is more or less the same, but the contracted employees are going to be increased from twelve to nineteen and they are going to increase the salaries from \$23,028,000 to \$40,067,000, while the other sixty employees their total salaries combined is \$31,900,000. Sir, it begs the question, the Hon Westford has said that people opt to be either a traditional public service employee or a contracted public service employee when you hire them, but the evidence as laid out here it seems to me that in all cases the contracted employees is the group that is expanding while the traditional public service group is diminishing and one has to ask the question; it is a

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legitimate question; is this a deliberate attempt to destroy the power of the public service representative unions and ... [*Noisy Interruption*] ... Well it is a question and I would like the answer from the Minister. I would like to know why it is that the ordinary traditional workforce including improvements will only rise by about \$2,000,000 if you add up 6111 to 6115, while the one group 6116 - Contracted Employees - will rise from \$23,000,000 to \$40,000,000.

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. I noted the political statement by the Honourable Member, but just to say to address the question somewhere in the statement talking about the increase by seven, these persons will include the two Deputy Permanent Secretaries; the Executive Secretary of the National Cane Farmers Committee; and other critical staff.

I must say too that under the contracted employees, we also have persons who fall within Band 14; there are several persons with Band 14; Band 8; Band 6, Band 13 of the public service and once you check those bands, you will recognise why it is that you have that amount being a portion for those categories of employees

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr Vieira

**Mr Anthony Vieira:** I will therefore move on to Account Code 6284 - Other - I do not think that I got an answer. Under Other there is a huge jump and when we have

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unspecified expenditure in a budget, it always raises some suspicion in the minds of people who have suspicious minds. In this case the charges under Other are increased from \$1,800,000 to \$13,140,000, I was wondering whether the Minister would like to comment on what occasioned this huge estimate for other.

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** I can understand the cause for suspicion by the Honourable Member, but just to say that \$11.1 million of that is an allocation to the National Climate Unit for the purposes of its work for the year. The National Climate Unit is a new unit that was created in the Ministry of Agriculture and to advance the issues relating to Climate and preparing our public and to prepare policy positions and so forth. So that is where that expenditure is for.

**Mr Anthony Vieira:** Mr Chairman, I want to refer to Account Code 6272 - Electricity Charges - in the Administration building the electricity charges estimated for 2008 would be \$14,880,000. Mr Chairman, this comes against the background of my looking at the Estimates in general and found that the Government's expenditure on electricity is about \$4 billion per year. I was wondering if the Minister of Agriculture works in the night or they have a rice mill hidden in the building there, but why would they require \$14,000,000 light bill?

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** The objective of our budgetary plan is to ensure that we make adequate allocation to

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satisfy our electricity needs and hence fulfilling our commitment with GPL

**Mr Anthony Vieira:** I have a supplementary question - I would like to know, Mr Chairman, if \$14, 880.000 for the Ministry of Agriculture ... I am asking a question, I do not know and I would like it to be answered if possible; are the electricity bills of the Minister, the Permanent Secretary at home added to this amount or are they separate and somewhere else.

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** Mr Chairman, I think the Honourable Member may be aware that the Ministry's building are not only located at Vlissingen and Regent Street, but rather they are scattered across the country and that is where many of these charges are paid from.

**Mr Anthony Vieira:** Mr Chairman, I think that the Honourable Member is dancing around the question. Is the light bill of the Minister of Agriculture or the Permanent Secretary ... *[Interruption]*

**The Chairman:** That question was asked during the earlier estimates and it was mentioned by some minister that the Office of the President pays the bills for ministers - the electricity bills for ministers are paid by the Office of the President. That question was answered during the course of these debates.

**Mr Anthony Vieira:** Well then I should restrict my question to whether the Permanent Secretary in the

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Ministry of Agriculture whether his house in being paid for from this and if it does how far down in the line of management do those charges go to the Ministry of Agriculture?

**The Chairman:** Before you answer, I now remember the Honourable Member Ms Webster mentioned that.

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** Yes, you are absolutely correct, Mr Chairman, but just to say that the Permanent Secretaries' residents are not the Ministry of Agriculture facility hence it would not be qualified.

**Agency 21 - Ministry of Agriculture, Programme 211 - Ministry Administration**

**\$901,461,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates**

**The Chairman:** *Pages 108 and 109*

**AGENCY 21 - MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, PROGRAMME 212 - Crops and Livestock Support Services**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$838,607,000 for Agency 21 - Ministry of Agriculture, Programme 212 -**

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**Crops and Livestock Support Services - stands part of the Estimates**

The Honourable Member Mr Vieira

**Mr Anthony Vieira:** Mr Chairman, I am not going to bring up my questions in chronological order, I am going to start with the first one rental of buildings and maintenance of buildings.

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** What is the number?

**Mr Anthony Vieira:** 6241 and 6242 - now these two items together apparently amount to a total of \$9.889 million in 2007 - Revised 2007 Estimates - and have now been increased to \$17 million. It seems to me that this is quite a substantial increase especially when it comes to rental of buildings, we are adding on \$2.58 million to the rental of buildings. I was wondering why it is necessary for the Ministry of Agriculture to rent additional buildings.

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** This is not for additional buildings, but it is for seven quarters located in the MMA Compound for field staff and also we have an Office there too to facilitate our extension services and if you move on to the maintenance 6242, you will also recognise that if you check at Charity or if you go to Corriverton or in Linden, we also have staffers who are working out there who would require:

- (a) Office space; and



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- (b) If they are not from that area accommodation and that is where we provide funding for those activities.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mrs Holder

**Mrs Sheila VA Holder:** Mr Chairman, to the Honourable Minister, I was looking at the heading and wondering whether or not it is possible for me to identify the sum rightly to be budgeted for compensation to the Buxton farmers. Would it be here or would a supplementary vote be brought to the House?

**Hon Robert M Persuad:** You would have recognised that at the time of the formulation of the Budget that issue was not fully and is still not being fully ... what we can say the cost is not known hence it was not possible to have that provided for in the Budget that we have before us and certainly through the Ministry of Finance the appropriate steps would be taken to ensure that the funding for that activity is fully covered.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mrs Riehl

**Mrs Clarissa S Riehl:** Mr Chairman, I wish to ask the Honourable Minister, Account Code 6242 - Maintenance of Buildings - could you say which buildings would be maintained? I know you said buildings being rented for MMA field staff. I wish to ask which buildings you are maintaining, because I know that there is a whole lot of houses in that area originally built and left dormant and

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falling to pieces. So I wish to ask what buildings are you maintaining?

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** The Account Code whereby we are going to be dealing with maintenance is 6242 and that does not cover rental in the MMA Compound. We are not repairing buildings in the MMA. That is covered at 6241 and that is for rental; 6242 is for the maintenance and that is for our offices which are located across the country including head office too.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mrs Holder

**Mrs Sheila VA Holder:** I would like to direct the Honourable Minister to Account Code 6302 - Training (Including Scholarships) - would you be good enough to say what form the training would take referred to here?

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** Mr Chairman, we have embarked on an expanded training programme for farmers that is both in terms of field farm training programmes. We also bring farmers down to the Guyana School of Agriculture; for the Hinterland regions we also take our technical officers there and conduct various training programmes targeting farmers. So this 6302 is primarily to train our farmers in terms of new husbandry or crop practices and also to expose them to new technology and development that is taking place within the sphere of agriculture. So it is training for framers.

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**Mrs Sheila VA Holder:** Thank you, Minister I recall some Indigenous communities that expressed concern that they do not very often see extension officers. Are there any provisions at all for training Indigenous officers to fulfil this role?

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** We have recognised that that is a shortcoming in the Ministry and last year we embarked on the revamping of the extension services programmes through the engagement of farmers or even students too and for the creation of extension service agents and we have started that programme of identifying farmers and training them in the hinterland regions. We bring them out to the Guyana School of Agriculture for a short period and expose them to the knowledge and also hands-on experience there and then they go back to their communities; they are paid a stipend to work with these farmers in the hinterland communities. We have not been able to do that for all the farming communities in the hinterland, but we tried to identify those which are critical and then we work as resources become available to engage more of those farmers or young people who are interested in agriculture.

**Agency 21 - Ministry of Agriculture, Programme 212 - Crops and Livestock Support Services - \$838,607,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates**

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**The Chairman: Pages 110 and 111**

**AGENCY 21 - MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE,  
PROGRAMME 213 - Fisheries**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$71,996,000 for  
Agency 21 - Ministry of Agriculture, Programme 213 -  
Fisheries - stands part of the Estimates**

**Agency 21 - Ministry of Agriculture, Programme 213 -  
Fisheries - \$ 71,996,000 - agreed to and ordered to  
stand part of the Estimates**

**The Chairman: Pages 112 and 113**

**AGENCY 21 - MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE,  
PROGRAMME 214 - Hydrometeorological Services**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$139,362,000 for  
Agency 21 – Ministry of Agriculture, Programme 214  
- Hydrometeorological Services - stands part of the  
Estimates**

**The Honourable Member Mr Vieira**

**Mr Anthony Vieira: Mr Chairman, there is an item  
entry here drugs and medical supplies which is unclear. I**

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am not absolutely sure what exactly it is - Account Code 6221 - an increase from \$7.6 million to \$10.5 million for the Hydromet. I am not sure what drugs the Hydromet Office uses. I was wondering if the Minister would be kind enough to enlighten me.

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** Honourable Member, are you referring to 6221 or 6222?

**Mr Anthony Vieira:** Account Code 6221 - Drugs and Medical Supplies.

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** It is just \$185,000, \$16,000 more than last year. I think for our Hydromet Service Staff, there again they are not only based in Georgetown, but they work for twenty-four hours and I think they require at least some aspirin, Limacol; perhaps some vitamins and I think that it is not too much asking the State to provide that to the tune of \$185,000.

**Agency 21 - Ministry of Agriculture, Programme 214 - Hydrometeorological Services -**

**\$139,362,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates**

**The Chairman:** 440 and 441

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**AGENCY 21 - MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE,**  
**CAPITAL EXPENDITURE - Agency Totals**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$2,110,414,000 for Agency 21 - Ministry of Agriculture, Capital Expenditure - stands part of the Estimates**

The Honourable Member Mr Vieira

**Mr Anthony Vieira:** Project Code 1301200 - Agri. Support Services Project - From 496,686,000 for 2007 to \$302,000,000 the Legend says Rehabilitation of drainage and irrigation structures and institutional strengthening - IDB - Could the Minister tell us exactly what institutional strengthening he is doing and the rehabilitation of what drainage structures will occasion this \$302,000,000?

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** Mr Chairman, I just want to be certain that I am addressing the right line item, Honour Member you refer to 1301200 - Okay that is the project that is being funded by the IDB, the Agriculture Support Services and one institutional strengthening refer to ... as you know, the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority is one of the new Semi Autonomous Agency which was set up and certainly requires that support and help so that it can be in a state to adequately fulfil the needs of our farmers, drainage and irrigation. Also the concept of water users association that is empowering the beneficiaries to manage and to operate the secondary systems; it is also supporting the water users association and farming training and extension too and how this

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relates to drainage and irrigation. That is what is regarded as institutional strengthening.

In terms of the rehabilitation of drainage structures and the repairs to pumps and access roads as a component of that project, there are nine areas which have been identified under this project for work to be done both earthen work and civil work and that is what is being reflected here under rehabilitation and irrigation structures, also the installation of pumps.

**Mr Anthony Vieira:** I am not sure that I am actually happy with the answer. I understand the principle of it, but this is a capital project, this is not routine expenditure where you can share the work over the country. These have to be specific projects identified by the administration to look after specific problems in specific areas. For example, I was hoping the Honourable Member would say, well we put aside a couple of millions for the desilting of the mouth of the Pomeroon River. I would like if I can have a little more detail.

Also Project Code 1301600 - National Drainage and Irrigation Authority - we are spending almost \$1 billion and I was wondering if the Member could expand a little more on the small footnote, which is rehabilitation and construction of drainage and irrigation channels. Since these are capital projects surely you will have a specific plan of attack and I was just wondering if you would for my personal clarification.

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**Hon Robert M Persaud:** Mr Chairman, I just want to ensure that the Honourable Member understands the programming formulation for the NDIA. This is one component of the work which will be undertaken by the NDIA and it covers four specific areas starting this year. There are nine declared NDIA areas in the country; the four areas that we are focussing on to commence this project or this aspect of the project would include Golden Grove, Victoria, Cane Grove. In Region 3 we are looking at Vergenoegen, Namryck, Canals Nos. 1 and 2 Polders. There are others area too which will follow Crabwood Creek, Black Bush Polder Nos. 52, 74. So there are specific areas in which specific works will be carried out in the context of this project. This is not part of the regular or the yearly capital programme that is undertaken by the NDIA. That is captured in a subsequent heading under the Capital Estimates.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mrs Holder

**Mrs Sheila VA Holder:** Mr Chairman, I would like to refer the Honourable Minister to Project Code 17500500 - National Dairy Development Programme - When I looked at the profile provision of pasture development; is there any possible that this can lead to the removal of animals from the Rupert Craig Highway and therefore increase more safety.

*Continued in part II of II (...page 81)*



# National Assembly Debates

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49<sup>th</sup> Sitting

14:00h

Monday 10 March 2008

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**Part II of II**

*Continued from Part I of II*

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** The objectives of the National Dairy Development Programme is to promote a vibrant dairy sector and in doing so we want to ensure that we provide support to our cattle farmers and in this instance our dairy cattle farmers as you know the price of milk has gone up globally and there is a great reliance on cows' milk now in Guyana. We want to encourage that sector and our pasture development is intended for farmers' group to cultivate grass, because we do not only want the problem of them roaming not only on the highways, but even in villages or we have the problem too within agriculture, in rice and in sugar cane. We do not want them to be roaming at all. So the aim is to have a much more organised approach towards the dairy sector by the expansion of pastures. We already have existing pastures; we are looking to rehabilitate those and then this year to improve those and to look at additional pastures whereby our dairy farmers can source feed for their animals without resorting to letting them loose and as you say to roam the public highways or other traffic ways.

**The Chairman:** Are you asking a question, Mr McAllister?

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**Mr James K McAllister:** Mr Chairman, Project Code 2100400 - Conservancy Adaptation Project - I notice that the total project cost is \$775,000,000, but for 2008 we have budgeted \$50,000,000. Could the Minister say what is the expected life of this project and what specifically will happen in 2008 and what are the other works that will follow in subsequent years?

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** The duration of this project is anticipated to be three years and as we know late last year this project was approved by the World Bank and we in the process of the start-up phase of this project, so one of the activities that we will see is one that is getting the institutional arrangements in place; the procurement of services and equipment to carry out the necessary work, because a lot of it will be carrying out surveys, testing models and those will require equipment that is not available and also services that are not available in Guyana. Also an element of this work will be the procurement of long beak excavators to be used in the Conservancy and by the end of the project we hope to have the Cunhia outlet of the East Demerara Water Conservancy re-opened and working in full capacity. As you recognised with the advent of Barama there, there were some obstructions and also with the highway major works will have to be undertaken. So this project:

(a) is looking at the technical data that we require to do long-term intervention; and

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(b) for us to undertake some immediate work which will improve our discharge in the westerly direction for the East Demerara Water Conservancy so as to remove the need for us to do any discharge north ... I am talking primarily through the Maduni and Lama outlets.

**Mr Anthony Vieira:** Project Code 2100100 - Hydrometeorology - Will the \$336,000,000 to be spent this year take care of the problems where the radar was located badly and was interfering with the radio signals for the directional findings for the aircraft and will this complete the project or will there be further monies required to complete it in 2009?

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** Yes, the allocation here is to ensure the completion of the radar tower and also to pay for the radar itself, the installation and other accessories associated with having a working radar facility in Guyana. That is what it has been budgeted for.

**Mr Anthony Vieira:** I believe my question was; has the problem of the close proximity of the directional beacon for the aircraft and the radar been rectified and is that catered for now in the Estimates and can we see an end to this project?

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** The original site for the radar has been abandoned and put in a site that has been cleared technically so that there would be no interference with any other aeronautical instruments or other equipment

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that they have been using at the Cheddi Jagan International Airport. So that is where the radar is being built and it will be operating from that new location and I must say that the work is proceeding apace; the civil work is about forty percent completed up to this morning.

**Mr Anthony Vieira:** Just for my personal edification; the new location is where? How far away from the previous location? Is it in a right location this time or is it going to interfere with the tower?

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** Mr Chairman, I thought I answered that question; it has been cleared by the Civil Aviation Authority and it is located within close proximity to the South Dakota circuit, if you get the geographical picture in mind it is around there and I can invite Mr Vieira for us to inspect the works that are taking place at a convenient time.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr Murray

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Mr Chairman, my question relates to Project Code 1700500 - National Dairy Development Programme - would the Minister agree that one measure of satisfaction as to the propriety of the expenditure would be the audited financial statements of the institution and assuming that he agrees, is he aware that this agency has not submitted statements for auditing since 2003 and would the Honourable Minister is he is aware inform this National Assembly of the measures that are being taken to update these audited financial

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 10 MARCH 2008**

statements and whether he would insist that being a requirement prior to disbursement of these resources and if not on what basis would be disburse these resources.

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** I share the Honourable Member's desire for transparency and accountability in ensuring that these agencies comply and that is one of the task that we set ourselves at the Ministry now to ensure that we bring all our accounts up-to-date and I wish to advise the Honourable Member that they are now updated to 2006.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Mr Chairman, I take it that they are now up-to-date they still have to be audited, because at the last meeting with the Auditor General, they were still not audited; so have they been submitted for auditing.

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** A request has been sent to the Auditor General's Department.

**The Chairman:** Mr Chairman, I crave your indulgence for a recommitment to Project Code 1301600 - National Drainage and Irrigation Authority - Can the Honourable Minister through you say what is the status of Mr Ravi Narine in terms of his Chairmanship of the Drainage and Irrigation Board or whatever capacity he served in, because I see another person making frequent and other statements and appearances?

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** I do not think that the employment of any staff in the NDIA can be considered capital employment, but for the information of Mr

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Trotman, Mr Narine never served as Chairman of National Drainage and Authority Board, he served as the Chief Executive Officer and he has since demitted office for personal reasons.

**The Chairman:** Honourable Members, I now put the question that Agency 21, Programme ... Mr Carberry, you wait until I almost put the question before you stand up.

**Mr E Lance Carberry:** Almost, but you did not complete.

**The Chairman:** Honourable Members, we cannot go on like this.

**Mr E Lance Carberry:** But you were not finish putting the question.

**The Chairman:** Go ahead, Mr Carberry.

**Mr E Lance Carberry:** Okay, Sir.

**The Chairman:** This is the third time I am putting the question and when I am about to complete then somebody stands up. Go ahead.

**Mr E Lance Carberry:** Mr Chairman, thank you for your accommodation. Project Code 1700500 - National Dairy Development Programme - I looked at the Project Profile, it does talk about the provision for pasture development, it does not speak to other issues of dairy development, which I think the Minister in his answer did

## BUDGET ESTIMATES 10 MARCH 2008

in fact refer to. Minister, in terms of the Dairy Development Programme and I notice you have shown a great deal of interest in bio energy, have you introduced within the dairy sector the development of bio energy using bio gas systems?

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** That first query the introduction of bio gas is not a new feature in Guyana ... *[Interruption: 'We know that.']* ... and I was going on to give you credit that it was introduced at President's College, I remember the students using the same cattle waste for the production of bio gas, but coming back to the query that the Honourable Member made, also while the capital expenditure would be primarily spent on improving pasture, it will also be providing services such artificial insemination, introduction of new breeding stock and there are other activities within the National Dairy Development Programme working with farmers, educating farmers and so forth. So there is a whole range of services which are provided, but mentioned here under capital is the improvement of pasture. That is just one element of the support that the NDDP give to our farmers.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr Carberry

**Mr E Lance Carberry:** Mr Chairman, just for the benefit of the Minister and since he has referred to the fact that bio gas systems existed here before. I presume that the Minister is aware that pasture development ... a bio gas digester provides a very good source of single cell fertilisers as well as a good soil conditioner to improve

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pastures. Do you know that that also is a possibility? But you have answered me as if I was only talking about methane; I was not only talking about methane. Thank you.

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** I am very much aware of the tremendous benefits of biogas technology. In fact, I am just back from a meeting whereby that is one of the issues that is being looked at; it has been propagated especially in Asia and Africa and it would be something that we would be looking at in our quest to develop and agro energy sector, but also looking at the other possible spinoff benefits that could help reduce the cost of production to our farmers especially of what is taking place on the global market scene.

**The Chairman:** Honourable Members, are there any other questions on this Programme before I put the question?

### **Agency 21 - Ministry of Agriculture, Capital Expenditure - Agency Totals**

**\$ 2,110,414,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates**

**The Chairman:** Thank you very much Members. We will now move to the Ministry of Finance



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*Pages 44 and 45*

**AGENCY 03 - MINISTRY OF FINANCE,  
PROGRAMME 031 - Ministry Administration**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$10,796,466,000 for Agency 03 - Ministry of Finance, Programme 031 - Ministry Administration - stands part of the Estimates**

The Honourable Member Mr Murray

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Mr Chairman, Account Code 6134 - National Insurance - Sorry, Sir, may I just allow them to ... *[Pause]*

**The Chairman:** Yes, just give them a minute to settle in.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** My colleague suggested that I give them time. *[Pause]* Yes Sir, Account Code 6134 - National Insurance - Is the Minister aware that in the latest Auditor General's Report, there have been complaints by him of the Ministry not remitting by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the succeeding month the previous month's NIS payment and that penalties have accrued to the extent of approximately \$1,500,000 in respect of 2005 and if he is so aware, could the Minister please say what steps are being taken by his Ministry to pay over the NIS contributions in a timely manner given that failure to do so could affect the payment of benefits to contributors

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Secondly, Sir, on that same line item is the Minister aware the Auditor General also draw attention to the fact that there is a number of employees in respect of whom there is a long time lag between their employment in the Ministry and the obtaining by them of their NIS numbers, during which period they remained uncovered for NIS benefits. And if he is so aware, could the Minister kindly inform the National Assembly of what is being done to also avoid this lengthy lag

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Thank you very much Mr Chairman. Through you, the Ministry does recognise its responsibility as an employer for ensuring that all appropriate steps are taken to secure timely registration and securing of numbers (temporary or permanent) for its employees and also to ensure that deductions are paid over in a timely manner. Where there have been instances that this has found not to be the case, the administration within the Ministry is investigating why this may have happened and the Honourable Member can certainly be assured. that all appropriate remedial steps would be taken to ensure that there is no recurrence

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Thank you Mr Minister. Mr Minister in that connection, would you also consider approaching the National Insurance Scheme for waiver of penalty in the context that there are many instances,

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people the job but NIS contributions continue to be made to them and are you aware that they seldom ever make those refunds by way of returning monies to the agencies, and under those circumstances, may it not be a good idea to trade off any penalties that they may want to charge against the Ministry against those outstanding monies which should really be returned to the Ministry.

**Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, again through you, like I said on the matter where there are instances of the nature as described by the Honourable Member, we are in the course of investigating and the suggestion made by the Honourable Member might certainly be a one possible course of action to take to rectify the matter going forward, but the facts would have to be ascertained before we could determine whether that course of action as he has suggested or indeed any other would be appropriate or which would be the most appropriate.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Thank you very much Mr Minister. Sir, Account Code 6141 - Revision of Wages and Salaries - Mr Minister, could you kindly inform this National Assembly what the sum of \$2,332,697,000 represents under that Account Code for 2008?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, the sum provided under this Code as is described in the Legend is intended to meet the cost of revision of wages and salaries. This allocation will in 2008 as in previous years be used to meet both the cost of salary increases and also the cost employment cost shortfalls as might arise in other

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agencies such as a result of additional employment, promotions that might not have been anticipated in time of the preparation, et cetera, and so there is a process in place and indeed a well established procedure whereby in the event that another agency - any other of the Budget Agencies - should find themselves in a situation that they require additional allocations to meet expenditure associated with, like I said, promotions, reclassifications, adjustments to emoluments or indeed additional recruitment where there is any other employment cost shortfalls in those agencies, this allocation will be used to meet that amount.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Through you Sir, Mr Minister with great respect, this item is revision of wages and salaries and it would be my respectful submission that that could not include promotions and matters of that kind; it is a clear heading for where salaries are revised and am I right in understanding you to say that where there are shortfalls in the budgeted provisions for agencies in 2008 to meet their wages and salaries bill that the Ministry will make good the difference between the provisions they have and what they need to have to make those payments and are you talking about shortfall in those circumstances in respect of the nine percent increase that was awarded in 2007 which may have come too late for Ministries to have made provisions for in their 2008 estimates?

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**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, in general the nine percent increase that was awarded in 2007, should have been and I believe is provided for. I would say it would be provided for in the respective agency allocations. There may be on occasion in the course of execution of their budgets during the course of the year, issues may arise from time to time, lie I say, there may be additional recruitment that might not have been anticipated; at the start of the year there may be promotions that may arise; there may be also the discovery as a result of perhaps the annualising of the effect of the salary increase persons may have been recruited during the course of the year; there is a number of possible combinations of circumstances that can arise where an agency might find itself in a situation where it might require additional allocations. Mr Chairman, to meet the cost associated with those, this revision of wages and salaries' allocation is the allocation that has historically been used for this purpose.

I might add also that it is not our custom to make provisions for the filling of vacancies or for new recruitment. So the allocations that are provided in the various budget agencies would be allocations to meet the cost of the positions that were filled at a particular point in time, but where during the course of the year additional recruitment is done, budget agencies may very well not have allocations to meet the cost associated with that new

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recruitment and this allocation will be used to meet that cost.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** But through you, Sir, Mr Minister since salaries are paid in arrears of work done, is it not the normal procedure that any increases for additional budgetary provisions would come to the National Assembly via requests for supplementary provisions and/or draw-downs from the Contingency Fund?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** That is not necessarily the case. Like I say, historically the revision of wages and salaries allocation has been used to meet employment cost shortfalls arising in other agencies.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Through you Sir, but Mr Minister, would you agree that this is a reflection of very bad planning, may I suggest, if over a number of years this trend continues as appears to be the case certainly in 2006, in 2007, where billions of dollars will have to be provided within the Ministry of Finance to make provision for what surely could only be inadequate planning on the part of agencies who have the responsibility to project for their additional needs; to project for promotions within their agencies and to make provisions for them in their budgets? Would it be an ongoing practice or is it your hope that this would be minimised and this lump-sum that is seen in the Ministry will over time not be required or not be required to the same degree?

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**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, I do not agree with the Honourable Member in his characterisation of the situation.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Through you Sir, the Minister may not agree, but I still believe it is accurate. Through you Sir, could the Honourable Minister say whether I this provision of \$2,332,697,000 there is any provision here for increase in wages and salaries to the general public service for the year 2008 or is that left out?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, had the Honourable Member been paying attention in my answer to his first question, he would recall had he been paying attention, I said that this allocation is intended to meet the cost of increases in wages and salaries; I subsequently clarified that that did not mean the nine percent that has already been awarded, because in general that has already been provided for and I said in addition, (I may not have used the word *general*) but I said in addition to increases in wages and salaries, the allocation is also used to meet shortfall in employment cost in other agencies.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Through you Sir, Mr Minister, I did hear you very well in the first instance; it is just as succeeding questions got asked, he seemed to have implied that the money here was to meet the requests and shortfalls in budgetary agencies, that is why I came back to the question that I had in mind when I started out. So Mr Minister, I take it that you are confirming that there is an element in this sum to provide for additional increases

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for public servants in the year 2008, would you kindly let this house know that once again?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, I believe that question has been answered twice already.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Mr Chairman, since that is the case, could the Minister now tell the National Assembly specifically what sum of money of this that is in the Estimates is a provision for additional wages and salaries for public servants for the year 2008? *[Applause]*

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, I would not be in a position to tell this Honourable House what portion of this amount will be for wages and salaries for public servants. *[Applause]*

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Mr Minister, would you find it passing strange that you do not seem to know anything about what any of this money is about except generalities.

Secondly, he has specific sums here, but he can only speak generally about the specific sums, could the Minister tell the National Assembly whether he intends to engage in a collective bargaining process with the union representing the public service employees in order to arrive at a sum and a quantum of increase for them in the year 2008 or does the Government intends to mandate an increase as is historically done?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, once again ... in fact, I believe the Honourable Member is well aware of



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the reason why I might have suggested that I would not wish to earmark a particular amount out of this total sum for the purpose of revision of wages and salaries. So that is precisely the reason I believe that he is aware of and indeed for the reason that he alluded to in his question. Mr Chairman, as the Honourable Member and indeed this entire Honourable House are well aware there is a process that is followed in determining increases in wages and salaries that includes negotiations with the representatives of public sector employees, and that process has to be followed before the increase and the associated cost is ultimately determined.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Through you Sir, is the Honourable Minister while he uttered those words and gave us the laudable objectives that he intends to pursue aware of the fact that over the last many, many years, the Government has never allowed the consultative bargaining process to run its course, but has imposed government awarded percentages to the workers and in those circumstances my question is wholly relevant.

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, I do not know why the Honourable Member feels compelled to defend the relevance of his question, I do not recall challenging the relevance of his question, but perhaps he believes that he has to justify to some other audience the relevance of his question. I have no difficulty with the relevance of his question. I would draw the Honourable Member's attention to Paragraph 3.24 of the Budget Speech in

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which I say that *our Government continues to view the conclusion of multi-year agreements as the most appropriate means of ensuring predictability and timeliness in the award of increases to wages and salaries of public sector employees.*

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Through you Sir, is the Minister aware that in my budget presentation, I endorsed the approach of multi-year agreements for public servants, but drew to his attention the fact that he never allowed the consultative bargaining process to be the one by which the sum was determined. *[Applause]*

**The Chairman:** Gentlemen, I hate to have to bring this debate to an end. It is now becoming very enjoyable, but we are going into the philosophical and departing from the Estimates. Are there any other questions?

The Honourable Member Mr Murray

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Mr Chairman, I now wish to turn to Account Code 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - and in respect of that particular item, I wish to draw attention to the accompanying chart at the back of the Estimates on Page 414, which list the agencies to benefit from these subsidies and contributions. Under the Ministry of Finance, I want to draw attention specifically to the Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit; I want to ask the Minister whether he is aware the Auditor General has raised the issue of propriety of having a subsidy or contribution to this organisation,

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when it is a Department of the Ministry of Finance and therefore provision should be made for it in the normal administrative framework of the Ministry and not through a subsidy or contribution. Is he so aware?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, like the good honourable Member, I too have read the Auditor General's Report. Mr Chairman, he asked if I am aware and I am indicating that I am aware.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Mr Chairman, would the Minister agree that having read the Auditor General's Report is not synonymous of being aware. Many people read many things and are often not aware of what it is that is contained in what they read. *[Applause]* So if the Honourable Member does not mind, may I ask him whether he is aware of the observations of the Auditor General's Department that CANU as a Department of the Ministry should be financed out of the ordinary resources of the Ministry and not by way of a subsidy or contribution.

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, I am not in the habit of reading and not becoming aware, but the answer the question once again, I have read the Auditor General's Report just as the Honourable Member has and I am aware.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Through you Sir, could the Honourable Minister then explain to the National Assembly why is it in the 2008 Budget he persists in

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bringing CANU under an organisation for subsidy and contribution rather than as part of a department in the Ministry of Finance?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, this matter is currently engaging the attention of the administration.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** *[Interruption]* Do not hassle me, Madame. *[Laughter]*

**The Chairman:** I did not hear anything

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Thank you very much, Sir. Through you Mr Chairman, Mr Minister, are you aware of the announcement made many years ago by the Government of its intention to close it's the State Planning Commission ... *[Interruption: 'Line Item?']* Sorry, it is on Page 14 ... Is it the case, Mr Minister, that this entity continues to exist and a number of persons who are being paid out of these resources made available through this subsidy and contribution subhead are in fact employed in line positions in other Ministries. If that is the case, Sir, would it not be a preferable situation rather than treating it as subsidy and contributions that these persons be properly transferred to those agencies and be paid out of the resources made available to those budget agencies?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, through you, this matter is also currently engaging the attention of the administration.

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**Agency 03 - Ministry of Finance, Programme 031 -  
Ministry Administration - \$10,796,466,000 - agreed to  
and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.**

*The Chairman: Pages 46 and 47*

**AGENCY 03 - MINISTRY OF FINANCE,  
PROGRAMME 032 - Government Accounting  
Administration**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$3,965,732,000  
for Agency 03 – Ministry of Finance, Programme 032  
- Government Accounting Administration - stands  
part of the Estimates**

**Agency 03 - Ministry of Finance, Programme 032 -  
Government Accounting Administration -  
\$3,965,732,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part  
of the Estimates.**

*Pages 428 and 429*

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**AGENCY 03 - MINISTRY OF FINANCE, CAPITAL**  
**EXPENDITURE - Agency Totals**

**Question is proposed that the sum of \$8,766,797,000 for Agency 03 - Ministry of Finance, Capital Expenditure - Agency Totals - stands part of the Estimates.**

The Honourable Member Mr Murray *[Pause]*

**Mr Winston S Murray:** *[Interruption: 'Mr Murray!']*  
A little bit of patience, Mr Irfaan. I can hear you; I know how you sound by your voice; I do not have to see you.  
*[Laughter]*

Mr Chairman, Project Code 1301400 - Drainage, Irrigation and Roads Support Project - Through you, Mr Chairman, could the Minister agree that Project Profile 18 which deals with that budget Code does not provide any details as to which culverts and roads in Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10 are going to be rehabilitated and maintained and if he agrees that they are not here, could he kindly tell the National Assembly where we may access that information so that we could monitor and indeed keep track of the rehabilitation and maintenance intended to be undertaken by the sum \$998,000,000?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, in relation to the first part of the question whether I agree about the details that are provided, I am not sure that there is much room for me to disagree. The facts are there for all to see. The

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Project Profile is as is stated in the Estimates. So I do agree that the project profile states what they do.

In relation to the specific culverts, which I gather is the matter in which the Honourable Member is interested ... in relation to the specific, drains, culverts, parapets and roads, I would like to advise the Honourable Member through you, Mr Chairman, that there is process through which this work is identified that includes the NDC and so at this stage the specific culverts, parapets and other elements of the work would still have to be determined.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Could the Minister kindly explain to the National Assembly if he does not know the specifics of what is going to be done in respect of these various items, how did he arrive at the global sum of \$998,000,000.

Secondly, especially since he said that he does not have such a pre-determined list, would it not have been a good idea, Mr Minister, in order to practice autonomy and greater devolution of responsibilities to the regions to have been a good idea to put these resources at the disposals of the regions, who are nearer to the scene of action, who will have better first hand information as to the needs of the region and better be placed to effect these repairs and maintenance as outlined here in this programme.

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, through you in order to determine the amount that is allocated we are

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guided by the benefit of experience having executed projects of this nature for two years and so we are guided by the benefit of historical experience, like I say, in terms of how much the project is going to cost and so that would be my response to the Honourable Member's question in relation to determination of the amounts.

In relation to the second half of the Honourable Members question, I would say as I said before there is a process that involves or that engages the local authorities in identifying the projects.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Thank you Mr Minister. Mr Chairman, the project profile and the capital expenditure page identifies the Ministry of Finance as the executing agency. Mr Minister, is the Ministry of Finance therefore the agency that provides the engineers and the other workers and technical personnel needed to execute this project? Do you have a project execution unit in the Ministry of Finance that oversees the execution of this \$998,000,000?

**Hon Dr Ashini K Singh:** Mr Chairman, the Ministry of Finance does not employ the staff as such; the staff is hired through the NDCs, but we provide the administrative function within the Ministry, but the hiring of the staff is done through the NDCs.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Sir, this is an amazing situation. Could the Honourable Minister really explain why if the staff are going to be employed by the NDCs



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and they are the ones he is going to consult as to what are the projects that needs to be done, why is there a reluctance in the letting them have the resources and simply the Ministry of Finance supervise to ensure that the financial regulations are maintained. Is that not a better procedure for dealing with the execution of these many small projects in various regions?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, the Honourable Member is well aware of the lack of administrative capacity that exists within the NDCs. [*Applause*]

**Mr Winston S Murray:** But Mr Chairman, this is a further amazing answer by the Minister, because while he says that they no capacity, he says it is to them that he devolves the responsibility to employ and engage the workers and the various elements to execute these projects. Does the Minister recognise that there is an inconsistency between his earlier answer and this one?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, I do not, because I spoke of a lack of administrative capacity.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** So through you, Sir, is the Honourable Minister saying that the Ministry of Finance undertakes the administration of this project out of the Ministry of Finance and if that is what he is saying, could he tell the National Assembly what is the framework; does he have a project execution unit within the Ministry of Finance that will administer this project, because that

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is what happens in every agency that has responsibility for the administration of a project?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, there is.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Mr Minister, you continue to give inconsistent answers. Could you tell the National Assembly what are the positions that exist in the Project Execution Unit that carry out the administration of this project?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, I am not currently in possession of this information, but it can certainly be supplied.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** After you shall have considered the matter and cooked up something to give me. Sorry Sir, I withdraw those remarks unreservedly ... I am speaking to an honourable gentleman ... I withdraw those remarks unreservedly, because that is not the regard I have for this honourable gentleman. I think he is an honourable gentleman so it is a slip of the tongue and please forgive me, Mr Minister. I am sorry.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr Norton

**Mr Aubrey C Norton:** Mr Chairman, Project Code 1209500 - Project Development and Admin - the Legend says provision of design of community roads, training and administration of projects, I am particularly interested in the design for community roads, could the Minister say in this process they will have in the design a component

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which suggests the length of time the road will serve the people of Guyana?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, this project is really in its early preparation stages and the allocation is intended to conduct economic and financial feasibility studies among other things of course when the projects would have been identified and found to be feasible, there will be works such as the preparation of bill of quantities and tender documents that would lead to the execution of this community roads and other infrastructure projects and so this is really essentially an allocation to provide for the preparatory work.

The Honourable Member Mr Vieira

**Mr Anthony Vieira:** Mr Chairman, I would like to refer to Project Code 4500900 - Guyana Sugar Corporation - \$4,050,000,000 is being allocated for GUYSUCO. In his Budget Speech the Minister had told the nation that he will allocate this year \$7.6 billion for the Skeldon project and a further \$2 billion for the Enmore packaging project. So I have not in fact seen the other \$3.6 billion and I was wondering whether the Minister would direct me to a place where I can find the additional \$3.6 billion.

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, what was said in the Budget Speech were amounts totalling \$7.6 billion, the Honourable Member is absolutely right. The amounts totalling \$7.6 billion will be spent to complete field improvements, et cetera. Those amounts projected to be

## **BUDGET ESTIMATES 10 MARCH 2008**

spent included amounts to be provided by Central Government by way of the national budget and also amounts to be spent out of GUYSUCO's own budget, which if not of course the subject of the Central Government's allocations as such. So the amount that is being provided out of the Central Government's budget by way of Central Government's allocations is the amount thrown in the National Estimates, but in addition to that GUYSUCO is spending out of its own resources, resources generated by its own activities on these projects also. As you know, the Skeldon project is financed partly by allocations that are provided by Government, but also by way of resources generated by GUYSUCO.

**Mr Anthony Vieira:** I understand and accept the Minister's explanation, however, I have to say that is was highly misleading for him to say that he was going to give GUYSUCO \$7.6 billion resources to do its work.

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** No, not at all. I did not say that I, we or anybody will be giving anybody will be giving GUYSUCO - I did not say anything like that. I said how much would be spent. I think the Honourable Member has accepted that clarification in the spirit in which it is intended.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr McAllister

**Mr James K McAllister:** Mr Chairman, Project Code 4400700 - Poverty Programme - I am seeking

## BUDGET ESTIMATES 10 MARCH 2008

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## **BUDGET ESTIMATES 10 MARCH 2008**

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**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr McAllister

**Mr James K McAllister:** Mr Chairman, Project Code 4400700 - Poverty Programme - I am seeking

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clarification here. Could the Honourable Minister say if this is a new project or a continued project, because there seems to be some inconsistencies between Volume 3 and Volume 1? Volume 3 has stated that no money was spent before 2008 and ... well, let me allow the Minister to answer the first one.

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, it is not a new activity. If the Honourable Member would bear with me, I would check the Volume 3 reference Page 28 - we are speaking of NGO private/public sector support programme. Mr Chairman, I was momentarily distracted by Mr Murray's heckling and so the Project Code to which the Honourable Member was referring could not be discerned clearly by me, but if the Honourable Member would be kind enough to repeat his question and if the Honourable Member Mr Murray will be kind enough to permit me to hear the question, I might be in a better position to answer.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Mr Chairman, I assume I left him confused. *[Applause]*

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, the Honourable Member can be assured that he has not and could not leave me confused.

**Mr James K McAllister:** Mr Chairman, a follow-up

**The Chairman:** Mr Norton, please allow him, we still have to deal with this question.

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**Mr James K McAllister:** Project Code 4400700 - I just need his clarification before I ask the other question.

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Okay, I am with you. Project Code 4400700 - Poverty Programme ...

**Mr James K McAllister:** Yes.

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** ... that is not a new programme.

**Mr James K McAllister:** Well okay, it means then that we have a typo in Volume 3. Mr Chairman, I know that we have spent \$502 million in 2007 and \$614 million in 2006; I am wondering if the Honourable Minister is in a position to provide this Honourable House with a list of NDCs that benefited from the monies spent in 2007 and 2006.

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, if I may clarify what I believe to be the matter that is of interest to the Honourable Member, the reason why the project profile reflects an amount of zero spent before 2008, is because of a certain interpretation in relation to the programme and that is to say that the interventions are regarded as somewhat discreet and so while amounts were spent on the Poverty Programme on previous occasions, because the activities were discreet and separate if you like, they are not on-going projects. There is not a particular activity that is brought forward from 2007 that would be financed in 2008, that is the reason why the zero has been shown there, but in fact as is well known and is reflected



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in the Volume 1 amounts were spent on the poverty programme in previous years.

In response to the details of the expenditure that was incurred, I would say to the Honourable Member that that information is available.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr Norton and then Mrs Holder

**Mr Aubrey C Norton:** Mr Chairman, Project Code 4501300 - Linden Economic Advancement Programme - In the Project Profile it suggests that there will be increase in jobs; could I ask the Honourable Minister how many jobs will be created? It also suggests that there will be increased investment project; could I ask the Minister how many projects are envisaged and what is the quantity of investment it will bring to the area? I would like to know, Mr Minister, you said reduced unemployment, what is the present unemployment in the Region and how much do you expect it to reduce to?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, based on the information that is currently available to me, I am happy to inform the Honourable Member that to date as a result of this programme 1,400 permanent jobs have been created and 68 temporary jobs created through micro, small and medium loans that have already been disbursed. It is further anticipated that another 120 jobs would be created as a result of the intervention financed under this programme

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**Mr Aubrey C Norton:** Mr Chairman, there are some elements to the question that he did not answer or were not answered. For instance, I asked for reduced unemployment if you have an idea as to what the employment is and I asked by how much it will be reduced based on these activities. I also asked for the amount that will be invested and the areas that they will be invested in.

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, I do not currently have at my disposal the specific information in relation to employment that is requested by the Honourable Member. In relation to the amounts that will be invested, the answer of course is the amounts indicated in the Estimates.

**Mr Aubrey C Norton:** No, no, no, Mr Chairman, with all due respect to the Minister. You have the amounts that will be invested, I asked for the areas that they are going to be invested in and how much money will be invested in each areas?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, that information is available now that the Honourable Member has clarified the question. LEAP of course as we all know has been operating a revolving fund and so disbursements will be made out of that revolving fund that will not require additional budgetary allocations by way of disbursement by the Ministry of Finance under this allocation, but as the Honourable Member is well aware, LEAP administers a revolving fund into which amounts

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are being repaid and from which amounts will be disbursed. However, I will say that out of the allocation that is provided in the Budget, we anticipate disbursing a further \$11.5 million to the fund that is the LEAP fund. Of the amounts budgeted approximately just over \$280 million will be spent on infrastructure rehabilitation; just over \$21 million will be spent on technical vocational management training and just over \$24 million will be spent on institutional strengthening.

In relation to loans - the loans that will be disbursed by up to the time of the expiration of the project, we anticipate a total of 432 loans will be disbursed in the sectors of agriculture, forestry, mining, manufacturing and services.

**Mr Aubrey C Norton:** Mr Chairman, through you, I note here as well the development of an industrial park; could you state where the park will be established and what are the likely benefits to be derived to the community from this industrial park?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** I am advised that the industrial park will be established at the old Guyana Stores Facility and it will provide for the housing of a business incubator that will accommodate small business in the areas wood craft, panel doors and household fixtures.

**Mr Aubrey C Norton:** Mr Chairman, with all due respect to you, I born and grow up in Linden, you are talking about the Guyana Stores building as an industrial park, because as I understand an industrial site and an

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industrial park, you are talking about putting a few businesses in this old building?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Provisions are made for the refurbishing of the building; if the Honourable Member prefers I would say that it would be a facility that would accommodate a business incubation service, if you like.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mrs Holder

**Mrs Sheila VA Holder:** Mr Chairman, I would like to refer the Honourable Minister to Project Code 4400500 - Student Loan Fund - and ask whether or not he can give an assessment of the performance of these loans in the context of the benefits intended to be derived from this project as stated in the Profile 24

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, I would not have at my disposal and even if I were to have at my disposal, I might not be inclined to use the forum of a debate of the Estimates to provide a comprehensive evaluation or assessment of the effectiveness of the student Loan Programme. I suffice it to say that so far the programme has accommodated thousands - indeed tens of thousands of students being able to attend the University of Guyana. And by that measure alone I would venture to suggest that it has been a very effective programme.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr Norton.

**Mr Aubrey C Norton:** Mr Chairman, I return to the same Project Code 4501300, I recalled being told in this

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Assembly that that said building was for a call centre. Now I am trying to find out if that has been abandoned or they are going to have a call centre and an industrial park in this building.

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, I am advised that a portion of the building will still be used for the call centre. This is the information I have at my disposal at the current time if the Honourable Member would like additional information or further clarification, I will be delighted as always to provide it.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mrs Holder

**Mrs Sheila VA Holder:** I would like to ask the Honourable Minister a supplementary question to the same Project Code 4400500 - Student Loan - based on your answer does that mean that the Honourable Minister is comfortable or he thinks that the money of the people of this country is adequately being spent as a capital item for the purpose of exporting our educated people who benefit from this loan.

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, were I not satisfied that is not an appropriate use of public money, I would not have proposed it in the National Budget.  
*[Applause]*

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr Williams

**Mr Basil Williams:** Mr Chairman, might I respectfully refer the Honourable Minister to Project Code 1209400 -

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Millennium Challenge Threshold Programme - the Project Profile at Page 16 - Description of Project Item 4 - Guyana Office for Investment, Modernisation of Business Registration Systems and Establishment of a One-Stop Business Registration Facilitation Service and System - My question to the Honourable Minister is: would the current system of business name registration and companies incorporated in the Deeds Registry be affected by this modernisation?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, we recognise the need to conduct a thorough assessment of the procedures that are required in registering a business and indeed where areas are identified for improvement or for strengthening, we are indeed of the intention to take those actions. And so this project - Millennium Challenge Threshold Programme - is intended to cover a number of areas including areas associated with business facilitation and indeed including the area that the Honourable Member described. The detailed project activities are currently being defined by way of terms of reference that will lead to appropriate studies, et cetera. And where it is ascertained that interventions are required, to improve the process of business registration and indeed to improve other processes, the Honourable Member can be assured that we will be taking appropriate action.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mr Murray

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Mr Minister Project Code 4500900 - Guyana Sugar Corporation - could the

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Honourable Minister say, why there is no Project Profile in respect of such a large quantum of expenditure on such a large project a total sum of \$4,000,000,000? That is the first question.

My second question is: through you Sir, Mr Minister, am I right in concluding from your presentation that the Skeldon Ouput is projected at 38,500 tonnes of sugar in 2008 and if that conclusion on my part is accurate, could the Honourable Minister inform the National Assembly as to what percentage of the installed capacity at Skeldon this quantum of production would represent in the year 2008?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, if I were with your permission to answer the second half or to respond to the second half of the question first, I do not currently have at my disposal the information that the Honourable Member is seeking on the capacity utilisation on the new factory, but that information cold certainly be ascertained and shared with the Honourable Member.

In relation to his observation to the absence of a project profile, and I say this cautiously, I am advised that in recent years there has not been a project profile on this project, but I say it cautiously subject to correction. If the Honourable Member were to suggest that a project profile should be supplied, I would have no difficulty in agreeing with him and I would be delighted to share with him information associated with this project.

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**Mr Winston S Murray:** Thank you very much, Mr Minister. Through you Sir, the Government proposes according to this to make available to GUYSUCO the sum of \$1.4 billion in 2008; could the Minister kindly explain to the National Assembly whether this sum is being provided in light of GUYSUCO's inability to itself finance this sum of money from its own resources? That is the first question.

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, the answer to that question is no.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** So Mr Minister, if the answer is no, could you describe the nature of the relationship between the Government and GUYSUCO in relation to this specific sum of money?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, in fact GUYSUCO is in the process of making a number of critical investments aimed of course at increasing its productive capacity and increasing its efficiency. To this end, Mr Chairman, GUYSUCO has in fact participated in the preparation in a national action plan, which in fact was shared with the European Union as part of our submission to the European Union in our discussions on the subject of the accompanying measures, that is to say the measures that would accompany the changes that are currently being implemented in the European Union regime or access to preferential markets for our sugar. And as a part of that submission certain prioritised projects were identified including an upgrade to the



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Enmore factory and the construction of a packaging plant at Enmore. In my Budget Speech, the Honourable Member would recall that I mentioned that an amount of ... in fact I mentioned it in Paragraph 4.7 of the Budget Speech, I indicated that an amount of US \$7,000,000 is budgeted to be spent in 2008 on this same project that is to say the upgrade of the Enmore factory and commencement of the construction of a packaging plant and so this amount of \$1.4 billion relates to that US \$7,000,000, which is a project that was identified in the National Action Plan that was submitted to the European Union and indeed accepted by the European Union and that resulted in certain grants being provided to the Government of Guyana, they are described as sector support grants; those grants are disbursed to the Government of Guyana and this \$7,000,000 represents an amount out of that grant that has been approved by the European Union. This \$7,000,000 represents a disbursement by the Government of Guyana of \$7,000,000 out of that grant to GUYSUCO to commence this project.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Mr Chairman, through you, would the Minister not agree that this sum of money here is not part of the specific financing coming out from the EU, so it is not part of the EU resources. This is very specifically stated here as local cost so this is counterpart financing that is coming out from the Government of Guyana's own resources and surely that is different from

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the monies being made available from the European Union. Would you not agree, Mr Minister?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, in fact I would not agree and with the greatest of respect to the Honourable Member, I would say because of the manner in which this transaction is executed that is to say the grant is a grant which is called budget support grant, so the grant is a budget support grant to the Government of Guyana. It is disbursed to the Government of Guyana; it is reflected as grants received by the Government of Guyana and then an amount is provided in the budget as is the case here to be transferred to GUYSUCO.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Sir, let me say that I do not accept that for one moment, because I want to put it to the Minister that when you receive specific financing, you convert the specific financing into Guyana Dollars and you, yes, receive the specific financing and pass it on to the agency that is executing the project. But that is one aspect of the financing that is here, because in the layout of this particular profile you have specific financing of \$2,615,000,000 which are going to be drawn down from the resources made available by the EU and that you will pass on to GUYSUCO, but you are inputting out of Government resources and we cannot escape that reality, because this is here as local expenditure, you are inputting from out of governmental resources the sum of \$1.4 billion.

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Secondly, is the Minister saying given his earlier answer to the question - I posed a question asking the Minister whether he was making this money available, because GUYSUCO could not find it itself to inject it into the project and his answer was no. Is the Minister then saying that if it was necessary ... [*Interruption: 'Ask the question.'*] It is a question; don't you understand how questions are asked? Is the Minister then saying that GUYSUCO ... [*Interruption: 'This is a long, long story.'*] Well I am sorry; I just cannot help your understanding if it is too long for it. Is the Minister then saying that GUYSUCO, but for the Government's desire to input this money has the resources to have input it itself?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, once again, I say with the greatest of respect to the Honourable Member, I would be happy to discuss this matter in greater detail with the Honourable Member outside of the House, but I wish to emphasize, because it is important that this issue not be recorded inaccurately; I wish to emphasize that the amounts that the amounts that are shown as specific are not EU resources. In fact the amounts that are shown as specific comprised two other elements of the capital works being executed by GUYSUCO out of funds transferred by the Government to GUYSUCO and those two other elements are:

- the CDB Skeldon Project, which is primarily agricultural works to complete Skeldon; and

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- the Chinese Project Loan to complete the co-generation capability.

And so there are two amounts of \$1.182 billion and \$1.433 billion which will give you a total of \$2.615 billion, which are the specific allocations being disbursed under project loans and the Honourable Member is right in his description about how project loans would be treated; in this case the CDB Skeldon amount the Co-generation amount are project loans, so they are specific financing for a particular project and these amounts are reflected as specific in the case of the local, because of the nature of the budgetary support grants, these amounts are disbursed to the Central Government. They are not project loans or project grants; they are called budget support grants and so they are disbursed to the Government of Guyana and the Government of Guyana is now in turn budgeting a transfer to GUYSUCO to meet the cost of the project. Like I say, Mr Chairman, I would be happy to discuss the more technical details with the Honourable Member outside of this Honourable House if it would be of any assistance to him.

In relation to the other part of his question that is to say perhaps a revert to the earlier question that he had asked whether these funds are being provided because of GUYSUCO's ability or otherwise in relation to financing of these projects. I would say that when one speaks of ability to finance or inability to finance, one always gets into the issue of prioritisation; what is a

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higher priority than the other and so in a pure sense perhaps GUYSUCO would be able to finance this project, but at the expense of another priority that would be subordinated to it. So I do not want us to get into that debate. I would say that GUYSUCO is financing a number of capital interventions out of its own resources and these interventions are being financed out of the transfers that are being made for the specified purposes. But Mr Chairman, like I say, I would be delighted if the Honourable Member would be so inclined to discuss this issue further with him after this session or elsewhere or otherwise.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Mr Chairman, I want to say that I am gratified to the Minister for his answer and his invitation to discuss this matter further outside the halls of the National Assembly.

Nevertheless Sir, I have a final question for the Minister on this matter. Since it is my understanding, am I right Mr Minister that GUYSUCO is intended to be a commercial enterprise to function on the basis of profitability which is not a social sector organisation; then would it be right for me to assume that these resources or some part thereof that are being made available through the Government of Guyana to GUYSUCO are going to be repaid to the taxpayers of Guyana into the resources of the Treasury? That is my question, Sir.

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman ...

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**Mr Winston S Murray:** With interest according to my colleague.

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** ... in answer to the Honourable Member, Mr Chairman through you, the specific amount indicated that is say the \$2.6 billion that are coming out of loans that are project loans are in fact the subject of an on-lending agreement between the Government and GUYSUCO and GUYSUCO will in fact be repaying these amounts to the Government of Guyana with interest.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** And what about the other elements, Sir? Only those aspects; what about the other elements ... [*Noisy Interruption*] ... if you cannot bear with this; this is what this National Assembly is for, Sir. This is where I am supposed to come and ask questions and get answers and I object to the impatience of my colleagues.

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, if I may answer the Honourable Member's question very quickly; I am sensing growing anxiety in the Honourable House. In relation to the \$1.4 billion this is not the subject of an on-lending agreement between the Government and GUYSUCO.

**The Chairman:** The Honourable Member Mrs Holder

**Mrs Sheila VA Holder:** Mr Chairman, I would like to direct the Honourable Minister to Project Code 4500700 - NGO/Private/Public Sector Support Programme - the



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Profile indicates that there is a person intended to give some degree of guidance and direction to donors - USAID, Japanese and so on and this is for non-governmental sector/private/public and so on, will the Minister say where this person is situated and who he is?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, the person has been situated for some time in the Ministry of Finance and has been working on a number of bilateral interventions including the USAID PL 480 and a number of others that have emerged subsequently - Japanese grant aid, et cetera in providing support for these bilateral initiatives. The person is situated in the Ministry of Finance.

**Mrs Sheila VA Holder:** Who is he, Sir?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Chairman, the person is an employee who is situated within the Ministry of Finance. I need to be advised on the Parliamentary protocols which apply to these matters, but it is not a secret, but I would certainly outside of the House, out of respect perhaps for the person, I would not wish to disclose the name of such in this Honourable House, but there is no secret. This is an employee who is known and who works with the Ministry of Finance and I would be delighted to provide the name to the Honourable Member, but again out of respect for the individual ... in the first instance, subject to your guidance of course, I would suggest that it would be more appropriate if I would share this with the

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Honourable Member privately solely out of respect for the individual.

**Agency 03 - Ministry of Finance, Capital Expenditure - Agency Totals - \$8,766,979,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.**

**The Chairman:** Honourable Members, there are some other materials that we have to go through; there are three pieces of legislations so what we will do, it looked at one stage as if we will be able to finish in time before we take the suspension, but it is getting on now and I gather from the tone of the debate that Members wish to have the suspension at this time. So we will suspend for the usual half an hour and we will return.

**Assembly resumed**

**17:42H - SUSPENSION OF SITTING**

**18:22H - RESUMPTION OF SITTING**

Honourable Members, we have completed consideration of the Estimates, that is the Committee of Supply for the year 2008.

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The Honourable Minister of Finance, would you please make the report?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Speaker, I beg to report that the Committee of Supply has considered the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2008 and has approved of them as printed

Question -

That this National Assembly approves of the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2008 of a total sum of \$106,506,904,000 excluding \$12,748,184,000 which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the Schedule and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to make further provisions in respect of finance.

**Put and agreed to**

**Motion carried**

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS NOS. 13 (n)  
and 54**

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**The Speaker:** Hon Prime Minister, would you move the suspension of the Standing Orders or the Honourable Minister of Finance?

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Speaker, I was not sure; on behalf of the Prime Minister

**The Speaker:** You can move it in you own right.

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Speaker, with your leave, I move that Standing Orders Nos. 13 (n) and 54 be suspended to enable the Appropriate Bill 2008 to be introduced at this stage.

Question -

That Standing Orders Nos. 13 (n) and 54 be suspended

**put and agreed to**

**Motion carried**

**BILL**

**First, Second and Third Readings**

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**ITEM 2 - APPROPRIATION BILL 2008 - Bill No.**  
**2/2008**

*A Bill intituled, an Act to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2008, 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.*

**The Speaker:** The Honourable Minister of Finance

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Speaker, in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Article 171 of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended that the Appropriation Bill 2008 - Bill No. 2/2008 be considered by the National Assembly and I now present the Bill to the Assembly and moved that it be read the First time.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Bill read the First Time**

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**The Speaker:** The Honourable Minister of Finance

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Speaker, I move that the Appropriation Bill 2008 - Bill No. 2/2008 be read a Second time

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Bill read the Second time.**

**The Speaker:** The Honourable Minister of Finance

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Speaker, I move that the Appropriation Bill 2008 - Bill No. 2/2008 be read a Third time and passed as printed

**Question put and agreed to**

**Bill read the Third time and passed as printed.**

**The Speaker:** Thank you very much. Honourable Members, we now have for consideration two Bills rising out of the Budget and these have engaged the House in discussion and debate

**BILLS**

**Second Readings**

**ITEM 3 - INCOME TAX (AMENDMENT) BILL  
2008 - Bill No. 1/2008 published on 2008-02-06**

*A Bill intituled, an Act to amend the Income  
Tax Act*

We will not proceed with the Second reading of this Bill, which was published on 6 February 2008.

The Honourable Minister of Finance

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Speaker, I rise to move that the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill 2008 - Bill No. 1/2008 be read a Second time and in so doing, it is not my intention to give extensive remarks.

The subject matter of this Bill is of course the adjustment of the income tax threshold - the threshold for personal income tax that is to say, to adjust the income threshold from \$28,000 to \$35,000 or \$336,000 per annum as it is written in the Income Tax Act to \$420,000 per annum in the various sections in the Income Tax Act that is to say, Sections 8, 20 and 60.

Mr Speaker, this measure was announced in fact by Government some months ago and was elaborated further

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in the Budget Speech and believe even featured very significantly during the course of the debate on the National Budget. So like I say, it is not my intention to offer at this stage extensive remarks in the Bill except to say that I commend the Bill to the House and I move that it be read the Second time.

### **Question proposed**

**The Speaker:** The Honourable Member Mr Murray

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Mr Speaker, I rise on behalf of the People's National Congress Reform-One Guyana to express our support for this Income Tax (Amendment) Bill 2008. Sir, we wish that it would have been higher and better, but we have to accept small mercies and be grateful for them. So Sir, without further ado, let me immediately say that we support this Income Tax (Amendment) Bill.

My only other comment is that I noted the Minister makes it with respect with effect from year of assessment 2009, which means year of income 2008 although in fact the nine percent increase was given with effect from 1 January 2007 and it would have been our hope and expectation that accompanying that increase would have been the relief. We would have liked the relief to have been simultaneous with that so that there could have been



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a nice little neat bundle for the workers, but nevertheless we accept the small mercies. Thank you very much, Sir. We support the measure. *[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr Ramjattan

**Mr Khemraj Ramjattan:** In another forum I would have simply indicated and you would appreciate this that I have concurred with what Mr Murray indicated just now. But just for the purposes of the record, I would wish to say that yes, we support small mercies and we support this Amendment that raises the threshold to the level it is presently as against what it used to be. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. *[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you Honourable Member

I was not inviting you Honourable, but I pause to see if you would rise and you did.

The Honourable Member Mr Franklin

**Mr Everall N Franklin:** Mr Speaker, on behalf of the Guyana Action Party/ Rise Organise And Rebuild, we too support the changes that have occurred to give some relief no matter how small it is to the working people of this

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country. However, we look forward to see in the very near future an expedientially revised amount that would really pull our people out of some of the poverty they find themselves in. So without anything else I support the Amendment.

**The Speaker:** Thank you Honourable Member.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Bill read the Second time.**

**The Speaker:** Honourable Members, the House will resolve itself into Committee to consider the Bill clause by clause

**IN COMMITTEE**

**Clauses 1, 2, 3 and 4**

**Question proposed and put**

**Clauses 1, 2, 3, and 4 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill**

**Bill considered and approved**

**Assembly Resumed**

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**Bill reported without amendment, read the Third time and passed as printed.**

**Assembly resumed**

**The Speaker:** Thank you very much.

Honourable Members, we can now move to the next item on the Order Paper

**ITEM 4 - EXCISE TAX (Amendment) BILL 2008 - Bill No. 3/2008 published on 2008-02-29**

*A Bill intituled, an Act to amend the Excise Tax Act 2005*

The Honourable Minister of Finance

**Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:** Mr Speaker, as in the previous instance, it is not my intention to present extensive remarks on this Bill; simply to say that this Bill also reflects the legislative enactments that is required to give effect to an announcement made in the Budget speech and that is to say and announcement in relation to the procedure that is required to be followed in making

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amendments to the regulations made under the Excise Tax Act 2005.

Mr Speaker, in effect this Amendment resembles very closely an Amendment that was enacted to the Value-Added Tax Act early last year, which allowed for amendments to be made in that case to the specified Schedules to the Value-Added Tax Act to be amended by way of delegated legislations that would be subject to a negative resolution instead of an affirmative resolution. In the current case the procedure that is currently stipulated in the Excise Tax Act for amending the regulations made under that Act is a procedure that provides for such amendments to be subject to affirmative resolution.

This Amendment that is currently that is before the House seeks to change that procedure somewhat by substituting the requirement by affirmative resolution with the requirement of a negative resolution, which as was argued when the Value-Added Tax (Amendment) Act was presented before this House and indeed was passed in this House preserves the objective of transparency, because the Orders or Regulations would still be required to come to this House, would still be subject to scrutiny by this House, but allows the Minister responsible for Finance to be more responsive in a timely way should the need for amendments arise. And so Mr Speaker, like I say, the Bill before us resembles very closely a Bill that did sought to do exactly the same in relation to the Value-

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Added Tax Bill and I am not going to detain this House any further with more detailed remarks except to commend the Bill to the House and to move that it be read a second time.

**Question proposed.**

**The Speaker:** Thank you Honourable Member.

The Honourable Member Mr Murray

**Mr Winston S Murray:** Mr Speaker, I agree with the Minister of Finance that this Bill closely resembles the one brought during 2007 which amended the regulations to the Value-Added Tax Act and provided instead of affirmative resolution procedurally for amendments to be made by way of negative resolution. It would be recalled, Sir, that on that occasion, we objected to a change in that procedure. I heard the Minister say that the principle of transparency is maintained even though the procedure is changed from affirmative resolution to negative resolution. Maybe indeed some element of transparency remained, but I must say, Sir, that in our respectful view transparency is a little diminished when we employ the procedure of negative resolution as the basis for transparency.

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In the case of affirmative resolution, Sir, the Minister is obliged to bring the Order to the National Assembly for debate and for approval by the National Assembly before it takes effect. Under a negative resolution procedure, the Minister makes the order and it takes effect upon the making of the order and is laid in the National Assembly after this order is made and indeed brought into effect. The element of transparency comes into it because there is a certain time frame within which anyone in the House may if he has a problem with anything in the order made, he may move a resolution for amendment to the order, in other words, to negative the order that was laid. May I suggest, Sir, very respectfully to the Honourable Minister that this could not be deemed as transparent a way to proceed as if there was a requirement to come prior to making of the order and giving it effect. That the representatives of the people would have had an opportunity before the Minister brought any change in force, to have had an opportunity to debate the measure, pronounce upon it, make proposals for changes before it became effective. And even though that opportunity exist post fact, the fact of the matter is that it reduces transparency.

The second thing I want to say is this. I see the Minister going to the Standing Orders and he will point me to the fact that the Standing Orders has certain requirements for a period of time within which motions must be laid in this National Assembly before they are debated, but Sir, he

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would also know that the Standing Orders make provision for the Minister with the consent of the Speaker to ask for an abridgement of the period and within twenty-four hours could in fact have a motion debated in the National Assembly once it is laid in the National Assembly so that there is nothing prohibiting us for going the procedure of affirmative resolution. The Government has that flexibility. The side that does not have that flexibility is the opposition, because the opposition has to have some period of notice before we can give effect. So I would suggest two things that -

- (i) the transparency is diminished somewhat in fact significantly in my view by not allowing a prior debate and discussion on what the Minister proposes to; and
- (ii) I do not believe that there is any serious inhibition to the Minister taking measures in a timely manner to give effect to whatever changes he wants, because the Standing Orders makes provision for exemption of notice in defined circumstances and I believe that they adequately allow the minister to come here and seek an affirmative resolution.

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In those circumstances, I do not wish to delay the House, but I wish to say that we of the People's National Congress Reform-One Guyana cannot support this measure because of the diminution in the case transparency element in that new procedure. Thank you, Sir. *[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr Ramjattan

**Mr Khemraj Ramjattan:** Again, Mr Speaker, I wish to concur with the remarks made by Mr Winston Murray on the issue here and to take objection to what the Honourable Minister of Finance just mentioned that we are going to have a similarity that he is trying to indicate of position whether it be negative as against affirmative.

Some time ago, I did make a presentation on this side which indicated that through these instrumentalities, this Administration is eroding transparency. I had indicated that with certain regulations, which were said to be going to be changed and I have indicated the arguments there, but I want to further indicate here that this presumption of legality of regulations when the process is through a negative resolution is what we are afraid of as Mr Murray indicated and made quite clear, there is this presumption that comes immediately upon its making whereas



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affirmative resolution there a holder - a staying of it - until we in Parliament have that debate done and deliberation done and by-the-way we can then go and consult largely before *ex ante* as it were rather than what we have here now, it is a re-post and so it is going to be obviously a diminution of transparency.

Now I could understand, because indeed Parliaments of the world and the British Parliament itself created this procedure for certain circumstances. One of which is literally for contingencies as it were and I do not know if taxation matters or lowering of taxes, because by-the-way this also gives in my humble opinion, powers for the Minister to increase that which gives him the power to decrease also gives him the power to increase. Supposing he now comes with an increase of taxation through the negative resolution method and so we are not in a position to debate, deliberate and consult prior to making a decision in this august Assembly. So in that context, this procedural change is but an erosion of transparency and to a large extent too the reasons and motivations behind whatever the Minister might want to do, because we are not going to know of them until of course it is through an affirmative method we are going to know. And knowing the practice when it comes to negative resolution that it is sometimes largely overlooked by Parliamentarians in their busy schedules and that is what makes it all the more something that encroaches in that transparency I am talking about. And so we in the

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Alliance For Change and those grounds would want to object to this methodology being implemented for taxation matters. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr Franklin

**Mr Everall N Franklin:** Mr Speaker, I would say, I think the ayes have it. Thank you

**The Speaker:** Thank you Honourable Member

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Bill read the Second time.**

**The Speaker:** Honourable Members, the Assembly will resolve itself into Committee to consider the Bill clause by clause

**IN COMMITTEE**

**Clauses 1, 2 and 3**

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**Question put**

**Clauses 1, 2 and 3 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.**

**Bill considered and approved**

**Assembly Resumed**

**Bill reported without amendment, read the Third time and passed as printed.**

**The Speaker:** Honourable Members, thank you very much. This brings us to an end of our business for today and the end of our deliberations in relation to the Budget.

I want to thank all Members, thank my staff, thank the press and all those who participated in bringing this event together. Thank you very much.

**Hon Samuel AA Hinds:** I want to join too in thanking you and all who supported this Budget debate and I move that the House stands adjourned to a date to be fixed.

**The Speaker:** Thank you very much. The House is so adjourned.

*Adjourned Accordingly At 18:47H*