

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2015-2016) OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

53RD Sitting

Tuesday, 13TH December, 2016

The Assembly convened at 10.20 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS

MOTION

BUDGET SPEECH 2017 – MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2017

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

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

AND WHEREAS the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana for the financial year 2017 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2016-11-28.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2017, of a total sum of two hundred and thirty billion, three hundred and forty nine million and seventy nine thousand dollars (**\$230,349,079,000**), **excluding nineteen billion and seven hundred and seventy four million, and eighty seven thousand dollars (\$19,774,087,000)** which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the undermentioned schedule, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to make further provision in respect of finance.” [*Minister of Finance*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Assembly will now resolve itself into Committee of Supply to begin consideration of the Estimates of Expenditure for the year 2017.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we will proceed in accordance with the Sub-Committee’s Resolution and Schedule. All of us would have had the Schedule.

I have a few remarks to make in relation to the Schedule. The first matter that we will consider is as set out in that Schedule. It allows us two hours to complete all of the work which is set out on that Schedule for this period 10 a.m. to 12.00 p.m. At the end of that time, I will propose the question. I hope all Hon. Members would be able to make their comments that they so wish because, at that time, I will move the question. Thank you.

Opposition Chief Whip [Ms. Teixeira]: Mr. Chairman, if you would allow me, the two hours have to be from the time that we commence the Schedule. I believe it is 10.20 a.m. so we will go to 12.20 p.m., for two hours.

Mr. Chairman: Is that a question or a statement, Ms. Teixeira?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, it is a question.

Mr. Chairman: If it were a question of whether the Speaker intends to maintain the two hours, of course. This morning, we made some allowances for Members who may have had difficulty in getting here on time.

Ms. Teixeira: I appreciate that, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I understand that and I will not rob the House of the 20 minutes, as you put it.

Ms. Teixeira: It is only because you said 12.00 p.m. that I raised the question. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Members will kindly turn to Volume 1 of the *Estimates of the Public Sector* and turn to pages 48 and 49.

Agency: 05 Ministry of the Presidency

Current Expenditure

Programme: 051 – Policy Development and Administration - \$2,271,584,000

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There is an increase of 11 employees and the cost moving from \$798,159,000 to \$899,641,000. Could the Hon. Minister indicate the names, designations and emoluments of these 11 new employees?

Minister of State [Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon]: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I thank the Hon. Member for the question. This increase of 11 persons in this category is a result of several things which have occurred and which we anticipate in 2017.

First of all, the increase in the sum of \$101,482,000 that covers the expenses for those at the category of persons has to do with the removal... Mr. Chairman, it is a long explanation which I wish to give to the Hon. Member. First of all, it deals with the removal of 22 persons under the Civil Defence Commission (CDC). Secondly, it has to do with five persons who were transitioned to the fixed establishment in 2016. Thirdly, there was a budgetary shortfall which is now being properly and adequately addressed. Fourthly, the increase in wages and salaries and employment of 52 new employees and the re-allocation of 41 persons as follows: (a) five to the fixed establishment; (b) 22 to the Defence and National Security; (c) 10 to the Social Cohesion,

resulting in a net increase of 11.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, if I may interrupt the Minister, we are dealing with Programme: 051 - Policy Development and Administration - and the 11 persons that I am asking the question to get the information on are directly related to this Programme and not to any other Programme.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I have answered the question and, if the Hon. Member wishes to have further clarification, he can do so. Four persons will be for the Ministry of Communities. In fact, what we have is a net increase of 11 employees because of movements in and out of the Programme.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, my question has not been answered. My question was for the names, designations and emoluments of the 11 persons.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Because of the movements in and out, as I said, what the Hon. Member would probably wish to have would be...because the net inflow would have been 52 and then there would be an outflow of 41. I can provide the Hon. Member with the names of the 52 persons who came in, their designations and their salaries. I will provide the House with that before the end of this morning.

Bishop Edghill: We will be appreciative of having that information earliest but I would have thought that the Minister would have had that information available.

Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: There is no allocation for the Office of the Commissioner of Information. Last year, there was a \$36,954,000 allocation and there is zero. Could the Hon. Minister indicate how the Commissioner of Information's Office would be financed in the 2017 Budget?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The Commissioner of Information's function has been properly placed under the Office of the Prime Minister and it would be reflected there in these Estimates.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item, look at the Office of the Prime Minister. There is no subvention for the Office of the Commissioner of Information.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I suppose that, when the Prime Minister deals with his portfolio, that matter will be addressed. What I am saying is that the function has been moved from under the

Ministry of the Presidency and is now placed specifically under the Prime Minister and is catered for there.

Bishop Edghill: At line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: The revised figure was \$50 million and the budgeted figure is \$50 million. I would like the Hon. Minister to indicate at what date the revised figure was set at?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: There is an increase in the sum of \$1 million in this line item. It is to be noted that the increase in the allocation of 2017 will see the extensive maintenance in keeping with the Ministry's mandate of enhancement of the physical infrastructure. It was recognised that some of these buildings are in a state of disrepair and will require significant maintenance. The sum had been increased by \$1 million to deal with that.

Bishop Edghill: For the purpose of clarity, I was asking the Minister to indicate... We are dealing with figures that are revised for 2016 to compare to 2017.

10.35 a.m.

I am seeking to get from the Minister the cut-off date for the revised figures of 2016 because we are not finish with the fiscal year. What was the date the figures were revised as of?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, these figures deal with the Government's expenditure for the year 2017. I think the Hon. Minister of Finance had made it clear that we have to be ready to start rolling out these projects by the 1st January, 2017. So I cannot be of any further help to the Hon. Member. This is basically what I can say on the matter.

Ms. Teixeira: We can point to several heads and I will just use one as an example. Line item 6116 – Contacted Employees: I want to remind the Hon. Minister that the 2016 figures are under scrutiny for implementation and, therefore, \$798,159,000 was budgeted in 2016. The exact figures are revised of 2016 and, therefore, when was the cut-off date for these figures before publishing these documents?

Secondly, if it is so that these figures are accurate, are you saying to this House that you have no money to pay your staff under this head for November and December?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, as I understand it, these figures will cover up to December of 2016. So my understanding is that there will be funds, as allocated here, in the line item for payments to the persons identified.

Mr. Ali: If I may take the Hon. Minister back to line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings - the 2016 revised figure is \$50 million, which is the same figure in the Budget. The question is that we have not concluded the financial year 2016 as yet. How did you arrive at this \$50 million? Is it projected or is it actual expenditure to date? And, if you are projecting it based on a contract, how are you sure that this work would be concluded before December to make the payment? You cannot keep the resources after December.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, these are projections for expenditure in 2017 and the 2016 sums are indicated here. The sum allocated for 2017...

Mr. Ali: It is the revised sum, Minister.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I am dealing with the sum that is being budgeted for here. The revised sum is the same as was budgeted for. And, therefore, what we are saying is that we will deal with the maintenance in 2016 with those sums that have been allocated. The 2017 figures are basically projections as to what we intend to spend on this line item.

Mr. Ali: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: May I seek to get clarification? I am asking the Hon. Minister whether he can provide the House with the details in relation to the 2016 revised amount – the contractor, the contracted sum, and what tendering process was used in the selection of those contractors for the revised \$50 million?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Yes, Mr. Chairman; that can be provided to the Hon. Member and I want to give him the assurance that all of these contracts are properly advertised. They are tendered and there are persons who have been selected. We have followed the procurement process in having them placed on these works. So, we can, in fact, provide that information for you.

Mr. Ali: When?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: It will be before the end of today or probably tomorrow the latest but we can give you that information. That is available.

Mr. Ali: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Would the Hon. Minister give us a guarantee in the House that no amount in the revised sum of \$50 million would be paid beyond the end of the Financial Year December, 2016?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I wish to give the Hon. Member the assurance that, on this side of the House, we follow, very scrupulously, the provisions of the law. And that the information which the Hon. Member requires will be provided, all of it in full. In fact, I have given the instructions to all of the entities under the Ministry that there will be full and frank disclosure of every aspect of Government's business in this House.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: For the year 2017, budgeted is \$80 million. Could the Hon. Minister tell this House if this sum has taken into consideration the Government's appeal for conservation?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: It does take into consideration our appeal for conservation. In fact, a number of the Ministries, not only my Ministry, have been given clear instructions at the Ministry of Finance that this has to be a year of conservation; we have to conserve. Therefore, the use of electricity in Government buildings and departments will be seriously and scrupulously monitored and the sums of money which have been allocated to us are what we will have to live within the confines of. So, it will require some amount of adjustment in our thinking and planning and the way in which we do our business in the Ministry.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you for the answer. There is an increase under this allocation of \$7 million. So I do not know if are conserving how is it that we will be spending \$7 million more than what was spent last year.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Yes. Sir, what has happened was that the budgetary requirement for electricity charges in 2016 was partially met in 2015. However, there is no such arrangement for electricity charges in 2017, resulting in the full amounts to be paid by the Ministry. So, this is why that is so and, as I said, it will require some serious amount of conservation on our part to ensure that the Government's business is completed.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item, is the Hon. Minister indicating to this House that the prepaid electricity bills for 2016 were in 2015?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Yes, Sir.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6281 – Security Services: There is a whopping increase from \$55 million in 2016 to \$80,116,000 in 2017. Could the Hon. Minister indicate the venues to be secured, the contractors engaged and the process of procurement for these contracts?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: There is an increase in the sum of \$25 million in this line item and it has to do with several things. First of all, for the new minimum wage, we have catered for that by the private sector for the security employees. Secondly, there are some new locations which are guarded. These are the Acting Permanent Secretary, the Commissioner of the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission, the Head of the Department of the Environment and the vehicle holding yard on Mandela Avenue. These are the new matters, and the companies that have been identified for this are Brans Security Services, Supreme Security Services Inc. and Calibre Security Services Ltd.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, part of the question was not answered. What is the procurement process used?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: These are companies that have bidden for contracts in the national tendering process. Additionally, because the security is something which the persons who are being secured have to be satisfied with the quality of service, they have actually had a choice in recommending to the Ministry the entity they would wish to have secure and protect them. And that is how we have arrived at these companies.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I would just like the Hon. Member to confirm that these contractors were sole sourced and not advertised and that there was no competitive bidding.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: As I said, these companies are companies that have actually made bids for contracts in Government entities all across the country. Yes, in fact, they were shortlisted and the persons who they are protecting identified them as the companies that they have the confidence in to protect them.

Bishop Edghill: I come back to line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. There is no provision made for the Presidential Guard Service under this line item. Could the Hon. Member indicate how the presidential guard service would be dealt with?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The Presidential Guard Service is properly placed under the Ministry of Public Security, where it quite rightly belongs.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, there again, in the perusal of the Estimates, there is no provision under the Ministry of Public Security for the Presidential Guard Service.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: It is there.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support: There is an increase of six staff. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us what the positions are that have been created and filled?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: These six persons have transitioned from contract employment to the fixed establishment and they are three Accounts Clerks, one Typist Clerk, one Office Assistant and one Clerk II General.

Ms. Teixeira: Could I go back to line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations? Is the Hon. Member therefore admitting that, by the removal of the Presidential Guard Service from the Ministry of the Presidency, this is the main cost saving section of the entire head, because your figure has reduced from \$2,575,557,000 to \$2,295,647,000? If I remove the \$300 million plus approximately for the Presidential Guard Service, that accounts for the so-called savings in the Ministry. Is that correct?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: No. That is not correct. That is a part of the answer. The full answer is that the sum of \$44 million is basically what we are looking at and the reduction comes from the removal of the Presidential Guard Service being redirected to the Guyana Police Force, the Office of the Commissioner of Information being placed under the Office of the Prime Minister, and the cost for the Guyana Energy Agency (GEA) was budgeted for under this line item for the period January to March, 2016. The GEA is no longer included under the Ministry of the Presidency. It is under the Ministry of Public Infrastructure.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you very much for clarifying. There are actually no savings.

10.50 a.m.

What you have done is jiggle and moved sections into other agencies. That is not saving. This is just a comment.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I did not say it was saving. I said that there were either increases or decreases in the line item. "Savings" was the word of the Hon. Member.

Programme: 051 – Policy Development and Administration - \$2,271,584,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 051 - Policy Development and Administration – \$496,000,000

Bishop Edghill: Project code 1214100 – Office and Residence of the President: Could the Hon. Minister indicate the works to be done, the contractor engaged and the procurement process that resulted in that contractor being engaged?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, there are two rollover projects – one for the Cabinet room and the other for the fence and security features at the complex of the Ministry of the Presidency. The projects were advertised. The contractor for the Cabinet room is Mr. R. Bassoo and Sons and the contractor for the fence is JPN Contracting Inc.

Bishop Edghill: Project code 3301100 – Lands and Surveys: Could the Hon. Minister indicate where the lands are that would be surveyed and the contractor engaged for the survey?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, these are cadastral surveys that are required as part of the responsibility of the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission. The surveys, as I understand it, would be done by the surveyors of the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission. The project includes the production of cadastral and occupational surveys, the acquisition of survey equipment as well as the rehabilitation of the rural office of the Commission in New Amsterdam.

Bishop Edghill: Project 2507900 – Purchase of Equipment: There is an allocation of \$38 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us what is to be procured and for which location?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I have a list of the equipment to be purchased that I can provide the Hon. Member but I can say to him that the major items would be 26 computers and office furniture – executive chairs, desks and cubicles. I can give the Hon. Member the list which would include all of the items to be purchased and the cost of the items.

Bishop Edghill: Project code 2405200 – Land Transport: Could the Minister indicate to this House what vehicles are to be purchased, how many and to be used by whom?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, these are vehicles for His Excellency's fleet of vehicles. We will be replacing some of the aging vehicles. These are four cars and one land cruiser. Additionally, our intention is to have, at the Ministry, a fleet of vehicles which is owned by the Ministry that can be used by heads of states when they visit, so that we do not have the uncertain situation of having to rent private vehicles when we have visiting heads of states, but have vehicles that are properly identified and maintained. When visiting heads of states come, we could be assured of the fleet and the quality of the maintenance.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I thank the Hon. Member for his answer. Under the same project code 2405200 – Land Transport - could the Hon. Minister provide us with an inventory of the stock of vehicles currently under usage at the Ministry of the President and whom they are assigned to?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Do you want the fleet of the Ministry of the Presidency or of the President? We can provide you with the fleet of vehicles. They number 142 but some have been taken out of service because of the state of disrepair in which we found them. Those would be sold once we have gone over the process of having them boarded.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, under project code 1701700 – Minor Works - \$95 million – in the legend, it states the project entails “Provision for developmental, humanitarian and other activities.” Could the Hon. Minister advise this House on what comprises the projections for the \$95 million and does this include bicycles, boats, buses and expandable boots (four Bs)? Are those included in the \$95 million for Minor Works? Please remember also that you had cut this budget in 2012.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, in 2015 and 2016, the sum that was allocated is the same as we are allocating in 2017. These sums are basically used at the discretion of His Excellency. It is allocated for educational funds, educational trusts, developmental projects and humanitarian activities.

Ms. Teixeira: I appreciate the discretion of the President. However, in this House, everyone comes under scrutiny. Therefore, I would like to be guided as to what are the parameters or areas that will be covered by this \$95 million. The advice you gave is rather broad and ambiguous.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I said educational trusts, developmental projects and humanitarian activities that are in the discretion of His Excellency. I can go no further than that.

Mr. Nandlall: Project code 2405200 – Land Transport: The Hon. Member indicated to us a few moments ago that the Government intends to or is in the process of acquiring a fleet of vehicles which is intended to be used to move around foreign heads of states when they are in Guyana. Could the Hon. Member explain to us what use will be put to those vehicles when heads of states are not around and how many of such vehicles are going to be acquired?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I did indicate that there are four cars and one land cruiser to be acquired. These vehicles, once they are not in use, are mothballed and placed in a secure place for use by various heads of states and persons of that level when they come to visit Guyana.

Programme: 051 - Policy Development and Administration – \$496,000,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 052 – Defence and National Security - \$287,597,000

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: By our count, it shows that this line item would have 22 additional staff. Would the Minister provide this House with the names, designations, remuneration as well as the process that was used for the recruitment of these new staff? Was it advertised and, if so, when?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, these are not new staff. These are the staff of the Civil Defence Commission, who have been moved from one programme to the other. I can give you the designations and salaries for these persons.

Mr. Gill: Mr. Chairman, line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister please give details of maintenance works, methods and procedures of procurement, when advertised and how many contractors were selected?

11.05 a.m.

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, this allocation is for the maintenance of two buildings, one of the buildings is the National Intelligence Centre which is, as you are aware, one of our premiere security and intelligence analysis agency. Therefore, the persons who have been identified to work on that would have been persons who had been security cleared from the time the centre was built. That has not been changed and, therefore, the same contractors will be used because they were security cleared.

The same applies for the Civil Defence Commission (CDC) building. The contractors that have been identified are people who have been security cleared for some time. That is as much as I can say. It is a security matter, but if the Hon. Member insists, I can provide the names of the contractors.

Mr. Gill: I thank the Minister for his explanation. Line item 6231, Fuel and Lubricants: The allocation has increased significantly from \$6.5 million to \$10.5 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain the reason for this increase?

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: This is an increase of \$4 million. Previously, the Department was catered for under the Ministry of the Presidency (MOTP) and the old fuel and lubricants expenditure is now being dealt with and that is why it is there.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6294, Other: There is an increase by \$60 million over the Revised Budget for 2016. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House what the items are under this line item that brought the allocation to \$100 million – a breakdown?

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: This is the cost of security operations that are undertaken by the National Intelligence Centre (NIC). It also includes the security vetting of persons who are engaged or employed in national security matters and have access to certain persons who require particular vetting. That is what this sum is intended to cover.

Bishop Edghill: May I further enquire of the Hon. Minister if this allocation includes polygraph testing?

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: Yes, it does include polygraph testing.

Bishop Edghill: So you are following through with that?

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: Yes.

Mr. Gill: Line item 6281, Security Services: The allocation for security services is now \$2 million compared the 2016 Budget where it was \$0. Could the Hon. Minister provide a breakdown for this additional amount for security services?

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: Security services were never catered for in the past for the National Emergency Centre at Timehri. This sum is now being allocated to cater for security at that feature. Clearly, it is an inadequate sum, but we will work with what we have.

Mr. Gill: Line item 6302, Training (Including Scholarships): The allocation has been increased from \$2.5 million to \$17.5 million. Could the Hon. Minister provide a breakdown of the training and the beneficiaries?

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: This is the Civil Defence Commission's (CDC's) training and it is training that is undertaken all across the country in the 10 Administrative Regions. It is an increase of \$15 million because we expect and do anticipate that there will be an intensification of the defence and disastrous preparedness training. In addition, some of Guyana's international obligations will require intensified training at the level of the Civil Defence Commission. This is why we are catering for those types of training under this head.

Programme: 052 - Defence and National Security - \$287,597,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 052 - Defence and National Security - \$59,000,000

Bishop Edghill: Project code 2405200, Land Transport: \$22 million is allocated and I have noticed in the Legend the description of this vehicle as a “bucket truck”. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us how a “bucket truck” would fit into Defence and National Security?

Lt. Col (Ret’d) Harmon: The bucket truck is an articulated vehicle that allows for the repairs and maintenance of the Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras that is a part of the NIC arrangement. The truck will be used to go to higher levels to be able to make repairs to that. This, in the wider scheme of things, will eventually fit into the bigger picture that is being dealt with by the Ministry of Public Security, under the Smart City Project.

Mr. Gill: Project code 2507900, Purchase of Equipment: There is an allocation of \$17.5 million. Could the Hon. Minister please detail the equipment to be purchased under this project code?

Lt. Col (Ret’d) Harmon: The purchase would be Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras, the mountain tools, pole brackets, integrated systems, pole mounts, midspans and installation tools, all of which are for the CCTV camera coverage of the country.

Programme: 052 - Defence and National Security - \$59,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 053 - Public Service Management - \$1,143,177,000

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6116, Contracted Employees: There is an increase by five, in terms of numbers 38-43, which is a 13% increase. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to provide this House with the names, designations and emoluments of the 43 employees listed under this category?

Lt. Col (Ret’d) Harmon: Yes, I can provide that list for the Hon. Member with the names, designations and salaries.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much Hon. Minister. Line item 6134, National Insurance: There is an increase in the number of employees from 50 to 55, but there is a decrease in the National Insurance Scheme (NIS) contributions for these 55 employees. It is a significant decrease of about 20%. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to explain this to the House?

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: My understanding is that there is a decrease. The decrease is due to the retirement of a Training Officer and an Office Assistant with effect from 1st September, 2016.

Mr. G. Persaud: I think that we need to check that line item because there is an increase by 5 employees and there is a decrease by two, but yet, there is a decrease by over \$200,000 with regards to the NIS Employers' Contributions in 2016, as against what is projected for 2017.

Line item 6272, Electricity Charges: In 2016 there was an allocation for \$10,728,000; in 2017 there is an allocation of \$17 million. If the Value Added Tax (VAT) is to be added to the allocation in 2016 it would have been \$1.5 million. Could the Hon. Minister say to this House what the \$5.5 million increase will cater for? Apparently, this bit of conserve has not affected the Ministry.

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: As I had indicated earlier, there were some changes in the way these electricity charges were being dealt with. With respect to the Department of Public Service, there is some increase because of the works which had to be done at the Department of Public Service. The House would recall that a room which was used to store old books, *et cetera* was converted to a place where the commissions of inquiry sit and take evidence from the public. That room is now air-conditioned hence, the increase in the consumption of electricity.

11.20 a.m.

The Training Division of the Department of Public Service has also been upgraded and many of the training facilities are now of a very high standard. So much so that, the Canadian project which was done across the region, the training could have been done there in that facility, which I believe, was a very big improvement and a plus for us in Guyana. So these are some of the things that represent the increases that would have occurred under this line item.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): In 2015, it was \$193 million; in budget 2016, \$904 million was spent according to the projected figures - as you have said Minister Harmon; and \$910 million for 2017. Could the Hon. Minister advise on the number of students we have studying overseas on scholarship - countries, numbers, disciplines and how many new scholarships will be offered in 2017?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I could give the Hon. Member a general sense of the numbers and, thereafter, I can provide the details of the courses that they are attending, the number of students at each of these learning institutions and the levels.

In fact, we have, at the PhD level, nine persons who are aboard on training; at the Masters level, we have 75 persons who are aboard on training; and at the Bachelor's Degree level, 186 persons on training and these are persons who are training overseas. At the local level, we have approximately 705 students who are at various institutions of learning in the country.

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6273 – Water Charges: We noted that, from an allocation revised, \$2.7 million in 2016 and the allocation for 2017 is \$1.6 million. As I said before, there is an increase in staffing in this entity. Could the Hon. Minister explain this decrease? Would they be doing anything less or is there a modernised element in place?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, actually there was a credit balance in 2015 that came forward to 2016 and this is what is responsible for this decrease. It is a credit balance that we are actually making use of.

Programme: 053 – Public Service Management - \$1,143,177,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 053 – Public Service Management - \$102,000,000

Mr. G. Persaud: Project code 1214400 – Buildings: The Legend states “Rehabilitation of buildings” and “Provision of consultancy”. Would the Hon. Minister share with the House the intended scope of work and what is the type of consultancy?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, the consultancy is basically for the drawings and documents to be produced in the rehabilitation of the two the buildings at Ogle which are to be used by the Staff College.

Mr. G. Persaud: A follow-up: Would the Hon. Minister share with the House how much would be for the building and how much would be for the consultancy?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, the consultancy is \$6 million and the buildings would be \$49 million.

Mr. G. Persaud: A follow-up: I want to thank the Minister for the response given, but Sir a quick Math gives me \$55 million instead of \$60 million.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Yes, the Hon. Member is correct. There is an additional amount of \$5 million which is to be used for the construction of a storage bond at the Department of the Public Service compound.

Programme: 053 – Public Service Management - \$ 102,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 055 – Citizenship and Immigration Services - \$444,526,000

Mr. Gill: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: This has been increased from a \$129 million to a \$139 million. While the Staffing Details shows a decline from a 116 persons to 114 persons, could the Hon. Minister justify this increase?

Minister of Citizenship [Mr. Felix]: Mr. Chairman, the increase was occasioned by the increase in wages and salaries.

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6284–Other: \$194 million was budgeted for and the revised sum is a \$191 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate what this sum was used for?

Mr. Felix: Mr. Chairman, this amount accounts for the computerisation of the General Register Office (GRO).

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, could the Minister advise whether the computerisation of the GRO, as of today, has been completed?

Mr. Felix: It has not been completed.

Mr. Hamilton: Could the Minister indicate to the House whether it is factual to say that the records to be computerised are about 3.5 million records?

Mr. Felix: That is correct.

Mr. Hamilton: Could the Minister indicate to the House, of the 3.5 million records to be computerised, how many records, as we speak, have been computerised?

Mr. Felix: We have completed from 1987–1997.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, my question was specific to the Minister. Could the Minister indicate to the House, of the 3.5 million records to be computerised, how many records have been computerised, as of to date the 13th December, 2016?

Mr. Felix: Mr. Chairman, we have been calculating our progress by years, but if the Hon. Member needs the specifics I can get it for him.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, the question is relevant because, according to line item 6284, we have spent \$191 million of a \$194 million. That is suggesting that there is only \$3 million to be expended. Therefore, I would be grateful for the Minister to advise the House. But the point is, could the Minister say who the contractor of this project is; secondly, the total contract sum; thirdly the procurement methodology; and fourthly was there a public announcement of the contract award, the date and time?

Mr. Felix: Mr. Chairman, the contract from 1987–1997 is the one which is being done and that is the one on which we have spent \$3 million. The \$191 million has been rolled over. The project from 1896-1986 has not yet been awarded. As a matter of fact, it was tendered on two occasions, but the persons tendering were found to not having met the requirements set and as such, we have resorted to using the skills employed at the General Register Office (GRO) to commence and complete this project, and that is what we are proceeding with right now. The \$194 million has not yet been spent.

11.35 a.m.

Mr. Hamilton: So, Minister, are we to conclude that your first answer was not truthful because you indicated that \$191 million was utilised on the computerisation of the GRO?

Mr. Felix: No, I said that \$191 million was not utilised, but for the project, during the period 1987 to 1997, we spent \$3.5 million on that component of the programme because it was divided into two. The other component between 1896 and 1986, which is what the \$194 million has been allocated for, has not been spent. I am saying that, at this very moment, we are mobilising from within to commence and proceed with that project.

Mr. Hamilton: Just indulge me. Mr. Chairman, if we look at line item 6284 – Other, it is clearly stated that \$194 million was budgeted and that the revised sum expended was \$191 million, not \$3 million. So, the Minister is to give account not for the \$3 million expended, but for \$191 million.

Mr. Felix: The \$191 million under ‘Revised 2016’ has not been spent. It has been rolled over to 2017.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, under the same line item. This is a very interesting conversation. This tells us Sir, that \$191 million was expended and not that it is to be expended. That is why we asked a particular question earlier, what was the cut-off date for the expenditure in this revised amount. The Minister is saying that this money was not spent and that it is being rolled over. There is no indication of that here in these numbers. Maybe the Minister of Finance may wish to explain what is happening here, Sir. That is not an explanation.

Mr. Felix: The \$191 million under ‘Revised 2016’ was committed to be spent in 2016. It was not spent for the reasons I have given, because the bidding process did not turn up suitable contractors. So, the money is still with us and I will repeat for emphasis that we will now mobilise internally to proceed with this project.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I do not know if the Minister, who is giving this explanation, is aware that all moneys that are not spent need to be returned to the Consolidated Fund as of 31st December. We asked a particular question, what was the cut-off date? If the Minister is telling us that it is \$191 million under the revised figure, what this is saying to us Sir, is that this is money

actually spent and not to be spent. I did ask for the assistance of the Minister of Finance to explain to us what is happening here. Are we going to get an answer Sir?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I did not hear the last question. I heard comments, but if there is a question, could you then redirect the question to the Minister?

Bishop Edghill: Yes Sir. The Minister of Citizenship has told this House that \$3 million was expended. The specific question is, has the \$191 million been paid back into the Consolidated Fund?

Mr. Felix: Mr. Chairman, the money has been budgeted for 2017.

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Minister, is it \$191 million to be spent in 2017 or \$194 million? I am taking your answer further. You are suggesting that in 2017, \$194 million is budgeted to be spent, but you have been telling us for the last five minutes that it is a \$194 million which has gone over to 2017.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, can you assist?

Mr. Felix: Mr. Chairman, the \$194 million in 2017 is what we have budgeted to spend.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister state when the 2016 amount, which he said earlier was not spent, will be paid back into the Consolidated Fund? The total amount which he said was not spent has to be paid back into the Consolidated Fund. When is this going to be paid back into the Consolidated Fund is the question?

Mr. Felix: Well, it would be paid back before the end of the year, as the process dictates.

Mr. Ali: Good.

Mr. Gill: Mr. Chairman, line item 6224 – Print and Non-Print Materials: This was increased from \$9.5 million to \$37.7 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain the reason for this significant increase?

Mr. Felix: The cost went up because there was a need for us to provide or to produce a birth certificate that was secured. Therefore, the quality of the paper which we are now printing the birth certificates on are of a very high quality, which is not easily replicated as we have been

experiencing and the security features on the birth certificates also add to the cost. So, that is why we have this increase. It is not a piece of paper we picked up from anywhere to use as a birth certificate. This is paper which, in itself, is secure, plus the security features placed on it.

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, Mr. Chairman my final question. Could the Minister indicate to us how many birth certificates were printed in the year 2016?

Mr. Felix: The figure is 300,000.

Programme: 055 – Citizenship and Immigration Services - \$444,526,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 055 – Citizenship and Immigration Services - \$180,700,000

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, project code 1214400 – Buildings: Could the Hon. Member, provide the House with the details with respect to the construction of these buildings, their locations, purpose and the time expected for their completion?

Mr. Felix: Mr. Chairman, the \$50 million allocated is for two buildings to be used as passport offices as we are decentralising the passport services, one in New Amsterdam and one is proposed for Linden.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Member inform the House whether he intends to relocate from the current location which was commissioned for the issuing of passports at Linden to a completely new building?

Mr. Felix: Mr. Chairman, we are committed to providing a building that provides space both for the public and for the immigration staff working there at a different location for passports.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Member, inform the House with respect to the staffing of these buildings and for the processing of the passports, which was mentioned, whether they would be staffed by civilians or members of the Guyana Police Force?

Mr. Felix: Eventually, there will be civilians as the transition starts.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Member be a little more specific as to the staffing of these buildings? I was not referring to a transition period. I was referring to the actual staffing of the building, when it is completed and, currently, whether it is staffed by members of the Guyana Police Force's immigration branch or civilians?

11.50 a.m.

Mr. Felix: Mr. Chairman, at the outset the facility would be staffed by the current staff, who, we all know, are members of the Guyana Police Force and eventually will re-transition to civilians.

Bishop Edghill: Project 1214400, Buildings: Could the Minister indicate to this Assembly the procurement process used to engage these contractors and what are the contract sums for each of the two buildings?

Mr. Felix: We are committed to open tendering. The contracts have not been awarded but we are committed to following the process.

Bishop Edghill: Project 2509900, Furniture and Equipment: Could the Hon. Minister give a breakdown of the items to be procured?

Mr. Felix: The items to be procured are two electrical fixtures, two close circuit television (CCTV) security systems, air conditioning units, desktop computers, six printers, scanners, photocopiers, ten cubicles, ten desk chairs, ten task chairs and 12 seats for the waiting area.

Mr. Rohee: Project 2405200, Land Transport: Could the Hon. Member inform the Assembly what is the purpose of this vehicle that is intended to be purchased? Who is to use it? What type of vehicle is it intended to procure?

Mr. Felix: The type of vehicle is a minibus. It is to be used by the General Registrar Office (GRO). The reason for this is that we have done lots of outreaches and the cost of moving staff by vehicle from point A to point B is very expensive. It would take us into millions of dollars. It was considered more feasible to acquire a vehicle, cut down on the rental cost and save some money.

Mr. Hamilton: Project 2502500, Furniture and Equipment: Could the Minister confirm whether the furniture and equipment to be used are procured to be utilised in the computerised project that is there?

Mr. Felix: The answer is no. The furniture identified has all been identified for the two new buildings which I said we intend to construct in Linden and New Amsterdam.

Programme: 055 - Citizenship and Immigration Services - \$180,700,000 agreed to and stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 056 - Social Cohesion - \$88,129,000

Ms. Chandarpal: Line Item 6116, Contracted Employees: The sum of \$34.92 million has been allocated for this line item. Could the Minister indicate whether these positions were advertised and secondly the names, designations and emoluments for all ten of the contracted employees?

Minister of Social Cohesion [Ms. Ally]: This line item reflects payment of salaries for ten employees of the Ministry of Social Cohesion. These are existing within the Ministry of the Presidency, attached to this Ministry. They are being paid from Programme 051, Policy Development and Administration. With effect from January 2017, the same will be transferred to Programme 056 which is Social Cohesion. The other part of your question, these employees range from Coordinator, Technical Officers, Liaison Officers, Confidential Secretary and Research Officer.

Ms. Chandarpal: I do not think the question was properly answered because I asked, firstly, whether these positions were advised and the Minister did not indicate that. I also asked, what are the emoluments and the names of the persons who were employed?

Ms. Ally: There were no advertisements and the interviews were conducted. We employed people based on their necessity. As you would know, that this is a new Ministry that was established and based on our programme we identified what was necessary.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item 6116, could the Hon. Minister indicate to us why these persons were engaged on the establishment and why were they employed as contracted employees?

Ms. Ally: It was because of the urgency of this, we employed under this head, but we are going to be transferring them to the fixed establishment soon.

Bishop Edghill: I do not know that urgency can make people not follow procedure. The Hon. Minister indicated that those people were interviewed. The question was put: Were these positions advertised? If they were not advertised, how did you get people to be interviewed?

Ms. Ally: I am sure I answered that.

Bishop Edghill: No.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, it would not hurt to answer it again. It certainly would assist in us moving on.

Ms. Ally: To repeat this, I said that this is a new Ministry. Based on our mandate and knowing what our programme was we interviewed people based on that.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item, could the Minister indicate to this Assembly if it is a Government policy when there is an urgency to forego procedure as it relates to advertising and recruitment for people in the public service?

Ms. Ally: No Mr. Chairman. I must say that when this Ministry came into being there were numerous applications for all sorts of position.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this Assembly, in keeping with her presentation that she made to the Assembly in her budget debate, where her Ministry would be promoting equal opportunities and equal access, if in the employment of the staff equal opportunities were provided to all so that the best could have got these jobs?

Ms. Ally: Yes Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Chandarpal: Based on the question by the Minister, could the Assembly be provided with the name designation, and emoluments of all these persons that have been hired?

Ms. Ally: Certainly. I have it with me and I can present it to the Clerk as soon as possible.

Ms. Chandarpal: Line item 6261, Local Travel and Subsistence: How does the money will be intended to be spent, the places, and the beneficiaries? At line item 6265, Other Transport and Postage, there is \$4 million allocated, how does the Ministry intend to spend the sum, places, and beneficiaries as well?

Ms. Ally: Line item 6261, Local Travel and Subsistence, is for the payment of toll, chartering of flights and boats for social cohesion activities, including interregional use, exchange in the Regions 1, 7, 8, and 9 where travelling cannot be done in many cases by roads.

Ms. Chandarpal: Line item 6291, National and Other Events: Two million dollars has been allocated. What are the events, and a breakdown according to the events?

Ms. Ally: This provision is made for the support of art competition, cultural, peace building and diversity awareness, activities within schools and other communities for social cohesion week.

Ms. Chandarpal: Line Item 6294, Other: There is \$4 million that has been allocated. Could the Minister tell us how he intends to spend this amount and provide the details?

Ms. Ally: Here, again, we intend to spend this amount on regional outreaches, dietary supplies, refurbishment in office and other inter and intra- regional programmes.

Ms. Chandarpal: Line item 6302 Training (included Scholarship): Thirty million dollars has been allocated. What are the criteria used for scholarship, if any given?

12.05 p.m.

Who are the beneficiaries for the education subvention and grant? How much you intend to spend? Where are the locations? How much small livelihood community projects are supported by this and how many persons do you intend to target? I know it is quite a mouthful, but I would like if you could please answer.

Ms. Ally: Training is going to be done in all the regions. Now, representatives for training would be drawn from Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs), Community Development Councils (CDCs), Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs), political parties, non-governmental

organisations (NGOs), civil society groups, chambers of commerce, youth, women and special needs groups and others who could influence change.

We have a long list of where these training would be done - Mabaruma, Port Kaituma, Anna Regina, Suddie, Charity, Wakenaam, Georgetown, Uitvlugt, Wales, Veed-en-Hoop, Diamond, Timehri, Kurukururu, Fort Wellington, Mahaicony, Lusignan, New Amsterdam, Rose Hall, Corriverton, Bartica, Kamarang, Mahdia, Paramakatoi, Kato, Lethem, Annai, Aishalton, Linden, Wismar, Rockstone and Kwakwani.

Ms. Chandarpal: Could this information please be provided to the Assembly?

Ms. Ally: Certainly Mr. Chairman.

Programme: 056 – Social Cohesion – \$88,129,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 056 – Social Cohesion - \$2,000,000

Programme: 056 – Social Cohesion – \$2,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 057 – Environmental Management and Compliance – \$667,870,000

Ms. Teixeira: When one looks at the agency head, there are no employment costs whatsoever, only the allocation under line item 6231, Fuel and Lubricants. When you look at Agency 54, which was originally Natural Resources Management, it had 58 people. Could the Hon. Member explain what has happened with the 58 staff who were formerly under Programme 054 which is now renamed Programme 57.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Those personnel, who previously were under the Natural Resources Management, are under the Environmental Protection Agency, the Wildlife Authority and the National Parks Commission. Those entities have been allocated subventions under line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. The sum here, that is, for the sum of

\$2,070,000, is a sum that is allocated for the Department of the Environment and this is just an indicative sum because the work of the department would be to coordinate the work of all of the others that are in the environmental sector. That is the explanation, but the sums, and so on, which had been allocated for them, are catered for separately.

Ms. Teixeira: Under the same subvention, Hon. Member, which you referred to, could you look at page 585, where the breakdown is given, in the Estimates of Expenditure. There is Wildlife Conservation and Management Commission, could you say when this commission would be appointed and has the Act been assented to, as there was a period where the Official *Gazette* was not being printed? We are not sure about this Act. On page 585 under “Details of Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations (6321),” \$20 million has been budgeted, but my question has to do with if the commission has been appointed. Well, I should ask the first question, that is, has the Bill been assented to and where and when do you anticipate this commission would be appointed and up and running? What guided you in giving the \$20 million towards that agency for the budget of 2017?

Lt. Col. (Ret’d) Harmon: Very good question, Mr. Chairman. This agency is now in contemplation with His Excellency and I do believe that the Bill would be signed into law very shortly. As recently as, I believe, January of 2017, we are going to have that agency that would be brought into being, the commission. We are looking at all of the provisions of the Bill right now and to see how best we could activate those mechanisms that are placed under it. Certainly this is something that is in our immediate contemplation, and this is something we hope to roll out as early as January of 2017.

Ms. Teixeira: Could I ask a supplementary question, Mr. Chairman? Is it normal, Hon. Member, for a body to be budgeted for which is not, yet, provided for in statute because the statute has not been assented to as yet? Is it normal and legal?

Lt. Col. (Ret’d) Harmon: I am not going to deal with normality or legality of it. The point is that it is law. It is a Bill already. It would be assented to very shortly and, therefore, provision has to be made for it coming into being. We have put a sum there that would cater for that eventually. It is not as if there is nothing there and then it is to just budget for something that does not exist. There is a Bill that already had been debated in the National Assembly. It is just

going to be, by the signature of His Excellency, brought into law in 2017. Therefore we are making provisions for the various entities that would have to fall under that and the other provision which have to be made under the particular piece of legislation.

Ms. Teixeira: I just have to, after the experience of the Local Government Commission not being appointed as yet, eight months later. I am sceptical. I hope I am wrong.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I do believe you are wrong.

Programme: 057 – Environmental Management and Compliance – \$667, 870,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 057 – Environmental Management and Compliance - \$238,000,000

Programme: 057 – Environmental Management and Compliance – \$238,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 53 Guyana Defence Force

Current Expenditure

Programme: 531 – Defence and Security Support – \$10,996,320,000

Ms. Teixeira: There was a number of supplementaries that were granted in Financial Papers 1, 2 and 3 of 2016. Could the Hon. Member indicate that these supplementaries had been reflected? If I go to line item 6265, Other Transport, Travel and Postage, under 2016, it shows \$662,150,000, but there was a supplementary granted of \$46,000,000. Could the Hon. Minister advice on this? It was an increase of \$461,150,000 by \$46,000,000, but the total here is \$662,150,000, revised for 2016. Could you advise on the hundred-odd million additional for the revised before I ask my question on 2017?

12.20 p.m.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I believe at that time, when the sums were debated, I gave an explanation. That had to cater for the exercises that had taken place for the movement of troops from one location to the other as well as the Independence celebrations during 2016.

Programme: 531 – Defence and Security Support – \$10,996,320,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 531 – Defence and Security Support – \$844,800,000

Ms. Teixeira: Under project 1200100, Buildings – GDF, the Budget 2016 had \$138 million; in 2017, it is projected to \$169,800,000. Could the Hon. Member say if any of these works, which are going on in the Guyana Defence Force (GDF), relates to the fixing up of the building or the rooms for Cabinet's meetings?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: That is not the case. The moneys, which have been allocated for the GDF, have been used by it.

Programme: 531 – Defence and Security Support – \$844,800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Assembly resumed.

Sitting suspended at 12.23 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 1.07 p.m.

In Committee of Supply

Agency: 02 Office of the Prime Minister

Current Expenditure

Programme: 021 - Prime Minister's Secretariat - \$587,613,000

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6116, Contracted Employees: There is an increase of five persons and a budgeted increase of \$15 million. Could the Hon. Prime Minister indicate the names, designations and emoluments of the five additional staff members?

First Vice-President and Prime Minister [Mr. Nagamootoo]: The designations of those five persons are Household Services Worker, Administrative Assistant, Legal Adviser, Coordinator and the Personal Attendant.

Bishop Edghill: I think the question was names, designation and emoluments.

Mr. Nagamootoo: I will supply the details asked for in writing.

Bishop Edghill: We were told a bit earlier that the Office of the Commissioner of Information falls now under the Office of the Prime Minister. From the five new positions that were named the Prime Minister did not name the designation of the Commissioner of Information. Could he tell this Assembly where is the Commission of Information being financed under this line item?

Mr. Nagamootoo: It is under a section for line item 6284, Other. It is on a different page, on page 65.

Bishop Edghill: A follow-up. Could the Hon. Prime Minister itemise all of the items that will be dealt under this budgetary allocation? In 2016, it was \$40,385,000; in 2017, it is \$80 million. Could he give us an itemised breakdown of the \$80 million?

Mr. Nagamootoo: This allocation provides for constitutional reform, governance and the Commissioner of Information.

Bishop Edghill: Could we have the sums allocated to each item, Sir?

Mr. Nagamootoo: The salary, gratuity and vacation allowance of the Commissioner of Information stand at \$36,954,000, being a salary of \$1,701,600. The Commissioner of Information, I had written him. He has given no report of his work in the last couple years of his appointment. I understand, at the moment, that he has no staff and no office. At the start of the constitutional reform to establish the secretariat would come after the tabling in the House of the Constitutional Reform Consultative Bill which is expected to be early in the new year.

Ms. Teixeira: A follow-up question. Could the Hon. Member tell us what will be the budgeted sums provided for constitutional reform and for governance outside of the secretariat being appointed? What in the budget has been allocated for the constitutional reform and governance, particularly as in the budget document presented by the Minister of Finance? He gives a particular figure that will be used for the consultations for constitutional reform.

Mr. Nagamootoo: The amount of \$44 million would be allocated to governance which was the transfer of the Ministry of Governance under the portfolio of the Prime Minister. We have not been able to staff that department fully and the rest will go to start the constitutional reform process to which \$40 million had been pledged by NGOs.

Ms. Teixeira: Could I again have a follow-up? If the governance unit, department is not functioning, how are you allocating \$44 million towards it? It is \$44 million plus \$36 million for the Commissioner of Information. I am rounding off numbers. It is \$80 million and you said that constitutional reform is having \$40 million from an outside source. You are allocating \$40 million. What is it that this is allocated for in governance?

1.17 p.m.

Mr. Nagamootoo: The \$44 million is for both allocations for the constitutional reform initial work and for governance. There are two Directors of Governance in place already. The amount of moneys that would be available for the establishment of the secretariat would be the balance – the difference between that for governance and constitutional reform. In fact, we see the constitutional reform as being part of the governance department.

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Prime Minister advise us about who has been hired as the Director of Governance - the name, position and salary - and when?

Mr. Nagamootoo: The name of the person is Tamara Khan. She is the Coordinator of the Governance Office. Her salary is \$420,000. She is an Attorney-at-Law.

Ms. Teixeira: And when was this from?

Mr. Nagamootoo: It was from March, 2016.

Ms. Teixeira: Was this done through an open advertisement, internal civil service or Facebook? How was this position advertised or was it selected?

Mr. Nagamootoo: There was a Ministry of Governance, headed by the Hon. Raphael Trotman. This staff was transferred from the Ministry of Governance to the Department of Governance.

Mr. Nandlall: Is this person, Tamara Khan, related to your Information Director, Imran Khan?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, is that an appropriate question to deal with here? It seems to be somewhat going beyond what is reasonable in the context of examining the Estimates. Relationships can hardly be part of this remit. Perhaps beyond this, yes, but not today.

Mr. Nandlall: With respect, I consider it important, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I understand what you are saying but what I am saying to you is that I will not allow that question in the context of what we are doing.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: There is no allocation whatsoever. Six million, one hundred thousand dollars was allocated before. Is that because the Government does not think that there will be any maintenance required to your residence and or to your office?

Mr. Nagamootoo: Maintenance of buildings is being taken care of by the Ministry of the Presidency.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6281 – Security Services: Zero has been listed. Now that the Head of the Presidential Guard is under Ministry of Public Security, are there no allocations for Security for you whatsoever or your personal security otherwise?

Mr. Nagamootoo: That is so.

Bishop Edghill: I would like to return to line item 6284 – Other. This is where the Prime Minister indicated to this House that the Commission of Information is being financed under this Line Item.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I am just advised that where nothing is allocated, no question is usually put.

Bishop Edghill: The line item that I am asking the question under has an \$80 million provision.

Mr. Chairman: Could you repeat the line item?

Bishop Edghill: It is line item 6284.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister...

Bishop Edghill: I have not finished the question, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Well please go ahead.

Bishop Edghill: I was waiting on you.

Mr. Chairperson: Hon. Member, we have until 10.00 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: The question is: since the Commission of Information is required to receive information from public authorities of which the Office of the Prime Minister, according to the Act, is, why is this Office not being given a subvention to function independently?

Mr. Nagamootoo: I have answered that question before. If the Member wants to bring it as a substantive motion as to why a subvention is not given, then that is a different matter. I can only answer if a vote is provided for.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: The Prime Minister’s secretariat is staffed by 31 Members. All are contracted employees. Could the Prime Minister indicate to this House if it is the Government’s position to have people on the establishment in certain entities and, in some entities, have contracted employees or is it a consistent position that everybody should be on the establishment?

Mr. Nagamootoo: There are a number of persons who were inherited on contract who were not taken off of the contract establishment but the Ministry has started to transition persons into the fixed establishment. There are already five persons who are in the contract portfolio and have so far received some level of Public Service training and are being transitioned into the fixed establishment. It is not the intention of this Office to depend solely on contracted employees, though we recognise that there are some areas of specialty and skills of which service would be required on contract.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Prime Minister provide to this House the list - designations and emoluments of all contracted employees under line item 6116?

Mr. Nagamootoo: I could read the list or I can provide the information. The salary ranges from \$59,382 at the lowest for one person to \$551,200 for two persons. No one has yet replaced those who had worked in the \$1 million bracket in the complex.

Bishop Edghill: Would the Prime Minister lay over the document to the House with the names, designations and emoluments?

A follow-up question: Could he indicate to this House what the emoluments of the Director of Public Information (DPI) are?

Mr. Nagamootoo: The Director of Public Information and Press Secretary to the Prime Minister, who heads a three-person Department of Public Information, has a salary of \$551,200 per month. The benefits - if I may use the word - enjoyed by the DPI are Duty Allowance at \$10,000 per month and Entertainment Allowance at \$10,000 per month, giving a total of \$20,000 per month.

Bishop Edghill: Is his telephone paid for?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, do you wish the floor?

Bishop Edghill: Yes, Sir. I would like to draw your attention to line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. In view of the Prime Minister's previous position that no moneys were allocated to the Government Information Agency (GINA) and cut to \$1, could he explain the increase of \$45 million from 2016 to 2017, moving from \$170 million to \$215 million?

Mr. Nagamootoo: The Government Information Agency is no longer performing partisan propaganda. The Government Information Agency, as everyone would testify, is now providing a national public information function. To that extent, the State has a responsibility to maintain the GINA in a position that it could function in. If it amuses the Members on the other side, I could provide the details of what the money is being spent on. Most of it caters for wages, which was the tradition, for the GINA staff, material and equipment, fuel and lubricants for a fleet of

vehicles, the maintenance of buildings, transportation, travel and postage and goods and services to maintain the environment in a safe, perhaps comfortable, manner. We had to fight termites on an enormous scale at the GINA building. We are still exterminating them; we cannot get them off in 18 months.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item, could the Prime Minister indicate to us what the present staff strength of GINA is and if it represents an increase or a decrease over 2015 and 2016?

Mr. Nagamootoo: The present staff strength is 35. It was 30 in 2015, which is an increase of five for 2016.

Bishop Edghill: A follow-up: The Prime Minister indicated to the House that GINA is no longer one-sided, so to speak. Could he provide this House with a log of GINA's coverage of the Budget debates, how much time was allocated to Government and how much time was allocated to the Opposition?

1.32 p.m.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Chairman, I have answered the question that was asked in relation to the size of the staff in a fruitful, factual manner, and, if the Hon. Member would like to interrogate the functions of the GINA, he may wish to do so by way of a motion; we will provide the details. For now, we will talk about money.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - there is a budgetary allocation for the National Communications Network (NCN) of \$134,110,000. Could the Hon. Prime Minister give to this House the total expenditure for NCN for 2016 and the total revenue received?

Mr. Nagamootoo: As of this moment, NCN has received revenue of \$400.9 million and anticipates that, by the end of the year, it should be able to receive \$443.4 million. The projected deficit for 2016 is placed at \$69.9 million. Actually, at the moment, it is \$55.9 million and a lot of that has to do with having inherited a bad business practice of customers, prior to 2014 and up to 2015, having being rendered service, who did not pay up. The total expenditure expected for this year is \$649.7 million.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item, could the Hon. Prime Minister give us a breakdown of the items to be procured with the \$134,110,000?

Mr. Nagamootoo: The \$134,110,000 will be used for salaries which are for next year.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Prime Minister give us the number of staff employed by NCN, indicating if there is an increase or decrease over 2015 and 2016?

Mr. Nagamootoo: The staff complement was actually reduced. It was 218 in 2015 and, this year, it is 180. There have been resignations, migrations and terminations – three – after due process and consultations with the unions.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Prime Minister give to this House the designations, names and remuneration of the top 10 paid persons at NCN?

Mr. Nagamootoo: I am sure it is available. I have a spreadsheet here: Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Mr. Lenox Coronet - \$600,000; Marketing Manager/Programme Manager, Mr. Ronald Robinson - \$350,000; Finance Manager/Human Resources Manager, Ms. Tishika Da Costa - \$300,000; Internal Auditor, Mr. Tulsiram Sukhraj - \$274,000; Editor in Chief/Assistant Manager Production, Ms. Sharda Lall - \$127,320; Assistant Manager Production, Ms. Wendy Hermonstein - \$208,509; Deputy Finance Manager, Mr. Vickram Ally - \$205,509; Assistant Manager Production, Ms. Michella Abraham-Ali - \$198,220; Chief Engineer Coordinator, Berbice, Ms. Donna Mathoo - \$144,570; Director Client Liaison, Ms. Ananda Ramjewan - \$157,081; Verification Officer, Ms. Edith A. Sattaur - \$151,549; Sales Supervisor, Ms. Lakranie Mohammed - \$151,549; Coordinator Linden/Traffic Supervisor, Ms. Saona Jerome-Layne - \$151,549. Have I exceeded the 10 persons?

Bishop Edghill: Yes, you have.

Mr. Nagamootoo: But I can go on if you want. That is actually no problem. Thank you, Sir.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, the Prime Minister can lay over the document so that the House can have the benefit of it.

Under the same line item, could the Prime Minister indicate to this House the names, designations and emoluments of the top five persons engaged at GINA?

Mr. Nagamootoo: The top five are: Director of GINA - \$390,875; Editor in Chief - \$220,000; Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Manager - \$225,960; Finance Manager - \$205,000; and Editor - \$185,000. I want to compliment all of these employees for a great job being done.

Mr. Nandlall: Might I take the Prime Minister back to line item 6284 – Other, where the Prime Minister said that that is the head in which moneys are allocated for Commissioner of Information, Constitution Reform and Governance, a total sum of \$80 million is allocated for 2017? The Hon. Minister of Finance, in his Budget Speech, said that \$80 million had been set aside for the constitutional reform process. So, there is some kind of discrepancy here. It is on page 22 of the Budget Speech, paragraph 4.21. So, if the Hon. Prime Minister can clarify for us, Sir, I would be most grateful.

Mr. Nagamootoo: I heard and I read the same that the Hon. Member of the Opposition referred to, and it is the \$80 million for the constitutional reform being a function of the Department of Governance, together with the Commissioner of Information. And I had indicated that there were pledges that were made by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and other organisations. At least, from one agency, the amount of \$40 million will be going towards the process of constitutional reform. The sum that has been allocated under the governance heading within my portfolio was to kick-start the process of constitutional reform. And, as we go along, we would be able to supplement the work because the Minister of Finance already hinted that it will be a process that will last as long as two years.

Ms. Teixeira: Just a follow-up: Hon. Prime Minister, are you sure when you said that \$40 million in pledges from UNICEF and other organisations? Are you sure you are speaking of UNICEF, with others, contributing \$40 million to the constitutional reform process in Guyana? Are you certain that you are calling the right agency? It is highly unlikely but I bow to your Ministry because you must know.

Mr. Nagamootoo: I used the word “pledged” and that is all I can repeat. It was a pledge.

Mr. Nandlall: I want to take the Prime Minister, respectfully, back to line item 6116 – Contracted Employees. When he spoke of contracted employees, he mentioned a very unique portfolio of a particular officer. I wrote it down – Legal Advisor/Coordinator. Might we be told

what the functions of this office holder will be, the terms of reference, if you wish, and what he or she is coordinating?

Mr. Nagamootoo: The functions of the Coordinator for Governance are very broad. There are a number of constitutional agencies, the matters dealing with human rights, treaty obligations, matters relating to child and women welfare, matters falling under what my good and Hon. Friend, Mdm. Gail Teixeira, had been focusing on. There are several Rights Commissions and the Coordinator has to treat with legal issues from time to time. We are in the process of reforming and amending the integrity law. She was pivotal in the process of the committee that produced a draft of the Code of Conduct for persons in public office and in the Steering Committee on Constitutional Reform. I suppose that anyone who would be involved in Rights Commissions and governance issues would also be required to give anti-corruption reporting in regards to existing law and we have just started our liaison with the Open Government Initiative.

1.47 p.m.

We hope to subscribe to this international organisation to make legal provisions as regards openness and to make the production of data available, transparent and accessible to all. It is an enormous job for one person to assume, so far, in what is called the Department of Governance. It is almost the same, having assumed responsibility for parliamentary affairs, in that Department of Governance, one functionary has been assigned to me and has been doing a fantastic job. That is for both the Governance Coordinator and the Parliamentary Coordinator - two persons so far. It is like the Department of Public Information where three persons have been doing a fantastic job, for which all Guyanese would be highly appreciative.

Mr. Nandlall: One quick follow-up question, Sir. Having regard to that huge amount of information and the multi-dimensional responsibility that this person will discharge, it is only fair that I ask the Hon. Prime Minister to give us her name and remuneration.

Mr. Nagamootoo: I have given the remuneration but I do not believe that I will subscribe to any witch-hunting of people on the basis of name, gender, sexual preference, ethnicity or religion. I believe that I have answered already that the person is a functionary...

Mr. Nandlall: This is a public officer, funded by public funds.

Mr. Nagamootoo: It is public funds at \$420,000 per month, and I think that is all I would like to say at this point in time. The person has a travel allowance of \$5,000 a month, a duty allowance of \$20,000 a month and an entertainment allowance of \$20,000, totalling \$45,000 in allowances attached to the salary. I will not be bated by my Friend. I have given him very weighty answers. He could feed on those.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, the Hon. Prime Minister spoke about subscribing to open government, openness and transparency, all in the portfolio of this person. This is a public officer being funded and we are being asked to approve.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, do you want to ask a question? I am trying to reduce the amount of speeches. We are getting speeches all the time.

Mr. Nandlall: I am insisting, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: No; you are requesting.

Mr. Nandlall: I am requesting, Sir, that the Prime Minister gives us the name. He is entitled to give us the name of the person.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, there is a request for the name of the person.

Mr. Nagamootoo: I could advise, Sir, that that is a good question for the Commissioner of Information who, despite his long years of service, has not presented a report to this National Assembly, which is statutorily required.

Mr. Nandlall: [*Inaudible*]

[*Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Nandlall, if you wish to speak, you will address the Chairman. If you do not wish to speak, allow us to continue with the work here.

Programme: 021 – Prime Minister’s Secretariat – \$587,613,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 021 – Prime Minister’s Secretariat – \$295,000,000

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 4502900 – National Communications Network: The budget for 2016 was \$125 million. I would like to know if the moneys were all spent. For 2017, \$250 million is budgeted. When one reads Volume 3, the description of the projects, the \$250 million would go towards the establishment of community radios in four areas, the purchase of equipment for Radio Paiwomak and the provision of equipment for one of the stations which it does not state. One, could the Hon. Prime Minister provide us with a breakdown of the allocations of the \$250 million as described in the legend and indicate if any items are left out? Two, could he advise if Radio Paiwomak comes under NCN, as it was always an independent community radio system supported by the Government but independent from the Government? Three, on the list of equipment being purchased, which station is it for? Is the equipment for stations in Georgetown, Linden or for the community radio stations listed at Orealla, Bartica, Mahdia and Aishalton?

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Chairman, the answer to the first part of the question is that the subvention for this year has been utilised. For 2017, of the \$250 million, \$150 million would be for community radio stations in Aishalton, Bartica, Orealla and Mahdia. Mahdia, for the very first time, would have access to community radio. The buildings have been identified to house these radio stations. The NCN plans to have a network rolled out from Georgetown that would take expanded signals to Bartica, Mahdia, Lethem and Kwakwani. The sum of \$12 million will be spent on equipment and setting up the facility to expand the transmission to outlying stations *via* satellite.

The sum of \$10 million will be spent on equipment for radio Paiwomak. Radio Paiwomak remains a radio station that is indigenous to the community and linked to the concessions. It has been established under the egis of the Iwokrama project. Over the years, because of the shortfall in subvention to the Iwokrama project, it was discovered, on my visit and that of the Consultant on Communication, that the facilities were rundown, the studio did not have windows, the air conditioning units were not working and there were no proper chairs on which the indigenous peoples’ announcers were to be seated. So we have taken on, as a matter of public information... The sum of \$10 million is to facilitate this important radio station through which broadcast is already being conducted in Indigenous languages, involving Indigenous broadcasters who have been trained in more recent times.

The sum of \$15 million would be spent to do electrical wiring for NCN's head office, which was described by someone as a jungle of wires. We are trying to safeguard the electrical infrastructure and to reduce any potential for unforeseen fires or other risks. The sum of \$6 million would be spent on network cabling to improve data connectivity and transit rates throughout the company and reduce, again, unforeseen risks, for example fires.

The sum of \$10 million would be for the conversion of transmission equipment from analogue to high definition. We have already built a new master control room and have upgraded the equipment. This amount of \$10 million is to do the conversion from analogue to high definition.

The sum of \$3 million has been allocated for the master control room. This is of interest because now the control work flow would be managed in an automated way. The plan is to automate the generation of broadcast, so there is no need for manual control of broadcast, particularly at nights. There would be very few occasions when people could blame blanks on the signals because someone might have fallen asleep.

Rehabilitation and relocation of the master control room would cost another \$2 million. The room would be in an area which is more secure and less exposed to human traffic.

The sum of \$3 million is to improve video production output. We have to purchase something called a TriCaster. I must admit that I do not know very much about it. I know about the old radio type of controls. I understand the TriCaster controls video, audio and text content and is able to merge them.

The sum of \$8.5 million would be spent on the upgrade of 91.1 Frequency Modulation (FM), 100.1 Fresh FM, and the Voice of Guyana (VOG). The radio studios would be upgraded from analogue to digital format. The sum of \$1.5 million would be spent on trying to rebrand the signals of the radio stations so as to enhance the quality of broadcasting in a competitive environment so we can have more clients and to be able to do live streaming as well.

2.02 p.m.

\$10 billion is allocated for one television (TV) transmitter and antennae system to upgrade the transmission power and transition from analogue to digital TV output; \$4 million will be spent to provide new broadcast equipment to expand 98.1 Hot FM, 100.1 Fresh FM and Voice of Guyana

(VOG) outreach. This sum is mainly to be spent on the provision of the bandwidth and antennae systems. There is a sum of \$15 million which the Government feel is justifiable to do the archiving of all systems. This Government has inherited a storeroom of old VHS, betacam, mini DVDs and these ought to be converted from video formats to digital so that an archiving could be done to preserve the history of the National Communications Network (NCN) and public broadcasting in Guyana. That is as much as I could help. If my Hon. Friends, on the other side, wish me to be of any further service, I would be happy to do so.

Ms. Teixeira: Hon. Prime Minister, when the figures that you shared with us are added, they do not amount up \$250 million. I wonder if there is any big ticket item that has been omitted. The cost for the new radio stations, you talked about identifying buildings and I assume that there may be Government buildings, building that would be rented or new buildings that would be built because the figures you give the House do not add up to \$250 million?

Mr. Nagamootoo: Unless I left something out, I am advised by the competent Chief Executive Officer (CEO) that the figures do add up to \$250 million. Unless my Learned Friend would like me to repeat the list, I can do that because maybe I have skipped an item, but that is what I was advised.

Programme: 021 - Prime Minister's Secretariat - \$295,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 25 Ministry of Business

Current Expenditure

Programme: 251 - Policy Development and Administration - \$251,611,000

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6116, Contracted Employees: We note that the number of contracted employees has moved from 29 to 38 and the proposed sum has moved from \$42 million to \$62 million for 2017. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to the House for the nine additional staff, their designations and their likely emoluments?

Minister of Business [Mr. Gaskin]: Those positions are, two Economists at \$119,631 each; one System Development Officer, \$119,631; two Accounts Clerks at \$67,851 and \$59,382,

respectively; one Confidential Secretary, \$63,449; one Mechanic Operator, \$55,000; one Clerk, \$59,392; and one Legal Assistant, \$186,299.

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6111, Administration: Again the staff complement has increased from six to nine. Could the Hon. Minister indicate the likely positions and the emoluments?

Mr. Gaskin: The new positions are: Principal Assistant Secretary (Finance), \$186,068; Principal Assistant Secretary (General), \$186,068; and Principal Personnel Officer, \$186,068.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Could the Hon. Minister state, that of the nine new contracted employees to be on the establishment, the effective dates of employment?

Mr. Gaskin: The Legal Assistant started on 4th January, 2016. Mr. Chairman, can I supply this information in writing because I have to look for each individual employee on separate documents and this would not be the best use of this honourable House's time? I can supply the information to the House within 24 hours, if the Hon. Member does not mind.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: I would be grateful for that information to be laid over. However, I do have a follow up question. Can the Hon. Minister justify the need for the nine persons, given the fact that they are being employed as contracted employees, and not so long ago, in this House, the Commission of Inquiry into the Public Service did recommend that such employment be phased out? That was approved and voted for in this House by the Government's side.

Could the Minister say whether the employees will be transferred to the pensionable establishment and if so, when?

Mr. Gaskin: I think the need is justified as to whether they are contracted or whether they are hired as public servants. It is Government's direction that these newly contracted employees, most of them, will be contracted for one year and, thereafter, they will be absorbed into the public service as public servants.

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Minister, are you saying that the additional contracted employees were already employed by the Ministry?

Secondly, how do you answer the fact that the Ministry's budgeted sum in 2016 for 29 contracted employees was \$42,000,590 and the revised sum is \$42,145,000, when in 2017 the

sum is moving to \$62,108,000? I am trying to understand how the additional nine persons were paid with the \$42 million that was budgeted for the 29 contracted employees at that time.

Mr. Gaskin: I cannot do a precise calculation while standing here on the floor, but if nine additional employees are being looked at, at an average of \$150,000 per month, that would equate to, approximately, \$18 million per year. The difference between this year's and next year's figures is approximately \$20 million. With the increase in salaries next year, it certainly does not look strange to me, but if the Hon. Member feels that he needs a greater explanation, then we could do some more precise calculations. However, it certainly does not seem out of the ordinary or inconsistent with the figures provided.

2.17 p.m.

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6116: \$42 million was budgeted for 29 employees at the time. The revised sum is showing of that \$42,590,000 the Ministry spent \$42,145,000. It was said earlier to my Colleague that the nine additional persons are already working and these are not persons to come. So I am trying to find out how the \$42 million that was budgeted for 29 persons is paying 39 contract employees?

Mr. Gaskin: New employees hired during the year are not paid from the Ministry's budget. They are paid through the Ministry of Finance. So it would not show up in our revised expenditure. The shortfall could simply be somebody leaving the job before they had worked the entire year. So I am not sure if that satisfies the Hon. Member.

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6272 – Electrical Charges: The budgeted sum is \$32,780,000 and the revised is the same. Am I to understand from the Minister that all of the moneys allocated for electrical charges have already been paid over to the Guyana Power and Light Company (GPL)?

Mr. Gaskin: No. These revised charges are not actual charges. This is what would have been submitted at the time the budget was being prepared. Based on our consumption, we saw no reason to change our projected 2016 Expenditure under that line item. I am sure, at the end of the year when the actuals are calculated, there will be some adjustment made.

Programme: 251 – Policy Development and Administration - \$251,611,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 251 – Policy Development and Administration - \$ 80,000,000

Mr. Hamilton: Project code 1214700 – Buildings: Could the Minister inform the House as to what are the facilities to be upgraded? If we are talking about more than one, could he give the House the specific sum of the different facilities?

Mr. Gaskin: This sum is for the first phase of works to the National Exhibition Centre in Sophia. Does that answer your question Hon. Member?

Programme: 251 – Policy Development and Administration - \$80,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 252 – Business Development, Support and Promotion - \$505,912,000

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees, stands the same in 2017, but I note that there is a decrease in the budgeted sum from \$14.4 million to \$13.7 million. Could the Minister indicate what was responsible for that decrease?

Mr. Gaskin: Yes. Salary increases would be responsible for that increase.

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There is a decrease from \$14.4 million revised down to \$13.7 million. I am trying to find out what could have been responsible for that decrease, when the Staffing Details for contracted employees remain the same at seven persons.

Mr. Gaskin: The decrease in the revised amount is actually due to one of the officers being promoted and finding herself being paid under a different line item 6111 – Administrative.

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6321- Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Could the Minister indicate why the increase from \$367 million to \$418 million in 2017?

Mr. Gaskin: Mr. Chairman, that increase caters for increased expenditure in three subvention agencies: The Guyana National Bureau of Standards (GNBS), Go-Invest and the Guyana Small Business Bureau. The breakdown between the three agencies: \$151 million goes towards the

Guyana National Bureau Standards, \$193,922,000 to Go-Invest and \$73,473,000 to the Guyana Small Business Bureau. All three of these agencies have had increases to their budgetary expenditures for various reasons, for example, increase in staffing, salaries, as well as expansion of promotional activities and training of staff members. Those were the main areas where there were increases.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, could the Minister indicate to the House the specific increases for the three agencies identified?

Mr. Gaskin: Yes. We can get more specifics on page 820 of the Estimates, where one could find the budget of the Guyana National Bureau of Standards, where one could actually see the specific line items where the increases are. For instance, employment costs have moved from \$133,762,000 which is the revised 2016 total to \$156,952,000 projected for 2017. Another area of increase in that particular agency... materials, equipment and supplies have moved from \$9,260,000 to \$20,120,000....

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, if I may.

Mr. Gaskin: You have a question and I am responding to that question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, let the Minister finish his answer. Then, if it does not satisfy you, then you can come back again.

Mr. Gaskin: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Fuel and lubricants have gone up from \$5,900,000 in our revised expenditure for 2016 to \$9 million in 2017. So for that particular agency, those were the main areas of increases. The Guyana Office for Investment had a total budget in 2016 of a \$196,752,000; the 2017 budget is \$213,172,000 and that is an increase of approximately \$17 million or \$18 million. Most of that increase could actually be found in the increased employment costs, which have moved from \$79,295,000 to \$94,152,000....

2.32 p.m.

The Small Business Bureau had an allocation of \$49,248,000 for 2016 and in 2017 will be allocated \$73,473,000. Those are the three subvention agencies that are responsible for the

increased allocation that the Hon. Member would have pointed out, and that is my explanation for where that difference or how that difference is allocated. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: There is an increase of \$61 million going to these agencies. The question I would repeat, of the \$51 million how much, specifically, is going to the three individual agencies?

Mr. Gaskin: Mr. Chairman, if we are looking at an increase of approximately \$51 million, then I would say that, according to page 820 of the Estimates, the Guyana National Bureau of Standards (GNBS), that agency's total expenditure would have increased by approximately \$2,000,841; the Guyana Office For Investment (GO-Invest) expenditure would have increased by \$23,670,000; and the Small Business Bureau expenditure would have increased by \$24,000,225. If we add those up, we are going to get, roughly, the \$51 million or so that we are looking to explain.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, under line item 6281 – Security Services: We have an allocation of \$48,682,000. Could the Minister indicate the venues to be secured, the contractor awarded and the process for procurement of this contract?

Mr. Gaskin: The locations covered under this expenditure are four locations, one in Enmore and one in Tuschen. Those are call centres that have been constructed under the Rural Development Fund Project and are close to completion and need to be secured, as well as, the now infamous plantain chips factory in Leguan, which has also been completed and needs to be secured. The contracts for security for those premises have not yet been awarded. They will be going out to tender early next year.

Ms. Teixeira: Minister, I have two questions: One, you referred to the Small Business Council and Bureau having an additional \$24 million. Could you give us a breakdown of how much of the budgetary allocation is for the council and how much is for the bureau, as they are two separate entities and one is covered by statute? The second issue has to do with when we go to pages 820 and 821, as directed by you, to do with the statutory agencies, the Guyana Office for Investment and the National Bureau of Standards, I noticed there is no allocation for subventions to local authorities. Could you say where are the rates and taxes being paid for the two statutory

bodies, GO-Invest and the Guyana National Bureau of Standards to the city of Georgetown? I have follow-up questions to those as well.

Mr. Gaskin: The council does not have a separate budget *per se*. The only real expense incurred there is an honorarium for the council members which amount to \$1,190,000 every year. There is also a sum that is expected to be expended on providing the reform agenda which should form part of the annual report of the council and that sum is \$1,200,000. So, the total cost incurred by the council itself is \$2,390,000. In response to the Hon. Member's second question, which was for an explanation of the increase in the Small Business Bureau's expenditure, was that...

Ms. Teixeira: I asked the House to go to pages 820 and 821, as directed by you. There is no provision under the statutory agencies for rates and taxes to local authority. Not for the Guyana Bureau of Standards nor GO-Invest.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, would you resume your seat so that Ms. Teixeira could raise her question? Hon. Ms. Teixeira, you have the floor.

Ms. Teixeira: I just repeated the question Sir that I have noticed that there is no provision under a number of the statutory agencies, including the two that we are addressing now. No provision for rates and taxes to the local authority. Both these agencies' offices are based in Georgetown.

Mr. Gaskin: The Guyana National Bureau of Standards is housed at the Sophia Exhibition Centre, so that is paid for by the Ministry itself. The Small Business Bureau will be moving next year to new rented premises and as such, the owners of that premises will be paying the rates and taxes. For GO-Invest, I am informed that the Ministry of Finance will be paying the rates and taxes on its property.

Ms. Teixeira: Just a follow-up question on that particular issue. When we go back to the other heads, under the Ministry of Business, there is only one that has rates and taxes of \$670,000. There is no other allocation under the heads of the Ministry of Business for rates and taxes. Does the \$670,000 cover the Sophia Exhibition Centre and other entities under the Ministry for rates and taxes in the city? Is that all there is?

Mr. Gaskin: It covers the Sophia Exhibition Centre and the Ministry's Head Office.

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Minister advise whether the Value Added Tax (VAT) has been included in the cost for telephone and other costs. There are no allocations for telex and cablegrams. I have noticed that the Ministry has no allocations whatsoever for services and utilities under this head?

Mr. Gaskin: To the best of my knowledge, the telephone charges have always included VAT, so there will be no change in that regard. Of course, the other utilities are paid. We are all in the same building, so they are not paid through two separate programmes. The electricity and water charges would be paid through the previous programme that we just approved.

Programme: 252 – Business Development, Support and Promotion - \$505,912,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 252 – Business Development, Support and Promotion - \$460,299,000

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Minister, project code 4503300 – Industrial Development: We note that \$212,190,000 was budgeted for 2016 to be utilised. Could the Hon. Minister say whether the Lethem Industrial Estate was included as part of this expenditure?

Mr. Gaskin: The short answer is, yes.

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Minister, could you advise this House whether, as of this moment, works are being undertaken on the Lethem Industrial Estate development?

Mr. Gaskin: The design work has been completed. The contract is with the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) and we are awaiting that contract to be awarded.

Mr. Hamilton: First let me ask this question. How much of the \$212 million was allocated for the Lethem Industrial Estate?

2.47 p.m.

Mr. Gaskin: One hundred and sixty million dollars was allocated to the Lethem Industrial Estate.

Mr. Hamilton: You have just stated that the works to be undertaken by the Lethem Industrial Estate was tendered couple weeks ago. Presently it is at National Procurement Tendering Administration Board (NPTAB) or being evaluated and we are at the 13th December. Could you enlighten us how? You have indicated that this \$212,190,000 would be expended by 31st December 2016?

Mr. Gaskin: I am not trying to tell the Assembly that this money would be expended by the 31st December 2016. I am saying that that was the money allocated, that was the amount projected. We are at a stage now where we are about to sign the contract and depending on when that contract is signed and when a mobilisation fee is paid, we will know what is the actual amount expended in 2016 be. I cannot give you that figure until it is actually expended. That is why there is a budgeted amount, then there is a revised amount, and then finally there is an actual amount. There is nothing mysterious about that.

Bishop Edghill: Project 4503300, Industrial Development: The Minister figure is that the latest Estimate for 2016 expended is \$212,190,000; budgeted is \$212,190,000. The Minister has indicated to this House that there is a sum in this \$212,190,000 of \$116 million that was designated for Lethem that was not spent. How could the latest estimate be \$212,190,000? Could the Minister give this Assembly a breakdown of the \$212,190,000 that was expended?

Mr. Gaskin: During my budget presentation I made the point that how scary it was to see that we can so easily get use to something that is obviously flawed, simply because it happens regularly. We are seeing this now because the Hon. Members on the other side of the Assembly seem to be unable to comprehend that the revised amount, which are listed in this column here, are the revised budgeted amounts.

A budget is presented for the upcoming year. When the budget for the next year is presented, if there is an opportunity to revise the amounts based on the progress made and the projected amounts that we spent by the end of the year, that is what the revised amounts indicate here. It is because we have got so accustomed to bringing budgets well into the following year, those revised amounts have actually become actual amounts. Now, we have corrected that. We are not following that practice any longer, but we have to get that side of the Assembly to understand

that there is a new practice. I am not sure if I can assist the Hon. Member beyond that, because if he is still following the previous practice, then we are not communicating on the same page.

Bishop Edghill: I return to the same project and all I am asking the Hon. Minister is that, as of today's date, give this Assembly a breakdown of the expenditure in these Estimates in which we could have \$212,190, 000.

Mr. Gaskin: The Hon. Member is asking me to do something that is impossible. Our budget submissions are made somewhere at the end of August and these revised figures reflect the submissions as of that time, the projected amounts. You are asking for me to make the figures, which were projected back in August, the actual figures as of today. Mr. Chairman, I cannot do that. I am not a magician. If you are asking whether we are likely to expend the revised amount I think I had already pointed out that that is unlikely to happen and that we are not likely to spend the amount that you see here before the end of the year. That is clear as day. I am saying that, but I cannot give you the actual figure that we will spend before the end of the year. You would have to wait until next year when the actual are published.

Bishop Edghill: I am on the same project. The Minister is waxing lyrical in giving all fancy explanation. I am just asking for a simple breakdown of the expenditure, as of now, of the \$212,190,000 included in these Estimates.

Mr. Gaskin: I would not like to provide the Assembly with false information, but I can give the Hon. Member a ballpark if he is satisfied with that ballpark. That ballpark is the summary in the vicinity of \$22 million under that project code that would have already been expended.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same project code, it therefore means that the figures, which we are working with, are not reliable and I would like the Minister to confirm that these figures of 212,190,000 as the latest Estimates of Expenditure is not reliable.

Mr. Gaskin: I do not understand the question. The Member said that the figures that we are working with, but what work is he doing? I do not know what work he was doing with these figures. This represents a budget and it represents the latest revision of those figures as of when the various Ministries would have submitted and met their final projection. I have given you the ballpark. I am telling you that the amount stated here, under the heading "revised 2016" is not

the amount that is likely to be spent in this particular project. I am not sure what else you expect me to do or to tell you, but I am not going to lie to this Assembly.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same project, if the Minister is indicating to this Assembly that just about \$20 something million have been expended, why is the figure here of \$212,190, 000 as the latest Estimates? Is the Minister prepared to admit that there has been an underperformance as it relates to the expenditure and these numbers are misleading?

Mr. Gaskin: The Minister is saying to this honourable Assembly that we expended \$22 million under this project where up until the end of August we had expected to expend \$212 million. Those are the facts.

Bishop Edghill: Finally, before I cede to my colleague, under the same project, is the Minister willing to concede that the Opposition's fear is really...?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, is this a question relating to the figures?

Bishop Edghill: Yes Sir. It is a question relating to the same project. We are dealing with figures because there is \$116 million for a contract that is not yet entered into as of today's date by the Minister that was catered for in the budgeted amount. This money...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you must ask a question. We are having speeches, too many speeches and too long. The Minister gave an explanation. The Hon. Members are to ask questions.

Bishop Edghill: Are we at a disadvantage where we cannot seek clarity? I am just finding that because...

Mr. Chairman: You must ask your question, Hon. Member.

Bishop Edghill: Would the balance of the \$212 million be returned to the Consolidated Fund?

Mr. Gaskin: I cannot return something to the Consolidated Fund that never came out of it. Again, he is asking for the impossible.

Mr. Hamilton: Could you help us with another ballpark? Based on your projection, you have spent \$22 million, thus far, of \$212,190,000. By the 31st December 2016, what ballpark can we look at that you will expend?

Mr. Gaskin: I have provided a ballpark of \$22 million. I do not like to speculate and to engage in conjecture, but I will only say this: If the contract is actually signed and awarded which we expected to be before the end of this week, there is likely to be a mobilisation fee paid to the contractor. I do not want to speculate as to what that figure is, but that would have to be added to the \$22 million ballpark that was already spent, and that will give you the figure that you are perhaps looking for. You will get that figure in the actual amounts whenever those are published. Again, there is nothing mysterious or secretive about any of this. You are just asking for information that is not yet available.

3.02 p.m.

Mr. Hamilton: So far we have just been speaking about the \$116 million of the \$212 million that was allocated for Lethem. We have \$96 million to account for. Could the Minister indicate what the specific projects were, other than Lethem, that were to be done in 2016 that covers the \$96 million?

Mr. Gaskin: If I get the Hon. Member correct, he is asking me to explain to him which projects, back in 2015, comprised or incurred the expenditure of the \$96,726,000 under the project Rural Enterprise Development?

Mr. Hamilton: It is not at all, Sir.

Mr. Gaskin: Well, you ask about a figure and I only see that figure under the year 2015 Actual. That is where I am seeing it.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, if I may. I was speaking specifically to project 4503300, Industrial Development, \$212,190,000 for industrial estates. So far we were just dealing with Lethem Industrial Estate that the Minister indicated of the \$212,190,000, \$116 million was allocated to expend on Lethem. I am seeking from the Minister the \$96,190,000 remaining of the \$212,190,000. Which of the industrial estates it was to be expended on and the specific sums to those listed?

Mr. Gaskin: Yes, the other two industrial estates, which were catered for under this amount, were Coldingen Estate and Belvedere Estate. I think the amount budgeted for 2016 was \$212,190,000. The amount budgeted for Lethem, out of that, was \$160 million. I am getting a difference of \$52,190,000. It is not 90-something million dollars, so somewhere along the line...

Mr. Hamilton: Is it \$116 million or is it \$160 million?

Mr. Gaskin: It is \$160 million.

Mr. Hamilton: We are discussing \$42 million.

Mr. Gaskin: The other two estates - Belvedere Estate, \$33 million was allocated and Coldingen Estate, it was \$20 million.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Minister, you have just indicated to me, and I agreed with you, that if we take out \$160 million for Lethem, we have \$42 million.

Mr. Gaskin: It is \$52 million.

Mr. Hamilton: It is \$52 million. You have said now that \$33 million would budget for Belvedere Estate, \$20 million for Coldingen Estate, that is \$53 million. I would not be squibbling about the \$1 million. The question is regarding Coldingen and Belvedere Estates, was there any contracts given out for those two locations? If so, what are the specific sums thus far expended on these works?

Mr. Gaskin: On the Coldingen Estate, a contract was awarded for \$29 million of which \$14 million is expected to be spent before the end of this year and on Belvedere Estate, the contract has not yet been awarded.

Mr. Hamilton: I will move on to 2017. Mr. Minister, the sum to be expended in 2017, the same project is \$287,903,000. Could you indicate to the Assembly how this money is to be expended?

Mr. Gaskin: Out of that amount the construction of a bridge at Coldingen is \$19,501,000. The security fence, gate and fire hydrant at the Belvedere Estate is \$23 million and the works to the Lethem Industrial Estate, \$150 million. In the Lethem Industrial Estate, a business incubator is being designed and built and the cost of that allocated in this amount here is \$287,903,000.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, could I ask the Minister, what is the total projected cost for the completion of Lethem Industrial Estate?

Mr. Gaskin: It is \$800 million.

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Minister, could you advise us, the fact, that you were unable... \$212,190,000 was budgeted to be utilised on industrial estates in 2016 and you have indicated that as of this moment only \$22 million was spent, that leaving us with \$180 million or thereabout, a \$170 million rather, still to be spent. Could you enlighten us what has changed or what would change, drastically, in 2017 to cause you to be so optimistic, that if you were unable to spend \$212,190,000 in 2016, how would you spend \$287,903,000 in 2017?

Mr. Gaskin: The simple answer to that question is that we know what we are doing now. When we started looking at this last year, we were dealing with a project that was already on the way. When we made some basic enquiries about that project, we found out that the master plan was to put down a road, put down a few culverts, put up a fence and then call it an industrial estate. We decide we did not like that approach. We wanted something that was purpose-built and that had all the makings or a modern industrial estate. That is why we stopped. We paused and we redesigned the area to give us and to give the people of that community something that is purpose-built and designed to produce a certain result, rather than just simply divide the area, a big piece of land, into a number of little plots and expect that to do the trick. We have now redesigned that industrial estate. We have hired the consultant. The contract is about to be awarded for the works to begin and, therefore, I am confident that those works would begin early in the new year and progress rapidly from here, because, as I said, we know what we are doing now.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Minister, my final question, could you advise us on how many years this project is to be run for?

Mr. Gaskin: We are expected to complete that project early 2018.

Bishop Edghill: The same project on industrial estates, may I refer the Minister to his Volume 3? The total project is expected to be \$1,125,000,000. This volume tells us, Sir, that as of now, before 2017, \$230,415,000 was spent and that would have taken into the \$18,225,000 spent in

2015 plus the proposed \$212,190,000 in 2016, which would give you the \$230,415,000. My question to the Minister, sir, is the \$160 million that is not expended yet for 2016 being rolled over to 2017?

Mr. Gaskin: The answer to that is yes.

Bishop Edghill: As a follow-up question. When the Minister gives his breakdown of the \$287,903,000, he indicated that \$150 million would be spent on Lethem and \$87 million on the business incubator. Is this \$150 million, which he referred to, is additional moneys or new moneys?

3.17 p.m.

Mr. Gaskin: Mr. Chairman, again, I do not understand the question. The amount allocated in 2017 is \$150 million. The fact that it is called a rollover project does not mean that money is somehow rolled over. What is here is what is being provided for in 2017. This budget is being examined here in 2016. As I said, we have got accustomed to doing things in the year in which we are budgeting for. We have got accustomed to rolling things over so that the money can be expended during the first few months of the year when there is no budget. That situation does not arise. This concept of rollover, in the sense that the Hon. Members over there may understand it, is not applicable to this particular year. The amount, which you see here, \$150 million, is the amount that is projected to be expended on that estate next year.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, this will be my final question on this same project. We were told by the Minister that the Lethem Industrial Estate will cost approximately \$800 million and it will be finished in 2018. One hundred and sixty million dollars was supposed to be spent in 2016 and it has not been spent. One hundred and fifty million dollars is budgeted for 2017 to be spent. The simple question is if the \$160 million, which is supposed to be spent in 2016, which was not spent, be added to the \$150 million which was budgeted for in 2017. It is simple mathematics. If it is to be added, then the Minister's figure for the total allocation under this line item of \$287 million is incorrect. That is what I am pointing out to the Assembly.

Mr. Gaskin: I think I have just explained that there is no addition to any money being spent or allocated in 2017. I am saying that it is not applicable in this situation because we have a budget

for the entire year so there is no need to rollover amounts that you can spend it in the first few months of the year when there is no budget. There is nothing that is going to be rolled over as you put it. The amount that you see there, for a \$150 million, is the amount that is budgeted to be expended next year and there is no other money that will come from this year and enter into that amount.

Ms. Teixeira: Under the project 4503400, Rural Enterprise Development, could the Hon. Minister say why the budgeted amount of \$195,213,000 for 2016 was not spent and we see \$133,154,000 spent of that? Could he advise us what were the reasons for a balance of about \$60 million between now and the end of the year? Could he then explain also the \$59,225,000 budgeted for 2017? What is the state of works at the call centres at Tuschen and Enmore where this \$59,225,000 is supposed to be expended next year?

Mr. Gaskin: The call centre at Tuschen has been completed. The external works have to be completed. That entails landscaping, bridge, fence, and so on. At the call centre at Enmore there are still some internal works left to be completed and also the same external works that are being done at Tuschen. The amounts were not spent as budgeted because the contracts were awarded late and therefore the works could not be completed as projected. That is the answer to that. Was there a second question you asked? Was it a two-part or three-part question?

Ms. Teixeira: Does it mean Minister that the contracts were awarded late, in other words, the contracts were awarded, but late? Would the moneys for those contracts, which would not be complete this year, be added into the budget for 2017? I do not want to use the word rolling over again. You men can talk about rolling over. I prefer not to talk about rolling over as a woman. The point I am trying to make is that the money, which was assigned for these contracts ending in December 31st, these contracts were awarded late. What budgetary provisions had been made to pay these contracts in the new year? Is it budgeted here in the budget documents? Is it going to be a supplementary? Or is it some other mechanism?

Mr. Gaskin: The amounts that you see in the budget are the amounts that will be expended next year.

Programme: 252 –Business Development, Support and Promotion – \$460,299,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 253 – Consumer Protection – \$69,346,000

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships): Could the Hon. Minister say to this Assembly what will be the training programmes or the persons that would be trained under this line item?

Mr. Gaskin: These funds are for training staff in information technology (IT) and statistical training, research marketing, occupational safety and health. Those are the areas of training.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: There has been an increased amount of \$4,885,000. Could the Hon. Minister state the reason for the increase and to which organisations?

Mr. Gaskin: The organisation is the Competition and Consumer Affairs Commission (CCAC) and the increase is due to increase in salaries as well as the fact that in this year's budget we had only catered for ten months because the commission was only brought under the Ministry of Business responsibility as of Tuesday, 1st March, 2016. Next year there will be a full year's allocation as opposed to ten months for this year.

Programme: 253 – Consumer Protection – \$69,346,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 253 – Consumer Protection – \$1,490,000

Programme: 253 – Consumer Protection – \$1,490,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 254 – Tourism Development and Promotion – \$322,125,000

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Under line item 6294, Other, there is no budgeted amount. Could the Hon. Minister state...

3.22 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: If there is no line item, then there is no question to ask on that.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Under line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - the 2016 Budget has an increase by \$28,891,000 while the 2017 Budget was increased by \$42,432,000, an increase by \$13,541,000. Could the Hon. Minister say why the huge increases, which organisations will benefit and if there are any new organisations?

Mr. Gaskin: There was no allocation under the Ministry of Business, under this particular Programme or line item, for the year 2016. We are just dealing with one allocation for 2017 under this line item. The rest of the figures are zero. The allocation is to cover the expenditure of the Guyana Tourism Authority.

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Persaud, this is your last question.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Under line item 6322 – Subsidies and Contributions to Intl. Organisations - there is an allotted amount of \$17 million. Could the Hon. Minister say if this is a new organisation and what is the name of it since there has not been an allocation in 2016 under the line item?

Mr. Gaskin: This is the Caribbean Tourism Organisation and, like I said, there was no allocation under that line item under the Ministry of Business because the Department of Tourism and the Guyana Tourism Authority (GTA) were, in 2016, not funded under the Ministry of Business. It is not a new membership.

Programme: 254 – Tourism Development and Promotion - \$322,125,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 254 – Tourism Development and Promotion - \$10,287,000

Programme: 254 – Tourism Development and Promotion - \$10,287,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 21 Ministry of Agriculture

Current Expenditure

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration - \$13,909,698,000

Mr. Chairman: We will allow a few minutes for a change in officials to take place.

Mr. Seeraj: Line item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support: I notice here that there has been more than 100% increase in the number of staff. Could the Minister say whether the Government's most recent practice of selection as against an open advertisement for the filling of these positions was used?

Minister of Agriculture [Mr. Holder]: They are not new people. They have been moved from contract to the fixed establishment.

Mr. Seeraj: I notice also that, for contracted employees, you have less but you are paying more. Could you say what would account for this increase in the amount that will be paid to less contracted employees?

Mr. Holder: These are based on salary increases. There have been salary increases like 5% and 10%, I think.

Mr. Seeraj: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: The charges for most of the agencies that we have examined have been less or about the same. I notice that you have an increase here. Will this agency not practise conservation or are you catering for VAT on the electricity charges?

Mr. Holder: Due to the acquisition of new equipment and an addition of staff to achieve output achievement, the use of electricity has increased accordingly.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Under line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings - I notice an allocation of \$16,200,000. Could the Hon. Minister say which buildings we are talking about here?

Mr. Holder: This is the main building in the Ministry on Regent Street.

Mr. Damon: Line item 6223 – Office Materials and Supplies: I see a sum of \$4,800,000. There is an increase there. Could the Hon. Minister explain what the increase was for?

Mr. Holder: This is a very miniscule increase. It is being used for the purchase of stationery, air fresheners and hand sanitizers for staff. The increase is just in time. It is to cater for the projects - key binding and straight initiative, food and nutrition, agriculture disaster risk management and the monitoring and evaluation section.

Mr. Damon: Line item 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skilled: You have two less than what you had in 2015. Could you say if these are retirees or were they contracted workers who have now gone onto the permanent establishment?

Mr. Holder: One person was promoted and the other was dismissed with effect from 7th January.

Mr. Damon: A follow-up on line item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support: In the Staffing Details, I am seeing, as mentioned by my Colleague, that you have an increase of almost 100%. Could you, Hon. Minister, list the names of all these employees and state their emoluments?

Hon. Members: No names.

Mr. Damon: If you do not want to state their names, could you state what category of workers they are?

Mr. Holder: Typist Clerk I - \$294,137 per annum; Typist Clerk II - \$147,014; Registry Supervisor - \$76,836; Stores Clerk I - \$56,748; Voucher Attendant - \$59,310; General Clerk - \$135,702; Expeditor I - \$55,373; Clerk - \$59,382; Office Assistant (4) - \$233,594; and Accounts Clerk II (6) - \$475,078.

3.47 p.m.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, line item 6294 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister identify the other operating expenses and say how much would be spent on each expense?

Mr. Holder: These are payments of stipends and other related costs incurred by the Rice Assessment Committee - \$7 million; key binding constraints initiative activities - \$3.4 million; food and nutrition strategy - \$3.1 million; hinterland development - \$4 million; agricultural disaster risk management plan - \$2.3 million; monitoring and evaluation - \$4.8 million; and the Ministry's administration - \$13.4 million.

Mr. Mustapha: Just a follow-up: I heard the Hon. Minister just say money budgeted for the Rice Assessment Committee. Does that include stipends for members of that Committee?

Mr. Holder: Yes.

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration – \$13,909,698 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration – \$2,106,000,000

Mr. Seeraj: Project code 1301600 – National Drainage and Irrigation Authority: It is stated here in the legend that it is for completion, construction and rehabilitation of drainage and irrigation canals, *et cetera*. In the profile page, there is an item here that is listed at number five in description of project – excavation of outfall channels and empoldering of farmlands. Can the Hon. Minister, through you, Sir, give us an idea of which outfalls are targeted for excavation and the farmlands identified for empoldering?

Mr. Holder: It is empoldering of farmlands in the upper Pomeroon River in Region 2; empoldering of farmlands in the lower Pomeroon River in Region 2 and both are for \$10 million each. Excavation of upstream and downstream channels in the Number 51 Village outfall in the Corentyne in Region 6 - \$13 million; excavation of upstream and downstream channels at Number 43 Village outfall, Corentyne - \$20 million; excavation of upstream and downstream channel at Evesham outfall on the Corentyne in Region 6 - \$26 million; excavation of upstream and downstream channel at Adventure outfall in the Corentyne, Region 6 - \$16 million.

Mr. Seeraj: Project code 2100700 – Flood Risk Management Project: Again, I want to make reference to profile page 55. Here the description of the project includes construction of pump stations at Number Two Village; pump stations at Hope, Vigilance, and Lusignan. Can the Hon. Minister give us an estimated cost of these pump stations that are identified for construction?

Mr. Holder: The pump station at Lusignan, Demerara Mahaica, Region 4 – \$162,000,047; the pump station at Buxton, Vigilance - \$105,152,000; and the pump station at Hope, Enmore – \$186,379,000.

Mr. Seeraj: Can you give us also an estimated cost for number one in the project details – rehabilitation of sections of East Demerara Water Conservancy?

Mr. Holder: Are you talking about the North/East dams on the East Demerara Water Conservancy? That is \$75 million.

Mr. Seeraj: And what about the structures?

Mr. Holder: The rehabilitation is [*Inaudible*] and irrigation structures - \$20 million, giving a total of \$95 million for the East Demerara Water Conservancy.

Mr. Damon: Project code 1301700 – Drainage and Irrigation - provision for building and facilities at East Demerara Water Conservancy (EDWC): Can you explain, Hon. Minister, how much moneys will be spent on each of these drainage structures?

Mr. Holder: The purchase and installation of a solar panel at the EDWC [*inaudible*] regulator; upgrading of the electrical system for the EDWC [*inaudible*] regulator, both at \$10 million each. There is a construction of a building to house the operators at the EDWC, the high level outfall sluice at Hope/Dochfour - \$5 million; the supervision of services - \$5 million; and another relief channel level sluice outfall structure at Hope for \$5 million.

Mr. Damon: Project code 1301900 – Mangrove Management: Can the Hon. Minister explain which areas these projects will be?

Mr. Holder: Construction of brushwood dam groin at Columbia, Region 2 - \$22,750,000; installation of geotextile tube groin at Aberdeen, Essequibo, Region 2 – \$19,500,000 geotechnical surveys at Columbia and Aberdeen in Region 2 - \$2.4 million. There is the mangrove monitoring for which we will be purchasing two motorcycles at \$600,000 for Regions 2 and 6, nine digital cameras, four-way analysers and a pH metre for Region 6 at \$250,000.

Mr. Seeraj: Minister, I want to take your attention to project code 1301600 – National Drainage and Irrigation Authority. Again, it is stated in the profile that the Ministry will be looking to purchase a dredge. May I enquire, through you, Sir, what will be the estimated cost for this dredge and where it will be put into operation – the target areas?

Mr. Holder: The dredge will be purchased at a cost of \$125,855,729. The dredge will be mounted at the Abary Mahaicony and Mahaica Rivers and also at the Pomeroon and other tributaries and estuaries and channels along the Corentyne that lead into the Atlantic. This will improve the drainage flow rate into the Atlantic and hence bring faster relief to residents and farmers along the coastland of Guyana who are affected by flooding and climate change.

Mr. Anamayah: Hon. Minister, project code 4504100 – Sugar Industry Mechanisation Project: Could the Hon. Minister kindly update us on how much of this \$400 million allocated was spent? Which estate was it spent on and how was it spent?

Mr. Holder: I cannot find the project code, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, could you repeat the project code so that we are all together?

Mr. Anamayah: Project code 4504100 – Sugar Industry Mechanisation Project: I am asking for 2016. I noticed that there is no money there for 2017.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, if there is no provision, then you ought not to ask a question on a non-existent provision.

Mr. Anamayah: No. I am asking about 2016, if we can have an update of how much of it was spent.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, is there a project code there to which a provision is attached?

Mr. Anamayah: No figures are attached, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Then, Hon. Member, you ought not to ask a question.

Mr. Anamayah: Very well, Sir.

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration – \$2,106,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Lumumba: If there is zero in a specific area, are Members in this Assembly not entitled to ask why there is zero allocation? Mr. Chairman, it was my understanding that zero is a number

and if there is zero allocation, one is entitled to ask why. Are you saying that, under the rules and regulations and Standing Orders, we are not allowed to do that?

Mr. Chairman: I am saying that, under the practice that we have observed in this House, no.

Mr. Lumumba: But, Mr. Chairman, I am suggesting that that practice is archaic.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you might be right or wrong but this is not the time to have a change in that practice.

Mr. Lumumba: Can you propose a time?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, do you have another question to ask? You have asked a question and I have answered. Please take your seat.

4.02 p.m.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 213 – Fisheries - \$156,863,000

Programme: 213 – Fisheries – \$156,863,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 213 – Fisheries - \$26,300,000

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, project code 1201100 – Aquaculture Development: Could the Hon. Minister disaggregate from the sum of \$26,300,000 what amount will be allocated to the construction of the hatchery and where will it be located? In addition, could he also include in his answer what model of vehicles would be purchased or procured and what type of equipment?

Mr. Holder: The hatchery will be constructed at the Anna Regina Fish Culture Station at a cost of \$7 million. The current vehicles are handed down from other agencies and are old. They experience frequent breakdowns and maintenance costs have been escalating over the years, thus the reason to justify the gradual replacement of the fleet to ensure that the department efficiently

carries out its mandate. With the expected increase in activities in inland fisheries and aquaculture in the hinterland areas, these vehicles will facilitate the travel of staff to these locations. The new vehicles will also enable more mobility of staff to conduct data collecting activities. Four vehicles are for the fishing department - two 4x4 off-road vehicles for \$16 million.

Mr. Damon: A follow-up question on project code 1201100 – Aquaculture Development: Could the Minister say what would be the capacity of the hatchery, how many fishes would be hatched every month?

Mr. Holder: Currently, there is no hatching facility in Region 2. This will be the first one and we expect that there will be enough fingerling production to satisfy the requirements of the Region.

Mr. Damon: A follow-up question: What type of fingerlings? Would they be tilapia, arapaima or hassar?

Mr. Holder: Tilapia, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: I shall now put the question, which is that the sum stated for Programme 213, Fisheries, Capital Expenditure, stands part of the Estimates.

Mr. Seeraj: Sir, might I enquire just for the purpose of the flow...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you must let this flow. When I am through, then you can seek your clarification. Please resume your seat.

Programme: 213 – Fisheries - \$26,300,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you had a question.

Mr. Seeraj: Yes, Sir, procedurally, because there is no amount allocated for Programme 212 under Current Expenditure but there is an amount under the Capital Expenditure. I was trying to enquire whether we should have done that first before we do Programme 213 so that there would be a flow from Programme 211 to 212 to 213.

Mr. Chairman: Or another flow from Programme 213 to 212.

Mr. Seeraj: I was just enquiring, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Hon. Members, you will see, from your schedule, that there is no provision under the Current Expenditure for Programme 212, Crops and Livestock Support Services. My intention is that we should complete consideration of Current and Capital Expenditures and then we would return to Programme 212 which is standing by itself under Capital Expenditure.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 214 - Hydrometeorological Services - \$568,894,000

Mr. Seeraj: Line item 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skilled: Again I have noticed here an almost 100% increase in the number of staff. My question to the Hon. Minister is whether he could inform us about the methods used to employ the additional persons.

Mr. Holder: Basically, these were staff on contract who were placed on the permanent establishment. There was a shift from one to the other.

Mr. Seeraj: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Could the Hon. Minister provide us with the emoluments for the top five contracted employees, their names, lengths of service and packages?

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, there was a little hiccup here because of the order but I have picked up the top five, emoluments-wise. They are Specialist Hydrologist - \$215,040; Meteorologist - \$189,000; Electrical Engineer - \$191,000; Agronomist - \$175,000; and Engineer - \$180,000.

Ms. Sukhai-Campbell: Mr. Chairman, I am seeking a clarification with respect to line item 6113. The response from the Hon. Minister was that the increase of staff was as a result of the employees moving into the permanent structure, but, in 2015, there were only 15 such employees. When one looks at the staffing details, there is actually an increase. I am a bit doubtful as to where the...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please ask the question.

Ms. Sukhai-Campbell: Mr. Chairman, it is a clarification. How is it that, in 2015, there were 15 employees but they arrived at 26 employees in 2017 and the justification is that the increase is as a result of moving staff from the contract to the permanent establishment?

Mr. Holder: There were 15 but now 26 employees: 11 were moved from contracted to permanent; one driver died and one handyman was dismissed; and one driver was removed from contract to permanent establishment.

Mr. Seeraj: Sir, line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): I have noticed a significant increase over both 2015 and 2016 in terms of training. Could the Hon. Minister provide an explanation for this substantial increase?

Mr. Holder: There is an additional ground water section which is being revived in keeping with the Water and Sewage Act of 2002. This requires extra training of staff which results in the increase in the quantum allocated.

Mr. Seeraj: A follow-up, Sir: Could the Minister say what component of this training will be local and what component will be overseas in terms of value?

Mr. Holder: Most of this training will be done at the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH) in Barbados.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, just a follow-up on the same line item: Could the Hon. Minister describe the nature of the training and how many persons will be trained?

Mr. Holder: I gave the nature of the training already. The ground water section is being revived and the training will be on ground water management. I will not be able to give you exactly how many individuals because the training is ongoing. Individuals are identified as the training comes up, but we have to make an allowance for training in the budget. We think this should adequately cover it. The individuals have not been identified at this point but will be when the programmes are made available through the CIMH.

4.17 p.m.

Mr. Damon: Hon. Minister, line item 6281 – Security Services: I see there is an allocation of \$20,323,000 for security services, could you say which company operates this security service and when would the contract come to a close?

Mr. Holder: Currently, the RK Security Services has the contract and that contract will come to an end at the end of December. Of course, the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) will decide which security firm gets the next contract.

Mr. Damon: Hon. Minister, I saw that under line item 6282 – Equipment Maintenance, there is a \$48 million allocation. Could you say what type of equipment the moneys will be used to maintain? Is the Hydrometeorological Office at Timehri included?

Mr. Holder: The equipment for maintenance is the Hydrometeorological Services equipment, such as computers, fax machines, air conditioning units, *et cetera* and the purchasing of replacement spares for the Doppler Weather Radar at Timehri.

Mr. Seeraj: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: I have notice that less is budgeted for in 2017 than the revised amount for 2016. Could the Hon. Minister say whether he will be conserving or whether VAT will not be paid on this particular line item?

Mr. Holder: We are on a conservation drive at present.

Mr. Damon: Line item 6284 – Other: I saw a whooping sum of \$47.9 million, could the Hon. Minister state what he means by “Other”?

Mr. Holder: The allocation will be spent on payment for radars; frequency licence; DSL services for the Doppler Weather Radar Tower for the Head Office; payment of stipends to part-time and relief observers for 2017; the printing of the 2018 hydromet calendars; purchasing of diaries for 2017; payment of stipends to national weather presenters, *et cetera*.

Mr. Damon: Follow up: Hon. Minister, are you certain that no other line item caters for any one of the items you have just listed?

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, reasonably so.

Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services - \$568,894,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services - \$34,000,000

Mr. Seeraj: Project Code 2100100 – Hydrometeorology: It is stated here that there is a provision of \$34 million for building and equipment. In the project profile the completion of laboratory and bond is stated. Could the Hon. Minister give us an idea of what will be the cost for the completion of the laboratory and bond and where is the bond located?

Mr. Holder: The bond is located at Brickdam. It is the reactivation of hydrometeorological water quality laboratory and the storage bond on the ground floor of the Hydrometeorological Office. The cost is \$15 million.

Mr. Seeraj: Item 2 on the Profile page speaks about the construction of climatological station at Kato and hydrological station at Chi Chi, Sand Landing and the Amaila Falls. Could the Hon. Minister give us a breakdown as to the cost of these interventions?

Mr. Holder: The total cost will be \$6 million. As for the breakdown, in terms of bills of quantity and so on, I do not have that right now. It is quite lengthy because it covers a number of stations. How much detail does the Hon. Member requires?

Mr. Seeraj: Sir, for clarification, did I hear the Minister say \$6 million?

Mr. Holder: That is correct.

Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services - \$34,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 212 – Crops and Livestock Support Services - \$1,346,550,000

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Under project code 1701500 – Guyana Livestock Development Authority: I have noticed that the sum allocated is \$47 million. When I look at the Profile page it states that the allocation is for the:

- “1. Construction of corral, pens and foraging area.
2. Provision of hatchery protection system, pasture, protein bank, boars, rams and bulls.
3. Purchase of vehicle and equipment.”

Could the Hon. Minister say where the corral, pens and other things will be constructed?

For the equipment and vehicle to be purchased, could the Hon. Minister say who will be using the vehicle and what type of equipment will be purchased?

Thirdly, again, I have noticed hatchery listed, could the Hon. Minister say, under each item listed, how much money will be spent on each activity?

Mr. Holder: Five million dollars will be spent in Regions 1, 6, 7, 8 and 9. Foraging areas will be erected, [*Inaudible*]... materials for poultry and construction of black giant poultry pens; procurement of solar electrical gas incubators for hatching of poultry eggs in the hinterland locations; \$10 million will also be spent in Region 4 for the construct of a semen extraction corral to improve the genetic stock that is at Mon Repos. In terms of the provision of hatchery protection system, there will be the procurement of the Hatchcom computerised hatchery collecting system at Mon Repos for \$5 million; the importation of breeding boars, rams, bucks and bulls and related equipment for semen extraction and production for \$7 million; and the establishment of pasture and protein banks in Region 4 at Mon Repos for \$2 million.

With regards to the vehicle and equipment purchases, the Ministry will be procuring bee handling protective processing equipment and hives for Regions 1, 6, 7, 8 and 9, at a cost of \$2 million. There will be a riding mower, slasher and side cutter to improve livestock production efficiency at Mon Repos at a cost of \$5 million; an all-terrain double cab land cruiser with winch given from a gear box to improve transportation in hinterland areas at a cost of \$9 million; and there will be some computers, internet systems, server and equipment for conference rooms and different departments at the Mon Repos Heads Office for \$2 million.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Mr. Chairman, could I ask the Hon. Minister to lay over the information?

Mr. Holder: Sure, in fact, I will ask the Clerk of the National Assembly to make a copy so that the Hon. Member could have it.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Project code 2803000 – Hinterland Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture Development Project; on the Profile page I notice it states,

- “1. Investment plan for development of local value chain.
2. Establishment of investment fund.
3. State of food and agriculture study in Region 1.
4. Institutional strengthening.”

Could the Minister give us a little more detail on what is meant by the investment plan or what is the intention for the development of the local value chain and the establishment of the investment fund and how much will be spent in each area?

Mr. Holder: This is the start of an International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) funded project that has three components. The first component is for \$26.5 million and the objective is to support village and community councils in Region 9, value chain round tables in Region 1 and Regional Development Councils in planning and prioritising investments for the development of local value changes, resilient communities and livelihoods.

The second component, which is for \$6 million, is to support the actual implementation of business plans. An investment fund will be established to finance, through non-reimbursement mechanism, public and common goods and services in the following categories of investments which may be included in the different types of investment plans. All of these are in Regions 1 and 9.

The third component is for the establishment, management and administrative packages, including accounting and auditing, as well as the setting up of monitoring and evaluation

mechanisms, in accordance with IFAD and national guidelines for \$72,500. Institutional strengthening is included in that particular component.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Under the same project code: Could the Hon. Minister tell us which regions will benefit from the Investment Fund and what amount of beneficiaries will be targeted or will benefit from this Investment Fund?

4.32 p.m.

Mr. Holder: Well all sub-regions in Region 9, along with the Moruca and Mabaruma sub-regions in Region 1, will benefit from this fund.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman could the Hon. Minister state what is the amount of moneys from the \$105 million that will be allocated towards the study and what process will be used to contract those who will undertake the studies in Region 1, as stated in the Profile?

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, it is within the \$6 million here, but the study on Region 9 has been virtually completed and other studies are ongoing right now. For \$6 million, I think that it is available.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, I wish to seek clarification because the Profile does not speak of a study in Region 9. It speaks of a study in Region 1 in relation to food and agriculture. Could the Minister clear this issue?

Mr. Holder: The studies in Region 9 have been completed and, therefore, would not be shown here. The studies ongoing are for Region 1.

Mr. Seeraj: Project code-1300600-Civil Works-MMA: \$175,000,000, which is the provision for drainage and irrigation systems and structures. Sir, the Profile speaks of the "Construction of sluice at D'Edward, West Bank Berbice". Could the Minister advise us as to the estimated cost and how soon this project will commence?

Mr. Holder: Design and Mobilisation for the construction of a four-door sluice at D'Edward West Bank Berbice, \$100,000,000. That is for Region 5.

Mr. Seeraj: Sir, “Provision for Abary Conservancy and control structures” could the Hon. Minister give the House a breakdown as to what kind of works will be done here?

Mr. Holder: The Conservancy and Conservancy Dams, sections of the Conservancy Dam are to be restored - five miles. There is a regional elevation of 67 GD that will be built and will benefit 12,500 farming families on the left and right bank of the Abary Conservancy at a cost of \$5.8 million. There will be the weeding of the Bora Bora Trench, 26 miles of our trench to be free of weed, this will enhance the free flow of irrigation, again, for the 12,500 families, this is for \$5.7 million. Cleaning of the Abary River within the Conservancy as well, free flow of irrigation water within the Conservancy and that is \$2.7 million. The provision of stop logs for the seven-door sluice that will make a head regulator. Purchase of fallen lumber to be used as stop logs to carry out works on the seven and eight-door sluices. That is at Copeman - the main canal head regulator - that is \$2.447 million; and the acquisition and rehabilitation of machinery and equipment which is needed to be acquired and rehabilitated. The equipment purchased - one outboard engine and boat, construction of a mud bin on the pontoon to use in the Conservancy area, West Copeman and Dageraad - \$20,246,000.

Mr. Seeraj: Hon. Minister, at item three, there is a provision for primary and secondary drainage and irrigation systems. Were they separate from the work done on the Abary Conservancy or are these now a part of the empolder area outside of the Conservancy. If they are, could you give the House a breakdown as to what works these will entail?

Mr. Holder: This is outside of the Conservancy area. It is the rehabilitation of secondary drains and the canals in the rice area, 20 miles of drains and canals for farmers in the Abary/Berbice area, at the cost of \$20.467 million and the construction of a secondary drain canal for 5000 acres of cattle pastures. This is to help cattle farmers in the Abary/Berbice area and to improve production AD22 to the Blairmont water path, \$6,290,000.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 1301900 – Mangrove Management: In 2016, the budgeted figure was \$25 million and the present budget for 2017 is \$45.5 million. Could the Hon. Minister, please advise on what was the reason for the increase in budget. Secondly, could he also advise on whether it is now that the Ministry of Agriculture is building groynes? This is because under the Profile it states the “Construction of groynes at Columbia and Aberdeen, Essequibo”. I did not

know that this was the forte of the Ministry of Agriculture. Could the Minister give us a breakdown on what would be the cost for the groynes being constructed at Columbia and Aberdeen, Essequibo? The total is \$45 million in the budget.

Mr. Holder: Yes. The Mangrove Restoration Programme is an ongoing programme. It is not a project. For next year, the reconstruction of brushwood groynes at Columbia in Region 2, the 600 metres of brushwood dam will be completed to support sediment, accretion and the promotion and generation of mangrove forest. This is where the groynes are needed to get to sedimentation so that the mangroves could be planted on it, if not the sediment will move.

I think that many of us who would have visited the seawalls, recently, would have seen these little tyrotex tubes that have been doing a very good job of retaining sedimentation. Not for sea defences purposes, they are for mangroves restoration purposes, which will become sea defence barriers. What are the other things you wanted?

Ms. Teixeira: The cost breakdown.

Mr. Holder: Secondly, there is the installation of the *[inaudible]* drawing at Aberdeen, which I just mention, that is \$19.5 million. We have to do geotechnical surveys at Columbia and Aberdeen and that will be \$2.4 million. Then there is the procurement of two motorcycles for monitoring the coastline in Regions 2 and 6 in East Berbice, Corentyne and the Essequibo Coast, at \$600,000; and the procurement of nine digital cameras, a four way analyser and a Ph. Metre, for \$250,000.

Ms. Teixeira: Yes. Could the Hon. Member advise this House if the \$25 million has been completely used up from the 2016 Budget, at this point?

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, at this point yes.

Mr. Seeraj: Project code 1405500– Rural Agricultural Infrastructure Development: Sir, this is quite a substantial amount of money. Could the Hon. Minister, please provide the House with information as it relates to the rehabilitation of drainage and irrigation systems? Where are these drainage and irrigation systems located; how much moneys will be spent; how many canals will be rehabilitated? Also, could he provide information as it relates to access dams - how much money would be expended in the following areas in Mocha, Triumph, Buxton and Ithaca?

Mr. Holder: May I confirm that we are talking about project code 1405500?

Mr. Seeraj: That is right.

Mr. Holder: This again has a number of components. Component 1 is the rehabilitation of the drainage and irrigation system; the procurement of services of a consulting firm for the design and supervision of works should be done within the four areas; the procurement of contractors for the rehabilitation works within the four areas - that is \$100 million and the consulting services is \$20 million; the agricultural survey of the areas of Buxton, Mocha, Triumph and Ithaca to establish the project baseline will be \$12 million; the expansion and extension services of National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI) and Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA) within the four areas that will be \$10 million; the commencement of rehabilitation of the President's College farm; the construction of 0.5 kilometres of asphaltic concrete roads to the farm, establishment of a five acres orchid, establishment of a 10-diary animal complex with a 10 acre pasture, milking parlour and animals - \$53 million.

Then there is Component 2, which is a grant and the purchase of equipment for monitoring and evaluation; the procurement of heavy equipment to facilitate the rehabilitation of works within the four areas, which are eight excavators, four bulldozers, four tractors and four land tilling equipment.

Component 3 - which is monitoring and project management, the project management and administrative cost, is \$35 million, for Engineers, Assistant Accountant, Drivers and Office Attendants, institutional strengthening, office overheads, repairs and maintenance of office, fuel and vehicle maintenance, communication and advertisement.

Mr. Seeraj: Sir, through you, could I request of the Minister to provide the House with the details of what was just mentioned. It is quite a long list and I have not managed to capture all of it. Sir, before I take my seat, could the Hon. Minister give the House an estimated cost of the design and supervision part of the project?

Mr. Holder: I thought I did. It is \$20 million and it would be in the list of things I gave.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, under project code 3300800 – New Guyana Marketing Corporation - \$16,200,000. Could the Hon. Minister tell the House, out of this amount, if there is any provision to support market access and support for hinterland produce? If not, when will the Minister earmark such allocation to support hinterland agriculture?

Mr. Holder: That would not be covered under this head. But I could discuss the Ministry's plans for hinterland agriculture, subsequently. It is not under this project code which basically covers the cassava plant at Parika, the purchase of a boat so that we could acquire our plantains and get the system going with the farmers.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: A follow-up question. Mr. Chairman. Since there is no allocation under this provision for hinterland market support under the New GMC, could the Minister say to this House whether at any point in 2017 he would be bringing a request for supplemental to support the hinterland market access?

4.47 p.m.

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, our hinterland programme is ongoing. The Guyana Marketing Corporation (GMC) used its funds and has been working with the cassava farmers in Region 9 and elsewhere. There is a programme that is on-going with the GMC, so things are happening, but this particular programme is separate and apart and does not cover that.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, a follow-up question: Could the Minister point me to the line item in the 2017 Budget under which this programme that he is talking about is receiving funding, the current on-going programme for the hinterland market access?

Mr. Holder: The GMC is an autonomous agency, so it is not fully financed by the Ministry of Agriculture. It has its hinterland programme and one would not see it here under any line item in these budgets.

Ms. Teixeira: Could we go back to project code 1405500 – Rural Agriculture Infrastructure Development: The 2016 Budget had \$200 million and the latest estimate has \$0. Is it that this money was not used or was it moved to another agency? There is \$200 million allocated, approved in 2016 and no latest estimate of expenditure for 2016. Could the Hon. Minister advise where that \$200 million has gone?

Mr. Holder: That \$200 million loan agreement was not signed. It has now come to fruition. So, that \$200 million was never used or disbursed.

Mr. Seeraj: Project code 1700400 – Guyana School of Agriculture: There is a ball park figure here, Sir, of \$39.8 million. The Profile page informs us about a number of systems, electrical, irrigation, solar system, *et cetera*. Could the Hon. Minister give us a breakdown as to the cost of these systems and where they will be put in place? Sir, if we could pay some particular attention to the solar system and whether the irrigation system and the electrical system that are stated here will be driven by solar powered energy?

Mr. Holder: I can say that the installation of fire protection systems, alarms, extinguishers, *et cetera* and the installation of a new electrical network and the rehabilitation of labs in the compound at Mon Repos will cost \$7.6 million, \$6 million and \$4 million, respectively. All of this is to protect against fire, electrical hazards and improve the laboratory environment, which will increase the school's chances in gaining international accreditation. That is what we are working towards.

Mr. Seeraj: Mr. Chairman, out of the amount that is stated here, could the Hon. Minister tell us how much of this money will be used for the sanitary block and poultry pen in Essequibo?

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, \$3 million each will be used for the sanitary block and the poultry pen in Essequibo.

Mr. Charlie: Project code 2802900 – Sustainable Agriculture Development Project: budgeted sum \$100 million. In the Legend:

“Description of project:

1. Construction and rehabilitation of agriculture centres in Regions 9 and 10.”

Could the Hon. Minister relate the location in the region that the works will be executed?

“2. Agriculture census.”

Could the Hon. Minister relate also where the census will be conducted?

“3. Pilot projects in meat processing.”

Could the Hon. Minister relate where this processing will take effect and what are the allocations as per the listed projects?

Mr. Holder: I will attempt to satisfy the numerous questions asked. The Sustainable Agriculture Development Programme is broken down into three components. The first component is generating information for evidence-based policy making and natural resource management. It involves the implementation of an agricultural centre nationally, update of regulations and legal framework and the training of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Guyana Bureau of Statistics staff. That would be \$7 million.

The second component is the strengthening of the Agriculture Innovation and Extension System, which is the design and construction of an agriculture centre in Region 9; the design and upgrading of the facilities in Region 10, to implement a fully functional agricultural centre in Ebini; and the implementation of five research programmes in each agricultural centre. During the preparation of the loan, the following crops areas searched were identified, cassava, peanuts, orchard crops, livestock like cattle and small ruminants and pasture development.

The third component is the support for compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary standards, which, of course, involves the implementation of a simplified breeding system for beef that would compensate livestock owners for the quality of their beef animals; the update of the abattoir standards and preparations of a legal framework; and the technical assistance for the adaptation of the international codes *[inaudible]* in Guyana's context; the *[inaudible]* of the Guyana Livestock Development Authority to enforce standards; technical assistance for the preparation of regulations pertaining to the Food Safety Act; the development and enforcement of sanitary and phytosanitary standards; the financing of two meat processing facilities, one in Region 9 and one in Region 5; one processing facility for dairy in Region 3, that would include infrastructure for processing and waste management and equipment; the training of the GNBS staff and members of selective producers associations, members in management standards, best practices and environmental protection; and the strengthening of producers' association as to enhance management - that would be \$14 million. Then there is marking the evaluation and strengthening of the Mahaica, Mahaicony and Abary (MMA) Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture that is \$8 million; and then there is the public management and administration operating cost of \$50,000,940, which gives a total of \$100 million.

Mr. Charlie: Thank you very much Hon. Minister. As it pertains to the answer and question, could the Hon. Minister provide those details to every Member on this side of the House? I would be grateful. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: I know that Mr. Charlie meant to the House.

Mr. Charlie: Yes, exactly.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Seeraj: Sir, I am aware that the Minister mentioned pilot projects from meat processing in Region 9 and Region 5. Could the Minister inform us, I do not know whether he said it, he might have and I might have missed it, the amounts that have been allocated for these pilot projects? Additionally, how far do we expect to get in terms of reaching phytosanitary measures for the export of meat and meat products?

Mr. Holder: I think with the passing of the Food Safety Act, the establishment of abattoirs of this nature and with the country being now free of the foot and mouth disease that we are well based for the export of beef. What we need to do now is to build our numbers up. This country should not start exporting beef before it has the numbers. If not, it could destroy the entire cattle industry.

Mr. Seeraj: Sir, I was inquiring about the amounts that have been allocated for the two pilot projects in Regions 5 and 9.

Mr. Holder: We know it is in excess of US\$2 million for the abattoirs, but we have not fine-tuned it to the level where we have gone out for tenders and that nature. These are indicative sums and this is an internationally financed project. It is an Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) project.

Mr. Seeraj: Sir, for clarification. Am I to take it that these two, what is stated here, as meat processing pilot projects, are going to be two state of the art abattoirs, one in Region 5 and one in Region 6, to meet all contemporary standards that are related to sanitary and other measures to reach export certification?

Mr. Holder: That is correct, Regions 5 and 9, not Region 6.

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

Mr. Seeraj: I did write down here Sir, Regions 9 and 5. If I could take the Minister back to project code 1700900 – Agriculture Development – MMA: It is stated here in the Profile page:

“The project includes provision for engineering and cadastral surveys.”

Could the Minister give us some more information as it relates to this head?

Mr. Holder: The cadastral surveys will cost \$9 million; engineering surveys will cost \$6 million, a total of \$15 million. Does that answer your question?

Mr. Seeraj: Sir, I did not get the Minister clearly. I was trying to get some more information as it relates to what is quite bald information here for engineering and cadastral survey. This I assume is in the MMA project area. So, I was seeking clarification from the Minister on what this project entails.

Mr. Holder: I will attempt to give that information now. The cadastral surveys would involve research, previous survey plans and titles. The beneficiaries will be surveyors, survey technicians and the location would be the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission in Georgetown. Then traverse and demarcation of boundaries and that would be put down at \$228,000. Then there is the traverse and demarcation of boundaries, the boundaries that State lands defined that are throughout Region 5 and that is \$7.5 million. The preparation of plans and issuing of titles as a record of surveys completed and titles issued, benefiting the staff and farmers and the MMA Office. That would be \$1.271 million. Regarding the engineering surveys, traversing control for surveying and engineering works throughout the region, that would be \$1 million; the benchmark levelling throughout Region 5 would be \$900,000; the profile and cross section levelling- \$1.8 million; setting out the works for operators to guide the execution of works throughout Region 5, \$1.394 million; and the preparation of plans at the MMA Head Office- \$725,000.

5.02 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: This would be your last question, Hon. Member.

Ms. Teixeira: We have three hours for this Ministry, one and an half and one and a half.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, you have the floor.

Ms. Teixeira: Minister, I beg your indulgence. When we look at your budget, and let us go to the same one, we are on Programme 212, Crops & Livestock Support Services \$1,346,500,000, and when I go to the budget document, the speech by the Hon. Minister, paragraph 4.106, page 52, the Minister said on behalf of the Government...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira...

Ms. Teixeira: It is a question. I am at a particular a head, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, you must bear in mind that you must ask question.

Ms. Teixeira: I am Sir. I am trying to match what is in the book with what is in the number. Is that not valid? Under project 1405500, Rural Agricultural Infrastructure Development, there is \$635 million. Could the Minister say where is the \$20.6 billion that has been allocated to improve drainage and irrigation systems, and increase cultivation in the Budget 2017, paragraph 4.106, page 52 by the Minister of Finance?

Mr. Holder: I cannot really speak for the Minister of Finance, but I believe that what is happening here is the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Communities which have agricultural components, when you add the agricultural components of the Ministry with the Ministry central, the figure would be got with drainage and irrigation. I could be corrected by the Minister of Finance.

Ms. Teixeira: I have done what the Minister said, added up everything I can find, and I cannot find \$20.6 billion promised in the budget speech. However, could the Minister advise me under cadastral survey, project 1700900, Agricultural Development – MMA...? When I listened to the presentation it does not include what is in the budget document about doing surveys and the expansion of the Intermediate and Rupununi Savannahs for more and large agro-processing agro-culture developing and agro-processing....

Mr. Holder: What is the line item?

Ms. Teixeira: I already quoted the number Sir. It is project 1700900, Agriculture Development – MMA. Is there no other part of the budget that is dealing with the Intermediate and the Rupununi Savannahs which is promised in the budget?

Mr. Holder: It was mentioned under the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) agriculture project. The IDB project is a multi-year project. What we are dealing with here is with 2017, but it is included in the multi-year IDB project.

Mr. Chairman: This is the last question.

Mr. Seeraj: Project 1701600, National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute: There is an amount provided here and it is less than 2016. There is an amount provided for the extension of farms at Hosororo and Ebini, upgrading of electrical system at Mon Repos, rehabilitation of building at Kato, purchase of vehicles, all-terrain vehicles (ATV), computers and lab equipment. Could the Hon. Minister give us a breakdown of the allocation for each of the items and tell us how many vehicles will be purchased and or ATVs and how much have been allocated for Aishalton, Annai, Monkey Mountain and Mabaruma? It is on the profile, page 63.

Mr. Holder: I will try to give the breakdown for the Hon. Member. Upgrade of electrical system at Mon Repos, which is National Agriculture Research Extension Institute (NAREI)'s headquarters - \$215 million, acquisition of two off-road vehicles to go to hinterland areas, Regions 1, 6, 9 and 10, which is \$16 million, acquisition of 5 ATVs for Kato, Paramakatoi, Upper Mazaruni, Moruka and Aishalton, at \$10 million at Regions 7, 8, and 9, acquisition of 5 solar systems for Mon Repos, Aishalton, Monkey Mountain and Mabaruma, that is, and Regions 4, 7, 8, and 9 - \$20 million, the 20 acres expansion of farm at Hosororo, this is Region 1, and that is \$5 million, expansion at the farm at Ebini, in Region 10 - \$5 million, acquisition of 20 computers and accessories, that is for inputting and analysing farming data and research in all ten regions - \$2 million, the acquisition of laboratory equipment we need to improve the services provided at the National Agricultural Research Extension Institute laboratories such as microscope, ecothermometer, multiple glass..., lab shakers, electronic balances, fuse and ovens at Mon Repos region - 6 million and the rehabilitation of buildings at Kato which is to improve agricultural services, in Region 8 for \$15 million. The total is \$94 million.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we must have a break at 5 o' clock. It is now some minutes after 5 o' clock. The amount of time allocated to the Ministry of Agriculture amounts to three hours but it is clearly the case that work will expand to fill the time available. Hon. Members might wish to return after the break to resume here consideration of the Ministry of Agriculture. I am advised that the Ministry of Natural Resources is ready and willing to treat with its concerns in the budget. I mention that to you so that we know that there is no reason why we cannot move the Ministry of Natural Resources whenever Members are through with questioning here. We will have a break which we are entitled too. It is five minutes to 6 o' clock and we will resume at that time.

Mr. Holder: We are actually at the very end of the Ministry of Agriculture. There is no other head to consider. Could we just finish so at least the staff would not have to hang around for an hour then to come back to one or two questions and then leave?

Mr. Chairman: That certainly commends itself to me, but the Minister will know that that depends on the rest of the chamber. If Hon. Members are of mind that we will proceed to the end then certainly we will do that. There is a proposal that we continue until we have completed the questioning on the Ministry of Agriculture. If Members are against that proposal then Members can indicate, if not then we will proceed with the questions that are available. Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira we will entertain questions until we have exhausted all in relation to agriculture.

Ms. Teixeira: Project 1701600, National Agriculture Research Extension Institute, the profile on Volume 3 said the expansion of farms of Hosororo and Ebini. Could the Hon. Minister say what exactly entail the expansion of the farm at Ebini and how much addition land...? Is this part of the Intermediate Savannahs programme that was talked about in the budget? You have admitted that relatively small amounts have been assigned to this.

Mr. Holder: Perhaps I can try to give concepts of what is going on here. We have the Intermediate Savannahs which we see, in the Ministry of Agriculture, as the next logical expansion of agriculture in Guyana bearing in mind that our coastal area is threatened, so this is the next frontier. It is right behind the coast. We have an area of 250,000 hectares put under agriculture production. We already have one at Santa Fe, operation in the new front agriculture from Brazil, but we think that we need to have a good solid demonstration location that can

demonstrate the potential of the area as well as producing making sure we have the pastures work done so that farmers could use that to expand their acreages.

We have an area where we can reproduce the necessary breeding bulls and breeding sheep, the genetic stocks so the place can take off if investors want to come in. This is the concept behind both the Ebini expansion and Hosororo expansion in Region 9. As models, expansion areas a source of getting materials, a source of planting materials, a source of breeding stock, is the whole concept. Ebini already is currently on the ground. It has 3,000 acres under pasture lands. It has 50 head of cattle and growing, it has few hundreds of sheep and the crops are expanding. This is where it is at and it is being funded currently under the IDB project, both of them, and the one for Rupununi.

We are doing other things in Hosororo which is more long spices and things of that nature, but along the same concept of producing and having a farm to get the necessary material so the farmers could expand. We import US\$1 million of spices and Region 1 is to supply all of that in three to five years if we are to get those going. This is the concept in general. I hope that satisfies the curiosity of the Hon. Member.

Ms. Teixeira: Under the same head, I appreciate you, Minister, pointing out what is being done experimentally or otherwise at the Ebini and Hosororo. You are using models and stuff such as that. How will the land be distributed? Is it going to be homesteads, large agro farms? What is the vision, because this investment is a large one with such a grand plan that you have? I am beginning to wonder that the \$20 million, which I cannot find, that I wish you were giving it because these are things we should be doing. Could you tell us with the land issues, because I know in the Intermediate Savannahs as well as you do...? Are you going to allocate land to these people in order to continue these experimentation and expansion in some of the things you are doing at Ebini, for example?

5.17 p.m.

Mr. Holder: At this point in time this is where we are at in regard to Intermediate Savannahs. We have done, with the help of the Organization of America States (OAS), complete studies. We have land allocation plan. We have our road transport allocation plan. We have already done the environment plan, including maintaining biodiversity areas and things of that nature. In short, we

have had our plan for where we are supposed to be. We have the plan for where the backup services are supposed to be. The Intermediate Savannahs is probably the most completely planned area for agriculture development that this country currently has. We have started planning for the Rupununi Savannahs, because Rupununi is the bigger region that we have and the potential there. The Rupununi Savannahs is much greater than Intermediate Savannahs. We have some plans started on that, but certainly with the Intermediate Savannahs, I could perhaps send the volumes of information to the Hon. Member for records. It might be useful in spreading the word when you travel abroad and to your colleagues.

Ms. Teixeira: Could we ask the Hon. Member whether those plans could be put on the Ministry websites or on different public domains so that the public and young people doing studies in school and the university could access this, and people like myself who might be interested.

Mr. Holder: Those plans are already on the Ministry's websites, Intermediate Savannahs development plan.

Mr. Seeraj: Project 2605500, Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Control Board: There was a budgeted sum of \$78 million in 2016. The revised amount has not changed and in 2017, \$62 million for the extension of a laboratory. Could the Hon. Minister inform this Assembly as to what kind of laboratory are we talking about? Where is this laboratory and what work would be done there?

Mr. Holder: It is the Pesticide and Toxic Chemical Laboratory at Mon Repos. The current existing infrastructure for the pesticide laboratory accommodates both the residual and formulated lot. The main constraint for the certification of the Pesticide and Toxic Chemical Laboratory is the separation of the formulated laboratory from the residual laboratory. This separation is key, so as to prevent cross contamination. The proposed expansion would allow these two laboratories to be housed separately as well as pursuing International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) certification and an accreditation. The certification and accreditation would enhance operation and use of the facility in the drive to achieve food and nutrition security at the same time contributed to revenue generation to the toxic board because then it could be available internationally for these tests. It is a pesticide laboratory, which, as you know, exists there. It is an extension to that, at \$62 million.

Mr. Seeraj: Project 4700100, General Administration – MMA: The legend states here as a provision for environmental monitoring and control. This is in the Mahaica-Mahaicony-Abary (MMA) area. Sir, could the Hon. Minister tell us what kind of monitoring as it relates to crops, livestock, gas emission? What kind of environmental monitoring are we talking about?

Mr Holder: It is really for farming. It is monitoring the water that would ensure the quality suitable for farmers use. You do not want to have... At times there could be the movement of salt water up the creeks and we have to keep constantly monitoring of it, so that farmers do not inadvertently put salt water on their lands. It is \$12 million. It is all the major rivers in Region 5 which is to keep track.

Programme: 212 – Crops and Livestock Support Services – \$1,346,550,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, on return we would move immediately into consideration of the Estimates for the Ministry of Natural Resources. We would return at 20 minutes after 6 o'clock.

Sitting suspended at 5.23 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 6.20 p.m.

In Committee of Supply

Agency: 26 Ministry of Natural Resources

Current Expenditure

Programme: 261 – Policy Development and Administration – \$280,916,000

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Line item 6116, Contracted Employees: I notice that there is a spike in the sum allocated and when I look at the staffing details, it provides an increase from 56 to 74. Could the Minister of Natural Resources explain or provide details of this increase?

Minister of Natural Resources [Mr. Trotman]: Indeed, there is a spike. It is as a result of the Ministry's continued programme of assimilating scholarship students upon their return. This year

there were 12 students coming, forest rangers, engineers and environmental officers. Also, as for the beginning this year, the Ministry had an addition of another Minister, Minister Broomes, and a staff of four, and the Ministry hired this year two persons. So this accounts for the increase.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: A follow-up question. Could the Minister indicate where under his staffing details are future opportunities for staff that would be needed to do increase monitoring of the various sectors as is necessary under the greening of the economy or the Local Carbon Development Strategy?

Mr. Trotman: It is difficult for us to put positions in anticipation. As they come up, we will fill them. We do have some attrition even those it is marginal. Later on there is a new programme opening for petroleum and we do anticipate some hiring there. As for now, we are going with what is approved. Indeed, as we advance a green economy, we would both be training as well as employing new persons, but would seek Parliament's approval before doing so.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Under line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships), could the Minister provide details of the scholarship opportunities that would be funded from this \$7 million?

Mr. Trotman: I have a list here, for training, which I could quickly go through, but I am also prepared to give a copy to the Hon. Member immediately after I am done. We plan to do training for a performance review in January of 2017. We are reviewing the strategic plan as disclose earlier. We have a seminar plan for the green economy and greening of the economy in natural resources, another training for project cycle management, occupation, health and safety education and geographic training sustainable development. These are the areas where training is budgeted for 2017. I will make this available if needed.

Mr. Lumumba: Line item 6242, Maintenance of Buildings: Hon. Minister, I notice that you have an amount there and I am trying to figure whether it is a mistake because it appears that the building on High Street is not being considered for repairs, renovation, or reconstruction. I just want to know what your take is on that, the building on High Street, the old radio station.

Mr. Trotman: The building on High Street, which is a building that has been in the public eyes for many years, in fact, the Ministry of Social Protection is going to occupy that building. This

\$8 million is for some rehabilitative works that would be taking place at the Ministry's building, upper Brickdam, changing of windows, locks, repainting of the building, carpentry, plumbing and electrical defects have to be taken care of.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Under line item 6281, Security Services, I notice a huge increase here. Could the Hon. Minister say if there is a more than one security company now or other areas to be secured, please explain this huge increase?

Mr. Trotman: Indeed, earlier in the year we did indicate that the Ministry is expanding and is seeking new accommodations. We were given access to a building in Duke Street, Kingston and that building has to be secured. The current contractor is GEB Security Service and this account for the increase. Now there is another building which, in some instances, we had to tear down one part that was completely unfit for use and habitation and in another we are completing some remedial and rehabilitation works. We have had to put 24-hour security there. The service is GEB Security Service that provides security for the Ministry.

6.29 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: I would like to return to line item 6116. The Hon. Minister indicated that the increase catered for the 12 scholarship students who have returned and four new staff who have come with the Minister within the Ministry. My question to the Minister: Why were these members not placed on the establishment in keeping with the policy that has been announced that you are moving from contracted employees to the establishment?

Mr. Trotman: That is a very good question. In fact, the Public Service Ministry (PSM) or department is at the GS1 and GS 2 scales. These persons are beyond those scales and not yet receiving the attention of the Department of Public Service (DPS).

Bishop Edghill: It is a follow-up for clarification. My understanding is that while the Public Service Ministry can appoint for GS1 and GS2, appointments coming from the Public Service Commission (PSC) could also put people on the establishment. Are these Public Service Commission appointments?

Mr. Trotman: Again, very good question, but they are scholarship students, who left on PSM scholarships, and are now returning, so they are being placed by the PSM or the DPS as it is better known, not by the commission.

Bishop Edghill: As a follow-up on the same line item 6116, as is the case doctors and other medical professionals who are asked to go on the establishment, they are returning scholarship persons as well. What is the difference here?

Mr. Trotman: We are facilitators and we will be guided by the Department of Public Service upon their return. We are happy to receive them. They have studied and they have come back to serve and it is our job to accommodate them and the Department of Public Service will guide as to the terms of their assimilation into the Ministry and elsewhere.

Bishop Edghill: While we would had the 12, who are returning scholarship students as explained by the Hon. Minister, the four staff, who would have come into the Ministry with the new Minister, are not scholarship people. They are new recruits, so to speak. Why are they not placed on the establishment?

Mr. Trotman: They are only four persons who fall into the category raised by Hon. Member Bishop Edghill and they pertain to the staff who came with Minister Broomes from the Ministry of Social Protection. They were transferred and so we assumed responsibility for them which is the rightful thing to do. They came and we assumed responsibility of the same terms and conditions under which they operated elsewhere. There is really just those four.

Mr. Lumumba: Line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships): I have noticed that the Government has made it clear that it wants the better life for everyone. I also noticed that there is no clear position on whether the money set aside for training will cover training for the small miners, whether they will benefit from such training, what kind of training or whether maybe there is another category for such training.

Mr. Trotman: Indeed, this training is being done by the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) and Members may recall I did speak about the mining school providing training for small miners. Last year we trained over 300 small miners in techniques, managing a mine, safety, and so forth. I am looking for the specific amount but I will share this document

which is the GGMC's programme for 2017 with the budgeted allocations with the Hon. Member. It does include a figure and if I could be given a minute or two I will get to that figure specifically and I will also share the document with it.

Mr. Lumumba: A follow-up. Would such training be a prerequisite before they are given a licence or would it be during the process?

Mr. Trotman: Given the reoccurrence of mining accidents, we are moving to make it mandatory that persons receive training in constructing and maintaining mines, the faces of mines, the use of an excavator, basic health and safety training, how to secure a mine site or, how to move a person who has been in an accident. Indeed, yes, we are moving to make it mandatory but we believe that we have to provide education and some more training before we can compel all miners. Certainly, those who are known as the General Managers or the GMs, to hold those positions they must, we believe, pass through the training provided by the mining school, if they are to hold a permit. Again, it is a very good question.

Mr. Lumumba: It is a final follow-up on this issue. Would the training include reclamation for small miners in particular and medium scale miners? Could you be a bit specific on how you go about carrying out such functions?

Mr. Trotman: Indeed reclaiming of mined out lands is the priority of the GGMC and this year we have set aside for land reclamation. To disseminate information to miners and the mining laws, we will be providing training for that, also occupational health and safety and transparency. There is a budget but it appears to be in the area of \$500 million, but I will verify that. It is a sizable budget for training and reclamation of mined out lands. These are breeding, of course, vector-borne diseases and apart from that they are very unsightly. We are moving to address those this year.

Ms. Teixeira: It is good to hear about the \$500 million, but it is not under this heading, as the Minister knows, so when we get to that we would like you to point that out to us where the allocation that you are now talking about is. Could we go back to the more mundane issues if you do not mind? Line item 6111, Administrative, there is \$1,861, 000 for one staff in 2016. You have not changed the staff by the looks of it and the salary has gone up to \$2,500,000. The same thing applies to line item 6112, Senior Technical, one person. There is no additional staff and the

budget has gone up by almost \$500,000. My last question on employment falls under line item 6116, Contracted Employees. In the Budget 2016 you allocated \$124,728,000 and it has gone to \$179,800,000. When you spoke Hon. Minister about the 12 students returning the only way these students can get pay if they are on either the fixed establishment or they are on contract. According to the figures that you have given, they are under the contracted employees, the increase in the contracted employees. Therefore whether they will eventually move to a public service establishment is not the issue at this point. The point is that they are on contract. Is that correct? In other words, the issue of moving them to public service establishments has not taken place at this point for the Budget 2017 projection. I just want to have my views clarified, if I am correct.

Mr. Trotman: That clarification or that point captures precisely what I answered to Hon. Member Bishop Edghill a few minutes ago, that they are coming and we will be guided in the future as to how they are to be taken care of.

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, but the point you omitted Hon. Minister is that, right now, they are contracted employees.

Mr. Trotman: Indeed, I have answered before that they come to us as contracted employees. When the Department of Public Service gets around to this scale we will adjust accordingly. In so far as the other matter at line item 6111, Administrative, I believe a question was raised, that caters for the increase in salaries as announced across the board for everyone.

Bishop Edghill: Under line item 6284, Other, last year the Ministry spent in excess of 50% of what was budgeted and there is a reduced sum in 2017. Could the Hon. Minister explain to this Assembly what was responsible for the 50-plus per cent increase in 2016 and what are the items to be procured under this amount in 2017?

Mr. Trotman: This year has been a very busy year and this accounts for some consultancies that we are offered, particularly in the area of oil and gas which I will be hopefully bringing to the House early in January or in the new year. We did have to have some consultancies for communications, a strategy for the oil and gas sector, in particular, and a corporate social responsibility framework which I believe I did show to the House when I addressed it last week.

Bishop Edghill: What about the other part of the question, the items to be procured in 2017?

Mr. Trotman: This is to give effect to the programmes that have been developed this year to ensure that they are implemented and that they have a smooth flow. Hence we would have budgeted for that.

Bishop Edghill: Could we name the programmes?

Mr. Trotman: It is corporate social responsibility framework which I can share a copy with you now. Hopefully you can assist me in recommending persons for it. That is in particular the main one that we will need the support of. I will get it to you.

Ms. Teixeira: It is as a follow-up, line item 6284, Other: The 50% increase between what was allocated in 2016 and what was expended, was this covered by a supplementary financial paper, the increase was from \$8,950,000 to \$14,150,000? Furthermore for the consultancies, could you say how many consultants or consultancy services were hired in 2016 for the value of \$14,150,000?

Mr. Trotman: Firstly, there was no supplemental. We did a virement. In terms of consultancies, we have had one for communication strategies, one for the corporate social responsibility framework. There are several consultancies for oil and gas. It would be three consultancies for oil and gas.

Programme: 261 – Policy Development and Administration – \$280,916,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 261 - Policy Development and Administration - \$298,963,000

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: At project 2406800, Land Transport: Could the Hon. Minister detail to this Assembly what models of vehicles would be purchased and where will these motorcycles and vehicles be assigned?

Mr. Trotman: It is very difficult for me to name the model because we hope to have procurement advertisement put out to see who could provide the best model.

6.44 p.m.

Certain brands stand out for All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs). I am unable to give you what model of vehicles will be acquired because that would be getting ahead of ourselves and breaching procurement practices and law. I am sorry but I would not be able to answer the question.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister tell this House how many vehicles he is expected to procure, how many ATVs and motorcycles?

Mr. Trotman: Two pick-ups for the Compliance and Petroleum Divisions, one enclosed four-wheel drive vehicle, two ATVs, two motorcycles and four pick-ups for petroleum specifically.

Bishop Edghill: Just to follow-up, would the Minister enlighten the House where this enclosed vehicle would be used?

Mr. Trotman: This is an off-road vehicle/all-terrain vehicle that has capabilities for four-wheel drive, a winch and other accoutrement that you would expect of a vehicle. It would be for travelling to the interior.

Mr. Lumumba: Project code 2510000 – Furniture and Equipment: \$178,963,000 seems to be a lot for furniture. It sounds like furniture for the Buckingham Palace. The Minister does not have to be very specific, but, in generality, could he give us some understanding about the type of furniture, whether it would be gold lace or silver lace and where would they be placed?

Mr. Trotman: In 2017, there will be two occupations. As I indicated, the Ministry is expanding and therefore a building has to be constructed because the one that we had hoped to occupy was unfit for occupation. Additionally, the newly created Petroleum Division of the Ministry has to be housed. We anticipate 14 members of staff and we have to house that building and provide telephone systems, PBX photocopiers, computers, executive desks and chairs, satellite phones for interior use, notebooks, refrigerators and printers. We are also acquiring buoys or bullies for oil spill detection, oil spill floating detectors, a vault, a radio system and water dispensers, to name a few.

Mr. Lumumba: A follow-up: The Minister spoke of a new building. I assume he will tell us, since this seems to be new information, whether that building would be tendered and when it would be constructed?

Mr. Trotman: We are speaking, in essence, about two buildings – one to be rented for the Petroleum Division and the other we hope to construct in 2017. This is a building where, as I said, when we attempted to occupy it, it was unfit and was rendered unsafe. We now have to approach the Minister of Finance later to see if it is possible that we could be financed to do that. I cannot say definitively if it shall commence in 2017 but we hope to commence the works in 2017.

Mr. Lumumba: The Minister is saying that a percentage of this money will be set aside pending the construction of that new building.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, is that the question?

Mr. Lumumba: That is the question, Sir.

Mr. Trotman: We are acquiring material in anticipation of the building and, as I said, another building is to be rented for the Petroleum Division and it has to be equipped as well. We are proceeding to acquire, with Parliament's approval, the items that would be needed. As the need arises and once the approval is given, we will be spending. Moneys will not be spent all at once but will be spent throughout the year.

Mr. Lumumba: A follow-up question: It seems like something is missing. If a percentage of this \$178,963,000 will be set aside for a new building, it seems to me that that money should be reduced. Will that money be placed in a bank account? I am totally confused.

Mr. Trotman: I am sorry about your confusion. Let me see if I can help. We come to the House for approval to spend. The Ministry of Finance does not transfer *en bloc* the money to you on 1st January. As the need arises, we will approach the Ministry and we will say that we are ready to receive. It is then spent but we are not going to receive all of it upfront and set aside a portion in a bank account in any secret form. We are going to spend it as the need arises. We will be able to go to the Ministry of Finance and say that we are ready now for this and then it will be given to us. That is the new way that we practice our fiscal arrangements.

Ms. Teixeira: When I look back at the Programme that we just approved or which was just approved, there were no budgetary allocations for Rental of Buildings. Although you talk about renting a building for petroleum and compliance, the new unit, I see no funds in this head under Current for Services Purchased or Rental of Buildings. My confusion is further compounded by the fact that you are spending \$178.963 million on furniture and equipment with no building to put them in. Could you clarify where the money is for the rental of the building? Is it under some head or is someone paying for it?

Would it not have been wiser to have used a portion of that \$178.963 million to either build the building or buy a building and later buy the furniture?

Mr. Trotman: We are, in fact, looking at Programme 264 - Petroleum Management...

Ms. Teixeira: No; we are on Programme 261.

Mr. Chairman: Rental of buildings - \$12 million... We have not as yet come to Current for Programme 264 but it is there.

In terms of what should come first, whether the building first or the furniture first, we, as I said, had hoped to be able to occupy. We found out belatedly that the building was unsafe for occupation, hence we had already prepared our budgets. We are confident that we will have a building even if it means coming to utilise some space in one of the agencies. We do need the furniture and we will have the building later. I appreciate the concern but I believe we are in order.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Under project code 3402600 – Forest Carbon Partnership Project - I notice that an allocation of \$50 million is budgeted for 2017. Could the Minister provide the amount that will be allocated for preparing for the Guyana REDD+ (reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation) Strategy and for the Readiness Plan or the continuation of the Readiness Plan? Would the Readiness Plan and its mechanism include land reclamation, reduce use of mercury, *et cetera*?

Mr. Trotman: Of the \$50 million, \$30 million will be used to assist with the functioning of the REDD+ secretariat and institutional support and capacity building for the National Toshias Council. There will also be established a national grievance redress mechanism - \$16.4 million -

and a Communication and Outreach Action Plan has been developed and participatory mechanisms are being put in place to operationalise this. This would be \$3.6 million.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: A follow-up question: Could the Minister elaborate on the improved REDD+ and the readiness support that he will be providing out of the sum allocated? I do not see anywhere in the Legend and in the Profile many of the details, but I suspect that some of the details that he just provided are in the greater Programme details.

Could the Minister also tell us or assure this House that the \$50 million will go to ensure that Guyana is well preparing itself for the REDD+?

Mr. Trotman: You may recall that, during my Budget presentation, I said that the present Government inherited this Programme which was in a moribund state. It had collapsed and, with the help of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), we are now in the process of literally rebuilding it. The moneys are being used to do just that because it was in a comatose stage and we welcome the support of the Hon. Member and suggestions that she may offer. With the guidance of the IDB and its Consultants, we are bringing this Project to fruition. We do commit not to repeat the ills and bad performances of the past and to make it a successful Programme.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item, as we are dealing with REDD+, the total Project cost is \$798 million and budgeted this year is \$50 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain to this House how the present activities are preparing us to have inflows? This money is sitting there waiting on us to benefit the country.

Mr. Trotman: Because the Project had ground to a halt, literally, these are conditions precedent which we must fulfil before we can go on to the larger tranche. We must rebuild and put in place the various mechanisms to address legacy concerns and have a communication and outreach action plan and programme to let hinterland communities and others know what the Programme is about. I know that once we can accomplish those, we then qualify for the larger amount which is set aside. Until such time that we can convince the donors that we have the capacity, that money will not be released. We are in the process of building that capacity to prove to ourselves and to them that we can capably handle this Project.

Programme: 261 – Policy Development and Administration – \$298,963 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

6.59 p.m.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 262 – Natural Resource Management – \$17,880,000

Mr. Lumumba: Under line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships) - based on the projection for the development of ‘go-more, gold land’, our expansion of gold and diamond, and our projections with oil and gas, is this amount adequate for training and preparation in terms of scholarships?

Mr. Trotman: Sir, I can say, without fear of hesitation, that the amount is inadequate but it is what is being provided and would be supplemented by the efforts of the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC). So, we do anticipate training, as I mentioned before in several areas of safety, leadership in mining, greening of the economy and, in fact, Minister Charles-Broomes is going to spearhead the project of greening the natural resources sector and mining, which is a new art that is now being taught at the School of Mining in Colorado. It is the Hon. Member Lumumba’s *alma mater*, Sir. I am told that they are on the cutting edge of techniques. We do believe that the amount is inadequate but it will go a far way and it will be supplemented, as I said, with support from the GGMC.

Mr. Lumumba: I have a follow-up question. I have a question and a comment but more of a question. Does the Minister think that the time is right for us to prepare an adequate plan that will cover the projection in terms of where we are going in oil and gas?

Mr. Trotman: Sir, there is Programme 264 – Petroleum Management - but I am happy to answer, yes. In fact, as indicated during the Budget presentations, we do have a revised petroleum upstream policy, local content policy and laws. We have reformed the Petroleum Act and regulations. We have developed a Bill for a regulatory commission to be known as the petroleum commission of Guyana. We are completing the framework for the Sovereign Wealth Fund and the Stabilisation Fund, the Citizen’s Participation Fund, and Infrastructural Development and Social Welfare Fund so that moneys are spread across the entire country to

different parts of Guyana, and those will be brought perhaps in part or *en bloc* very early in 2017 in conjunction with the Ministry of Finance. So, there are seven policies and pieces of legislation, if I may term them in that fashion, that are coming within a few weeks. And we wish to thank the Commonwealth Secretariat, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Chatham House – the new oil producer’s group, the Mexican Government, the United States (US) Government, the Canadian Government and the other donors that have given us assistance. Thank you.

Mr. Lumumba: I have a follow-up question, Mr. Chairman. I am assuming that, at some appropriate time, the Minister will have a document that will specifically state that, in the next 10 years, we are going to have so many trained Geologist, Petroleum Engineers, and individuals trained in land management and environmental practices, *et cetera*.

Mr. Trotman: Yes. We had mentioned last week that we are in discussions with the University of Guyana to twin the Guyana Mining School and Training Centre and the University of Guyana to ensure that we meet those targets. First, we identify what the needs of Guyana will be and that we meet them both locally and abroad.

I am happy to appear before the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Natural Resources but I will share the documents with the Hon. Member. They are going to be discussed in Cabinet very shortly and, after they would have been discussed and refined, I am prepared to share them as far and as wide as possible.

Mr. Lumumba: I have a follow-up question, Mr. Chairman. It is my understanding that the University of the West Indies (UWI) has submitted a proposal to the Ministry and the University of Guyana in terms of a Masters in Petroleum Engineering. Have we considered this in the Budget?

Mr. Trotman: Yes. Mr. Chairman, you may recall that, earlier in the year in August, Professor Jupiter, Professor of Practice, a new term, had delivered a lecture at the Pegasus Hotel Guyana and, in fact, there is a proposal for a Master’s Degree in Petroleum Engineering to be offered in Guyana in conjunction with the University of Guyana or through UWI. So we are, in fact, in deep discussions about that programme.

Ms. Teixeira: Hon. Minister, line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence: I noticed that there is no employment here. So I do not know who runs this programme or department or how it is run but you have funds for Local Travel and Subsistence. Who is travelling and where are they travelling to? I assume this is in Guyana because this is not overseas travel. The same thing you have at line item 6265 – Other Transport, Travel and Postage: the amounts have gone up from \$1.1 million to \$1.5 million. So, when we look at this, there are activities going on but there is no head. So, could you advise on how this programme operates?

Mr. Trotman: This is to permit or allow two Ministers within the Ministry to travel within the country to visit one of the six mining districts or any other area where there may have been an accident or report of some untoward behaviour, or, as is now frequently the case, to go to thank residents of a community for good practices. So the amount of \$900,000 and \$1.5 million are very negligible but it permits us to do some travel within the country to visit with the various locations and officers and with miners and others. Thank you.

Programme: 262 – Natural Resource Management – \$17,880,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 264 – Petroleum Management – \$200,720,000

Mr. Lumumba: I have a few fundamental questions I would like to ask the Minister. Petroleum and gas have turned the fortunes of many poor countries around and has set the stage for development. But the key to this has always been planning and projections and, in particular... It is a long question and it is a complicated question. I am not an attorney like my Friend, the Attorney General, so it is a complicated question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, see how you can uncomplicate it.

Mr. Lumumba: I am trying to simplify it and it is a new sector, so you must understand. The Government should be glad that I am raising these questions. It will help them tremendously.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please proceed.

Mr. Lumumba: What degree of specific planning has occurred so far in terms of small businesses to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, in terms of identifying the sectors to

this country so that the ordinary man – the working class man – can know how he fits into the development of this sector and how he can play a role in this sector?

Mr. Trotman: Sir, I thank you for the opportunity to answer that. We have, in fact, received, last week, the local content policy which I will present to Cabinet later this month so that it could be presented to the Hon. Member and others very early in January, 2017 or at the end of the year. So, we have identified, after speaking with technical institutes, business community – small and large businesses – looking at experiences not very far from here and much further afield and we came up with draft policies because we hope to bring this draft to the people so that it could be finalised. And there is much specificity and we will share it in the matter of weeks with Hon. Members of the House and with the wider public. As I said, it is not meant to be a final document because we do not believe that we have all the answers but we can put hands together and come up with something that we can be proud of. So we will be bringing a draft for finalisation to the House.

Mr. Lumumba: I have a follow-up question, Mr. Chairman. Is the Minister – I have to be careful – saying that this document, even though it is in draft, will be very specific as to the areas of potential employment and business involvement on all levels, whether it be small, medium or large scales, and whether it will cover some training because there will need to be training to prepare the wider population for their involvement?

Mr. Trotman: We do have a listing of all of the services that surround oil and gas and that will be an appendix to the document, yes. But to remind the Hon. Member and the House, contrary to popular belief, in most industries, not everyone becomes a part. So, if I were to take Trinidad and Tobago, for example, only 4% of its population is directly involved in oil and gas activity. The spillover or the extending benefits are what we have to look at - from catering to laundry services to security, providing accommodation, aviation services, document translation and so on. So, not everyone becomes a petroleum engineer or a natural gas expert. Minister Jordan and I were on a study mission to Uganda where less than 4,000 persons out of a population of 18 million have anything to do with oil and gas. So, there is a perception that everyone evolves into becoming an oil and gas expert, but I believe that the reality is that it is the extrapolation of the benefits that trickles down or either directly gets into other sectors that spurs the growth. But the document will have the list of the direct services that are to be provided and not only will the Hon. Member

have a copy, but we are inviting him and Members of the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Natural Resources to work with us so that we can produce legislation and policies that meet the national standard and expectation of the people.

Mr. Lumumba: I have a follow-up question, Mr. Chairman.

The Minister cannot think that I am that naïve to think that the entire population will fit into oil and gas but I am just concerned about if enough will be participants. The President has spoken at length about village economics and already some of the major companies are benefiting from the initial stages of oil and gas. I am sure that people like Nigel of Nigel's Supermarket can be saved with it and many of the villages can provide ochro, banana, cassava and callaloo for the present operations. So, we do not have to wait until everything has been spelt out. I think, initially, the question is whether those small individuals or farmers from villages like Buxton and Ann's Grove can participate at this point in time, which will fit into your leader's village economics.

7.14 p.m.

Mr. Trotman: Indeed, it is a valid question but we have to look at extending beyond ochro to include rice, poultry, pigs and everything else. That is what the policy does. We are developing regulations as well to ensure that there is compliance. We are not just going to say that one has to have a percentage of expertise or food or materials from Guyana. We are going to make sure that this House passes regulations to compel, to ensure that there is compliance.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees - \$64,370,000: There are 14 new contracted employees. Could the Hon. Minister advise us on the specific skills, persons, and qualifications required for these contracted employees? Have they been employed and how recent?

Mr. Trotman: Sir, I can answer by saying that they have not been employed because we have not yet received approval. Second, the job descriptions are being finalised and we hope to have advertisements published later this month for persons to apply. If I may, we do anticipate employing a director of petroleum, a deputy director of petroleum, two attorneys-at-law, one economist, one local content and corporate social responsibility officer, two geoscientists, one

project manager, one information technology (IT) officer, two drivers, one office assistant and one secretary. The advertisements will be published later in the month.

Ms. Teixeira: May I ask a follow-up, Mr. Chairman? Hon. Minister, has there been a policy change in relation to line item 6116? The policy has always been that we do not put positions in the contract area unless they are actually filled, and the positions are not budgeted for unless they are physically filled. Has that policy changed? The way the Ministry of Finance used to operate was that, once those positions were approved and the bodies found, then the money was released and a supplementary was subsequently applied for. Is this a major shift in providing for funds when there is no one there? Please clarify that policy matter for me.

Mr. Trotman: I am grateful for the question and for the opportunity to clarify. One, for the first time in over two decades, we have a budget coming before the fiscal year has started. That is the first shift. Second, in anticipation of passage, we are making preparations, rather than saddling the Minister of Finance with the untidy business of having to come with too many supplemental applications for things which we ought to have anticipated previously. We are still in 2016 but dealing with the budget for the next fiscal year. We are accustomed to coming in March or April of the same fiscal year when it is already four months in, and making applications. This is in anticipation and it is because we have shifted the policy to having the approvals prior to the commencement of the fiscal year.

Ms. Teixeira: In other words, the Government has changed its policy so that money is provided for even when there are no bodies.

Line item 6284 – Other - \$40 million: Could the Hon. Minister advise whether this is for more consultants or consultancies? What exactly is the \$40 million for?

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, again I am grateful. As just indicated, we wish to bring the local content policy and local content regulations to accompany that policy to finalisation in 2017. We wish to complete the Sovereign Wealth Fund and its accompanying funds, stabilisation, citizens' participation, infrastructure development and social welfare, organisational strengthening and capacity building. We do require consultancies for those and a geoscientific review of the petroleum data at hand. It has been urged upon us that we do an assessment of the basin to know

exactly what we have. That requires outside consultancies. We expect to have these done in 2017. This is the budgeted cost we anticipate.

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Member state how many consultancies or consultants he anticipates hiring under line item 6284?

Mr. Trotman: That listing is five consultancies, but some may be broken into one or more parts. We are speaking of five principal consultancies. For example, regulations may require one or more lawyers. We have utilised the Jones Day Law Firm, one of the premier law firms for oil and gas, out of the United States. We have as well utilised a law firm out of Norway, highly recommended by the Government of Norway. We have to be very careful with everything we do, so we are utilising the best and are ensuring the work is peer-reviewed, even when brought to a state of completion.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I will like to redirect the Minister to line item 6116 – Contracted Employees. Part of the question I had was answered by him when he indicated the various designations. But, since there is a definite amount to be spent as employment cost, could the Minister tell this House the proposed emoluments for each of the categories?

Mr. Trotman: Sir, it is anticipated that we could attract a director of petroleum with experience and academic expertise in the vicinity of \$650,000; a deputy director of petroleum for \$450,000; lawyers at \$300,000 or thereabouts; an economist at \$300,000; a local content and corporate social responsibility officer at \$240,000; a geoscientist at \$500,000; a project manager at 220,000; an IT manager at \$350,000; drivers at \$60,000 each; an office assistant at 55,000; and a secretary at \$65,000.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6281 – Security Services: This unit is not yet in operation, as the Minister indicated, but there is a budgeted cost of \$10 million for security. Could the Minister indicate what the anticipated expenditure is here?

Mr. Trotman: Thank you. Sir, if I may, line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings - upon approval, we hope to be able to advertise and rent a building in January, which would have to be secured. That is why we have sought an allocation in advance.

Mr. Lumumba: I would like the Minister to explain to this House how he intends to find a qualified director of petroleum for less than US\$50,000 a month.

Mr. Trotman: Sir, the industry is of such that high salaries are needed to get good persons. However, I am pleased to report that we are supplied with the resumes and curricula vitae of many Guyanese who are in the industry abroad. Many wish to provide national service because they recognise the high value and importance of this industry to their country. We have invited them to submit their applications when the advertisements go out. We know the amounts are not in keeping with international standards but, in the context of where we are as a burgeoning oil producing nation, we hope that we can attract patriotic persons who are not driven by lucre but by a sense of duty and patriotism, and will work or be remunerated for less than they would elsewhere. We have, as I said, thankfully and pleasantly encountered quite a few Guyanese who are willing to serve.

Programme: 264 – Petroleum Management – \$200,720,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Lumumba: Mr. Chairman, I wanted to raise a question on the Guyana Gold Board.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you would have to allow me to complete this before you raise the question on the Guyana Gold Board. Thank you.

Agency 26, Ministry of Natural Resources, Current and Capital Expenditure, the sums stated stand part of the Estimates.

Hon. Member Mr. Lumumba, did you want to speak about something?

Mr. Lumumba: I wanted to ask the Minister a question earlier about the Guyana Gold Board. I could not find the line item under which I could ask the question. I wanted to ask him to guide me. There is an amount of \$26 billion deficit for 2015 and 2016. It is important enough that I should ask the Minister, but I could not find the page it was on. Maybe the Minister could answer me.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member for his question. I believe if you cannot find it on the listing, given this is what we are confined to, you cannot ask it here.

Mr. Lumumba: It is written here but it does not state on which column I could ask the question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, when you are through, I must tell you that the consideration of this matter is now at an end.

Mr. Trotman: Sir, may I crave your indulgence? I am prepared to meet with the Hon. Member and explain how it works after we take the break.

Mr. Chairman: That, of course, Hon. Minister, is always available to the Hon. Member, Mr. Lumumba, I am sure.

Hon. Members, we have completed our work for today. I thank you for your assistance. We will resume tomorrow.

Assembly resumed.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, I move that this House be adjourned until tomorrow at 10.00 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Prime Minister for his statement. The House stands adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, 14th December, 2016 at 10.00 a.m.

Adjourned accordingly at 7.29 p.m.