

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2015-2017) 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

80TH Sitting

Wednesday, 13TH December, 2017

Assembly convened at 10.19 a.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Report was laid:

- (1) The Customs (Amendment of Schedule) Order 2017 – No. 39 of 2017. *[Minister of Finance]*

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND FIRST READING

The following Bills were introduced and read for the first time:

MOTOR VEHICLES AND ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 2017 – Bill No. 16 /2017

A Bill intituled:

“AN ACT to amend the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act.” *[Vice-President and Minister of Public Security]*

VALUE-ADDED TAX (AMENDMENT) (No. 2) BILL 2017 – Bill No. 17/2017

A BILL intituled:

“AN ACT to amend the Value Added Tax Act.”

INCOME TAX (AMENDMENT) (No. 2) BILL 2017 – Bill No. 18/2017

A Bill intituled:

“AN ACT to amend the Income Tax Act.”

CUSTOMS (AMENDMENT) (No. 2) BILL 2017 – Bill No. 19/2017

A BILL intituled:

“AN ACT to amend the Customs Act”. *[Minister of Finance]*

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT’S BUSINESS

MOTION

MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2018

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

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

AND WHEREAS the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the financial year 2018 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2017-11-27.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2018, of a total sum of two hundred and forty three billion, three hundred and seventy five million, two hundred and eighty eight thousand dollars (**\$243,375,288,000**), **excluding twenty three billion, seven hundred and eighteen million, four hundred and eighty three thousand dollars (\$23,718,483,000)** which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the undermentioned schedule, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to further provision in respect of finance. [*Minister of Finance*]

Mr. Speaker: The Assembly will now resolve itself into Committee of Supply to begin consideration of the Estimates of Expenditure for the year 2018.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply.

Agency: 72 Region 2: Pomerook/Supenaam

Current Expenditure

Programme: 721 - Regional Administration and Finance - \$209,096,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6281 – Security Services: Hon. Minister, could you explain what are the additional locations that warrant this increase?

Minister of Communities [Mr. Bulkan]: There are four additional locations namely, the Regional Executive Officer's (REO) quarters, the State House Annex at Anna Regina and the State House Annex at Cotton Field.

Mr. Croal: A follow-up: Firstly, was there a newly tendered contract for security or was there an extension? Just kindly clarify. Secondly, the annex for the State House, is this at the back of the Anna Regina location? Thirdly, just for confirmation, did the REO have security before?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that a new contract was tendered for, so it is not an extension. And yes, the State House Annex is east of the main State House building which is closer to the foreshore or river.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6211 – Expenses Specific to the Agency: Could the Hon. Minister indicate what the increase it intends to cover is?

Mr. Bulkan: There is an increase in the sum of \$3.5 million and it is a provision for the Regional Agricultural and Commercial Exhibition. The budgeted sum was \$3 million and the sum of \$480,000 was for the internal consultations for the Regional Democratic Council (RDC), giving a total sum of \$3,480,000.

Mr. Croal: A follow-up: Last night in your Ministry's Budget you had indicated some allocations for such consultation. I just want to reconfirm, are the regions also budgeting for those consultations?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer is yes.

Mr. Croal: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. A follow-up: If that is the case, because the nature of activities are similar, where do we have the separation as to who is covering what?

Mr. Bulkan: The consultation that I believe the Hon. Member is enquiring about is the National Regional Development Consultative Committee (NRDCC) and for which budgetary provisions are made at the central Ministry, as well as internal activities being conducted in the respective regions led by the respective RDCs.

Mr. Croal: My final follow-up under line item 6211 – Expenses Specific to the Agency: Could you lay over to the House the breakdown for this line item? In that I would take it that you would have the final total budgeted for the consultation. Is that so Hon. Minister?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Details under this line item can and will be laid over for the benefit of Hon. Members and, as I said, the sum that is budgeted for the RDCC under this line item is \$480,000.

Mr. Damon: Hon. Minister, Staffing Details. You have...

Mr. Chairman: The line item please.

10.34 a.m.

Mr. Damon: That is what I am going to. Under Staffing Details, line item 6115, Semi-Skilled Operates and Unskilled, there are seven additional employees; line item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support: there are nine more employees; I would like to ask you Hon. Minister about the job details of these employees, the date they were employed, their remunerations and whether the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) of Region 2 notified?

Mr. Bulkan: Indeed, there has been an increase in these two line items under the Staffing Details. Were we to look at the overall staffing in the region, it will show that the numbers are identical, namely a total of 87 staffs in 2017 and 2018. Were we to look a little closer at the information, we would see that there were, indeed, seven and nine increases but that there was almost a commensurate decrease in the contracted employees. What is the situation? It is that there has been a regularisation, which is often time referred to as transitioning from contract to the permanent establishment. This is, essentially, what is responsible for the bulk of the movements. With that said, there have been two new appointments under line item 6114, namely an Accounts Clerk and two Stores Clerks. The remainder in the staff changes would have been, essentially, due to regularisation from the contract to the pensionable establishment, Sir.

Mr. Damon: Follow-up: Hon. Minister, I asked for the staffing details and the remunerations of these employees, even if they were moved from one section to the other. When can you provide that?

Mr. Bulkan: Could the Hon. Member please repeat the two line items?

Mr. Damon: It is Line items 6114 and 6115.

Mr. Bulkan: Under line item 6114, there has been an increase of nine employees, three of which are new appointments. As I just related, an Accounts Clerk and two Stores Clerks and the remunerations are \$67,000 for the Accounts Clerk and \$60,000 each for the Stores Clerk. There has been a regularisation of four Accounts Clerks at remuneration of approximately \$76,580; two Typist Clerks remuneration \$66,141.

Under line item 6115, there has been an increase of seven. These would have been transitioning or appointments of one handyman at a remuneration of \$55,000, a driver with similar figures and five labours with the sum of \$55,000 each.

Mr. Damon: Hon. Minister, I asked, was the RDC of Region 2 notified?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the RDC is aware of the appointments of the handyman, driver, and the labourer.

Mr. Damon: Follow up: Were they advertised? If so, when were they advertised and where?

Mr. Bulkan: These seven employees are being regularised. They are being moved from line items 6116 to 6115 and 6114 under the fixed establishment.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6242 - Maintenance of Buildings and 6255 - Maintenance of Other Infrastructure, the budget allocation under these two heads in 2017 is \$4,100,000, but in the revised column it is \$15,802,000. Then there is, as I said line item 6255 with a budget of \$5.3 million has been budgeted but you expended \$10.4 million. When you go through of all the heads in the budget, there are only two other heads where they appeared to be allocation of the money, but the gross budget of this area has gone up by over \$9 million. Could the Hon. Minister say where the money came from for the increase of almost \$9 million for line item 6242 and another \$5 million for line item 6255? They were not appropriated amount, and there were or are no supplementary financial papers on this?

Mr. Bulkan: The additional activities that catered for the, approximately, \$9 million, under line item 6242 are repairs to the GECOM building to the sum of \$3.328 million. I will just give the major activities. Rehabilitation of State House \$1.8 million...

Ms. Teixeira: My question has nothing to do with that. My question is whether there is an appropriation of \$x and in the revised column you have spent more than that. There is no appropriation by supplementary financial paper or is there anything under "other charges", that is under the amount that is appropriated. In that way you would be able to vire but you could only vire within "other charges". There is no such place under "other charges", where the amount of money allocated versus the amount of money spent is found and which would allow you to vire to give yourself an additional \$5 million under line item 6243 and an additional, almost, \$5 million under line 6255. I am not asking what you did with the money as yet. I am asking about where the money came from?

Mr. Bulkan: Under line item 6242 the money was vired from line item 6272 - electricity charges. In the case of 6255, maintenance of other infrastructure, the unbudgeted sum was vired from programme 4 under education.

Ms. Teixeira: This is highly irregular. To be viring from another programme into another programme is not allowed. How could you be taking from Education...

Minister of Finance [Mr. Jordan]: There is nothing wrong with it.

Ms. Teixeira: But you have to do it with permission.

Mr. Jordan: Yes.

Ms. Teixeira: Where did you get the permission from? Mr. Chairman, the Minister of finance is answering me from his seat, could he stand and answer the House?

Mr. Chairman: If he is rising to speak then he would need the Speaker's...

Ms. Teixeira: I agree with you totally, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Address it to me and do not deal with the Minister of Finance.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Bring the matter to the attention of the Chairman. Then the Speaker will make sure that the proper approach is given to you.

Ms. Teixeira: So, are you saying that you vired from programme four and five to put into regional administration. It is very interested and noted and when we come to programme four and five we will verify what you said.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I take that back. It is not programme five it is programme 724 line item 6272 - Electricity Charges.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Line item 6294 – Other: In 2017 \$285,000 was budgeted and \$285,000 was spent. I notice that \$1.4 million was requested. Could the Hon. Minister state what would be included under this line item?

Mr. Bulkan: Indeed, there is an additional budgetary provision of approximately \$1.42 million which caters for six additional work study attachments from the University of Guyana (UG) and from the Essequibo Technical Institute.

Mr. Damon: Line item 6115 – Semi-skilled Operatives and Unskilled: There is an increase here, could the Hon. Minister say why the increase and what is the increase for?

Mr. Bulkan: I believed this question was asked twice already and an answer was given.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I invite you to repeat the answer to the question.

Mr. Bulkan: Sir, I said it was asked twice and I believe Mr. Damon's Colleague is trying to advise him that indeed that is so. It is a regularisation of seven employees; one handyman, one driver, and five labourers at salaries of \$55,000 each.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members we all have to when we asked a question listen for the answer then we would be sure to when the answer is given or that is given in in the manner in which we expect it to be given. We have to listen.

Programme: 721 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$209,096,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 722 – Agriculture - \$355,991,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: The staff complement would have decrease by three but yet the budgetary allocation would have increase by another \$4 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain?

Mr. Bulkan: The increase provision would have been as a result of the annualisation of the increases for 2018.

10.49 a.m.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, the increases for staffing... every public sector Ministry and every region would have gotten the similar increase; hence, the reflection would have been there. So, your answer...

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: Please proceed, Hon. Member.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, your answer does not add up.

Mr. Bulkan: There are 22 remaining employees under this line item, which is quite a substantial sum. Despite the fact that three employees under this line item were transitioned out, the increases are the sum of \$2,166,000, which would cater for the 22 remaining employees.

Mr. Croal: In the interest of time, I will move on.

Line item 6281 – Security Services: As in Programme 1, there is an increase in allocation, could the Hon. Minister indicate when was this advertised and who is the contracted firm for the provision of security service?

And secondly, the additional locations that would be catered for in this line item.

Mr. Bulkan: The security provider is Radar Security. That contract would have been advertised and awarded midyear 2017. There would be no new locations but there is an increase in the hourly rate from \$300 to \$350 and the additional provisions would also be catering for the value added tax (VAT).

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6253 – Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works: I see that you have a total of \$155.5 million, could the Hon. Minister tell us or layover to us the areas where the work will be done and the schedule?

Mr. Bulkan: It is to maintain trenches, canals, flood relief, the basins and facades. The list will be laid over for the benefit of the Hon. Member.

Mr. Neendkumar: How early can we get that list because it is an agricultural area and you know that this work desperately needs to be done?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are you asking a supplementary question?

Mr. Neendkumar: Yes. I am asking how early we can get the list because this is important for the regional development in agriculture.

Mr. Bulkan: I think that it is better if I read it out now.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, if you read it, and if it is a long list, it will cut into the time available for questions.

Mr. Bulkan: I think there is some amount of urgency on the part of the Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, what I would suggest if it is a long list...

Mr. Bulkan: It is quite a long list, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Then, Hon. Member, I would suggest that that list be made available to the Member so that we can maximise the opportunities and the time left to us.

Mr. Bulkan: It is noted, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: You will undertake to make the list available.

Mr. Bulkan: Yes. The list will be made available today.

Mr. Chairman: Very good.

Mr. Damon: Hon. Minister, line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: There is a massive sum there, Could you tell me if the Regional Chairman and Vice-Chairman usually access fuel from this line item?

Mr. Bulkan: It would be noted that the budgeted sum in 2018 is unchanged from the 2017 allocation. The answer to the question is yes, the Regional Chairman as well as the Regional Vice-Chairman (RVC) do access fuel and lubricants under this line item.

Mr. Damon: Follow-up: Under the same line item, do the Regional Chairman and the Vice-Chairman vehicles get the full supply or only part supply from this line item?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I must confess to being a little challenged here. I am not too sure how to interpret 'full'. But I believe that every time they take the vehicle to be filled it would not be half full, that it would be filled. I do believe that it is subjective but I am being informed that the fuel needs of the Regional Chairman and the RVC are adequately met.

Mr. Damon: Follow-up: Hon. Minister, is there a standard amount that is being given to the Regional Chairman or Vice-Chairman?

Mr. Bulkan: As with all public servants, the allocation is not unlimited. I believe that there are limits. What is provided is adequate and the fuel needs of the Regional Chairman are met. It is not for unlimited use, willy-nilly. They receive fuel that is needed in exercise of the duties and responsibilities.

Mr. Neendkumar: The Hon. Minister said, under Programme: 722 – Agriculture, that the Regional Chairman and Vice-Chairman will get fuel and lubricant. Under Regional Administration and Finance, there is fuel and lubricants to the sum of \$9 million and I think that the right thing is that they are supposed to be getting from Regional Administration and Finance. What is it that they are telling us here? I am a little upset with this.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, if you have a question to ask then ask the question.

Mr. Neendkumar: I am asking the question, where will they get fuel and lubricants from? Are they getting from under the Regional Administration and Finance or are they going to take from the Agriculture Department?

Mr. Bulkan: The observation is correct. The allocations are met under the Regional Democratic Council's (RDC) allocation, which is Programme 1, and not Programme 2 – Agriculture.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, since there is a clarification, could you, therefore, say, because we cannot go back to Programme 1, under Programme 2 for fuel and lubricants, who would be accessing this fuel?

Mr. Bulkan: These are the drainage and irrigation (D&I) activities.

Programme: 722 – Agriculture – \$355,991,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 723 – Public Infrastructure – \$129,190,000

Mr. Damon: Line item 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skilled: The increase in 2017 has moved from \$18,484,000 to \$19,411,000 in 2018. Could you say what caused the increase is?

Mr. Bulkan: The Hon. Member gave the full provision but the increase is quite a modest sum - \$674,000. It is intended to cater for annualised increases for the remaining employees.

Mr. Damon: Line item 6264 – Vehicle Spares and Service: Could you say whether the repairs of these vehicles are done in the plant yard of the region or are they tendered out?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that both methods are employed: internally with the workshop as well as contracted out.

Mr. Damon: Follow-up: Do we have a full complement of fitters and mechanics at the plant yard who are capable of repairing these vehicles?

Mr. Bulkan: Again, I am advised ‘no’, there is not a full complement of skilled personnel and hence the need to outsource some of the repair jobs.

Mr. Damon: This is the final question for me. Could the Hon. Minister tell this House who the contractor is that the work is being outsourced to and how would the contractor be chosen? Would it be through the procurement process, handpicked or quotations?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the selective tendering method would be employed from a list of prequalified mechanics that region would normally use.

Mr. Damon: If it is so that you do tender, could that information be laid over to this House to show the tendering process of this particular item?

Mr. Bulkan: The list with the names of the prequalified contractors and mechanics that are used by the region can and will be provided for the benefit of the Hon. Member.

Mr. Damon: Finally, could you produce, in this National Assembly, the date that the tender went out?

Mr. Bulkan: I am not clear if the Hon. Member is referring to 2017 repair jobs because the 2018 allocations would be for provisions for repairs and for which that process has not yet started.

Mr. Damon: It is for 2017.

Mr. Bulkan: I will undertake to provide that list for 2017 for the jobs that are outsourced.

Programme: 723 – Public Infrastructure – \$129,190,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

11.04 p.m.

Programme: 724 – Education Delivery – \$1,961,523,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6281- Security Services: You would have budgeted \$173 million for 2017, only utilised \$128 million for security and now, in 2018, you are asking for \$236 million. Earlier, in the previous programme, you would have indicated an increase in the hourly rate. Could you explain what caused this dramatic increase and could you say whether the new locations are catered for under this allocated sum?

Mr. Bulkan: The increased budgetary allocation, which is proposed in 2018, the sum of approximately \$62,747,000, is to cater for increased security at the schools in the region via an additional thirty-two (32) guards. There is also an increase in the hourly rate from \$300 to \$350 and, most significantly, there is an increase in the hours of services from eight hours to 24 hours. This is what would be responsible for the increase provision in 2018.

Mr. Seeraj: Line Item 6242- Maintenance of Buildings: There have been complaints from a number of stakeholders - students and Parent Teachers Associations (PTAs) - about poor and deteriorating wash room facilities at a number of schools. Could the Hon. Minister say if, under this head, provisions have been made to correct the situation of these washrooms in these schools? If so, could he provide the information as to which schools have been targeted for this kind of upgrade? Thank you.

Mr. Bulkan: The proposed allocation for 2018, under this line item, is the sum of \$65 million, an increase of 11%. The gross sum of \$6.4 million is to cater for general repairs to a few schools among these being, repairs to the Anna Regina Secondary School Dorm at a sum of \$6.8 million; Bethany Primary School, the sum of \$2.8 million; Hackney Nursery School, the sum of \$3.7 million; Suddie Primary School, the sum of \$2.6 million; Hibernia Nursery School, at a sum of \$2.8 million; Huist Dieren Primary School, at a sum of \$1.9 million; Taymouth Manor Primary at a sum off \$1.39 million; Hackney Primary \$2.359 million, Lilydale Nursery, that will be annex 2, \$2.9 million...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, may I interrupt you? Is it a long list or is it a list...?

Mr. Bulkan: No Sir, the list had just a few more, it is not very long. Charity Secondary School, \$4.65 million; Crikey Primary School, \$2.68 million; and Better Hope Primary School, \$1.82 million.

It is acknowledged that the issue of the state of washrooms, in a lot of our public institutions, do pose a problem, but there is a budgeted sum of \$65 million to cater for general repairs in our educational facilities, including plumbing and washroom facilities.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Line Item 6302- Training (including Scholarships): I would like the Hon. Minister to tell us if scholarship for the hinterland students that are in Region 2, attending the Anna Regina Multilateral and other, are catered for under this line item. If so, could the Hon. Minister say why it is that, since September, they only received their stipend a few days ago? Thank you.

Mr. Bulkan: This provision, under this line item, does not provide for the activity that the Hon. Member referred to. This provision is to cater for additional workshops and cluster meeting for Grades 1 to 6 teachers, across the regions, so as to enhance the curriculum delivery to enable improved performance. Workshops would also be conducted for administrators. There would quarterly reviews, actions plans, and quarterly schedules of activities aimed to allow for the smoother functioning of schools. Workshops would also be done in the core subjects, School Based Assessments (SBA's) for all of the secondary school teachers, literacy and numeracy workshops, parental workshops....

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Neendkumar, the Chairman conducts the business here. He thanks you for your help but he will prefer to do without.

Hon. Minister, the line item which was mentioned by the Hon. Member is clearly not the item she has in mind so telling her all of those things, which she did not ask, just takes us into a direction in which the Hon. Member, who asked the question, does not wish to go. May I suggest that, since that in the answer that that is not catered under it, we then proceed to give the Hon. Member a chance to find the item that applies?

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Thank you Mr. Chairman. All I am asking is that, if it is not here, the Hon. Minister say where the stipend for the scholarships students in the region could be found, so that I could ask the relevant question as to why the payment was delayed? Thank you.

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that stipends, under that programme being inquired about, is provided for under the hinterland students and this would be to Anna Regina Secondary School and other senior secondary schools under the Ministry of Indigenous People's Affairs.

Mr. Damon: Line items 6113 to line item 6302, could you have that information laid over in this House please?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, those can be laid over, is that so, Hon. Minister?

Mr. Bulkan: No, Mr. Chairman. The line items that are being referred to are numerous, from line items 6111 to 6302. It is the entire programme so I would appreciate of the Hon. Member could be a little more specific.

Mr. Damon: Line items 6252 to line item 6255.

Mr. Bulkan: Line item 6252 to line item 62550, Maintenance of Infrastructure – bridges, Drainage and Irrigation (D&I), sea defences and other infrastructure...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, would it be helpful if you tell the Minister the information that you seek?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes Sir, This information will be laid over within 48 hours.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we have to move faster than we are moving.

Mr. Croal: I was about to say that this is the last question from this side under this programme. Line item 6281 - Security Services: Hon. Minister, you would have indicated that the increase for 2018 caters for 32 new securities, correct me if I am wrong, but yet, in 2017, you did not utilise the \$45 million allocation for security. Are we saying that, for 2017, there is a deficiency in the system?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the reduced expenditure in 2017 was linked to the inadequate service that was provided.

Mr. Croal: I did say final but I must ask a follow up. If there was a deficiency in the provision of the service, and you said that you already have a new service in place, therefore, can you say when this new service started? Secondly, what assurance do you have now that you will be able to service the additional locations that you are now requesting?

Mr. Bulkan: The new service provider would have started from the 1st December, 2017.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are now looking at the last 15 minutes for this region.

Programme: 724 – Education Delivery – \$1,961,523,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 725 – Health Services– \$890,510,000

Dr. Mahadeo: Thank you Mr. Chairman. I would like to first, in the interest of time, ask if the Minister could lay over the information for line items 6242 - Maintenance of Buildings; 6252 - Maintenance of Bridges; 6253 - Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works; 6254 - Maintenance of Sea and River Defences; 6255 - Maintenance of Other Infrastructure; 6302 - Training (including Scholarships)?

In addition to that, line item 6221, Drugs and Medical Supplies, could the Minister say how much of this \$186,099,000, which was supposedly spent on drugs and medical supplies for Region 2, was spent by the region?

Mr. Bulkan: The information requested to be laid over will be provided within reasonable time and the answer to the question is approximately \$17 million.

Dr. Mahadeo: Could the Minister, through his representatives in the region, say whether the region received the full supplies of drugs and medical supplies for the moneys that were vired to the Ministry of Public Health to purchase same?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that a sum of approximately \$169 million which was warranted to the central Ministry for the acquisition of drugs... that reconciliation process is still in progress.

Dr. Mahadeo: There are severe shortages in Region 2 because I was there a couple of weeks ago. They said that they did not have 86 of the essential at the Suddie Hospital. I am wondering whether the moneys that are now budgeted would be adequate.

In addition to that, line item 6231, Fuel and Lubricants, there were a lot of blackouts in Region 2 and I am wondering if the standby generators that were budgeted for at Suddie and Charity are working, and if this would be adequate for the operations.

11.19 a.m.

Mr. Bulkan: The best assurance which I can give the Hon. Member and his Colleagues is that this Administration takes the delivery of public healthcare very seriously. If it is the case that the budgeted sum proves to be inadequate for 2018, I am sure that Hon. Members would not refuse a request for any supplementary allocations to cater for the provision of fuel for standby generators at the Suddie and Charity Hospitals.

Programme: 725 – Health Services - \$890,510,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 721 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$46,270,000

Mr. Croal: Project code 2401600 – Land and Water Transport: How many motorcycles are catered for and to whom would they be assigned?

Mr. Bulkan: The acquisition of two motorcycles is for the security checkers at Anna Regina.

Mr. Croal: Project code 2503000 – Furniture and Equipment - Administration: To whom would the computers be assigned and how many are being catered for?

Mr. Bulkan: The provision is for the acquisition of 10 desktop computers and they are to replace old and non-functioning computers at the Regional Administration Offices. There is also provision for two cubicles for the staff at the Regional Accounting Unit. These are at a total sum of \$2.2 million.

Programme: 721 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$46,270,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 722 – Agriculture - \$40,000,000

Mr. Damon: Project code 1300700 – Miscellaneous Drainage and Irrigation Works: The Legend states that there would be the construction of drainage and irrigation structures and payment of retention. Could the Hon. Minister hand over, in documented form, the related information? Where would the irrigation structures be constructed and which contractors are the payment of retention for?

Mr. Bulkan: Similarly, this information will be provided within 48 hours.

Programme: 722 – Agriculture - \$40,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 723 – Public Infrastructure - \$68,230,000

Mr. Damon: Project code 1100300 – Bridges: The Legend states that there would be the construction and the rehabilitation of bridges along with the payment of retention. Could you, Hon. Minister, hand over to this Committee the particulars pertaining to the bridges? Also, for project code 1400500, Roads, the Legend states that there would be the upgrading of roads and the payment of retention. Could you hand over all information to this Committee?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes.

Programme: 723 – Public Infrastructure - \$68,230,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 724 – Educational Delivery - \$193,800,000

Mr. Damon: Project code 1202800 – Buildings – Education: The Legend states that there would be provision for schools, sanitary blocks and the payment of retention. Could you, likewise, hand over the information to this Committee as early as possible?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, I will.

Programme: 724 – Educational Delivery - \$193,800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 725 – Health Services - \$112,700,000

Dr. Mahadeo: Project code 2401600 – Land and Water Transport: The Legend states that there would be the purchase of vehicles, boats and engine and motorcycles. Looking into the greater detail, it states that there would be the purchase of a truck, boat, outboard engines and motorcycles. I do not see a provision for a vehicle for the Regional Health Officer's (RHO) office. I know that a vehicle has been budgeted for and bought for the RHO's office. I had asked the Hon. Minister and he had said that it would be for the RHO's office. However, according to my information, the vehicle has been commandeered by a regional official and was never given to the RHO's Office. I am asking: where will these vehicles be located and to whom will they be assigned? Where is the vehicle that was bought for the RHO's office in Region 2?

Mr. Bulkan: The bulk of this allocation of \$8.2 million is to fund the acquisition of an enclosed truck for the uplifting and delivering of drugs for the Materials Management Unit (MMU) at a budgeted sum of \$4 million; the acquisition of three boats and engines to be used by health workers at Charity, Siriki and Yarashima and Barakara in Akawini; and the acquisition of one motorcycle to be used by the Environmental Health Officer (EHO) for the inspection of business premises and to attend to complaints in a timely manner. That amounts to a total sum of \$8.2 million.

Mr. Chairman: Dr. Mahadeo, you may ask one question without the preliminaries. If you are ready, just ask the question.

Dr. Mahadeo: Project code 2601600 – Furniture and Equipment: I notice that the provision caters for the purchase of a mortuary freezer, foetal monitor adapters, *et cetera*. I do not see any provision for generators, Hon. Minister, but I know that there are no functioning generators at the Suddie or Charity Hospitals. Could you please advise why there are no provisions?

Dr. Bulkan: A generator for the Suddie Hospital, a 750 kilovolt-ampere (kVA), has been acquired and it would be delivered, I am advised, by 28th of December, 2017. It was acquired under a different programme and not under this allocation.

Programme: 725 – Health Services - \$112,700,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency 73: Region 3: Essequibo Islands/West Demerara

Current Expenditure

Programme: 731 – Regional Administration and Finance – 205,770,000

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I will ask that the Hon. Minister please pay careful attention to the question that I am going to ask because I noticed that...

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

Mr. G. Persaud: Very well, Sir. I need answers to the question and not additional information. There has been a reduction in the number of contracted employees from 140 to 83. It is a reduction by 57 employees. I guess these employees have been re-designated among line items 6111 - Administrative to 6115 - Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled. Could the Hon. Minister please provide the list of those employees, their positions, salaries and the line items to which they have been re-designated? Could that information be laid over?

Mr. Bulkan: The information that has been requested to be laid over would be provided, but for clarity, the numbers referred to by the Hon. Member do not conform to what is in the document. Could you please repeat the numbers, Hon. Member?

11.34 a.m.

Mr. G. Persaud: I am sorry. I now have the correct page.

[Mr. Chand stood.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Chand, I think that Mr. Persaud is still asking his question.

Mr. G. Persaud: I will ask it after Mr. Chand asks his.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Persaud, are you asking a question?

Mr. G. Persaud: I am ceding to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: No, Sir, you cannot cede to anybody.

Mr. G. Persaud: I would not ask a question now, Sir. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: Then you should tell me that.

Mr. Chand: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There are 10 persons for this year and nine for next year. Has a post become or is to become redundant? Could you describe what the post is and when it became redundant or is to become redundant? Minister, could you advise us of the person's salary and designation?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the staff reduction of one was due to the resignation of one Clerk (General) in October, 2017 at the average salary of \$57,000 per month.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6281 – Security Services: Hon. Minister, under the consideration of provision for the previous region, you indicated the increase in rates for security services. In this case, as in the case of Region 1, the allocation is, by and large, similar to what was utilised in 2017. Could you explain this? Has there been an increase in rates? Has there been a decrease the number of locations for this amount to have been budgeted?

Mr. Bulkan: There was an increase in rates, even though it was not necessarily reflected in the provision. We are dealing with a sum that is proposed – a budgetary allocation for 2018.

Mr. Croal: I have three follow-up questions: If there will be an increase, from when would that increase be effective?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the contract became effective in December, 2017. In all likelihood, it is anticipated that there will be a necessity for supplementary provision, under this line item, for the continuation of service.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, the commencement month, according to you, is December, like the commencement month for Region 2. For Region 2, the increase was reflected in accordance with what you said. Could you explain, therefore, why the increase is not reflected for Region 3 when it was reflected for another region and a tender went out, across the board, for the regions? We know who the security service providers for the regions are and we know the tendered sum across the board. Could you say, in the case of Region 3, why the increase was not reflected?

Mr. Bulkan: The provisions in the allocations are unique and they are region-specific. The proposed sum for security services, which is under consideration, is an unchanged sum for 2017; it is the sum of \$17,274,000. As I said earlier, it is anticipated that there will be a need for a supplementary provision to allow for the continuation of the same level of service for the entire year.

Programme: 731 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$205,770,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Programme: 732 – Agriculture - \$361,246,000

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6115 –Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled: There is an increase of 10 employees from 35 to 45. Could the Hon. Minister provide the positions of these 10 employees, their remunerations and the procedure used for their recruitment?

Mr. Bulkan: The 10 employees in question are six sluice attendants and four rangers. The remunerations are between \$57,000 and \$65,000. The recruitment was done via public advertisements within the region.

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6264 – Vehicle Spares and Service: Could the Hon. Minister please provide the number of vehicles and equipment provided for under this line item?

Mr. Bulkan: It is a total of 13 vehicles under the Agriculture Programme. It includes pick-ups, tractors with trailers, ploughs, two Yamaha outboard engines and a mini excavator.

Mr. Chand: Under line item 6116, Contracted Employees, there is a reduction of staff by two. The expenditure is reduced by \$15 million. Could you advise us of the two positions that have become redundant, when they became redundant and what was the salary of each position?

Mr. Bulkan: There was indeed a staff reduction by two persons. They were labourers.

Mr. Chand: Was \$15 million allocated to pay two labours? Could you please advise us?

Mr. Bulkan: The information at hand suggests that there was the transfer of a number of persons from contractual service to the pensionable establishment. Perhaps, it could be the case that it is

not necessarily reflected in this Volume. At the time when it was printed, it was not reflected therein.

Mr. Chand: Could the Minister be kind enough, when he has the correct figure, to provide it to us? He said that when the Volume was printed it probably did not reflect the two positions.

Mr. Bulkan: The budgeted provision for 2018 is the sum of \$24,290,000. The information relevant to that would be provided to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Seeraj: Line item 6133 – Benefits and Allowances: There was an increase from \$2 million to \$11.2 million, which is almost a 500% increase. Could the Hon. Minister inform this Committee what catered for this massive increase in benefits and allowances?

Mr. Bulkan: There was an increase by 10 persons under line item 6115. Under line item 6113, there was one person. The benefits and allowances for these persons, who are now on the fixed establishment, are being paid for under this line item.

Mr. Seeraj: Supplementary: Did I hear the Minister say that there was an increase of 10 more persons under this line item?

Mr. Bulkan: No. Under line item 6115 there has been an increase of 10 persons. The benefits and allowances for the persons who were removed from line item 6115 as well as the one under line item 6113 are now being paid under this line item.

Programme: 732 – Agriculture - \$361,246,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

11.49 a.m.

Programme: 733 – Public Infrastructure – \$131,640,000

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skilled...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ganga Persaud, just allow me a minute. Hon. Members, there is a voice intruding into the proceedings and that person is not on his feet. I would ask that person not to do that. [Mr. Nandlall: It was Mr. Williams] [Mr. Williams: It was Mr. Nandlall]. I suspect that, unless he was speaking to himself, he must have been speaking to

someone else, if that is the Member. I do not know who the Hon. Member is. I would only say that there were two voices. I do not ask names. It is inconsequential now. Mr. Ganga Persaud, please proceed.

Mr. Persaud: Line item 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skilled: There were five employees in 2017. There would be five employees in 2018, according to the Budget, but there has been an increase in that allocation. Could the Hon. Minister give us an explanation for that? As I am on my feet, Mr. Chairman, if you would allow, I would like to ask a question under line item 6112, Senior Technical. Could the Hon. Minister share with us the designations and the salaries of the two persons who were added under this line item?

Mr. Bulkan: Regarding the first question on line item 6113, I am advised that, while the staffing details show that the numbers are unchanged in 2017 for a portion of the year, one of the five persons had resigned, but that vacancy would be filled in 2018. So the reasons for the increase in the budgetary allocation in 2018 would be for annualised salary increases in 2018 as well as the reappointment of the one person who was not on the job for part of the year. That is responsible for the sum going up by approximately \$1.275 million in 2018, even though the staffing details remain unchanged.

Line item 6112: the two additional persons are Senior Superintendent of Works and one Superintendent of Works who have been appointed to the fixed establishment.

Mr. Chand: Could the Minister advise us on line item 6116, Contracted employees? There is a reduction of staff by one. Could the Minister say when that occurred? Could the Minister provide the designation of that person and explain why as much as \$200 million was spent on that person's salary?

Mr. Bulkan: Unless I misheard the Hon. Member, I think I heard the figure of \$200 million, which I do not think it is ...

Mr. Chand: It is \$2 million.

Mr. Bulkan: Thanks for that correction. The staff reduction was due to one less Superintendent of Works.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6112 – Senior Technical: I see that, in 2017, there is one and, in 2018, there are three employees. Mr. Minister, I see that \$1.4 million was paid in 2017 and with two extra persons some \$5,457,000 has been budgeted. Could you let us know the designations and emoluments of these two persons?

Mr. Bulkan: One of the two persons was moved from contract employment – one could see the reduction under line item 6116 – to this line item and now on the pensionable establishment. There was one new hiring, which was the Senior Superintendent of Works. The figure was given earlier; it is \$65,000 a month. This figure caters for the salary for the entire 2018.

Mr. Neendkumar: The Hon. Minister is telling us about \$5,000. I see that the figure has increased from \$1.4 million to ...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Neendkumar, ask the question. There is no need to argue.

Mr. Neendkumar: I am asking the question. I would like the Hon. Minister to answer my question. I said that there are two more workers and the allocation has increased from \$1.4 million to \$5 million. The Minister told us that one of these workers [*inaudible*]; he is only talking about one worker, who has been moved up, but the money has increased by approximately \$4 million.

Mr. Bulkan: There are an additional two employees under this line item. One is a Senior Superintendent of Works, which is a new appointment, and the other is a Superintendent of Works, who was moved from contract to the fixed establishment under this line item. So, there are two additional employees.

Mr. Neendkumar: In all fairness, I am asking for the remuneration of these two people. Tell me how much it is and what caused it to reach so many millions of dollars. Is it that the supervisor is getting so much money?

Mr. Bulkan: The specific remuneration would be forwarded, subsequently, to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Chand: Line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads: Could the Hon. Minister lay over to us the roads that are to be maintained during next year?

Mr. Bulkan: This information would be provided. It would be laid over within 48 hours.

Programme: 733 – Public Infrastructure - \$131,640,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 734 – Education Delivery – \$2,750,002,000

Programme: 734 – Education Delivery – \$2,750,002,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Dr. Ramsaran, when I am through, I will give the floor to whosoever requests it.

Programme: 735 – Health Services – \$1,270,480,000

Dr. Ramsaran: Line item 6133 – Benefits and Allowances: There is a marginal increase. Would doctors be given their contractual gratuity under this head? How many doctors would be given and approximately what are the individual sums for gratuity?

Mr. Bulkan: No gratuities are paid under this head, but the gratuity would be paid under line item 6116 – Contracted Employees, where it is applicable.

Dr. Ramsaran: Following up on the same line item, the Hon. Minister mentioned that doctors would be paid contractual gratuity in the coming year.

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the doctors are employed under the Ministry of Public Health and not under the regional programme.

Dr. Ramsaran: Line item 6221 - Drugs and Medical Supplies: Could the Minister indicate for this year, 2017, what percentage of the sum has been expended, what percentages of the items procured have been received and what percentage are outstanding? Further, could he, in regard to the sum indicated for 2018, say what procurement process would be done?

Mr. Bulkan: Of the 2017 allocation of the sum of \$359,649,000, the sum of \$299 million was warranted to the central Ministry for the acquisition of drugs. As I had earlier related for the previous region, the same applies here. The process of reconciliation is still in progress. The allocation in 2018 is an increase of \$20 million to \$379,649,000. Again, it is anticipated that the same procedure would be employed. The bulk of it would be warranted to central procurement and a very small percentage would be retained, in the region, for purchases.

Dr. Ramsaran: Thank you for the information, Hon. Minister. Based on an experience from the reconciliation process last year and the previous year, how long would it take to get the reconciliation process done for these budgeted sums in 2018?

Mr. Bulkan: I think that by the end of the first quarter, this reconciliation process should be complete.

Mr. Bharrat: Line item 6115 – Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled: Hon. Minister, there is a reduction of almost a \$100 million to this line item. However, the staffing details reflect a decrease of only six staff members. Could you explain the decrease, Minister?

Mr. Bulkan: The number of employees, indeed, has been reduced by six and the proposed allocation in 2018 caters for the remaining staff.

Mr. Bharrat: Again, under line item 6221, the Hon. Minister did not tell me what percentage of the drugs and medical supplies, which were paid for with the sum indicated - \$359 million - for 2017 have already been delivered and what percentage is outstanding. Could the Minister please lay over to us a list of those items that has so far been received and those items that are outstanding?

12.04 p.m.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, as I indicated, it is the sum of \$299,000,000 that was warranted to the central Ministry. The list of items that were supplied will be laid over for the Hon. Member but, as I said, the reconciliation process is still in progress to actually give the dollar value of the drugs that were supplied. That is in progress and, as I related earlier, it will be available subsequently. I am advised, by the end of the first quarter in the new year.

Dr. Ramsaran: I encourage the Minister to expedite this process. I ask then, for 2016, has that reconciliation process been completed and where is the report on it?

Mr. Bulkan: That acquisition and the subsequent reconciliation is an activity that is being conducted by the Ministry of Public Health and their officers would be able to speak more definitively regarding the information that has been sought.

Ms. Teixeira: On line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: Could the Minister advise us on how many shipments or tranches of drugs were delivered to the Region in 2017? Is it one, two or three? Could we know, of the \$299,000,000 that was warranted, how many shipments were made to the Region? Second question, which is a rhetorical question in a sense, but I would like you to answer it. At line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings - \$40,000,000, could you say how much of that was used to paint the Regional Democratic Office (RDC) Office in green and yellow with green lights?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that the shipments are quarterly and that there were four shipments of drug supplies in 2017. For the second question, the answer is that no sums were used, under this line item, for the activity mentioned in the rhetorical question that was posed by the Hon. Member.

Programme: 735 – Health Services - \$1,270,480,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 731 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$11,499,000

Programme: 731 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$11,499,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 732 – Agriculture - \$109,000,000

Mr. G. Persaud: Project code 1300800 – Agriculture Development: Would the Hon. Minister please lay over the activities and the cost per activity that will be undertaken under this project code?

Mr. Bulkan: Just briefly, there were 10 activities totalling the sum of \$84,000,000 and the full details of information will be laid over for the Hon. Member.

Programme: 732 – Agriculture - \$109,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 733 – Public Infrastructure - \$119,129,000

Mr. G. Persaud: Project code 1100400 - Bridges: As I am on my feet I can make the second request on project code 1400600 - Roads. Could the Hon. Minister please lay over the specific projects and their costs?

Mr. Bulkan: It will be noted that the proposed allocations in 2018 is a 100% increase over the 2017 allocations. There were seven activities proposed in 2018 and this information will be laid over for the benefit of the Hon. Member.

Programme: 733 – Public Infrastructure - \$119,129,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 734 – Education Delivery - \$149,871,000

Mr. G. Persaud: The Hon. Minister informed us that there was an increase on Programme 733 but there was a decrease under Programme 734. Notwithstanding that, we ask the Hon. Minister if he could please lay over the activities that will be undertaken and the cost for each activity under this project code.

Mr. Bulkan: The sums are actually relative and the percentages do not always give a true figure. But the 2018 allocation, under this line item, is the sum of \$134,471,000 versus the sum of \$56,129,000 under the previous item. There are 14 activities and the activities and their respective costs will be laid over as requested.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 1203000 – Buildings – Education: I noticed, Minister, the Legend states “payment of retention”, therefore, I assume these are projects for 2017 that are near completion or are completed. Could you say what the retention money is and for which projects under this head? Are these projects completed, in fact?

Mr. Bulkan: The retention sums for the projects in question is for an Education Department building at Schoonord and for the Education Department Stores. There is the special needs education school, which is also at Schoonord, and the retention sum is \$4,371,000 total.

Ms. Teixeira: Just to clarify, Minister, are all of these projects that you announced completed? On the retention of \$4,371,000, are all of these projects completed?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that all three of the activities and buildings will be completed before the end of 2017.

Ms. Teixeira: I hate to delay, but I find it rather unusual that there is retention when the projects are not finished. Maybe you can clarify that for me.

Mr. Bulkan: This is a provision for a payment in 2018, so it will become applicable in 2018, because the defects liability period will still be in force and will kick in in 2018.

Programme: 734 – Education Delivery - \$149,871,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme 735 – Health Services - \$74,500,000

Dr. Anthony: Under Equipment - Health, could the Minister lay over, maybe a disaggregation, of the things that he would be buying?

Mr. Bulkan: For clarity, Sir, it is not that I will be buying, but the equipment will be acquired on behalf of the Region for the sum of \$35,000,000. It is quite a number of items and the requested information will be provided, in writing, to the Hon. Member.

Dr. Anthony: Could the Minister say whether the items that will be bought will be new items or refurbished items? In 2017, and maybe 2016, could he say whether new or refurbished items were bought?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that, in relation to prior and previous purchases, only new equipment were bought. I am similarly advised that in the intention for the items to be acquired in 2018 it is the same method and procedure that would be employed, namely, new equipment.

12.19 p.m.

Dr. Anthony: Could the Minister advise us whether the anaesthetic machine that was bought for the West Demerara Regional Hospital's theatre is operational? And, if it is not operational, why is it not operational?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that the anaesthetic machine that has been acquired is to be installed by the supplier and that arrangements for such an installation is in progress. That

activity has not taken place as yet, but the contractual agreement has been entered into and the activity is expected to be performed shortly.

Dr. Anthony: Could the Minister advise, since the anaesthetic machine was not installed or functional, how many months the West Demerara Regional Hospital's theatre has been down?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, for a period of two months but arrangements were made for the service to be provided at alternative locations.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, that equipment caused two months of downtime and then earlier in the year we were told that the theatre was closed for repairs. For how much time did the theatre at the West Demerara Regional Hospital actually function in 2017?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, for the two references made by the Hon. Member, I think that some of the periods were concurrent, but I am advised that the total downtime was approximately three months, which means that the theatre would have been functional for the greater part of the year.

Mr. Chand: Mr. Chairman, could the Minister advise us when the new equipment was acquired, what is the cost for the services that were done outside and what is the timeline for the installation of this new machine according to the contract that he has put in place?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the first answer is October. With regards to the cost of alternative services, I do not consider that to be a reasonable question. It would be very difficult to ascertain if there was any cost attached, because if it was at a public facility there would have been no cost attached to that. And the contract for the installation allows for a maximum period of three months but, I believe, it is in the interest of the supplier to have that service completed as early as possible.

Dr. Anthony: Could the Minister tell us when the contract for the anaesthetic machine was advertised, whether it was done by competitive bidding, who won the contract and what is the maintenance arrangement that is in place for the contract?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, again, I am advised that the process employed was one of open competitive tendering. The successful tenderer was Meditron and the contract is for a period of one year.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 6503100 – Equipment Health: I notice in 2017 the allocation from the House was \$37.5 million but the latest estimate shows \$42.9 million. As there was no supplementary financial paper to increase the allocation to this line... **[Interruption]** Mr. Chairman, there is an echo all the time. I do not know if I am speaking to the right Minister, because every time someone asks a question there is an interruption; some one seems to want to be a Minister and is not in the front row. I am dealing with the Hon. Minister Bulkan, and I would appreciate him being given the opportunity listen to me and to answer. So could I start over since I was interrupted?

Thirty seven and one half million dollars was allocated and \$42.9 million was spent. I cannot find a supplementary financial paper and I am looking for where the virement would possibly have happened. In all the other heads under this capital head, Health Services, all the moneys were expended as appropriated. So could you tell me where the additional \$5 million came from?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member sounded rather definitive when she was posing her question. She said that there was no supplementary paper (SP). But the fact is that that information was not correct. **[An Hon. Member: Who is she?]** The Hon. Member. There was an SP and, in fact, it was the last supplementary paper that was brought before this House. Those records could be easily verified; that is the sum of approximately \$5 million plus to allow for the activity in question. So there was a SP.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, going back to the anaesthetic machine for the West Demerara Regional Hospital, could the Minister kindly lay over a copy of the contract that was entered into with Meditron and the services agreement? That is the one year warranty or guarantee that the Region entered in with Meditron.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, it is an eminently reasonable request and the requested information will be provided.

Dr. Ramsaran: Hon. Minister, I am recalling that we referred to only one theatre and one anaesthetic machine. There were two functional theatres at the West Demerara Regional Hospital not so long ago. How many theatres are at the Hospital, when last did the second theatre function and how many anaesthetic machines are actually on the inventory of that Hospital which had two functioning theatres up to recently.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the very question was posed by the same Hon. Member when the SP was brought before this House in October. The explanation was proffered at that time that it is one theatre but two operation rooms. So the reference is that there is one theatre but there are two operating rooms.

Dr. Ramsaran: I know we are forbidden from using words like disingenuous so I would not. But we understand that because you are talking about a theatre suite with two rooms. So why do you then have to take surgery to another location? [Ms. Charles-Broomes: Line item.] This comes from the same line item, Equipment. The Minister is saying it is down. If there is one anaesthetic machine in one operating room then what is happening to the other room? We left two rooms there with two anaesthetic machines and a backup machine. Mr. Chairman, could we get a layover on the inventory of that suite or whatever it is called, whether two theatres, two rooms or one suite. The essence is do not let us mince words. How many anaesthetic...?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Dr. Ramsaran, the question.

Dr. Ramsaran: The question is on equipment. How many operating rooms or theatres existed up to recently and why, if there are two theatres or two operating rooms, do you have to send patients to other locations? Secondly, it does have a cost. Are the emergency patients being sent by an ambulance? Is the ambulance team paid? Is it out of the region? The Minister should not say that it is an unreasonable suggestion. It does have a cost. If you go for example, with a...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member.

Dr. Ramsaran: Sorry, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, my recollection and the details in the Supplementary Financial Paper will actually bare out the information in greater detail. But my recollection is that the non-functioning of the theatre and the operating rooms was as a result of deficiencies in the electrical system and not the anaesthetic machine. It was the electrical network that had the problem and that was the reason why the theatres were non-functional at that time. It was not because of the anaesthetic machine.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, on the same project code 2503100 – and, yes, I found the supplementary financial paper and I thank you for clarifying - I would like to ask, were the

equipment that were listed to be purchased for \$5,380,000 at supplementary No. 3, that was heard in this House and passed, been acquired? The anaesthesia ventilator, \$1 million, to function two operating rooms; two x-ray film processors, \$3,600,000 to improve diagnostic capacity and reduce wait time; two transformers, \$500,000 and two uninterrupted power supplies, \$3,000 to mitigate against frequent voltage fluctuation which damages equipment at the West Demerara Regional Hospital. Has this equipment been acquired and installed and are the two operating theatres functioning?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that the equipment has been ordered but they have not been supplied and, hence, it is not installed or operational as yet. But the procurement process is in place.

Mr. Chairman: Dr. Ramsaran, you have the last question.

Dr. Ramsaran: Thank you for your indulgence. Mr. Chairman, then where is the old machine that operated up to recently and who has condemned it? Is it there? Where is the old machine?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that the non-functioning machine is there on the location and the suppliers have deemed it to be beyond repair – unsalvageable. I believe probably scrap metal value.

Programme: 735 – Health Services -\$74,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

12.34 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I thank you. We have completed what was designed to be our pre-break work. We will now take the suspension and resume at 1.30 p.m.

Assembly resumed.

Sitting suspended at 13.34 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 1.46 p.m.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply.

Agency 74: Region 4: Demerara/Mahaica

Current Expenditure

Programme: 741 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$193,645,000

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, line item 6211 – Expenses Specific to the Agency: Hon. Minister, there is \$6 million increase on this allocation. Firstly, could you indicate to the House what is expected of this increase? What are you going to do with this allocation? Secondly, kindly indicate the categories of expenses that you have under the line item 6211?

Mr. Bulkan: The increases, the sum of \$6 million is the provision of the sum of \$3 million for the Regional Agricultural Commercial Exhibition (RACE); the sum of \$2.5 million is provision for the National Regional Development Consultative Committee (NRDCC) activities; and the sum of \$1.5 for the continuing consultation.

Mr. Croal: Follow up: On the consultation for the NRDCC, is there a guideline provided by the Ministry as to the budgetary allocation that each region should be making available for such consultation?

Mr. Bulkan: There is an individual provision for each region and the activities would be determined or, if you will, circumscribed by the allocation that is being provided for each region. In the case of the region that we are examining, the sum of \$1.5 million is provided for this activity in 2018.

Mr. Croal: Minister, line item 6281 – Security Services: There is a decrease in allocation of \$5 million. Could you say what the reason is for this?

Mr. Bulkan: Is it in the 2017 Expenditure?

Mr. Croal: Yes, and a similar amount obviously. I was waiting for a part two. So when you are finished.

Mr. Bulkan: The expenditure was as result of the services provided and it was less than was budgeted for in 2017.

Mr. Croal: Minister, continuing as a follow up: In the previous regions, we were given an indication that there was increase in the rates; hence, there was an increase in the allocation. In this case, you have a similar budgeted amount. Could you say whether the increases that have been mentioned in the newly tendered security contracts have been catered for here or not?

Mr. Bulkan: At the time of the preparation of the budget, the 2018 contract, the new contract was not in place so those increases would not be catered for and are not reflected in the 2018 Estimates. But, it is anticipated that an additional sum will be required to cater for the acceptable level of service.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, two questions. Could you confirm, therefore, that there is an expectation that you will be coming for a supplementary?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, the anticipation is not only for this Region, Demerara/Mahaica, but for all of the regions, there will be the necessity for supplementary provision for security services in 2018.

Mr. Croal: Thank you very much Minister. But, with that in mind, when we were under Region 2, the explanation given for the variants was that the increases were catered for. Therefore, there is inconsistency. Could you please explain?

Mr. Bulkan: I do not think there is anything necessarily wrong with that, for the region that is referred to.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support: I see they had budgeted in 2017 for \$9,822,000 and they had spent \$15,125,000. Why this extra spending?

Mr. Bulkan: A total of 10 employees under this line item were transitioned in 2017 from the contract to the fixed establishment, so the increased expenditure in 2017 would have been as a result of this. Similarly, when one was to annualise for the entire 2018 it would also reflect an increase in the 2018 allocations over the actual 2017 expenditure.

Mr. Neendkumar: Staffing Details, line item 6114 - Clerical and Office Support, they had 12 in 2017 and they have 21 now. Could the Hon. Minister lay over to us these 21 designations and the emoluments?

Mr. Bulkan: The information could be provided. But, of course, it would only give the designations and the emoluments not the actual names of the persons. But, as I said, the additional 10 were employees who were transitioned from the contract to the fixed establishment.

Mr. Neendkumar: I also notice that the increase has moved from \$15 million to just \$18 million. Could the Hon. Minister tell us why this small increase when you are going to almost double employment of the people?

Mr. Bulkan: A lot of the increases were already catered for in 2017 and this is why the figure moved by over \$5.2 million. The entire increase would only be reflected in 2018 because we have already moved the base in 2017. Because these employees were transitioned in 2017 for a period that is why the percentage would be lower in 2018. Some of it is already catered for in 2017.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: I noticed \$16 million. Could the Minister lay over to us which are the buildings and how much will be spent on each building?

Mr. Bulkan: This information will be laid over for the benefit of the Hon. Member.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: Minister, there is an increased allocation from \$1 to \$5 million. Before my follow up question, may I ask what the reason is for the increase?

Mr. Bulkan: It seems as if this issue goes way back as 2014, when a considerable sum of money was advanced to Guyana Oil Company Ltd. (GUYOIL) for the supply of fuel and the region has been drawing down on that advance. I think that would have been exhausted in September, 2017. This is why, going forward in 2018, the allocations would reflect considerably higher sums; in this case \$4 million.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6211 – Expenses Specific to the Agency: I know this covers Regional Democratic Council (RDC) meetings generally and stuff like that. Are the stipends for the Toshias of the Amerindian villages in this region included under this head? Could you advise on that?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer is yes. The Toshaos and the Deputy Toshaos and, I believe, there is only one indigenous village in the Demerara/Mahaica Region.

Ms. Teixeira: What about Santa Mission? Santa Mission used to be paid by Region 4 and not Region 3. Years ago there was a request for them to be included in Region 3 because it was very difficult for them to come from Santa Mission, to cross the Demerara River to come. Has that been taken care of administratively? Because, I think, geographically they are somehow in Region 4. Has that been corrected?

Mr. Bulkan: If I understand the question correctly, Santa Mission is in Region 3, Hon. Member.

2.01 p.m.

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, you are correct it is in Region 3, but for years they used to get from Region 4 Regional Democratic Council (RDC) because, I think, of the boundary lines of where Region 3 and 4 are. I forgot to ask under Region 3, so I am asking if Santa Mission would continue to get from Region 4 or not?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer is no. It is not catered for under this region but it is under Region 3.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: Could the Hon. Minister advise us if the moneys owed to the Neighbourhood Democratic Council (NDC), Diamond, for the buses which were hired for the St. Cuthbert’s Amerindian Heritage for Region 4, would be reimbursed to it?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that the reimbursement for participation in that activity was effected to the NDC in question but not under this line item. It is under line item 6291 – National and Other Events.

Programme: 741 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$193,645,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme 742 – Agriculture - \$351,015,000

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6253 – Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works: I see \$166 million is budgeted. First of all, I would like to know why is it that the amount of \$180 million

which was spent would be decreased to \$166 million. Secondly, I would appreciate it if the Minister could layover to us the areas for which this money will be spent.

Mr. Bulkan: The customs and practice here is that, unless there is some gross anomaly, an explanation is not required to justify any reductions. The sum of \$169 million is budgeted for 2018 for activities under this programme and the details pertaining to this will be provided in writing to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Neendkumar: It is not \$169 million. I am seeing that \$160 million was budgeted for and \$180 million was spent. I am also asking why it was decreased to \$166 million.

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, there was an additional expenditure of \$20 million over the budgeted sum in 2017. It catered for additional works, as well as emergency works. There is a slight reduction of the provision in 2018 over the 2017 expenditure. As I said, the activities pertaining to the 2018 expenditure will be provided in writing,

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: There is an increase of \$5 million; from \$6 million to \$13 million. Could the Hon. Minister say the reason for the steep increases?

Mr. Bulkan: It is the same phenomenon as was earlier described, which are the advances that were paid to the Guyana Oil Company Limited (GUYOIL) going back to 2014. Again, this amount was exhausted in September, 2017; hence, the full expenditure in 2018 would have to be paid for now under the provision for 2018.

Ms. Teixeira: Could we return Minister to line item 6253 – Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation: You spent \$20 million more than what was allocated in 2017, which brought it up to \$180 million. In 2018, it would be decreased to \$166 million. In light of the closure of the sugar estates and the drainage and irrigation (D&I), in particular, with the estates at the back of the villages of Region 4, particularly, East Coast Demerara, could you say whether there is any intention to cater for the preservation and the maintenance of those irrigation canals, since La Bonne Intention Sugar Estate is being closed *et cetera*? What is going to happen to the drainage on the East Coast Demerara? There is no allocation here. In fact, the amount of money would be decreased. Heavy rainfall and closures will swamp us on the coast.

Mr. Bulkan: With regard to the additional expenditure in 2017, it was as a result of catering for emergency works in three locations namely: Cane Grove, Beterverwagting (BV) and Mon Repos. That would have been responsible for the additional expenditure over the budgeted sum. With regard to the downsizing of activities in the sugar industry, the intention is that the D&I works would not be the responsibility of the respective regions but rather the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) would have that responsibility.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6115 – Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled: I see that there are 28 persons in 2017 and now there would have 49 persons in 2018. Could the designation and emoluments of these persons be laid over to us?

Mr. Bulkan: Again, it is as a result of regularisation or transitioning of persons from line item 6116, Contracted Employees, to the fixed establishment. The information that is being requested, which is the designations and emoluments, as requested, will be furnished in writing to the Hon. Member.

Programme: 742 – Agriculture – \$351,015,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme 743 – Public Infrastructure – \$138,595,000

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads: There is a sum of \$44 million, could the Hon. Minister please layover to us the names of the roads, the schedule when these roads would be repaired and the cost for each of the road?

Mr. Bulkan: There are seven locations where these works will be carried out. Would the Hon. Member prefer it in writing or would you want it to be related here?

Mr. Neendkumar: In writing.

Mr. Bulkan: This will be laid over, Sir.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6252 – Maintenance of Bridges: I see there is a total of \$23 million. Could the Hon. Minister please layover to us the names of the bridges to be maintained, how much would we spend on those bridges and the schedule when the works would be done?

Mr. Bulkan: This information will be provided in writing.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6112 – Senior Technical: I noticed there is zero and I have also checked Agriculture and Regional Administration and the same thing is there. Does the Ministry have any senior technical staff? Regarding your physical public infrastructure, would engineers not be included in Senior Technical? Does this region, with a \$4 billion budget, have any senior technical staff in these key areas? If I am correct, could you advise me if these are being advertised publicly, because qualified people are needed, and what actions are being taken to ensure the region has money to spend?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that there are indeed senior technical personnel under the various programmes but, for this Programme, such employees are under line item 6116 – Contracted Employees. As part of the transition, that process has not been completed as yet so some of the senior technical would be under line item 6116.

Ms. Teixeira: Even if you have moved people around and regularised them, it means that they are under line item 6116 – Contracted Employees. I see that there are four employees under line item 6116. Based on what you are saying, are there any engineers among these contracted employees?

Mr. Bulkan: There are two engineers.

Mr. Neendkumar: A follow-up: Under line item 6116, Contracted Employees, there are 12 employees. The Hon. Minister is telling us that there would be four of them and that they would be engineers. Hon. Minister, I see that there is a decrease from \$12.9 million to \$4 million. What are we paying these engineers?

Mr. Bulkan: It can be seen that a lot of the transition, again, took place in 2017 and the transitioning of the engineers has already been recommended by the Public Service Commission (PSC). That is expected to take effect in 2018 and, therefore, the allocations would not be provided under that line item for the entire year.

2.16 p.m.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, this is an unreasonable answer, for me, because I cannot see you are moving from contracted employees to the standard staff of the public service... Now, you are telling us that you are moving this amount of money and you are employing engineers, when there is a big budget for Region 4 and you are not employing people. What are we going to pay them? I do not agree with this answer, personally.

Mr. Bulkan: The two engineers that are part of the four employees under this heading; the transitioning process is entrain, so the \$4 million for salaries do not cater to pay the salaries of the two engineers for the entire of 2018, but only for a part of 2018.

Ms. Teixeira: Follow-up: The two engineers that you have now, who are contracted employees, could you give us their salaries? I am assuming these are qualified engineers and not Clerk of Works as many regions are forced to use clerk of works because it cannot get any engineers. So, assuming that you are dealing with qualified engineers, what are you paying them as contracted employees and is there any provision in the Budget 2018, since they are transitioning? That is a funny word that you are using. In certain cultures and norm that is not a good word to use. I would not explain more only to say that you have made no provisions for them as senior technical. An engineer would be in the category of senior technical and there is no money in the budget for that. Would be able to advise us on that?

Mr. Bulkan: As earlier indicated there are two qualified engineers in the region and the information about the exact remuneration would be provided at a subsequent stage because that is not available at this time.

Mr. Neendkumar: Now that there are four contracted employees, two of which are senior engineers with a total of \$4,032,000; I would like the Hon. Minister to lay over to us the designation and the emoluments of these four employees.

Mr. Bulkan: This information would be provided in writing.

Programme: 743 - Public Infrastructure - \$138,595,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 744 – Education Delivery - \$3,821,824,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6281 - Security Services: You did not utilise the 2017 budget and now you are asking for a similar budgeted amount for 2018. Firstly, you explain the reason for not utilising your security budget?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that, the 2017 allocation which catered for 24 hours security guards at all of the schools in the region, the then security provider did not have the capacity to deliver in accordance with those terms and, hence, the payment would have only reflected for the services that were actually delivered.

Mr. Croal: Having said that, could you indicate who the security provider was as is at November 30th and who is the security provider as at December 1st?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I will seek your guidance here. I am not sure if it is prudent for me to name the providers. I am advised that the previous provider was the Home Safe Security and the new provider is Calibre Security.

Mr. Croal: I have a question on the same line item. If it is that we did not utilise the full amount of hours because of one reason or the other, but we are requesting the same budgetary amount on 2018, then we still have a deficit of, according to your words, the increases per the hour.

Mr. Bulkan: I am not sure that I can discern a question. I believe that it is a statement or a comment.

Mr. Croal: Could you indicate what the new hourly rate under this programme is? Secondly, where is the budgetary allocation for the increases for the hourly rate?

Mr. Bulkan: For some of the earlier questions, pertaining to security, I did indicate that, by necessity, there will be situations where the budgeted sum might prove to be insufficient for the provision of the services for the entire year. Whilst what is anticipated or contemplated in 2018 is the provision of 24-hours security service, which was the earlier assumption in 2017 and which was not delivered, it stands to reason that the increased rate is, probably, \$350 and it would require some additional resources.

Mr. Bharrat: Line item 6242 - Maintenance of Building: \$107 million is budgeted in 2017; however, the revised amount is \$54 million more than the budgeted amount of \$161 million.

Could the Hon. Minister say where the \$54 million came from and say what works were done in 2017?

Mr. Bulkan: The unbudgeted sums were vired from security and the un-programmed activities were emergencies works in a number of schools across the region.

Mr. Bharrat: Follow-up: Could the Hon. Minister state whether there is any allocation, in the \$120 million, in 2018, for the Friendship office?

Mr. Bulkan: Would this be the Friendship Education Office?

Mr. Bharrat: Yes.

Mr. Bharat: I am advised that no work is programmed in the 2018 provision under this line item for that location.

Mr. Neendkumar: Could the Hon. Minister then lay over to this honourable House the schedule of the works to be done in relation to the maintenance of buildings for \$120 million for 2018?

Mr. Bulkan: I assume that the Hon. Member would want the sum and the specific activities as well. Yes, this would be provided.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6284 - Other: the figure for 2018 is \$110 million and 95 million was spent. Could you advise us what "Other" covers and I am specifically interested in this as this is an education programme? Where is the money for the school feeding programme? Is it included under line item 6284?

Mr. Bulkan: The school feeding programme is not catered for under the region, but under the Ministry of Education.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6255- Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: This region is doing a lot of "Other". I would like to know if the Hon. Minister could lay over to this House how this \$80 million would be spent? Could he tell us what is the "other"?

Mr. Bulkan: The details pertaining to this allocation would be provided in writing.

Mr. Bharrat: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: There is an increase of \$30 million; however, there seems to be no additional rental of buildings based on line item 6241. Could the Minister kindly explain the increase?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that there were three new schools constructed in the region, which were open in the September term in 2017. In 2018, there would be one additional facility which is a day-care centre located at Anns Grove on the East Coast.

Mr. Bharrat: The Hon. Minister mentioned three schools in 2017 and a new one for 2018. Could the Minister be so kind to let us know the three new schools and where they are located?

Mr. Bulkan: These would be located at Yarowkabra on the Soesdyke/Linden Highway, at East Ville on the East Coast and at Diamond on the East Bank.

2.31 p.m.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: In 2016, \$48.4 million was budgeted. Budgeted in 2017 is \$130 million and only \$40 million was spent. And now, in 2018, you want \$130 million for three new schools. These are not big schools. Are you telling me that you need to spend this exorbitant amount of over \$90 million? We would like to see this breakdown in writing. But I am telling you that this is serious problems.

Mr. Bulkan: Before the Hon. Member closes his book; may I ask the Hon. Member to give me the page number from which he is reading?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Neendkumar, could you state the line item please.

Mr. Bulkan: No, I need the page number, Sir.

Mr. Neendkumar: Let me ask the question again. Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: In 2016, \$93 million was used and in 2017, \$126 million was budgeted. In the Revised, only \$98 million was used and now you are asking for \$126 million. Could you explain to us how the extra moneys would be used?

Mr. Bulkan: But those were not the figures that were offered a moment ago.

Mr. Neendkumar: Answer the question now and come back.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, those are the figures that are being offered now and the question is asked in relation to those figures.

Mr. Bulkan: The 2018 budgetary allocation is to cater for electricity for four locations – three schools and the day-care centre.

Programme: 744 Education Delivery – \$3,821,824,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 745 – Health Services – \$1,216,175,000

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, before we proceed let me ask you to kindly pay attention to what is taking place. I know that a lot of murmuring is taking place in the Chamber. I think that the two are not working together to assist us to hear one another.

Mr. Neendkumar: I would like the Hon. Minister to tell me about line item 6272, Electricity Charges. In 2016, it was \$48,447,000. Budgeted, in 2017, is \$130,204,000 and only \$40,823,000 was spent. Now, in 2018, you are budgeting for \$130 million. I would like for you to explain, in writing, the details of where you expect to spend this money. I want to know how many hospitals and health centres would be built.

Mr. Bulkan: The 2017 provision caters for the provision of electricity at three locations that did not materialised in 2017 but will be materialised in 2018. These being: The maternity ward at the Diamond Diagnostic Centre, 24-hour inpatient Dr. CC Nicholson Memorial Hospital, and another location which the Hon. Member has spoken about a number of times, namely, the Eccles Health Centre which would become operational in 2018.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, no work was done on this Health Centre as yet. They have not even cleaned the space. Now, you are telling me that moneys have been budgeted to be spent, a difference of more than \$90 million. I do not know what you will be building in Eccles, and how early. You will answer me down that line.

Dr. Anthony: Line items 6111 to 6117, there is a decrease of 11 employees. Yet, in the heading, there is an increase of \$7 million. Could the Minister explain why there is an increase in the salary or wages allocation?

Mr. Bulkan: As a percentage, the reduction of 11 over 181 is probably less than 5%.The increased provision would have been as a result of the annualisation of the salary increases that came into effect late 2017 but would apply for all of 2018.

Dr. Anthony: Generally, line item 6111, Administrative, would cater for the administration of the region, like the Regional Health Officer (RHO), but I am not seeing any provision being budgeted for the RHO. Is it that we do not have a RHO in the region?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that there is an acting RHO but the emolument for that officer is catered for under the Ministry of Public Health.

Dr. Anthony: Under this heading, I think that we would normally budget for the emoluments for heads of hospitals and again, there is nothing here. So, can the Minister explain, like the Administrator at the Diamond Diagnostic Centre, where would this person be paid from and what is the emolument for that person?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that there is a vacancy for that position; hence, there is no budgetary provision. But, once the vacancy is filled then the Ministry of Finance will make provisions for the payment of salary for that officer.

Dr. Anthony: Under line item 6113, Other Technical and Craft Skilled, how many medical doctors do we have in Region 4?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that only one of the doctors stationed in the region is paid under the regional programme and under this line item. The other the doctors are being paid under the Ministry of Public Health.

Dr. Anthony: Could the Minister be so kind to, perhaps, since they are paid elsewhere, still provide us with the information of how many doctors are in the region? Secondly, line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There has been a steep decline from 50 to 20. Could the Minister explain why is it that persons have been moved, perhaps, from contracted to somewhere else?

Mr. Bulkan: The list of the doctors that are serving in the region will be provided as requested. The decrease in the number of contracted employees is as a result of transitioning. But, as I was earlier advised and cautioned to avoid using the word ‘transitioning’, I think that I will stick to

the word “regularisation”. There has been a regularisation of employees from contracted employees to the fixed establishment and it is reflected in the staffing details.

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: First of all, could the Minister explain how much money will be expended on drugs and how much on medical supplies?

Mr. Bulkan: That information would have to be provided subsequently.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Dr. Anthony, this will be the last question under this head.

Dr. Anthony: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Under the line item 6221, Drugs and Medical Supplies, could the Minister provide, perhaps by laying it over, how much of this money would be sent to the Ministry of Public Health so that the Ministry could procure drugs on behalf of the region? Also, could he say how much money the region, itself, would be using to buy drugs and medical supplies?

Again, there has been a recurring issue here, and that is whether or not the region has been getting the value from the Ministry of Public Health and how would the region know that; what systems does the Region have in place to determine that it is getting value?

Also, could the Minister say, for the drugs that are being bought by the Ministry of Public Health or at the regional level, whether those drugs have met the food and drug standard for importation into Guyana?

Could we have some of those certificates laid over to certify that they are meeting proper quality and standards in this country?

Mr. Bulkan: Just briefly and for the 2017 allocation, it is a very negligible sum of the \$620 which was retained by the region for local purchases. It is the sum of \$3 million and, in 2018, it will be even less. It would be reduced to \$2 million. So, practically, all of the allocations will be warranted to the central Ministry for central procurement.

I think that the question of value for money is a very subjective one, and I do not think that I could, reasonably, proffer an answer in that regard. Save and except to say, that the various arms of Central Government, in this instance the Ministry of Public Health and the other relevant

agencies, that are tasked and entrusted with this responsibility would and do take their responsibility seriously.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: I see that there is \$26 million. Could the Hon. Minister layover to us where the “Other” would be spent, and each specific item that the \$26 million would be spent on?

Also, line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings – \$49 million, could he could layover to us the buildings and how much will be spent on each building as well as the schedule for completion.

Mr. Bulkan: Yes. The requested information will be provided.

Programme: 745 Health Services – \$1,216,175,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

2.46 p.m.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 741 - Regional Registration and Finance - \$17,635,000

Mr. Croal: Project code 1208800 – Buildings - Administration: Could the Hon. Minister indicate what the nature of the work to be done at Triumph is? The Legend states that the works are to be done on the administration building. I know that there is a beautiful administration building there. I just want some clarification on the nature of the works that it entails.

Mr. Bulkan: It is sometimes, if not often, the case that looks can be deceptive. I agree that the building is nice looking but it has some structural defects, namely to the roof. The budgetary allocation of \$10 million is to remedy the defects to the roof.

Mr. Neendkumar: The Legend states that the provision of \$10 million is to rehabilitate the administration building at Triumph and improve operational efficiency and accommodation. I do not know if the roof is going to do that.

Mr. Bulkan: The project description, under reference number 298, states “rehabilitation of the regional administration building at Triumph.” The roof is part of the building.

Mr. Croal: Project code 2506800 - Furniture and Equipment - Administration: Could the Hon. Minister say where the computers would be assigned and how many it would be?

Mr. Bulkan: The allocation is to enable the acquisition of eight computers along with back up Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) and they are for use at the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) Triumph Office and the departments of Procurement, Planning, Local Government, Accounts and Personnel of the Regional Administration.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I am observing, from my hearing, an increase in the sounds of cellular phones in the room. You are allowed to use cellular phones if they do not disturb the Assembly. That is what the Standing Order states. Hon. Members, I am not asking for comments. I am asking you to simply be careful about what you do and how you do it, if you do not wish to disturb the Assembly. That is all.

Mr. Neendkumar: Project code 2506800- Furniture and Equipment - Administration: I listened to the Hon. Minister's response just now, but I would like to draw to the Hon. Minister's attention that the project profile states that the project includes provision for computers, air conditioning units, filing cabinets, printers, chairs, desks, cubicles and surveillance system to improve operational efficiency.

Could the Minister tell us how much of this \$7.6 million would be spent on each of these items and where they would be located? Could he lay it over to us?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, if I may, I wish to draw to your attention that the inference was that I withheld the information, but the question specifically put to me was for information on the computers and that is what I provided. If the Hon. Member requires information with detailed breakdown for the other furniture, then I would be certainly more than pleased to provide it. The imputation that I was less than forthcoming with the information is unjustified.

The provision is for the purchase of five air conditioning units, 12 filing cabinets, two heavy-duty printers, 10 office chairs, 800 square feet of cubicle and eight desks. This information can be happily provided, in writing, for the Hon. Members.

Mr. Croal: Programme 741 - Regional Administration and Finance. Hon. Minister, the audit query for 2016 indicated that a huge amount of money was not expended. Could you say,

therefore, what systems have been put in place for this programme to ensure that the allocation that is now being provided would be expended?

Mr. Bulkan: I am actually unaware of the audit queries in 2016, but the budgeted provision under this programme is a total of \$17.635 million - \$10 million for the repairs to the roof and \$7.635 million for the eight computers and the other items that I read out a moment ago. I guess that you can say there are three activities – the repairs to the roof, buying eight computers and purchasing five air conditioning units, a number of filing cabinets, two printers and 10 office chairs. I believe that the region has the capacity to successfully execute and acquire for this sum of \$17.635 million.

Programme: 741 - Regional Registration and Finance - \$17,635,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 742 - Agriculture - \$45,800,000

Mr. Neendkumar: Project code 1701200 - Agricultural Development: I see a total of \$45.8 million has been allocated. Could the Hon. Minister tell us what this money is going to be spent on?

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

Mr. Neendkumar: What would \$45.8 million be spent on?

Mr. Bulkan: The activities are the rehabilitation of the wharf at Timehri, commonly referred to as Timehri Dock, at a budgeted sum of \$13.9 million. That is for use by farmers and other commuters. There would be the construction of a timber revetment at West Sideline, Golden Grove, at a budgeted sum of \$13.5 million; rehabilitation of a timber revetment at the outfall at the Huntley Pump Station, Cane Grove, at a budgeted sum of \$6.4 million; and construction of a timber revetment at the fourth cross street, Good Success, East Bank Demerara (EBD), at a budgeted sum of \$12 million.

Programme: 742 – Agriculture - \$45,800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 743 - Public Infrastructure - \$90,000,000

Mr. Neendkumar: Project code 1100500 - Bridges: Could the Hon. Minister tell us where this \$20 million would be spent?

Mr. Bulkan: This would be spent at three locations - Plaisance, Anns Grove and Enmore – and the budgeted sums are \$7 million, \$6 million and \$7 million respectively.

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

Mr. Neendkumar: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Please let us have it.

Mr. Neendkumar: Project code 1400700 - Roads: I see that a total of \$70 million has been budgeted. Could the Minister tell us which roads would be constructed and give us a schedule of when they would be built? He could layover the information.

Mr. Bulkan: It would be the upgrading of roads at seven locations. The upgrading of the first cross street in the Triumph Housing Scheme...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, if I may interrupt you, the Hon. Member, Mr. Neendkumar, is quite amenable to receiving it in writing. Hon. Member, Mr. Neendkumar, did I interpret you correctly when you said that he can lay it over?

Mr. Neendkumar: Yes, sir, in respect to time.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. We are biting into our last half an hour; 10 minutes of it has already gone.

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, Sir. This information will be laid over.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much.

Programme: 743 - Public Infrastructure - \$90,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 744 - Education Delivery - \$259,408,000

Mr. Bharrat: Project code 1203300- Buildings- Education: Just a clarification before I ask my question. In Volume 3, the Legend speaks to Golden Grove and Grove twice. I just need a clarification as to whether it is East Coast or East Bank Demerara before I ask my question.

Mr. Chairman: Perhaps, the Hon. Member might wish to address that question to the Minister.

Mr. Bharrat: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Would you address the question, sir?

Mr. Bharrat: Could the Hon. Minister say whether the Grove referred to in Volume 3 is on the East Coast or East Bank of Demerara?

Mr. Bulkan: The reference is to both. Works are being done at Golden Grove on the East Coast Demerara as well as at Golden Grove on the East Bank Demerara. They are two separate locations.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, do you wish to proceed? I thought you were quite familiar with the geography of Guyana.

3.01 p.m.

Mr. Neendkumar: Follow-up: Could the Hon. Minister say what the specific allocation for Golden Grove Nursery School on the East Bank of Demerara is and the works that would be done at the school?

Mr. Bulkan: The works at that location would be an extension to the Golden Grove Nursery School. It is to cater for a 30 x 30 feet concrete building to accommodate two additional classrooms, and also to improve accommodations and create a child-friendly environment for an additional 40 pupils at a budgeted sum of \$10 million.

Mr. Neendkumar: I notice that, in the Legend, this seems to be a project for which \$467.851 million was budgeted. Next year, 2018, a total of \$237.408 million has being budgeted. The project entails payment of retention. How much money will be paid for retention next year?

Mr. Bulkan: With respect to the larger figure of \$467.851 million, it could be seen that the sum of prior expenses, in 2017, was \$230.443 million and the budgeted provision for 2018 is 237.408 million. With regards to the retention payments, this would be retention payments at six locations of varying sums of \$40 million, \$4 million, \$12 million, and two small sums for consultancies for design and supervision in the retention sum of \$259,000 and \$334,000 respectively.

Mr. Neendkumar: In 2017, the region was supposed to spend \$230.443 million. Could the Minister layover to the Committee the activities and how much of this \$230.443 million was specifically spent?

Mr. Bulkan: This information would be provided.

Mr. Neendkumar: For 2018, the region is supposed to be spending \$237.408 million on the completion of Peters Hall, Golden Grove, Buxton and Lancaster Secondary Schools; construction, extension and rehabilitation of Craig, Strathspey, Vryheid's Lust North, Grove and Strathavon Nursery Schools, Mon Repos Primary School and Anns Grove Secondary School; construction of living quarters at Dora, walkways at Chateau Margot Primary and Friendship Secondary Schools; a Science laboratory at Buxton Secondary and tarmacs at Strathspey and Providence Primary Schools. Could the Hon. Minister layover to us the specific amounts that would be spent in these respective schools and give us a schedule of the works to be done?

Mr. Bulkan: This information will be provided.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 1203300 – Buildings - Education: Just one last question, Minister. Budgeted in 2017 was \$230.443 million, but the latest estimate is \$200.443 million. The region has underspent. Could you advise what the reasons for the shortfall in expenditure of \$30.443 million were and what projects suffered?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that it was due to the late start in the construction of a few of these projects. These were the extensions at Lancaster and Buxton Secondary Schools. These would be rollover projects to be completed in 2018.

Programme: 744 – Education Delivery - \$259,408,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 745 – Health Services - \$99,065,000

Dr. Persaud: Project code – 1203500 – Buildings – Health: Some \$60.865 million has been budgeted for 2018. Could the Minister disaggregate this sum according to the Legend?

Mr. Bulkan: It will be for the rehabilitation of the Buxton Health Centre, \$7 million; construction of Supply Health Centre, \$32 million; construction of a pharmacy and dressing area at the Mocha Health Centre, \$550,000; and construction of a pharmacy at Cane Grove Health

Centre, \$400,000. Those are retention payments. There would be the construction of a pharmacy at Mahdia Health Centre, retention \$400,000; pharmacy at Craig for \$400,000 and construction of the Eccles Health Centre, \$20.115 million.

Dr. Persaud: Could the Minister kindly say what percentage of that is for retention specifically? Secondly, there has been a shortfall in the expenditure in 2017. Could the Minister say what the reason for the shortfall in expenditure was?

Mr. Bulkan: The reason for the reduced spending or the shortfall in expenditure in 2017 related to the non-commencement of the Eccles Health Centre. The retention amount is very negligible in proportion to the overall allocation of \$75.865 million.

Dr. Persaud: Hon. Minister, you mentioned that the construction of the Eccles Health Centre has not commenced. I understand that this has been ongoing for three years. Has there been any move towards finding a new person to deal with this? Are you sure that this would actually start? Could we have the schedule for the commencement of this health centre?

Mr. Bulkan: The procurement plan for the activities under this programme would be provided to the Hon. Member.

Dr. Ramsaran: Could the Hon. Minister indicate where the Eccles Health Centre would be located and what would be the actual cost of the Supply Health Centre?

Mr. Bulkan: The Eccles Health Centre would be located at BB Eccles. It would be located in the street with the Flamboyant Supermarket. It would be located just slightly north of the supermarket. The budgeted sum for the Supply Health Centre is \$32 million.

Dr. Persaud: Project code 2503700 – Purchase of Furniture and Equipment: I noticed a list of equipment and furniture to be purchased. Could you say where these will be placed?

Mr. Bulkan: The locations are Dr. C.C. Nicholson Hospital, Diamond Diagnostic Centre and the Laluni, Silver Hill, Moblissa and Hauraruni Health Centres.

Dr. Persaud: There has been a serious problem with the laboratories, especially at the Diamond Diagnostic Centre, with regard to a shortage of equipment. What is being done about that?

Mr. Bulkan: The provision under this project code 2503700, Purchase of Furniture and Equipment, does not cater for any laboratory equipment. There are other equipment, x-ray and ultrasound machines, sterilisers and incubators, but not that particular equipment.

Programme: 745 – Health Services - \$99,065,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency 75: Region 5: Mahaica/Berbice

Current Expenditure

Programme: 751 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$174,081,000

Mr. Croal: Hon. Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: The staffing details indicate that there was no employee for 2017 but there was an expenditure of \$3.9 million. Now, three employees are being catered for in 2018. Kindly explain that. Secondly, could you state the designations and the emoluments for the persons who are under contract in Programme 751?

Mr. Bulkan: The designations would be a clerk II, stores clerk and a stores attendant. These appointments took effect during 2017. They were not budgeted for at the preparation of the 2017 Budget. This is why there was no allocation in 2017; the provision in 2018 is to pay their salaries for the year.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, you said they were not there during the preparation of the Budget. Could I have an indication as to when these persons were recruited?

Mr. Bulkan: The clerk II and the stores clerk's appointments took effect in July, while the stores attendant's appointment date was in August.

3.16 p.m.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, the appointment was from July. Are you saying that, from July to the presentation of the Budget in November, there was no adjustment?

Mr. Bulkan: There were two adjustments, sir, from what we are looking at here. There was an expenditure of \$3.983 million, in 2017, to pay salaries for those three employees. For annual payments in 2018 the budgetary provision, as stated, is \$4.592 million.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6281- Security Services: Could the Hon. Minister indicate the reason for the increase from \$31 million to \$37 million?

Mr. Bulkan: It allows for the increase in the rate to \$350, the payment of Value Added Tax (VAT) and for the additional seven security guards.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, could you confirm, therefore, that, for this region, you catered for the increased rates for security? It is because you just mentioned that the rate is \$350.

Mr. Bulkan: The answer to that is yes.

Mr. Croal: Could you confirm also that, while there was one date for the security services, some regions had the allocation for the increase and some did not?

Mr. Bulkan: Based on the answers that were provided earlier, there was not a uniformed application. In this instance, a provision was made for an increase to the new minimum rate which is \$350.

Mr. Gill: Line item 6293 – Refreshments and Meals: Could the Hon. Minister justify the increase from \$1.481 million, in 2017, to \$2.052 million in 2018?

Mr. Bulkan: I do not think that it is difficult to justify the increase of \$571,000 for refreshments and meals for the regional administration. However, it caters for refreshments for senior officers, management at tender board meetings, budget meetings and meetings with other agencies and for outreaches.

Mr. Gill: Is the Hon. Minister aware that, since April, 2017, the development of Region 5 has been stymied by the refusal...

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

Mr. Gill: I am coming to my question.

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

Mr. Gill: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: What I would ask Hon. Members to do, and I address it to you in this instance, is try to avoid remarks that are gratuitous to our questions and are calculated to evoke similar responses elsewhere. Please go ahead.

Mr. Gill: I asked for a justification for the increase. The Minister just said that it is not difficult to justify the increase. Hon. Minister, how could you justify an increase in the allocation for meals when, since April of this year, the Regional Executive Office (REO) and the A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) Councillors have been walking out of statutory meetings?

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Gill, if you have a question to ask that is related to the line item, then you know what you must do. You cannot try to use here as a basis for doing that. That was for the debate. We are finished with the debate. We are dealing with the Estimates of Expenditure now. Please deal with the Estimates. Ask your questions on the line items and let us go ahead. This is not for debate, sir.

Mr. Gill: It is not a debate, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Gill: There were less statutory meetings and absolutely no committee meetings to justify an increase in the allocation that is budgeted for meals.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member for his statement. Hon. Minister, is there a comment or answer you wish to give to that statement?

Mr. Bulkan: As I outlined a moment ago, the allocation is to provide refreshments and meals. I outlined the activities and the categories, namely, planning, tender board meetings, budget meetings and meetings with other agencies.

Mr. Gill: There was none.

Mr. Bulkan: The work of the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) is continuing. The RDC of Region 5 – Mahaica/Berbice - has not been closed. So, with or without the cooperation of the Hon. Member or his associates, the work must continue and will continue.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Gill, if you would be asking a question on the line items, it is fine. If you are going to reply to the Hon. Minister, I would say to you that this is not the place. I would not permit that here. Let us be clear.

Mr. Gill: Line item 6312 – Subventions to Local Authorities: The allocation is \$6 million. Could the Hon. Minister name the local authority to which this money is going?

Mr. Bulkan: The budgeted sum of \$6 million is to assist in providing fuel and maintenance for the generator at Maraikobai. It is expected that this allocation would be in the form of a grant to subsidise the power generation in that area, along with the expansion of services to more households and residents in that village.

Mr. Gill: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): Could the Hon. Minister justify the increase from \$755,000, in 2017, to \$2.2 million, in 2018, for training?

Mr. Bulkan: The 2017 allocation, as could be seen, was quite a meagre sum of \$755,000 to allow for adequate professional and staff development. The 2018 budgetary allocation is a lot more generous. It is \$2.2 million and it is for internal and external training of officers in the region at the Department of Public Service and at the central Ministry and also for training of overseers in the region as well as chairpersons and councillors.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6211 - Expenses Specific to the Agency: Could the Hon. Minister layover to us the intended allocation?

Mr. Bulkan: This would be provided.

Mr. Mustapha: Under line item 6133, Benefits and Allowances, we have seen an increase, although there was a reduction of staff. Could the Minister explain?

Mr. Bulkan: I believe that because there was a salary increase, there was an increase in the benefits that are eligible to and payable to employees. While there is staff reduction, because of salary increases, it would reflect in higher benefits for the remaining employees.

Programme: 751 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$174,081,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 752 – Agriculture - \$212,193,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads, line item 6252 – Maintenance of Bridges, line item 6253 – Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works, line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Kindly lay over to the Committee the intended allocations for these expenses.

Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: Could the Minister indicate the justification for the increase?

Mr. Bulkan: The information requested for the maintenance of roads, bridges and other infrastructure would be provided in writing. The increase in the allocation for fuel and lubricants in the sum of approximately of \$2.004 million, in 2018, is to provide for an additional mini excavator and a truck which would be used to assist with drainage and irrigation works in residential areas; it is over and above what was done in 2017.

Programme: 752 – Agriculture - \$212,193,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

3.31 p.m.

Programme: 753 – Public Infrastructure – \$174,377,000

Mr. Croal: Line items 6251 – Maintenance of Roads, 6252 – Maintenance of Bridges and 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Hon. Minister, kindly lay over those expenditures. Secondly, line item 6116, Contracted Employees, there is a decrease from \$18 million to \$8 million and the staff complement shows a decrease by three employees. Could you, therefore, say what the emoluments are of those persons that were removed from the contracted employees?

Mr. Bulkan: For the three line items, the information requested in writing has been duly noted and will be provided. Line item 6116, Contracted Employees, as observed there was a staff reduction from 12 to nine persons and the budgeted sum in 2018, I think, is requested for the emoluments of the nine remaining employees.

Mr. Croal: No, the three employees that left.

Mr. Bulkan: Okay, the three that left; the information will be provided to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Croal: Last question under this programme. The reason why I said that, Hon. Minister, was because with three employees and a reduction by \$10 million that is a lot, so there must be a justification there.

Mr. Bulkan: I note the observation. These employees were transitioned to the pensionable status, but as earlier committed, the emoluments for these three employees would be provided subsequently.

Programme: 753 – Public Infrastructure – \$174,377,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 754 – Education Delivery – \$ 1,600,326,000

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, line item 6255, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure, kindly lay that over to the House. Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: Could you indicate what the reason for the \$15 million increase was?

Mr. Bulkan: The information that was requested to be laid over was duly noted and it would be complied with. Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: The additional expenditure is to allow for the provision of electricity to two new nursery schools, three extensions to primary schools and 50 new computers to the region and to allow for the provision of electricity for the equipment.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, line item 6242, Maintenance of Bridges, kindly lay that over to the House. The computers: Could you say where they have been posted or if it is a laboratory where the laboratory is or whichever is the case?

Mr. Bulkan: The list of the locations where the 50 computers have been deployed will be provided in writing as well as the requested information on line item 6242 and the schedule of works for the maintenance of bridges with a budgetary provision of \$85.3 million.

Mr. Seeraj: Sir, line item 6111 - Administrative and 6112 - Senior Technical: Under this section for wages and salaries I have noticed a decrease of 36 persons, but there is an increase in the total wages and salaries of \$42 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain why, with a decrease of 36 members of staff, there is an increase of \$42 million in wages and salaries?

Mr. Bulkan: The remaining approximately 540 employees is quite a substantial number. Given the salary increases that came into effect in November, 2017, the increased allocation in 2018 would allow for those increases that took effect in late 2017. It is the annualised sum for all of 2018 for the approximately 540 employees.

Programme: 754 – Education Delivery – \$ 1,600,326,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 755 – Health Services – \$ 688,886,000

Dr. Ramsaran: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: If you were to check in the column for 2017, it has \$163,436,000 for education...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Bheri Ramsaran could you repeat the line item please?

Dr. Ramsaran: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Dr. Ramsaran: Could the Hon. Minister tell the House how much of that sum of money was retained by the Region for procurement by its own mechanism or arrangement for 2017?

Mr. Bulkan: That sum would be \$33 million.

Dr. Ramsaran: Would the Hon. Minister lay over to us or tell us if those moneys have been totally expended for 2017?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes.

Dr. Ramsaran: I notice that the answer is a yes. So I will take that as yes. Would the Hon. Minister tell this House, or lay over to this House, since the Minister has already spent the money, a costed list for that sum of \$33 million, I think? He said that drugs and medical supplies so far were bought with those moneys.

One further question: Could the Minister provide this House with a list of the providers of those drugs and medical supplies on that list from the regional level, or for the local moneys as I call them? That is the \$33 million. Could you give us a list of the providers, the persons who won the

contracts and supplied the drugs? Secondly, on that same score, could you provide us with the documentation of the fit and properness of these entities to procure, store and sell new medication?

Mr. Bulkan: I believed all these proceedings had been recorded for posterity. In the interest of accuracy, I noted the Hon. Member said, “since the Minister spent the money.” Sir, I would like to correct that statement. This money was not spent by the Minister but, rather, by the programme. The information that was requested, as to the details pertaining to the expenditure of the sum of \$33 million, has been duly noted and will be provided in writing to the Hon. Member; as well as the suppliers of the drugs and medical supplies.

Dr. Ramsaran: I meant the Ministry buying these medications. Now, a third point that you need to give over to us is the certification to deal with, store and manage such delegate supplies as medications and medical supplies. Thank you.

Mr. Bulkan: The request is noted and I think the undertaken was given to provide the answers that are being sought.

Mr. Gill: The total amount that was appropriated for this programme in 2017 was \$103 million...

Mr. Chairman: The line item would be very helpful.

Mr. Gill: This is the appropriation for the total programme capital.

Mr. Chairman: Please precede Hon. Member.

Mr. Gill: Mr. Chairman, this is the capital for the health programme.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Dharamlall, you are standing Hon. Member, but I do not know why you are standing.

Mr. Dharamlall: I would like to ask a question.

Mr. Chairman: Would you like to ask a question?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Of whom? Hon. Member, Mr. Gill is on the floor. He did not say he is no longer on the floor. What are you doing?

Mr. Gill: I apologise Mr. Chairman, I will wait until the capital programme comes around.

Mr. Chairman: I beg your pardon, Mr. Gill? Are you saying that you are no longer interested in asking a question?

Mr. Gill: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, you are or no you are not, please tell me? You no longer want to ask a question.

Mr. Gill: No, I withdraw.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Dharamlall, you have the floor.

3.46 p.m.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, on line item 6221 - Drugs and Medical Supplies: Could you please state what mechanisms are in the region to verify and validate that the warranted amounts are actually the value of the drugs and medical supplies provided to the region.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, a similar query was posed when the earlier regions were interrogated. The explanation proffered was that the reconciliation exercise is still in progress and this holds true for all of the regions where moneys were warranted to the central ministry for central procurement.

Mr. Dharamlall: So, the Hon. Minister is confirming that the inter-departmental warrants (IDAWs) are out of order as of, almost, the end of 2017 regarding line item 6221, in Region 5.

Mr. Bulkan: No, Sir, I did not say that.

Dr. Mahadeo: I would like to draw the Minister's attention to Fuel and Lubricants, line item 6231, with an increase of nearly \$3,000,000. I would like to ask the Minister if he could provide us with a list of the vehicles and generators, or outboard engines, maybe, that are using this amount of money.

My second question points to line item 6282 - Equipment Maintenance. I would like to know if you have any bio-medical engineers or specialists in the region or if you are contracting out this service. I would also like to know what happened in 2017. How were your equipment serviced? Do you have a contract? Who is the contractor?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the request for increased allocations under line item 6231, Fuel and Lubricants, the \$3,000,000, is to cater for an increased fleet in the level of a new pick-up, a canter, and a bus; those three new vehicles. The procurement of services for the maintenance of equipment is done by the Ministry of Public Health.

Dr. Mahadeo: I would also ask if the Minister could provide us with a list of the vehicles and whatever else would be using this fuel.

My next question is on Dietary. The budgetary allocation is \$9,067,000, and for 2017 it was \$8,635,000. What is your bed occupancy and where do you have in-patients? Because dietary would have only been for patients.

Mr. Bulkan: Sir, I am not sure if the Hon. Member has referred to a line item. Is it line item 6292?

Dr. Mahadeo: "Dietary" I said.

Mr. Bulkan: There is a provision of a modest increase of \$432,000 in 2018, and this will cater for the in-patients at Mahaicony and Fort Wellington Hospitals. The number of beds at the former location is 47 and it is 27 at Fort Wellington. It is to cater for proper balanced diets for in-patients.

Dr. Mahadeo: Hon. Minister, I did not ask for the number of beds. To be able to come up with this number, we have to have an idea of how many patients have been occupying these beds over the year, which is why we have bed occupancy. We had this same issue last year and the year before.

Mr. Bulkan: The expenditure for dietary in 2017 was the sum of \$8,635,000. There is a provision for a slight increase in 2018, and it is primarily as a result of the addition of 10 new beds in these two Hospitals.

Dr. Mahadeo: *[Inaudible]*

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, but it caters for increased patients, Dr. Mahadeo. So, there is an increase in the sum of \$432,000 in 2018 and it is to cater for 10 additional beds. The assumption and presumption is that more meals will be provided to cater for more patients.

Ms. Teixeira: Could I go back to line item 6221? Minister you have spoken, several times in this House, about the reconciliation of what was provided by the Ministry to the regions. Can I just get a clarification? I have been listening to you say this and now this is the fifth time. When the regions get the Budget, do they warrant the entire sum to the Ministry of Public Health and then follow up with a list of what their needs are? Or do they warrant to the Ministry of Public Health and then, on a quarterly, monthly, or half-yearly basis, send in the request? Reconciliation should not be difficult; it should not be so difficult to do if there are quarterly releases as you reported in this House. I am just trying to understand the systems that are used by the regions in warranting the money and acquiring the drugs and medical supplies.

Mr. Bulkan: I am of the belief that the regions would have individual engagements with the central ministry to make a determination as to what percentage or how much of the allocation for their region they would want to warrant, to the central ministry, for the supply of drugs and how much they would want to retain. So the amount or the percentage is not the same. It is not consistent with all of the regions, but there is a case by case determination made in conjunction with discussions by the central ministry and the respective regions.

Ms. Teixeira: A follow up please: I did not ask about percentages at all. I am asking if you could clarify the system - there must be a system of how this is done. There may be variations in each ministry based on its health profile. In one region you need more malaria tablets and in another region you need more diabetic tablets, but the point is that I am trying to understand the system.

When the Budget is passed and assented to by the President, *et cetera*, and the year begins, what is the system? Do the health people, through the Regional Health Officer (RHO), send a Combined Requisition and Issue Voucher (CRIV) with all of their requests for the entire year and then that is supplied as the drugs come in? If that is so, then there should be no great difficulty in reporting to this House, as of 13th December, 2017, that Ministry X or Region X has received 70%, 80% or 90% of the drugs and medical supplies that it has asked for. I am trying to

understand the system because you have reported to this House, five times already, that you are waiting on reconciliation verification. But it is 13th December, 2017 and, therefore, if it is on a quarterly basis then I assume that most of the drugs have been received. I am just trying to understand and if you make us understand what the system is, we may not have to ask you on every region. A system I am looking at, a process, not the specificity of this region.

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the system or the process as outlined by the Hon. Member is indeed what obtains, which is that the respective regions warrant a given some of money, against an identified list of drugs on the CRIV, to the central ministry and as the Hon. Member said, this activity takes place quarterly. The second part of the question with regards to the reconciliation, the earlier answer that I have proffered, the same situation applies for this region.

Dr. Ramsaran: Hon. Minister, could you reconfirm that you are going to give the reconciliation for 2016. Could you reconfirm that the reconciliation for 2016 has, so far, not been completed?

Mr. Bulkan: We are examining the 2018 allocations and I prefer to answer questions on the 2018 allocations.

Dr. Ramsaran: Mr. Chairman, I crave your guidance. We are discussing what is here and I have raised this question before. The Minister seemed to say that 2016 was not finished and I am just asking for confirmation. If you check your records or your books, there is 2016, 2017 and 2018. It is a pattern that we are looking at; a budget is a costed plan. So, I will take it that the Minister is either refusing to answer or he will answer. Has the 2016 reconciliation, noting that we are at the end of 2017, been finished? If it has not been finished, what hope do we have that 2017 and 2018 will suffer any better faith?

Another question, coming down to \$186,000,000 under the same line item 6221, Drugs and Medical Supplies, the difference is some \$22,564,000 additional. Listening to the Hon. Minister's deductions, could he provide to this House a list of the costed drugs, or a list of costed items, that allow him to say that \$22,564,000 more is needed? Not \$25,000,000, not \$28,000,000 but why \$22,564,000? Where is that costed projection? Could you provide that costed list to the tune of \$22,564,000 so that \$186,000,000 could be happily passed, which is \$22,564,000 above \$163,436,000? Where is the costed list for us to say that you are working on some scientific

basis and that, yes, you need \$22,564,000 more? **[Mr. Ramjattan: It is an estimate.]**
An estimate must have a basis.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member for his statement. Before we proceed, Hon. Members we have 15 minutes of our time remaining to complete Capital Expenditures and the one other head.

Mr. Bulkan: The budgeted sum is a provision and is based on an assumption. Part of the reason for the request for an increase is due to a new operating theatre and the drugs that are needed for the operations of that operating theatre.

Programme: 755 – Health Services- \$688,886,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 751 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$2,200,000

Programme: 751 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$2,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

4.01 p.m.

Programme: 752 – Agriculture -\$ 59,800,000

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

Mr. Gill: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Project code 1903800 – Agricultural Development: I notice the legend states, “provision for crops and land utilisation project.” Could the Hon. Minister expand on this, please?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, it is a new initiative that is being promoted by the region. It is charged with the responsibility to promote, in particular, economic development. The project is aimed at promoting crop rotation techniques by proper land selection and utilisation, to provide training to farmers along with students from schools and residents. The project is expected to adapt drip irrigation technique, provide for shade house cultivation, composting and aquaculture. This regional agricultural economic project will also be an economic venture where it is

proposed that the produce will be marketed within the region and provide for the dietary needs of the region. The direct beneficiaries are expected to be 700 students and farmers within the Region.

Mr. Gill: Mr. Chairman, could the Minister name the area that this project is scheduled to be initiated?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the location is Naarstigheid.

Mr. Gill: Mr. Chairman, this is a model farm that is being promoted. There are farmers right now who are living on that property that will be displaced if this project is brought to fruition. Forty-five farmers and their families will be displaced. The question is if this project could not be adequately handled by the Guyana National Agriculture Research Extension Institute (NAREI) as well as the Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA) and to leave the families and the famers to earn a living.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the information that is being offered by the Hon. Member is not accurate. I would not want to say that he is attempting to mislead this House, but the information with regards to the amount of farmers whom he said will be displaced is inaccurate. There was extensive consultation with the persons who are occupying that land without lawful title. With regards to the relocation; it is a managed process that is being done with the full agreement of the persons who have been occupying the particular location. With regards to the capacity of the agencies to discharge the project, the answer to that is, yes.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, a follow-up to my Colleague's question.

Mr. Chairman: Sir, which question?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Gill just posed a question and we were informed that he is misleading or attempting to mislead the House.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Mustapha, the question was did the particular farm have the capacity to manage the product together with NAREI and some other institution. That was the question he posed and the other is irrelevant to the question and there was no reason why the Minister should have treated with it.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, could I ask a supplementary question?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, of course.

Mr. Mustapha: Could the Minister say if the farmers in that area were protesting because their lands were taken away by the regional administration?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, in the interest of time all I would say at this stage is that I am tempted to ask the Hon. Member if he could provide any evidence of the protest activities that he is referring to. This matter was thoroughly investigated by the central ministry with the RDC and there was engagement with the individuals who are occupying the lands. Again, I maintain that the information suggested is not accurate.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I thank you. Hon. Members, as long as we enter this realm no one knows where to go. I asked Members for their cooperation to stick to what we are meant to do here, and unless we can give it, we are going to be exactly as we are now.

Mr. Gill: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister is...

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Gill, we are not going back. We are not trying anything in this forum at this time.

Mr. Gill: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister accused me of misleading the honourable House.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Gill, please have a seat. If we are discussing the Estimates, let us discuss the Estimates. It ought not to have been part of this discussion in the first place. When Hon. Members make a comment that they know will evoke a certain response, and they make it, that response will come and then another response comes and after that we forget where we are. I do not think we can operate like that. I have asked Members for their assistance and cooperation; I cannot do more.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 1903800 - Agricultural Development; \$35 million as described: Could the Minister say if the Regional Democratic Council proposed and approved this project under capital?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that the answer is, yes.

Ms. Teixeira: Are you absolutely sure that it is in the submission of the RDC, approved by the RDC at the Council meeting? Sir, is that what you are saying? I am not asking if this is the REO's submission, I am asking if it is the RDC's.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that the answer to that question is, yes.

Programme: 752 – Agriculture -\$59,800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 753 – Public Infrastructure -\$155,450,000

Mr. Gill: Hon. Minister, I notice in the Legend that Bath Settlement is included. Could you say whether Block 'D' is also part of the section of Bath Settlement that is included?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I would appreciate if the Hon. Member could provide the project code.

Mr. Gill: Sorry. It is project code 1400800 – Roads.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the location in Bath Settlement is Super Value Street, and I am not sure if that is part of Block 'D'. There is also another location in Bath Settlement that would benefit from this allocation, which is the Centre Street with a budgeted sum of \$9,500,000. In the case of Super Value Street there is a similar sum of \$9,500,000.

Mr. Gill: Mr. Chairman, the amount budgeted for this project code is in my opinion grossly inadequate to cover all the roads that are in a despicable condition. The amount of \$135,450,000 I noticed in the Legend is for specific areas. So I wonder whether the Hon. Minister could explain whether he intends to come back to this honourable House to ask for a supplemental to cover the Burma, Mahaica, Branch and Blairmont roads.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I would like to respectfully draw the Hon. Member's attention to the fact that the allocation under this particular project code in 2016 was \$55 million. In the short space of two years that sum has almost tripled from \$55 million to a \$135 million. I think that the Ministry of Finance should be applauded for the amount of resources it is providing to allow for the improvement of roads. This allocation will allow for the acquisition of a semi-pneumatic

roller and a bitumen distributor which will help to reduce the cost of repairing roads in communities in that Region.

Programme: 753 – Public Infrastructure - \$155,450,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 754 – Education Delivery - \$144,950,000

Programme: 754 – Education Delivery- \$144,950,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

4.16 p.m.

Programme: 755 – Health Services - \$52,600,000

Dr. Mahadeo: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to refer the Minister to project code 2504000 – Furniture and Equipment – Health. We bought Coulter chemistry analysers and autoclave from the 2017 Budget for Fort Wellington and Mahaicony and these units are not functioning. I would like to ask if we could get the documents of the company that supplied and the tender process that it went through.

I would also like if the Minister could provide a list of the equipment that will be purchased in 2018. In addition, could we have the specifications of the equipment because the equipment of some companies would last one month or two months whereas others, of course, are of high quality? I would also like to know if the information about where these equipment would be located could be laid over.

Mr. Bulkan: The first part of the question, I am advised that the answer to that is yes. It was procured and it is functioning. The information that is requested for the locations that would benefit from the furniture and equipment in the 2018 allocation will be laid over for the benefit of the Hon. Member.

Dr. Ramsaran: Project code 1203700 – Buildings – Health: What portion or how much of the \$29 million will go towards the construction of Accident and Emergency (A&E) Unit at the Mahaicony hospital?

Mr. Bulkan: The sum of \$12 million.

Dr. Ramsaran: Could you say if that cost includes the cost of a designed diagram which would include modern centralised gases and other such facilities that we are tending towards now?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are back to the loud murmurs or the not so loud murmurs. Please desist.

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that adequate consultations were obtained in relation to the design for this facility. The design that will be employed is one that was submitted by the National Director of the Accident and Emergency (A&E) Unit, Dr. Bux. So, it is just not any building that would be constructed. There is a dedicated design that was supplied by the National Director of A&E.

Mr. Gill: The total appropriated Capital Expenditure for this programme, in 2017, was \$103 million. What was actually spent was \$104,348,000. Could the Hon. Minister explain where the additional \$1,348,000 came from and what was it used for?

Mr. Bulkan: The figure that is being related by the Hon. Member is an additional sum of, as he said, \$1 million over a total expenditure of \$104 million. It is less than 1% and I do believe that there ought to be provision for contingencies that would certainly account for the over expenditure. But, there is also an SP in 2017 that could have very well covered this additional expenditure of \$1.3 million.

Programme: 755 – Health Services - \$52,600,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency 76: Region 6: East Berbice/Corentyne

Current Expenditure

Programme: 761 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$146,841,000

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, line item 6116, Contracted Employees, your contracted employees allocation decreased from \$19 million to \$7 million but, yet, the amount of contracted employees that were reduced is three. Could you indicate the reason for that big difference having only lost three contracted employees?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the budgeted sum of \$7.38 million would be sufficient to accommodate the payment of salaries for the five persons under this line item.

Mr. Croal: Under the same line item, 6116, Contracted Employees, could the Hon. Minister state, for the \$19.2 million that was expended, how many contracted employees were paid under that?

Mr. Bulkan: As indicated here that would be a total of eight employees.

Mr. Croal: Therefore, Hon. Minister, for the eight employees with an allocation of \$19.2 million, five employees with an allocation of \$7.3 million, could you kindly indicate the difference of the three employees against the difference of \$12 million.

Mr. Bulkan: The details regarding the designations and the emoluments pertaining to the 2017 and the 2018 will be laid over for the benefit of the Hon. Member.

Mr. Croal: I will await that information, Hon. Minister.

Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings and line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Could you kindly lay over that information to the House?

Mr. Bulkan: This is noted and the information will be laid over.

Mr. Mustapha: Could the Hon. Minister also lay over the information regarding line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings. Also, line item 6264, Vehicle Spares and Services, could the Hon. Minister say what method is being used to service these vehicles in the region?

Mr. Bulkan: The undertaking was given earlier to provide the details relating to line item 6242 - Maintenance of Buildings. I am advised that the method of engaging service providers, under line item 6264, is that there is a list of prequalified mechanics that would be approached under a quotation system to provide these services.

Mr. Mustapha: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Could the Hon. Minister lay over, to the House, those organisations that would benefit from this programme?

Mr. Bulkan: It is not many. Would the Hon. Member be desirous of having the information now? What do you prefer, Sir?

Mr. Mustapha: I prefer you give it to us.

Mr. Bulkan: Should I give it to you now?

Mr. Mustapha: No.

Mr. Bulkan: I will lay it over.

Mr. Chairman: Very good, thank you.

Programme 761 –Regional Administration and Finance - \$146,841,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

4.31 p.m.

Programme 762 – Agriculture - \$724,076,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There is a 100% drop in the allocation for contracted employees but the staffing compliment was reduced by four. We are talking about \$26,518,000 to \$11,200,000. Could the Hon. Minister, therefore, provide the emoluments or the category of employees that were removed as contracted employees?

Mr. Bulkan: The request is duly noted and the information will be provided as requested.

Mr. Mustapha: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: Could the Hon. Minister explain the huge increase of almost \$65 million under this programme?

Mr. Bulkan: The additional provision is to cater for fuel and lubricants for the D3 bulldozer that were acquired by the region in 2017, as well as a 4x4 pickup which will be acquired in 2018 following the approval of this budget.

Mr. Mustapha: A follow-up: Could the Hon. Minister say how many vehicles were purchased last year including the bulldozer that was budgeted? Does the region have possession of the bulldozer presently?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the delivery of the bulldozer is expected within two weeks from today.

Programme: 762 - Agriculture - \$724,076,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme 763 – Public Infrastructure - \$262,006,000

Mr. Croal: Could the Hon. Minister lay over to the House the information in relation to line items 6251 – Maintenance of Roads; 6252 – Maintenance of Bridges; 6254 – Maintenance of Sea and River Defences; and 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, Sir. This request is duly noted and the information will be furnished.

Programme: 763 – Public Infrastructure - \$262,006,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme 764 – Education Delivery - \$3,129,258,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: Hon. Minister, you utilised only \$77 million of the \$106 million, which was allocated in 2017. Yet, you are asking for \$101 million in 2018. Could you explain this?

Mr. Bulkan: It was a case that, in the past, the lump sum was paid by the Ministry of Finance but, going forward, it will now be paid by the Department of Education in 2018 under this line item.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, kindly lay over to the House the information in relation to line items 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings; 6252 – Maintenance of Bridges as well as 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, line items 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings, 6252 – Maintenance of Bridges and 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure; this information will be provided in writing.

Mr. Mustapha: Under line item 6116, Contracted Employees, I have seen a reduction of only two contracted employees but then the budget is drastically reduced by \$9 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain please?

Mr. Bulkan: There was a similar question posed earlier by the Hon. Member Mr. Croal, regarding the details for the designations and the emoluments relating to this line item. This will also be provided for the Hon. Member.

Mr. Mustapha: Line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings: I see an increase here. Could the Minister explain if new buildings would be being rented in Region 6 for 2018?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, it is a very modest sum of \$290,000 but this provision caters for the rental of two buildings – No. 36 Primary School and Trinity Street Nursery School.

Mr. Bharrat: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: There is an increase of over \$20 million. The Hon. Minister just mentioned that there are only two additional small properties. Could the Minister kindly explain the increase in charges?

Mr. Bulkan: No. The information just provided was the rental for two buildings. They are not increases.

Mr. Bharrat: Mr. Chairman, the question was referring to line item 6272 but I drew refer to the rental as to the increases in electricity charges. The question refers to line item 6272.

Mr. Bulkan: The question was posed about the electricity and an explanation was offered.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I wonder whether I could ask you to offer those explanations again. The Hon. Member is still at sea. He has not gotten the answer.

Mr. Bulkan: Okay, Mr. Chairman. The explanation that I offered a moment ago was that, in the past, a lump sum was paid by the Ministry of Finance but the charges, in 2018, will now be paid by the Department of Education in the region.

Mr. Mustapha: Under line item 6292 – Dietary: I have seen that the same amount that was budgeted last year is budgeted for 2018 and I suspect that these are dietary for school children

and the influx of school children coming into the system. Why has the same amount been budgeted this year since more students would be coming into the system?

Mr. Bulkan: As of now, there is no evidence that there will be an increase in students to be catered for under this line item and that is why the provision remains the same.

Mr. Anamayah: I have a follow-up question from the Hon. Member Mr. Mustapha's question.

Could the Hon. Minister say if all of the schools in Region 6 are in receipt of the dietary supplies?

Mr. Bulkan: No. Mr. Chairman, this line item caters only for dietary needs for the children at the Springlands Dormitory, Orealla and the Special Needs Programme, not the schools in the region. That is catered for under the Ministry of Education.

Mr. Anamayah: Line item 6281 – Security Services: I see the same sum has been budgeted for 2017 and 2018. Are all the schools covered by security?

Mr. Bulkan: The budgeted sum is intended to cater for the provision of security services at all the schools in the region.

Mr. Anamayah: Hon. Minister, are you aware that there has been an upsurge of thefts and reports of break-ins at various schools?

Mr. Bulkan: The information that is given to me is at some variance; it contradicts the statement made by the Hon. Member. I would not want to deny but, given that, it necessitates the provision for security services at these locations.

Mr. Anamayah: Finally, Hon. Minister, what is the name of the company that would be providing security services.

Mr. Bulkan: The name of the security provider is Integrated Security Services.

Programme: 764 – Education Delivery - \$3,126,258,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 765 – Health Services - \$1,656,179,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6281 – Security Services: Could the Hon. Minister indicate or verify when this new company started and, secondly, could he state the hourly rate that is being paid?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the new security company commenced work on the 1st December, 2017 at \$350 per hour.

4.46 p.m.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, can you lay over to the House the information in relation to line items 6242, 6255, and 6251 to 6252?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes. Line items 6242- Maintenance of Buildings, 6251- Maintenance of Roads, 6252 - Maintenance of Bridges and 6255 - Maintenance of Other Infrastructure; the request for the details pertaining to these activities will be provided.

Dr. Mahadeo: Could the Minister tell us how much of the \$400 million from line item 6221, Drugs and Medical Supplies, was spent by the regional administration?

Mr. Bulkan: The sum of \$103,624,052 was spent.

Dr. Mahadeo: Could the Hon. Minister say how was this money spent, whether it by selective tendering or whatever? And who were the advisers about what medical supplies to purchase?

Mr. Bulkan: The identification of the needs for the drugs that are required would have been from the professionals such as the Doctors, as I am advised, and the suppliers would have been on the basis of open tenders to prequalified suppliers in the region.

Dr. Mahadeo: I had asked the Minister if we could have a list of the prequalified suppliers and evidence if they would have met the criteria for storing these medicines.

The reason why I asked about who recommends what to buy is because when we visited, in March, as a Parliamentary Sectorial Committee, the doctors told us that they requested chest tubes under water seal and they were supplied with under water seals for the septic tank pumps; that they requested surgical mesh and they were provided with regular mosquito mesh. This is why I want to know what mechanisms are in place that these types of mistakes are not going to be repeated and if anyone was surcharged for wasting government's money?

Mr. Bulkan: There are certain safeguards in the system. It includes oversight by Members of Parliament (MP); such information as is being provided now. It also includes oversight on the part of the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) in addition to the internal monitoring and evaluation by the respective ministry, whether it is the Ministry of Public Health or the ministry under which the RDC falls. I am also further advised that, following the revelation on the visit with the conditions that obtained in March, that particular deficiency was remedied and corrected subsequently, Sir.

Dr. Mahadeo: Was anyone surcharged for buying the wrong item? That part of the question was left unanswered.

Line item 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants: There is an increase of just over \$4 million. Could the Hon. Minister state what new additions have been made to the fleet of vehicles, engines or generators to warrant this increase?

Mr. Bulkan: The new equipment that has been acquired by the RDC includes a water ambulance, a minibus to transport nurses and a new generator. The increased budgetary request is intended to offset the fuel consumption for these equipment.

Mr. Mustapha: Could the Minister say if the region is in possession of the water ambulance, presently?

Mr. Bulkan: The water ambulance has not been supplied as yet but the expected date of delivery, we are advised, is 31st December. [Mr. Mustapha: Within two weeks] Within two week, Sir.

Dr. Mahadeo: Could the Hon. Minister provide us with a list of the vehicles in the region and to whom they are assigned? I am speaking about the vehicles that will be using fuel and lubricant from Line item 6231.

In addition to that there has been a huge increase of nearly \$14 million under line item 6243, Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies, could the Hon. Minister justify?

Mr. Bulkan: The list of vehicles that are requested would be provided and the increase provision for janitorial and cleaning supplies is to allow for compliance and adherence with the new Pan

American Health Organization (PAHO) standards, infection controls in hospitals and health centres and it would allow for the use of more bleach consumptions, hand sanitizers, liquid soaps, upgrade of the facilities and the physical space in the hospitals to allow, hopefully, for reduction transferring bacteria or contamination.

Dr. Mahadeo: Line item 6264 - Vehicles Spares and Service: \$11,300,000 was budgeted for in 2017 yet, eventually, the revised 2017 was \$15,300,000; could the Hon. Minister explain? In addition to that my question also include whether the engine for the boat which is assigned to the health in the region repaired? Are the engines for the boats at Orealla Health Centre as well as Barakara still working?

Mr. Bulkan: The increase in expenditure in 2017 over the original budgeted sum was to cater for emergencies repairs for four ambulances in the region. The information that is being sought, with regards to the condition of the engines that are being identified, I do not have this information at this time but I will provide it subsequently to the Hon. Member.

Dr. Mahadeo: Line item 6292 – Dietary: \$97 million was budgeted for in 2017 and \$95 million in 2016. From the Report of the Auditor General Report we know that \$24.6 million, basically, could not be accounted for in 2016. Earlier this year, we had reports in the press that the patients at Fort Canje were not getting chicken; they were fed sausage and bread. Could the Hon. Minister explain this \$97 million and whether there are guarantees that the moneys that are being spent would actually be spent for the patients at Fort Canje, Skeldon, New Amsterdam and Port Mourant Hospital as the case might be?

I would also like to ask Minister the same question about bed occupancy because when we visited in March, the bed occupancy at the New Amsterdam Hospital was 45. I know that you do not have that figure right now, but if that could also be provided and what is the average cost per meal per day per patient.

Mr. Bulkan: The information that I can provide, in relation to the 2018 allocation, is that it caters for provision of dietary needs for an average of 290 patients per day at an individual meal cost of \$900. It has been noted that the allocation remains, more or less, the same. The bed occupancy; the information is at the 193 at Fort Canje Hospital, 73 at New Amsterdam, 11 at Skeldon, nine at port Mourant, and four at Mibikuri.

Dr. Mahadeo: Hon. Minister, thanks for that information but that is not really bed occupancy.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Dr. Mahadeo, let us have the question please.

Dr. Mahadeo: What systems are in place that we will not have a repeat of what happened in 2016?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer that I provided was the best that I could have provided. Unfortunately, I am not in a position to answer that specific question but the information that I can provide is what the provision is designed and what it caters for, and that is the information I related.

Dr. Mahadeo: Could the Hon. Minister provide us with a list of training for 2018 that would cost \$8,399,000 and the National and Other Events that would cost \$4.1 million?

Mr. Bulkan: Line item 6302 Training: the sum of \$8.399 million and line item 6291 - National and Other Events: there is a budgeted sum of \$4.1 million. The activities relating to these would be provided, as requested, to the Hon. Member.

Programme: 765 - Health Services -\$1,656,179,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme 761- Regional Administration and Finance – \$13,580,000

Programme: 761 - Regional Administration and Finance -\$\$13,580,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

5.01 p.m.

Programme: 762 – Agriculture - \$117,209,000

Mr. Mustapha: Project code 1301000 – Drainage and Irrigation: Could the Hon. Minister provide to us, in writing, with the estimated cost for each project listed here?

Mr. Bulkan: Project code 1301000 – Drainage and Irrigation: There is the budgeted sum of \$109.209 million. As requested, the information will be provided, in writing, for all of the activities.

Programme: 762 – Agriculture – \$117,209,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 763 – Public Infrastructure - \$141,400,000

Mr. Mustapha: Project code 1100700 – Bridges and project code 1401000 – Roads: Could the Hon. Minister explain by giving us a breakdown of the estimated cost of each project and also layover the information in writing?

Mr. Bulkan: Is the request for me to offer an explanation now and to lay it over?

Mr. Mustapha: The request is for you to lay it over in writing.

Mr. Bulkan: The request is for it to be laid over. This is duly noted and it will be provided.

Mr. Bharrat: Project code 1401000 – Roads: Hon. Minister, could you say if there is any allocation included for the Black Bush Polder main road?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer is no.

Mr. Anamayah: Under the same project code, is there an allocation for the East Bank road or the Jackson/Moleson Creek road?

Mr. Bulkan: The East Bank Public Road is being done by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure at a cost of \$1.2 billion. Did you ask about the Jackson/Moleson Creek road?

Mr. Anamayah: Yes.

Mr. Bulkan: No. That particular stretch of roadway is not provided for under this allocation in 2018.

Programme: 763 – Public Infrastructure – \$141,400,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 764 – Education Delivery - \$109,511,000

Programme: 764 – Education Delivery – \$109,511,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 765 –Health Services – \$162,500,000

Dr. Mahadeo: Project code 1204000 – Buildings – Health: Construction of theatre at the Skeldon Hospital. Is this allocation only catering for the theatre or is it also catering for beds for patients after surgery?

Mr. Bulkan: The budgeted sum is for the construction of a theatre.

Dr. Mahadeo: Hon. Minister, it therefore means that surgery would be done downstairs and then the patients would have to be taken upstairs. That is just to note.

Could the Hon. Minister provide a breakdown of the allocation, under the same project code, for the three items that are stated – retention, construction of theatre and out-patient building? The total sum is \$132.5 million.

I would now go on to project code 2504300 – Furniture and Equipment – Health: Hon. Minister, last year, I had requested a list of the equipment that were to be purchased and where they were to be located. Could you please still provide that list? I did not get it. I am also asking for a list of equipment that would be purchased for 2018 and a list of the facilities which would benefit from these pieces of equipment to the tune of \$30 million. How many surveillance systems would be bought and where would they be installed?

Mr. Bulkan: To answer the last question first, the provision caters for the acquisition of two camera surveillance systems, together with installation and monitors. The locations for them are the New Amsterdam Public Hospital and the National Psychiatric Hospital. Pertaining to project codes 1204000 and 2504300, in the case of the latter for both 2017 and 2018, and in the case of the buildings, there is the budgeted sum of \$132.5 million. The breakdown and the full details would be provided in writing, as requested.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 1204000 – Buildings – Health: The Appropriated Budget for 2017 was \$81 million and \$61 million was expended. Could the Hon. Minister advise us of what projects were completed under this head and what projects were not completed? It is because there it is a \$20 million difference in the amount. I will have a follow-up question, depending on your answer.

Mr. Bulkan: The main activity that was not executed, as was originally programmed, was the maternity ward at the New Amsterdam Public Hospital.

Ms. Teixeira: In other words, the maternity ward was not done and now it has been catered for in the 2018 Budget. Is that correct?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes.

Ms. Teixeira: So, it is being treated as a completely new project in the 2018 Budget.

Mr. Bulkan: That is correct, Hon. Member.

Ms. Teixeira: Could you explain why it was not done? Maternity wards are extraordinarily important in order to reduce maternal mortality. What was the problem in doing the project in the first place?

Mr. Bulkan: It was due to failed tender and the need to retender for this particular project.

Ms. Teixeira: I did not quite catch what the Minister said. Did he say a “male” tender?

Mr. Bulkan: It was a failed tender.

Ms. Teixeira: Does that mean that the tenders were non-responsive?

Mr. Bulkan: I cannot provide the level of detail that is being requested, but the information that has been given to me is that it was a failed tender. It could have been as a result of different reasons. However, that information could be provided, in a little more detail, subsequently.

Mr. Mustapha: I have a follow-up question to my Colleague’s question. May I ask Hon. Minister, when this project was tendered?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that it was tendered for in September, 2017.

Mr. Mustapha: How many tenders were received for this particular project and were all failed or non-responsive tenders?

Mr. Bulkan: The explanation was offered a moment ago. With the provision of that information, the level of detail that is being requested by the Hon. Member would be provided. It would suffice for both of the questions that were posed.

Programme: 765 – Health Services – \$162,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

5.16 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I thank you for your assistance and cooperation. We will now take the suspension and we will return at 6.15 p.m.

Assembly resumed.

Sitting suspended at 5.16 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 6.35 p.m.

Assembly resolved itself into the Committee of Supply

In Committee of Supply

Agency: 77 Region 7: Cuyuni/Mazaruni

Current Expenditure

Programme: 771 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$267,750,000

[Mr. Chairman in aside with the Clerk.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I crave your indulgence for one moment.

[Mr. Chairman in aside with the Clerk.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we will continue with the consideration of the Estimates of Expenditure.

[Mr. Chairman in aside with the Clerk.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I apologise for the delay.

Dr. Westford: Line item 6264 - Vehicle Spares and Service: Could the Hon. Minister please say how many vehicles are going to be serviced under this head?

Mr. Bulkan: The fleet is one 4x4 pick up, one 75, two 115 and one 40 horsepower outboard engines and a car.

Dr. Westford: Line item 6242 - Maintenance of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister say which building or buildings are going to be looked after under this head?

Mr. Bulkan: The allocation provides for maintenance at the administration building and the Superintendent of Works' Quarters in Bartica at a cost of \$6 million and \$2 million respectively; the Regional Vice-Chairperson's (RVC) quarters in Upper Mazaruni, \$2 million, the Administrative living quarters at Mongreppo, \$6 million, day care centre at Bartica, \$2 million, Assistant Field Auditor's Quarters at Bartica, \$4 million; Mechanical Engineers' Quarters, Bartica \$2 million; and the Regional Guest House, \$3 million. There is also a \$3 million contingency.

Dr. Westford: Line item 6284 - Other: Could the Hon. Minister please say what activities are going to be conducted under this head?

Mr. Bulkan: The provision is for payment for services to Tender Board Members and evaluators and caretakers and it caters for incidentals, such as the washing of curtains and for porter services.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: Hon. Minister, there is a reduction by 15 contracted employees but the reduction in the budgetary allocation is less than \$1 million.

Mr. Bulkan: That is correct but it would be noted that, in 2017, the actual expenditure was reduced by a sum of almost \$15 million. This was as a result of 16 employees being transferred from line item 6116 to the fixed establishment. A lot of that took place in 2017; hence, it is not the full amount in one fell swoop that is catered for in 2018.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, I have a follow-up question, though the Chairman. Notwithstanding, that there was \$31 million budgeted and \$16 million spent, the \$16 million was for 29

employees, according to the Legend. That is for 2017. The 2018 allocation is \$15 million for 13 employees. I am having a difficulty with your explanation.

Mr. Bulkan: It is the case that a number of these employees were transitioned. It is not happening at the end of the year but it happened during the year. Some of them were transitioned quite early in the year. Hence, the reduction in expenditure under that line item by almost half or \$15 million. That is why there is no need for the variation in 2018 to be significant. It is because those effects would have already kicked in in 2017.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6211 - Expenses Specific to the Agency: Hon. Minister, there is an increased allocation of \$6 million. Could you indicate what the intention is for the additional \$6 million?

Mr. Bulkan: There is provision for consultations for the regional development plan, \$2.2 million; similar activities relating to the Regional Agricultural and Commercial Exhibition (RACE), \$1.4 million; and the National Regional Consultative Committee, \$500,000; and an increase for the Toshias Elections in 2018, \$3.4 million.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, you mentioned the Regional Agricultural and Commercial Exhibition. Is this an activity across all of the regions?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes. I did, in my presentation, speak to the fact that these exhibitions will be held annually in every region.

Mr. Croal: Could the Hon. Minister lay over the breakdown for line item 6211?

Mr. Bulkan: I note the request to furnish the details and the breakdown for the expenses under line item 6211.

6.49 p.m.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6311 – Rates and Taxes: Minister, I checked a couple of the previous regions and the allocations for rates and taxes are the same amounts as 2017. However, this appears to be the only region, which I have come across so far, where the allocation has moved from \$5.098 million, in 2017, to \$11 million in 2018. Could you explain? Have the rates and

taxes been increased by the Bartica Town Council? Is that what is going on or does the region have arrears with the Bartica Town Council?

Mr. Bulkan: It is the latter. Arrears are responsible for the increase; the arrears go back to a few years, to 2011.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Line item 6255 - Maintenance: of Other Infrastructure: I noticed there is a proposed expenditure of \$45 million. Could the Hon. Minister share with this Committee what amount of that allocation is expected to benefit the Upper Mazaruni area? What are the other infrastructures that are expected to be maintained in both sub-regions?

Mr. Bulkan: The provision is to allow for activities as follow: cleaning of the Government's compound in Bartica, \$2 million; repairs to the fence at the Regional Engineers' Quarters, \$4 million; repairs to the Regional Chairman's Quarters, \$4 million; maintenance of solar systems at the Administrative Building in Upper, Lower and Middle Mazaruni, \$3 million; landscaping of living quarters in Bartica, \$3 million; repairs to the fence and living quarters in Bartica, \$2 million; repairs to a day care centre in Bartica, \$3 million; and maintenance of lighting systems at Paruima in Upper Mazaruni, \$1.5 million. There is also a minor contingency.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6281 – Security Services: Hon. Minister, there is a \$7.280 million increase in the allocation. Firstly, could you say who the security provider is? Secondly, could you indicate the reason for the increased allocation?

Mr. Bulkan: The provider is Sentinel Security Incorporated. Among the reasons for the increase in the allocation is an increase in the rates. I am advised, also, that there is an increase in the number of guards ranging between five to 10. There is also provision for armed guards.

Mr. Croal: Follow-up: What is the increase in the number of guards, the number of armed guards, the location for these security as well as their hours, if there are increased hours in this allocation? I noted that you did not mention anything about increased rates in this case. I did point out to you that there are inconsistencies. Could you indicate what the hourly rate for this new award is?

Mr. Bulkan: I did indicate there was an increased rate of \$340. There are additional guards and one additional location, which is the new radio station at Bartica, Radio Bartica, which enjoys 24

hours security. The other locations are the Bartica District Hospital...Mr. Chairman, could I request that this information be laid over?

Mr. Croal: Could you indicate where the armed security is assigned?

Mr. Bulkan: They are assigned to the Regional Administrative Office. I have the information on the locations. Would you like me to lay it over?

Mr. Croal: Yes.

Programme: 771 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$267,750,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 772 - Public Infrastructure - \$168,334,000

Dr. Westford: Line items 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skilled and 6116 – Contracted Employees: Could the Hon. Minister say what the designations of the three workers are?

Mr. Bulkan: Line items 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skilled: There are two overseers. Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: there is an electrical inspector.

Dr. Westford: Line item 6264 – Vehicles Spares and Service: Could you say how many vehicles this sum of money would be used to maintain?

Mr. Bulkan: The additions to the fleet are two all-terrain vehicles (ATV), a motorcycle and a 4x4 vehicle which would be acquired in 2018. The complete fleet is a generator, an outboard engine, an ATV and a water pump for Kamarang and a mini-excavator, a 75 outboard engine, a Bobcat machine, two Bedford trucks, a pick-up and a 30 kilovolt-ampere (kVA) generator and the additional vehicles which I just mentioned for Bartica.

Dr. Westford: Line item 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants: Could the Hon. Minister say if this amount of money for fuel and lubricants would be used by the fleet of vehicles that he mentioned a short while ago?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer to that is yes.

Dr. Westford: Follow-up: Since there are only three members of staff under this heading, who are the persons who are going to be utilising the ATVs and the other vehicles that you mentioned?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that personnel from other programmes would utilise the vehicles under Programme 772, while these vacancies are in the process of being filled.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6254 – Maintenance of Sea and River Defenses: In 2017, there was an allocation of \$25.2 million. Could the Hon. Minister say if any of this money went towards the building or what is popularly called the Boardwalk in Bartica? I would like an idea of how much was spent, if that is so.

Mr. Bulkan: If I heard the Hon. Member correctly, I think the line items and the allocations have been transposed.

Ms. Teixeira: I said line item 6254.

Mr. Bulkan: You said line item Line item 6254, Maintenance of Sea and River Defenses, but the \$25.2 million refers to line item 6253 - Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation works.

Ms. Teixeira: My apologies.

Mr. Bulkan: The answer is no. The allocation was not used for that activity.

Mr. Croal: Follow-up: Line item 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants: We would have gotten an explanation, a few moments ago, about staff from other programmes utilising vehicles under this programme, but each one of the programmes have their respective budgetary allocations for fuel and, hence, to move around. Could you explain this?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that if it is the case that personnel from another programme are employed to operate vehicles that belong to this programme, whatever is the specific equipment, whether it is the outboard engine or the ATVs, is where the fuel and lubricants will be used, if the programme is utilising or employing personnel from other programmes on a temporary basis.

Ms. Teixeira: Follow-up: Minister, I think the point that we are trying to make is regarding programme budgeting. Therefore, there is a reason each programme has its own cost for electricity, water, *et cetera*. This is to better manage resources. Therefore, if it is that the other

7.04 p.m.

Therefore, if it is that the other head does not have enough fuel that should be rectified to reflect correctly the use of fuel or any issue or item under that programme. Could we ask that in the programme budget for Region 7 that this be rectified for 2018 to properly reflect this programme's use? I know that there would be times when the ATVs would have to be shared but I am talking about the fuel. They should keep to the programme budgeting.

Mr. Bulkan: Except that the question relates not to the use of fuel but to employing personnel from a different programme to operate the machines and equipment that are under this Programme. As I said, this is due to the fact that there are vacancies in this particular Programme. If an activity has to be carried out this is where personnel from a different programme would be employed if there is a vacancy on a temporary basis. The point is taken.

Programme: 772 - Public Infrastructure - \$168,334,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 773 – Education Delivery - \$1,294,982,000

Ms. Selman: Line item 6284 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister identify the other goods and services which are listed to be purchased utilising this allocation in 2018?

Mr. Bulkan: The allocation is for the payment of invigilators to conduct examinations at Arrau Annexe at Kurutuik; and it is quite hazardous to get there according to the explanation here. It caters for an increase in the rates in the stipend paid to invigilators and supervisors. It also caters for the distribution of examination papers to the outlying centres - an activity which takes place eight times per year. It also caters for the hiring of invigilators and supervisors to conduct the National Grade Six Assessment (NGSA) and the National Grade Nine Assessment (NGNA) examinations as well as for the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) supervisors; the hiring of boat captains; transporting of students to Waramadong Secondary School; hiring of escorts for the payment of salaries to teachers in the Upper Mazaruni; stipends for Voluntary Service

Officers (VSOs), sweeper/cleaners and checkers; cleaning; subsistence and payment of stipend to Work Study students.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6202 – Dietary: For 2018, there is \$236,600,000. Could you say how many children are beneficiaries of the School Feeding Programme? I assume that is what it is for. I notice that in Region 6 there is none. When we asked the question we were told that that is handled centrally. Is it that Region 6 is different and therefore the large allocation?

Mr. Bulkan: It is the case that the dietary provisions for the dormitories at Waramadong Secondary School, Bartica Secondary School and Three Miles Secondary School with 451 students, 110 students and 143 students, respectively, are provided for by the region under this particular line item.

Ms. Teixeira: I am very happy to hear that the children are taken care of and taken care of well. But I must make a comparison. We just did the health services in Region 6, where we are feeding 290 patients with three meals per day at four institutions - the National Psychiatric Hospital, Fort Canje, is one and the patients do not have a choice to leave – and the cost was \$97 million. Could you advise me, is there any standard cost per meal? These are patients who are really ill and these are children who are in dormitories. I am not quarrelling with the cost because the children need to be fed, I am happy that you are doing that. I am concerned about the disparity between the in-patient care for 190-odd in-patients at the National Psychiatric Hospital, Fort Canje, at the cost of \$97 million for 2018, and 311 children in three dormitories at the cost of \$236 million. I am trying to get at the cost factor and not the children or the patients. I am using Region 6 because we have not reached Region 7, Health, as yet. I will look for those figures and refer to them when we get there. I am trying to get at the cost factor, not the children or the patients.

Mr. Bulkan: I note the comparison that was made. There are almost 700 students at the three dormitories. It is the case that the cost of taking goods and the provision of services here necessitates aircrafts, particularly in the Upper Mazaruni. It is a lot more expensive to deliver a service of this nature in those far-flung locations as opposed to here on the Coast. This would have a significant impact. It is a lot more with the remoteness of the location.

Programme: 773 – Education Delivery - \$1,294,982,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 774 – Health Services - \$557,271,000

Dr. Ramsaran: Under line item 6221, Drugs and Medical Supplies, there is an increase of \$2 million for a small region - from \$70 million to \$72 million. Could you lay over a list of the items and a costing for them which prompted the addition of \$2 million? Even if it is a guesstimate, what prompted that? Secondly, could you tell us what portion of this \$2 million would remain in the region, how would it be spent and what method of procurement would be used to spend it?

Mr. Bulkan: Line item 6221, for the 2018 allocation, the request for the list of items that would have informed the request for this sum has been noted and would be provided to the Hon. Member. Unless I misheard, I think that the request would be for the entire \$72 million, what portion would be warranted to the central Ministry and what portion would remain in the region for 2018. Both requests for information would be provided at the same time.

Dr. Ramsaran: Line item 6221 - Drugs and Medical Supplies: We note that there are several columns with various numbers including 2016 - \$61,395,000. Following the explanation, could you tell us or lay over to us the reconciliation for 2016, having noted, Minister, that we are at the end of 2017?

Mr. Bulkan: It would be recalled that similar explanations were proffered earlier in the day in relation to other regions. It is the case that it is not any different here for this region. When that information is available it would be provided to the Hon. Member.

Dr. Ramsaran: I know that we discussed it but for clarity on this particular region, did the Minister say that the reconciliation for 2016 is not available in December, 2017? That is a fair question coming out of this first column. Is he saying clearly for this region that the reconciliation for 2016 has not been finished in December, 2017?

Mr. Bulkan: I have not said that. All I said was that I am unaware if that information is available at this point in time. If it is, it would be furnished and if it is not then an explanation is due and would be offered.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: I am concerned that the health budget for fuel, which is \$17,100,000 for 2018, seems extraordinarily low for the terrain that they have to

traverse. Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants, which we just approved in Education, is \$48 million. The health facilities are in the same difficult terrain as the schools are. Is there any co-sharing, moving of education and health together, and that is why the health budget is so low for movement?

Line item 6292 – Dietary: For 2018, budgeted is \$25,200,000 for hospitals and facilities in difficult terrain. Again, the dietary amount looks low because the people in some of these areas cannot walk home or visitors cannot go to see them every day and take food to them. This seems to be a very low figure for dietary for this region in view of the geography and the spread of this region.

7.19 p.m.

Mr. Bulkan: The observation is noted with regards to the use of fuel and lubricants under the health programme. It is the case that the facilities now at the Bartica Hospital, which is where the main demand is, is of a very high standard. I am informed that there are approximately eight specialists, including surgeons, on a full time basis at the Bartica Hospital offering the full gamut of services. I am aware that a Permanent Secretary of one of our Ministries actually left Georgetown recently to seek medical treatment in Bartica. Such is the state of the health facilities at the Bartica Hospital. So the comparison, I would suggest, is not exactly valid - to provide dietary for the 451 students in the dormitories at Waramadong as opposed to the provision of health services where the main provider is located at Bartica, which does not necessitate the use of a lot of fuel and lubricants to offer the health services in the region.

On the question of the dietary, I am advised that the Ministry of Public Health also subsidises the cost of the provision of the dietary needs for patients utilising these facilities.

Ms. Teixeira: I think the Minister may be getting tired. We have been dealing with seven regions now. However, I was not getting into all of that. I know the Bartica Hospital well. Your Regional Health Officer (RHO) was my Chief Medical Officer when I was the Minister of Health; he was excellent then and still is excellent. By the way, the extension to the Bartica Hospital, which was in a very bad condition in the 1990s, was done under the People Progressive Party Civic/ (PPP/C) Government.

Bartica is also special to my heart, but I am talking about Region 7 not Bartica. The fuel and lubricants I am talking about has to do with access and delivery of services, not Bartica. Region 7 is a vast Region with communities scattered all over the place. The fuel and lubricants has to do with the delivery and access to health services; that is what my concern is. When I was talking about dietary I was dealing with economic comparisons.

The issue is that on line item 6292, Dietary... **[Interruption]** I am answering the Minister. The Minister made a political comment and I can too. I am not so concerned with the patients at Bartica Hospital; I assume they are taken care of. I am more concern about patients at other hospitals and facilities who are coming from far flung areas like the Upper and Middle Mazaruni. Telling me that you believe – and I believe that you believe - the Ministry of Public Health is providing something, except that we are dealing with the budget; dollars and cents. I do need to know if the Minister of Public Health is subsidizing patients from Region 7. We are dealing with statistics and dollars not these other issues.

Mr. Bulkan: In addition, to the earlier explanation offered it is also the case that the health facilities at other locations across the region and sub-regions have been improved. For example, there are now doctors on a permanent basis. There are two doctors at Imbaimadai, one at Jawalla, one at Waramadong, two at Issano, two at Karau and one at Kako. So there is less need for the movement of patients, to bring patients from the far flung areas of the region to a central location.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, noting that under line item 6221, Drugs and Medical Supplies, Region 7 procured \$70 million worth of drugs and medical supplies, could you please state whether all the health facilities across the region, including the hospitals and health posts, are stocked or whether there are shortages of drugs in any of these facilities?

Mr. Bulkan: The information that is being relayed from the senior personnel at the location attests to the fact that the supply of drugs has improved considerably. It is the case that occasionally, on a temporary basis, there is the likelihood that there could be shortages, but these are being addressed on a continuous basis. The information is that the situation with regard to the supply of drugs has greatly improved in the region.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, a follow-up on Drugs and Medical Supplies. The Auditor General cited the region for expired drugs at the end of 2016. Could you please state what is the current status of expired drugs in the region in 2017?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that currently, in 2017, there is no issue in relation to expired drugs. It is probably historical, prior to that.

Dr. Ramsaran: Hon. Minister, back to line item 6292, Dietary. There is a significant increase in the 2018 Budget. There must be a measurement that you used. Could you lay over or tell us how many meals were prepared for the patients in 2016 and 2017 so that we would see how relevant your measurement is for the future?

Does the Minister note that it is \$25,200,000 and that this year it was \$17,500,000, a significant increase? Could the Minister tell us if he had done this based on a calculation of how many meals were used for how many patients to come to this sum?

Mr. Bulkan: The increased provision being sought in 2018, approximately \$7.7 million, caters for five new locations, five hospitals, that I listed earlier, namely, Imbaimadai, Waramadong, Issano, Kako and Jawalla, which now have medical officers. This accounts for the increased allocation being sought in 2018. The request for details in the prior years has been noted and this would be furnished.

Dr. Ramsaran: I noted the Minister's explanation, but new locations do not mean patients. How many more patients are you going to feed at these small locations? That is what I need? More specifically, could you lay over how many meals were prepared for patients already in 2017? You are using that seemingly as a baseline. What is your baseline?

Further, I note and I welcome the spread of doctors to the new locations. Could the Hon. Minister say how many locations are fully covered with doctors besides Bartica? Could he answer if these are the Guyanese who were trained in Cuba?

Mr. Bulkan: A moment ago I read out the locations which have doctors stationed there permanently. I will do so again; there are two at Imbaimadai, one at Jawalla, one at Waramadong, two at Issano, one at Kako and two at Kamarang. I am advised that these are all Guyanese nationals.

Dr. Ramsaran: My final question in two parts. I know they are Guyanese nationals. Are the doctors those who were trained under the Cuba agreement? That is the question I am asking? Secondly, where there are two doctors stationed will there be provision for one doctor to do outline visits? I have not seen the trace in the excess money for more travel. There are some increases, but if you have so many more doctors in the region you do not seem to have enough money for them to do the outreaches.

Mr. Bulkan: I am not too sure that it is really relevant where these doctors received their training. I believe once they are certified by the Guyana Medical Council to perform as doctors in Guyana that is what is of importance. There is a \$2 million increase in fuel and lubricants. The answer is, yes, where there are two doctors the intention is that they would do field visits to surrounding areas.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: At line item 6282, Equipment Maintenance, could the Hon. Minister say whether the \$6 million includes the cost for the repair of the ultrasound machine in Bartica?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that repairs for the ultrasound machine at Bartica are being catered for under a service agreement with the Ministry of Public Health and not under the region.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: A final follow-up. Could the Hon. Minister say whether that machine is currently operable and if not how many ultrasound requests were already referred to the services of private doctors?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that there are three ultrasound machines located there, one is currently operational, and two are in the process of being repaired at this time.

Programme: 774 – Health Services – \$557,271,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

7.34 p.m.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 771 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$16,744,000

Programme: 771 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$\$16,744,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 772 – Public Infrastructure - \$54,000,000

Mr. Croal: Project code 1401100 – Roads: Could the Hon. Minister indicate the allocation for the two networks, from Kako to Waramadong and Kamarang to Waramadong? Secondly, what is the process by which this work is to be done?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the respective sums are \$10,000,000 and \$15,000,000; and the method of procurement will be by open tender, but I think it caters for enhanced community participation and engagement in the execution of these contracts.

Mr. Croal: Just a follow up: The community enhancement; please expand further. I understand what it means, but what aspect of it will be different from the allocation of a contract to a contractor? I am just trying to clarify that.

Mr. Bulkan: The criteria in the bid documents will seek to provide weighting for the employment of persons in the locations where the projects are being executed.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 1500900 - Sea and River Defence: Could you say what the \$7,000,000 in 2017 was used for? You have “construction of revetment” at, I think, Bidrabu. What was the money used for in 2017? That is the first question.

Mr. Bulkan: The 2017 allocation was for execution of works for revetment at Agatash. The 2018 allocation is at the Bidrabu revetment and the Bidrabu road.

Ms. Teixeira: I visited Bartica and I saw the boardwalk being built. I was told that it was being built by the Ministry of Communities, but you presented your Budget and there is no reference to anything like that in your Budget. I am trying to find it in Region 7, which is logical. I may be wrong but I am logical. I cannot find any allocation for money that has been spent to commence work on the creation of what the people call a boardwalk; you may have another name for it, or a proper name for it, but that is what it is popularly called. It is on the seawall of Bartica. Could you say where the allocation was put for the money that was spent in 2017? It is not complete, so I assume there is money for 2018. Could you say where it is? I could go on a fishing expedition

through each region, but it is logical that it is either the Ministry of Communities or Region 7. It is not in your Budget neither is it in the Ministry of Public Infrastructure's Budget. So I am being logical now we are at Region 7, but it is not here either. Could you tell me where the money was allocated in 2017 for that expenditure, which is not complete?

Mr. Bulkan: The information being sought, as the Hon. Member alludes, is indeed not under this line item. It was funded under the Ministry of Communities *via* the Bartica Town Council. It is called the Boulevard.

Ms. Teixeira: Boulevard was the other word used for it. Some people serenaded me with "under the board walk" and that is why boardwalk is stuck in my brain. I thank you Minister, for clarifying that, except you may have made me a little more confused. In your Budget, which we spent extensive time on, I did not see reference to a boulevard or an allocation to the Bartica Town Council. It may be helpful, but we do not have to do it right now, if you can get a cup of coffee and then we will do it. You can you can give me the line item, the programme, what was allocated and how much more is to be spent in 2018; because it is not complete and it will not be completed by the end of this year, I am sure of that.

Mr. Bulkan: I can certainly accede to the request to provide the information and it will be provided to the Hon. Member.

Programme: 772 – Public Infrastructure - \$54,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 773 – Education Delivery - \$120,700,000

Ms. Selman: Project code 2402100 – Land and Water Transport: Could the Hon. Minister identify the type of vehicle that will be purchased and the place where it will be assigned, as well as the engines?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, it is one outboard engine to be based at Isseneru Primary School to transport students from Apaikwa Village and other locations. Sorry, it is two, with one 15 horsepower at Imbaimadai and two ATVs to be used at the Desrey Fox Secondary School and one at Philippi Primary School to transport children from the satellite community. Normally,

these students take approximately 45 minutes to an hour to get *to and fro* school, but the ATV will assist with bringing the students to those two locations.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Project code 2504400 - Furniture and Equipment - Education: \$12,000,000 has been allocated. Could the Hon. Minister tell this House how much of that \$12,000,000 is going to be benefitting the Upper Mazaruni villages?

Mr. Bulkan: Actually the majority of that allocation is to be deployed in the Middle and Upper-Mazaruni, and I can certainly lay over to the Hon. Member the items, the projected cost and the locations where they will be deployed.

Programme: 773 – Education Delivery - \$120,700,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 774 – Health Services - \$63,788,000

Dr. Ramsaran: Hon. Minister, could you give us a breakdown of the three components shown here? Could you, at a soon date, lay it over in writing to this House?

Mr. Bulkan: Which line item?

Dr. Ramsaran: I am speaking to project code 1204200, Buildings – Health. Sorry.

Mr. Bulkan: It is for the completion of a number of buildings and the rehabilitation of some. The request is for this information to be laid over and this will be done.

7.49 p.m.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, I do not know if you know but, in 2016 and 2017, it took two years and two budgets to construct and complete construction of the health huts at Kurutuku and Chinowieng in Region 7. I would like to ask you, in this year's budget, under health, buildings, there is \$41.088 million. What is so different now, in Region 7, that you would be able to complete construction and rehabilitation of living quarters at Philippi, Isseneru and Kamarang noting my earlier comment that you were unable to complete two health huts in Chinowieng and Kurutuku, for a given year? That is recorded and cited in the Report of the Auditor General for 2016.

Mr. Bulkan: Of the budgeted sum of approximately \$41 million, one of the activities is for the completion of the construction of the CT scan building in Bartica, which is the highest provision of all of the activities at an approximate sum of \$12.438 million. The provisions for the two activities that the Hon. Member has referred to – the living quarters at Philippi and at Isseneru – are \$10 million each. The procurement activities are already en-train so it is not anticipated that the faith which the health huts at Kurutuku and Imbaimadai would have suffered in 2016 is likely to recur here.

Mr. Dharamlall: Follow-up: The Hon. Minister just mentioned that procurement activities for 2018 are already en-trained but the budget is not even approved as yet so how come are you already in the process of procurement?

Mr. Bulkan: The rules and regulations do allow for, in anticipation of the availability of the funds which are being sought, the commencement of activities in relation to the designs and the bills of quantities. Of course, it is the case that a contract cannot be awarded but the process does not start merely with the award of contract and so these are the reasons.

Programme: 774 – Health Services – \$63,788,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, this is the time where there is a provision for half an hour break. If Members are of a mind that we proceed then, of course, I will do so.

Members: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Agency 78: Region 8: Potaro/Siparuni

Current Expenditure

Programme: 781 – Regional Administration and Finance -\$134,773,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Firstly, could the Hon. Minister indicate who the top five contracted employees are currently?

Secondly, there would have been a reduction of seven contracted employees but the adjustment on the allocation is minimal; could you explain this?

Mr. Bulkan: To answer the second part of the question, the adjustments would have already started to take effect in 2017 and it is reflected in the revised expenditure versus the 2017 allocation. The full adjustment does not apply in 2018; it had started to apply in 2017. The information about the top five persons in this category will be provided subsequently.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, well let me rephrase the question. Do you have a list of the contracted employees? I would think that, at a minimum, you would have that here.

Mr. Bulkan: The information that is available at this time relates to the staff reduction and not the full complement of the staff. I would respectfully ask for this information to be provided at a very early opportunity, to the Hon. Member.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, line item 6211, Expenses Specific to the Agency, I noticed that there is an increase in the allocation. Could the Hon. Minister advise this House whether this increase caters for an increase of the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) meetings because only five were budgeted for in 2017 and if not, could he explain the increase?

Mr. Bulkan: The proposed increases in 2018 are provisions to fund the three activities that were already indicated for the previous regions. These being the Regional Agricultural and Commercial Exhibition where a sum of \$2 million is budgeted for the activities relating to that; the Regional Action Plan for the sum of \$3 million; and the Regional Development Consultation, a sum of \$1.5 million is budgeted for that activity. There is no increase being proposed for additional meetings of the RDC over 2017.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: I notice that \$30 million is allocated for 2018. Could the Hon. Minister say what amount of this \$30 million will benefit the Mahdia sub-regions two and one?

Mr. Bulkan: Which line item is that?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of building. I am sorry, it is \$10 million.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, have you withdrawn your question?

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I will keep the question but I would like to know which buildings would be addressed this year with the amount allocated?

Mr. Bulkan: The 2018 provision is for two buildings in Mahdia which are the Assistant Accountant and the Administrative Officer living quarters.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Follow-up: Could the Minister enlighten this House whether there is any sum allocated in any other line item to repair the Vice-Chairman (VC) house in Kato?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, there is no provision in the 2018 allocation for the information being sought.

The question that was being sought about the highest categories of emoluments under line item 6116, the information is here and if the Hon. Member is so desirous I could provide it at this stage.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Croal: I would ask the Hon. Minister to layover the entire list with the contracted employees?

Mr. Bulkan: Noted, Sir. I so commit.

Programme: 781 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$134,773,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 782 – Public Infrastructure - \$177,627,000

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads: Could the Hon. Minister say, of this \$44 million, whether this caters for the road maintenance between Monkey Mountain and Bamboo Creek; whether it also provides for maintenance of road between Taruka and Tuzeneng and whether it also provides for the clearing of the Chieung River Mouth road which is totally engulfed with huge grass and trees? Would any amount be used for the road from Kamana to Kopinang because it is a very bad road and there are a lot of complaints? How much of this sum would be spent in Mahdia?

8.04 p.m.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the stretches of roadway that would be catered for under this line item and the overall provision is the rehabilitation, is Taruka to Paramakatoi stretch and the Hon. Member would recognised that that is the greater part of that road link. There is specific additional provision for the portion between Yawong and Bamboo Creek; rehabilitation of the portion between Kato to Uribaru; the portion between Monkey Mountain to Tuzeneng; between Bamboo to Paramakatoi; between Kanapang to Penak; between Red Creek to Paramakatoi; and Kamana to Kurukabaru. It goes on to state Red Creek to Maikwak; Monkey Mountain to Paramakatoi; and Arasawa to Maikwak. It includes as well other areas such as Itabac to Kanapang; Kato to Paramakatoi and the walking trail from Kato to Paramakatoi; Chenapau to Maikwak; Kopinang to Waipa or vice versa; Waipa to Kaibarupai; and Kopinang to Kamana. That takes care of the entire area from Monkey Mountain to Kopinang.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I must say that I am happy for the people of the North Pakaraima because for two and a half years these roads were not addressed. Thank you.

Mr. Croal: It is not a question. It is just a request for the Hon. Minister to layover line items 6251 to 6255.

Programme: 782 – Public Infrastructure – \$177,627,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 783 – Education Delivery - \$923,549,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6281 – Security Services: Could the Hon. Minister indicate who the service provider is?

Mr. Bulkan: The current provider is the region. There is no independent security provider at this time. But, the tender process is at the evaluation stage for security.

Mr. Croal: Follow up: Hon. Minister, what is the expected commencement for the new contract, if you are saying that it has been tendered?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the expectation is that the contract could be awarded in time to allow for the provision of the services by an independent contractor towards the end of January.

Mr. Croal: Follow up: My final question under security, we have noticed that, across the regions, so far for Regions 1 to 7, the new awardees are from 1st December. In this case where we would have, probably, now completed the tendering and is now evaluating, could you indicate what the reason is for the delay for Region 8 in this tendering process, since all of the other regions that we would have dealt with are completed?

Mr. Bulkan: There were delays in the preparation of the tender documents for this region which led to the region being unable to be part of the group for the other regions for which the contract was already awarded. As a result of that delay, a contract would not be awarded probably until, as I said, in January. They are behind the other regions.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Who are the remaining three contracted employees and their designations?

Mr. Bulkan: It would be Driver/Mechanic, Equipment Operator and Pump Attendant.

Mr. Croal: Thank you. Hon. Minister, could you layover for us line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure and line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings?

Mr. Bulkan: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings, there is a budgeted sum of \$90 million and line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure, there is a budgeted sum of \$45 million. There is a request for the details pertaining to these two line items to be laid over. That is noted and will be provided.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6292 – Dietary: There is an increase allocation for dietary. Could you say where you are catering for this increase and the approximate amount of students?

Mr. Bulkan: The principle reason for the increase would be to cater for students at the Kato Complex which would become operational in 2018. It is expected in January of 2018 and that is the main reason for the spike in this line item in the 2018 Budget.

There is an increase of almost \$88 million but the entire allocation is to cater for dietary needs for... It will be 300 students at Kato, 100 students Mahdia dorms, and 275 students at the Paramakatoi dorm.

Programme: 783 - Education Delivery - \$923,549,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 784 – Health Services - \$316,276,000

Dr. Ramsaran: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: Noting in the column under Actual 2016... could you, once again, layover to this honourable House, as soon as possible, probably within the next few days, in a written form, the reconciliation for 2016? We are noting that we are now in December, 2017.

Mr. Bulkan: I did indicate earlier that I am unclear if that specific information is available as we speak and if it is, it will be provided. If not, it would be provided upon availability. It will be the same answer.

Dr. Ramsaran: Mr. Chairman, I crave your indulgence; we are in December, 2017. The books for 2016 would have been closed, at least, by early January. Is the Minister saying that he does not know and that his experienced support staff does not know if the reconciliation for 2016, for this line item, has not been made or has been made in December, 2017? It is a reasonable question, Mr. Chairman. The answer is either yes or no.

Mr. Bulkan: I did say it may or may not be but I am unclear. I do not want to guess or provide an answer that might be incorrect. I did offer a similar explanation earlier and I will rely on the same explanation.

Dr. Ramsaran: I recognised your indulgence and we will await that information. I think that I have made the point that the reconciliation is very tardy.

Further, could the Hon. Minister please tell us the division of the \$32 million here, how much was remitted, how much was warranted back to the Central Ministry and how much is retained in the local coffers?

Mr. Chairman: Is that a line item, Hon. Member?

Dr. Ramsaran: Mr. Chairman, it is the same line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies. It has an allocation of \$32 million.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Bulkan: Twenty-eight million was remitted and \$4 million was retained.

Dr. Ramsaran: A similar question again, could the Minister layover a cost list of the items that would be procured with the moneys which would be warranted to the central ministry and a separate list of those items warranted that were procured in 2017 using the moneys that they retained at the regional level?

Mr. Bulkan: The request, as I understand it, is for the complete breakdown of the entire \$32 million, the \$4 million that was utilised for procurement within the region and \$28 million which would have been centrally procured, to be laid over. It is being noted. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Dr. Ramsaran, just let the Minister finish please. Hon. Minister, are you finished?

8.19 p.m.

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, Sir. The information will be provided as requested.

Dr. Ramsaran: I have been a little impatient. Thank you for your indulgence. The other question is, through you Mr. Chairman to the Hon. Minister, could you give us the documentation for the fit and proper nature of those agencies or those firms which supply drugs for the moneys retained at the regional level?

Could you layover the procurement procedure, the document which would certify that the suppliers were qualified to deal with drugs and medical supplies? I am trying to avoid falsified counterfeit drugs getting into the system. Could the Minister please layover r to us the credentials of those firms that deal with medical supplies and drugs which are engaged by the region and which are recruited by the procurement process to spend the moneys that the region retained?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I do not want to make too light the sum of \$4million because at the end of the day it is still a lot of money; a dollar is a dollar. It would have been \$4 million that was retained by the region and this would have been not for sophisticated drugs or medical equipment but, I believe, it would have probably been for Over the Counter Drugs (OTC) medication. I, myself, on a visit to Mahdia, had to buy an inhaler from one of the drug stores

there. It is not a huge sum of money that was retained by the region. It was \$4 million for the entire year.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Under the same line item 6221, Drugs and Medical Supplies, could the Hon. Minister say that he is satisfied with the proposed budget allocation for 2018 for drugs and medical supplies because of the situation that existed in 2017, where most of the health facilities in the region were out of stock and still out of stock? Could he also layover to the House whether, for the amount of money warranted to the procuring Ministry, the region had, indeed, received the full amount of drugs requested?

Mr. Bulkan: Again, there were occasional shortages in the region but I am advised by the Regional Health Officer (RHO), who is here, that medical supplies have been delivered to the various locations and health posts across the region. The additional question being sought about the drugs that had been supplied with the money which would have been warranted in 2017 is the same information that Dr. Ramsaran had asked for. The same information will be provided for the benefit of all Members.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Could the Hon. Minister layover the list of the scheduled delivery to the North Pakaraima Health Facilities so that he can help me in understanding whether there was, indeed, a relieve of the drug shortage which existed?

Could he say whether the Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccine and polio are now available in those health centres, because I returned from there only two weeks ago and there is no BCG and polio vaccine across that entire sub region? In fact, the health team that was on an outreach to do the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine was also alarmed that the level of vaccination was very low, including the absence of the BCG and Polio and also at all of the not working solar refrigerators.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I think the information being sought is at an operational level and I will be guided by you. I think we are here to discuss the more important policy aspect of these allocations and the specific information that is being sought could be obtained directly from the relevant personnel rather than detain the entire National Assembly.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Minister. I think the Hon. Minister is correct; we should try to focus on the Estimates.

Mr. Bulkan: Thank you, Sir.

Programme: 784 – Health Services - \$316,276,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme 785 – Agriculture - \$22,351,000

Programme: 785 – Agriculture - \$22,351,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme 781 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$2,100,000

[Mr. Speaker hit the gavel]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, however amusing the exchanges are it gets close to disrespect and disregard for what is taking place here. I will not name the Members but I will do that on the next occasion.

Ms. Manickchand: I am sorry, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I did not name you Madam but whatever is amusing you must feel free to use the doors. They are available to all Members who do not wish to be here and to participate in what is going on.

Mr. Croal: Project code 2504700 – Furniture and Equipment - Administration: Could the Hon. Minister indicate how many computers would be procured and to whom they will be assigned?

Mr. Bulkan: That would be two desktop computers with the accessories. It would be for the Regional Executive Officer (REO) at Mahdia and the Assistant Regional Executive Officer (AREO) at Kato.

Mr. Croal: Just a clarification or a confirmation, could you indicate if the Office of the Regional Chairman has any computer?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the Regional Chairman has a laptop computer which was provided by the Government.

Programme: 781 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$2,100,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme 782 – Public Infrastructure - \$110,465,000

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Project code 1100800 – Bridges: Could the Hon. Minister tell us the bridges that will be done in 2018 with the sum allocated?

Mr. Bulkan: These would be bridges at Mawaiparu, Yawong, Kawau, Tuzeneng and Maraikobai.

Mr. Croal: I would like to ask the Hon. Minister if he could layover the information on those bridges.

Mr. Bulkan: It is noted, Sir.

Mr. Croal: Under project code 1401200, Roads, there are two road networks being identified. Could the Hon. Minister layover the entire detail for the road programme that is under this project code?

Mr. Bulkan: It is single roadway and it is the road link from Konawaruk to Muruwa. Currently, access to Muruwa is almost non-existent. I was actually on a recent outreach in the region at Campbelltown. The residents of Muruwa were anxious and hopeful to know when the condition of the access road would be remedied. I think they would be very happy to know that, with the passage of this budget, the road link would be now accessible.

Programme: 782 – Public Infrastructure - \$110,465,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme 783 – Education Delivery - \$58,300,000

Mr. Croal: Project code 1204400 – Buildings - Education: Firstly, could the Hon. Minister say what is the allocation for the Itabac Primary School? Secondly, the Legend states:

“Completion of primary school at Kaibarupai.”

Therefore, now that it is for completion, what is the entire contract sum for that primary school?

Mr. Bulkan: The budgeted sum for the school at Itabac is approximately \$27 million and the contract sum for Kaibarupai Primary School is approximately \$24.7 million of which the budgeted sum for the completion is approximately \$17.3 million.

8.34 p.m.

Programme: 783 – Education Delivery - \$58,300,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 784 Health Services - \$54,400,000

Mr. Croal: Project code 1204600 – Buildings – Health: Could the Hon. Minister indicate what the budgeted sum is for the construction of the nurses’ hostel at Mahdia? What works are entailed for the completion of the Mahdia District Hospital? Having done the completion, what would be the total expended for the Mahdia District Hospital?

Mr. Bulkan: The contract sum for the construction of the nurses’ hostel is approximately \$16.748 million and the activities for the completion of the upgrade in Mahdia would include installation of oxygen lines to the male, female and neonatal wards, upgrade of electrical system and the construction of cupboards. The total contract sum is approximately \$33.216 million.

Programme: 784 – Health Services - \$54,400,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 785 - Agriculture - \$1,000,000

Mr. Seeraj: Project code 1702000 – Agricultural Development: In 2016, there was an allocation of \$12.9 million; in 2017, there is an allocation of \$3.6 million; and I notice that for 2018, the sum of \$1 million is budgeted. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this Committee: is this an indication of the deemphasising of agriculture in the region? Additionally, \$1 million is put aside for the purchase of a fogging machine. What would this machine be used for?

Mr. Bulkan: The details pertaining to the 2016 expenditure are not currently on hand; this information would have to be provided subsequently. I am advised that the 2017 allocations catered for the provision of Swingfog machines and pumps, which would be deployed to several locations across the region. That information can be provided, similarly, subsequently. The allocation of \$1 million being sought in 2018 is to acquire two Swingfog machines, which are to be provided for the communities of Kato and Kaibarupai, to assist the farmer in those two locations for the control of Acoushi Ants and other insect infestations.

Mr. Seeraj: I was not looking for the details for the 2016 or 2017 allocations. I just made reference to those allocations to ask the Minister, specifically, in view of that fact that the sums were reduced from \$12.9 million to \$1 million, whether this is an indication of his Administration's deemphasising of the importance of agriculture in the region. I am not really interested in what the 2016 and 2017 allocations were used for. I know that. I could have done that research myself. I just was drawing to the Minister's attention that I had expected an increase in the allocation for agriculture in these regions, given the Government's emphasis on development of these regions.

Mr. Bulkan: By the very nature of capital equipment, it is not something recurring. It is the case that there was no agricultural programme in that region prior to 2015. It was an initiative which was started by this Administration. Subject to correction, I believe that the 2016 provision catered for the construction of shade houses in a number of communities and villages in both sub-regions. By its very nature, those capital investments are not a recurring feature annually.

Programme: 785 – Agriculture - \$1,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency 79: Region 9: Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo

Current Expenditure

Programme: 791- Regional Administration and Finance - \$186,252,000

Mr. Charlie: Line item 6211 – Expenses Specific to the Agency: The budgetary allocation for 2018 \$35.449 million. We all know that this line item takes care of the payment of the Toshaos and senior Councillors. Could the Hon. Minister say if the Neighbourhood Democratic Council

(NDC) interim Chairman of Aranaputa village would be paid under this line item? If yes, could he state why?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I must tell you that references to individuals should be avoided in our discussions. I am sure you would be able to find another way. If not, I would not allow the question in which you are naming people, which is what you have just done.

Mr. Charlie: I would rephrase my question. Could the Hon. Minister say if the leader of Aranaputa village is being paid under this line item?

Mr. Bulkan: The Chairman of the Aranaputa Village Council does receive a stipend under this line item.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6211- Expenses Specific to the Agency: This line item caters for the Tosaos and the meetings of the Regional Democratic Council (RDC). The Aranaputa NDC has been gazetted, but there have been no elections by the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) for that NDC. So, who is running the NDC?

Mr. Bulkan: To the best of my knowledge, there is an elected village council in Aranaputa. Despite the fact the elections were not conducted by GECOM, there is a democratically-elected council in Aranaputa.

Ms. Teixeira: Follow-up: Hon. Minister, Aranaputa has been declared a Neighbourhood Democratic Council by a gazette under on your hand, I believe. It is not an Amerindian Village Council. Therefore, it cannot have an internal village council election. It has to be done by the Local Government Act, under GECOM's management of a NDC election of the people in that area. It has to be done in the form of all the NDC's elections. So, I am asking you again: was this NDC appointed by you or is it an Interim Management Committee (IMC)? There cannot be an election by the village for an NDC. It must be conducted by GECOM. Please clarify.

Mr. Bulkan: I note the assertion, and the rather definitive assertion, but it is the case that many communities were neglected over an extended period of time and Aranaputa is one of those communities whose status was left in limbo. In pursuit of regularising the status of the village of Aranaputa, this Administration is providing... Yesterday, with the Ministry's programme, I had indicated that the sum of \$30 million is being provided to upgrade the sports ground in

Aranaputa and to build a pavilion. Sir, that Council is not an appointed council. There were internal elections for the community of Aranaputa, out of which a Council was elected. It has a Chairman, a Vice Chairman, a Treasurer and other officers. There is a payment of a stipend, under this Programme, for the Chairman and the Vice Chairman of the Aranaputa Village Council.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, the Minister may wish to do that and he has done it, by his own admission, but it is against the law. The Amerindian villages have a right to elect themselves under the Amerindian Act. Aranaputa is a village.

8.49 p.m.

However, it is not a titled village because it does not have titled land. But you, as the Minister of Communities, declared it a Neighbourhood Democratic Council (NDC), after the March, 2016 elections.

Therefore, GECOM has to hold elections in order to appoint the council for NDC. I am not particularly interested in your wishes; I am interested in the law being complied with. You have the power as a Minister, **[An. Hon. Member: What is the line item?]** I am on line item 6211.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Hon. Minister, therefore, if you wish to give money to Aranaputa, you could do it under your own budget, but you cannot do it as though it is an Amerindian Village Council when you have just declared it a NDC. By law, it cannot be both things. It cannot be an Amerindian Village Council and a NDC at the same time. It could be one or the other. You declared it an NDC. Therefore, it has to have elections, under the management of GECOM, to elect its council. The boundaries have to be done and the boundaries have not been put into the *Official Gazette*. That village is surrounded by titled villages. You have a right to make a playground or whatever you want in Aranaputa, but, under this line item 6211, the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman cannot get stipends. They are not Amerindian Toshaos and they are not the NDC's Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson.

Sir, I am asking you to rectify this. It is against the law.

Mr. Bulkan: The provision is not exclusive only to Toshaos or to executives of Indigenous...
[Interruption]

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

I have not completed my answer. The allocation and the provision of budgetary resources, under this line item, are not exclusive only to Toshaos or to Amerindian Village Councils. They are also utilised for other local government areas. It is the case, as I said, that the status of the community of Aranaputa, which does have titled boundaries and which has existed in limbo since the 1970's, has been accorded local government status, but would not enjoy elections administered by GECOM until the next scheduled Local Government Elections towards the end of 2018. In the meantime, there is nothing prohibiting the Central Government from providing resources to support the management and the village council in that community.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6211 – Expenses Specific to the Agency: In 2017, \$32.449 million was allocated in 2017, but \$37.449 million was expended. I am aware that Supplementary Financial Paper No.3 increased the supplementary finances for Region 9. However, in 2018, it would be reduced to \$35.449 million. This head covers the Regional Democratic Council's (RDC) meetings; it covers Market Management Committees (MMCs), the Toshaos' meetings and so on. I am not saying that you do not have a right to give Aranaputa money. Please understand me very clearly, Minister. But you cannot give to an NDC Chairman and Vice-Chairman who have not been elected by the people. **[Mr. Bulkan: That is your opinion.]** No. It is not my opinion, sir. With due respect, it is not my opinion. It is the law.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

It is improper for the Minister to give money, under line item 6211, to a Chairman and Vice-Chairman of an NDC that is not properly put into place as of today. It is improper and illegal and I am asking the Minister to correct it. He has a right to give the people of Aranaputa whatever he wants under another head. But not under line item 6211 as an NDC Chairman and Vice-Chairman because they are not constituted as provided for in the law.

Mr. Bulkan: I discern a question in relation to the unbudgeted expenses under that line item, the sum of approximately \$5 million in 2017. This was for emergency interventions which were

occasioned by the floods in mid-year in 2017. So, whilst the observation is being made that the 2018 provision is slightly less than the 2017 actual expenditure, it is the case that one cannot budget for an emergency intervention. That is what is responsible for the minor decrease in the 2018 allocations over the 2017 actual expenses.

Mr. Charlie: Under the same line item, could the Hon. Minister humbly layover the document to this Committee as it pertains to the expenses which make up the sum for this line item?

Mr. Bulkan: What could be provided is the allocation against certain activities and not the actual expenses. But it is the case that the Hon. Member is aware that the RDC is in possession of this information – from the Regional Chairman to all of the councillors.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6211 – Expenses Specific to the Agency: The Supplementary Financial Paper No.3, which was brought to this House before we went into recess, was for \$5 million, which is why there is a \$5 million increase, and it had nothing to do with the flood. The Legend states that it was to cater for payments, including that of stipends, for village captains, deputies and councillors for the remainder of the year.

You would recall that, regarding Region 9, in 2016, and when we were discussing the 2017 Budget right here, a year ago, we raised a point that the money under this programme was inadequate for the RDC meetings and for the payment of the Toshaos. So, we were pleased to support your request for \$5 million for 2017. However, what the Legend states and the reasons that this was approved in the House had nothing to do with the flood of Region 9. It had to do with a shortfall in funding in the RDC's budget for 2017. I just want to go on record correcting that.

Mr. Bulkan: If I may provide a clarification, the shortfall that the Hon. Member spoke about was occasioned as a result of the provisions for the payment of stipends to Toshaos and Vice-Toshaos. Those resources were used, on an emergency basis, to cater for the floods and, hence, it was not available to pay the salaries for Toshaos and Vice-Toshaos for the remainder of the year. That is the reason a supplementary paper was brought to this House and approval was given for the sum of approximately \$5 million to replenish the pot so as to allow for the provision of payments for the stipends to the Toshaos and Vice-Toshaos until the end of the year.

Ms. Teixeira: Again, line item 6211. Line item 6211 cannot be used to manage flood issues. This is specifically for stipends for councillors of RDCs and NDCs and councillors of the Amerindian Villages, including Toshaos. It has nothing to do with flood relief. In fact, you may recall that we brought a question to you about whether there was any provision for flood relief for Regions 7, 8 and 9 and if you were going to bring a supplementary request and you said “no.” This was before the recess in August. It is illegal to use the provisions under that line item for flood relief. You could have found flood relief money elsewhere and brought the supplementary, and you would have gotten 100% support by everybody. But you did not do that. So, you cannot dip into the kitty at line item 6211 to pay for flood relief and then try to bring back money and replace it for the Toshaos’ stipends. Financially, you cannot do it, sir. If your Regional Executive Officer (REO) is doing that, maybe you need to correct these irregularities that are taking place.

Mr. Bulkan: We are hearing what purports to be a lot of definitive pronouncements and I cannot guarantee the veracity of what has just been proffered. What is indisputable is that the expenses under this line item – 6211 – are largely discretionary on the part of the Regional Chairman. The use of provisions under this line item for the activities, which were stated, was fully supported, and, in fact, was by the request of the Regional Chairman, who, as I said, has total discretion over the use of provisions under this particular line item, 6211. The Regional Chairman was fully supportive of the provision of services to assist residence who suffered as a result of that flood.

Ms. Teixeira: This is a red herring being thrown into the discussion. There is no Regional Chairman who has discretion on 6211, just like Ministers have no discretion on a variety of subheads, except maybe “Other”, and that is really the REOs and Permanent Secretaries’ (PSs) domain. Ministers do not have a slush fund under any heading nor does any Regional Chairman. Therefore, Minister, you are throwing a red herring into the discussion. If the Regional Chairman approved a proposal like that, he was incorrect. Line item 6211 cannot be used in this manner. And whether you like it or not that I am sounding pretty confident, it is the way I know it.

We have been around a while and we know some of these rules and regulations because we have had to obey them because we have had different Ministers of Finance who made sure that we obeyed these rules. Therefore, I am very happy that Minister Jordan is here because Minister Jordan knows these rules, having been in the Ministry of Health all this time.

Line item 6211 is being inappropriately used for the payment of a Chairman and Vice-Chairman who have not been elected under the NDC and the Local Government Act and also used for flood relief, which is also not catered for under the line item. Money for flood relief could have been found in another heading and not this heading.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira. Hon. Minister, is there more you wish to add to this? *[Interruption]*

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: As the night gets later...

Ms. Teixeira: Sorry, Mr. Chairman. The Prime Minister was provoking me.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is there any comment you wish to make following the last exchange?

Mr. Bulkan: No, Sir. I think what we had was an opinion – a suggestion that the agency is engaging in something that is unlawful. It is a contention with which I disagree.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6312 – Subventions to Local Authorities: Is this the allocation for the Lethem Town Council or for another body? It is because there are really only the RDC and the Lethem Town Council and now there is the NDC of Aranaputa. Where is this \$12.055 million going?

Mr. Bulkan: The provision is for support to both the Lethem Town Council as well as to the Aranaputa Village Council. It is \$5 million for the latter.

9.04 p.m.

Programme: 791 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$186,252,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 792 – Agriculture – \$40,520,000

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6242- Maintenance of Buildings: Could the Hon. Member advise what the \$8 million is being used for in 2017 and what the \$8 million would be used for in 2018?

Mr. Bulkan: The details pertaining to the 2017 allocation is being persecuted at the time when the 2017 Budget was being examined in the Committee of Supply. In 2018, the allocation of \$8 million would be to cater for the maintenance of living quarters and office of the Annai Sub-District.

Ms. Teixeira: There is a reason Budgets have several years anti the one we are dealing with and that is because we need transparency and accountability, sir. We are asking what is being done in 2017. It is just like you have been asked of for other regions and we were told that some projects have not started, contracts have just been given out and projects have not been completed. This is just a general question. Maybe, you are tired after answering questions for nine regions. You have my sympathy. I am trying not to be too hard on you, but what is the \$8 million being spent on in 2017 under Programme 792 – Agriculture? Is it being spent on the Agriculture Office in the Annai Sub-District?

Mr. Bulkan: Subject to correction, I am advised that the 2017 allocation was utilised for the maintenance of living quarters at St Ignatius and at Sand Creek.

Programme: 792 – Agriculture – \$40,520,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 793 - Public Infrastructure - \$189,779,000

Mr. Charlie: Line item 6242- Maintenance of Buildings: The budgetary allocation for 2018 is \$33 million. Could the Hon. Minister say if any maintenance work would be done on the Regional Guest House in Lethem?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer is no.

Mr. Charlie: I am very disappointed that this particular... [Hon. Members: Ask the question] I am coming to the question. This building is in dire need of maintenance and we see the Ministers using places of accommodation, except for the Regional Guest House. Could the Minister have this rectified so that the Regional Guest House can be effective since its purpose is to accommodate Government Ministers and other functionaries?

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6242- Maintenance of Buildings: Is the Hon. Minister aware that the Regional Guest House is a source of revenue for the RDC? Because of its state over the last three years and because no money has been put into it, it is deteriorating. Is there any consideration by the Government to provide supplementary funds to maintain it and repair it so it can be rented out, as it was before, to provide a source of revenue for the RDC? Could you advise if you would consider that?

Mr. Bulkan: It is not contemplated that any provision would be made available in 2018 for that particular facility.

Ms. Teixeira: I was asking the Minister of Government if they would consider a supplementary in 2018 to put this building up to a position where it could be rented, as it was before, as a source of revenue. I saw the RDO mention something but I am asking you as the Minister responsible. Would you be able to consider that?

Mr. Bulkan: I guess another way in which that question could be phrased is whether I am encouraging a scenario where the State is competing with the private sector for the provision of accommodation and that could be answered in different ways. But, I repeat: it is not currently contemplated that the allocation under this line item would allow for any rehabilitation to the Regional Guest House in Lethem. Not at this time.

Ms. Teixeira: My request for you to consider was denied. I just asked you to consider. I did not ask you to commit. That is all I asked for and you have turned me down. **[Mr. Bulkan: I**

did not.] However, you have also given me an answer that I am quite shocked to hear. It is that you do not want the Regional Guest House to compete with the private sector.

[Mr. Bulkan: I did not say that.] You did. **[Mr. Bulkan: I said it could be phrased as such].**

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Therefore, you have given me the answer that I did not expect. It is now recognised that the hotels in Lethem must not be in competition with the Regional Guest House which offers clean and safe facilities for other people who may not be able to go to a hotel but who may be able to go to a Regional Guest House. Thank you, sir.

I would now go to line item 6251- Maintenance of Roads: Could you identify which roads have been identified to be done in 2018? The allocation is \$62 million. Could you advise us on which roads have been designated to be maintained in 2018?

Mr. Bulkan: It is six stretches of roadway, each one kilometer long and the locations are in St Ignatius; farm to market road in Parishara, Mocomoco Settlement, Shea, Turupanau, Quarry and Kwatamang. Those six locations have budgeted sums of approximately \$10 million each and there is a contingency of \$2 million.

Programme: 793- Public Infrastructure -\$189,789,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 794- Education Delivery- \$1,049,437,000

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6302- Training (including Scholarships): For 2017, \$12.5 million was allocated and \$8.7 million was spent. Could you say why the remainder of the money was not spent? The same amount, \$12.5 million, has been budgeted for 2018. Could you advise what would be the training and who would be the beneficiaries of this \$12.5 million in 2018?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that all of the anticipated activities were conducted even though the revised expenditure is less than the budgeted sum.

Ms. Teixeira: That does put us in a bit of a quandary, does it not Minister? We go with the figures to guide us on the questioning. You are saying that \$8.75 million covered all the programmes that were devised for 2017. So, money was saved, in other words. The region did not spend \$12.5 million but it completed the programme at a cost of \$8.75 million. Is that so? That is my interpretation of what you said. You would probably say that I am wrong. My second part of the question is: what is planned for 2018 for \$12.5 million?

Mr. Bulkan: I did not use the word 'savings'.

Ms. Teixeira: I said it.

Mr. Bulkan: That is correct. What I did say was that I am advised that all of the activities were conducted and the 2018 provision does not contemplate any additional activities beyond what were provided for in 2017.

Ms. Teixeira: My Comrade really needs a break. The Minister needs a break. The \$12.5 million is for training. I am trying to get what is allocated, under this head, for the people of Region 9. You are telling me what was done in 2017 and that the money would be spent in 2018, which is very nice. What is the programme to spend \$12.5 million under line item 6302?

Mr. Bulkan: The activities are to conduct Mathematics and Science workshops for Primary school teachers and workshop for preparing School Improvement Plan (SIP) work plan for school teachers. Those two activities would be conducted by the Department of Education. There would be training for secretarial staff by the Department of Public Service, training of clerical staff by the RDC, workshop for parents, which would be conducted by the Department of Education and workshop for teachers and elements of Children Friendly Schools (CFS), training for cooks at dormitories, provision for the Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics (STEAM) Fair...

9.19 p.m.

Mathematics, Science and Social Studies workshops; secondary schools Mathematics development initiative; cluster meetings for Heads Of Departments (HODs); orientation for newly appointed Head Masters and Head Mistresses (HMs), Deputy Head Masters and Deputy Head Mistresses (DHMs), Senior Masters and Mistresses (SMs); courses for teachers continuous professional development; facilitate workshops in the creation of teaching and learning aids to boost Literacy and Numeracy; training in curriculum delivery for master trainers; facilitate visits by the Child Protection Agency (CPA) personnel; cluster head teachers meetings and attending Parent Teacher/Friends Association (PTFA), meetings *et cetera*.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6111 - Administrative: I noticed that Region 9 seems to have had a drop in employment for Agriculture, Public Infrastructure and now Education Delivery. There are 43 people short and most critically at the Administrative level. You had 39 employees in 2017 and you have dropped to 32. Could you explain why there is a decline under line item 6111, Administrative, Education Delivery under Programme 794?

Mr. Bulkan: The reduced staffing under line item 6111, Administrative, is as a result of the retirement of five head teachers and the promotion of two graduate head teachers from the region.

Mr. Bharrat: Line item 6133 - Benefits and Allowances: Based on the staffing details, there is a decrease of 43 staff members; however, there is also an increase of \$42,673,000 under this line item. Could the Hon. Minister say who would be the beneficiaries under line item 6133, Benefits and Allowances?

Mr. Bulkan: It is the provision for the payment of benefits and allowances for the 430 employees. This is the total sum of employees minus the number of contracted employees.

Mr. Charlie: Line item 6291 - National and Other Events: I have seen a decrease in the spending for 2017. The budgetary allocation was \$5,500,000 but the revised sum for 2017 shows the spending of \$1,990,000. Could the Hon. Minister explain why this is so and if the budgetary allocation for 2018 would be adequate?

Mr. Bulkan: The second part of the question; the anticipation is that the budgetary allocation of \$5,500,000 would be sufficient for the specific activities under National and Other Events in 2018. It is noted that the revised expenditure in 2017 was indeed lower than the budgeted sum.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6242 - Maintenance of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister say which educational buildings will be listed? If the list is very long, would the Minister prefer to lay it over for the House? The sum budgeted in 2017 was \$95,000,000 and we want to know what was completed. There is \$110,000,000 budgeted for 2018 so if it is not a very long list then I have no difficulty listening.

Mr. Bulkan: For the 2018 allocations, there are 12 activities but I think the Hon. Member would prefer to receive this information in writing. That would be more appropriate.

Programme: 794 - Education Delivery - \$1,049,437,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 795 - Health Services - \$459,043,000

Dr. Mahadeo: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: In 2017 there were 29 contracted employees and in 2018 there are 10. The difference between the revised sum for 2017 and budgeted sum for 2018 is \$3,758,000. Minister, am I to understand that the 19 persons who have been taken off from contracted employees would have gotten \$3,758,000 for the year?

Mr. Bulkan: No, that would not be the case, because these transfers would have taken effect during the course of 2017; some adjustments would have been made and reflected in the 2017 figures. Therefore, the adjustments to be made in 2018 are not for all 19 employees who would have been removed to the fixed establishment. Earlier in the day, the explanation was offered that these transfers had started to take effect during the course of 2017 and all is not from the 1st January, 2018.

Ms. Teixeira: Minister, you repeated throughout this issue about 2017, saying that your transition and regularisation has taken place *et cetera* and therefore it is reflected in 2018. Mr. Chairman, we depend on the books to be relatively up to date; these books are created and printed approximately one week before we have the Budget presentation. These figures are crunched by the Ministry of Finance in August/September, therefore the ministries and regions are expected to provide accurate information as of the cut-off date set by the Ministry of Finance in its circular. Telling us that this had taken place in 2017, and that what we are seeing for 2017 is not really 2017, because it has already been going on, is not appropriate for us who are trying to analyse the Budget. I do not accept that, at the end of October or whenever these books were printed, the 2017 Staff Details could not accurately reflect what was under staff for 2017 for this Region along with all the others that you have been answering for in this manner.

There is no excuse for the fact that, every time we are looking at the staff details, we are told that there were changes done during 2017 and now this will be regularised in 2018. It is not acceptable. There was enough time before the cut-off by the Ministry of Finance to get accurate data. I am not blaming you; I am not saying you are doing anything. The regions, the ministries or whoever needs to be advised because we are getting the same answers from the ministries. Minister Jordan, could you keep an eye on this issue? I know you were not listening to me, but could you please keep an eye and let us have a proper discussion. Half of the questions today could have been knocked out if we had the real figures for staffing at 2017. And we may have gone home already if they had given us the accurate figures.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, once again we are hearing about the question of blame. I do not think there is a need for any blame to be apportioned. **[Ms. Teixeira:** I am not blaming you.]

May I? If we look at the figures we will see that the expenditure in 2017 has already been reduced; it was revised downwards. So in the case here it is a reduced spending of

over \$7,000,000. The reductions have already started to take place in 2017 and they are reflected here in the expenditure. The suggestion that these figures are not accurate does not necessarily hold water. There is a further reduction for 2018 and, as I have been saying earlier, some of these reductions have taken place already in 2017 and will continue. Not all of it applies to 2018. I think that is a reasonable explanation.

Dr. Mahadeo: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: My understanding from talking to my colleague who is living in the region is that there were severe shortages. We see an increase of \$10,000,000 and we expect to have other facilities and services that will be offered. I would like to know if the Minister considers \$110,000,000 to be adequate for 2018. In addition to that, I would like to know if the Minister could provide for line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships), what training would be provided? Could that be laid over Minister?

For line item 6284, Other, there is an increase of \$519,000 in the budgeted sum from the revised version, could the Minister justify that?

Mr. Bulkan: Line item 6284 - Other: This caters for services as the need arises, for example, the temporary replacement of staff proceeding on annual leave and also for the transport of corpses from Boa Vista, Brazil and Georgetown. There were unbudgeted expenses in 2018 that resulted in the increased expenditure of \$519,000. The request is for the details pertaining to line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships) to be laid over.

I am advised that the Hon. Member has possibly been misled by his colleague who said that there were “severe shortages” of drugs in the region. That is not a contention that could be accepted at this stage.

9.34 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: I would allow one other question.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: This increase of \$1 million that has been catered for, is it to allow for a change of policy so that the Medics and health workers would not have to pay out of their own pockets to go and collect the drugs and medical supplies from Lethem?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that there is no such policy that provides for Medics and health workers to pay out of their pockets to uplift drugs and medical supplies.

Programme: 795 – Health Services - \$459,043 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 791 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$48,015,000

Mr. Charlie: Project code 1204900 – Buildings – Administration: The budgetary allocation for 2018 is \$44,715,000 for the construction of buildings, quarters and the payment of retention. Could the Hon. Minister say which buildings would be constructed, how many quarters would be constructed and what percentage of retention would be paid under this project code?

Mr. Bulkan: The retention payment is in the sum of \$1,715,000 which was for the project for the extension of the regional administration building at Lethem. The construction and rehabilitation activities are the construction of a regional administration annexe at Lethem at a budgeted sum of \$20 million; rehabilitation of the government building R5 in Lethem, at a budgeted sum of \$11,500,000; and rehabilitation of government building R6 in Lethem, for a similar sum of \$11,500,000.

Programme: 791 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$48,015,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 792 - Agriculture - \$43,350,000

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Project code 1701400 – Agricultural Development: I noticed that there is almost or more than 100% increase from 2017 to 2018. Could the Hon. Minister lay over the projects that would be funded by this amount?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, the observation is correct. The 2018 budgetary allocation is more than 100% increase over 2017. It caters for 14 activities. The request for this information to be provided in writing is noted and would be complied with.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Follow-up: Hon. Minister is there a reason why there is a more significant investment in agricultural development in Region 9 as opposed to Region 8?

Mr. Bulkan: We are examining here the budgetary allocation of \$43,350,000 to provide for agricultural initiatives in several locations across the Rupununi. I think that it might be invidious to make a comparison with another region. What we have here is a very aggressive agricultural development programme for which significant budgetary resources are being provided.

Programme: 792 – Agriculture - \$43,350,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 793 – Public Infrastructure - \$139,708,000

Mr. Bharrat: Project code 1401300 – Roads: Could the Hon. Minister say whether Tabatinga Housing Scheme would benefit from this allocation?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer is no.

Mr. Charlie: Project code 1100900 – Bridges: The budgetary allocation for 2018 is \$32,708,000 for the completion and construction of bridges. Could the Hon. Minister say which bridge or bridges have to be completed, what percentage has been completed to date and how many bridges are projected to be constructed?

Mr. Bulkan: It is stated in the capital profile that the completion of the bridge is at Rupanau at a budgeted sum of \$2,726,000. A bridge would be constructed at Achimeriwau at a budgeted sum of \$16 million and a bridge at Marabunta Creek at a budgeted sum \$13,981,000.

Programme: 793 – Public Infrastructure - \$139,708,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 794 – Education Delivery - \$111,549,000

Mr. Charlie: Project code 1204700 – Buildings - Education: I have observed that there was under spending of \$10 million in 2017. We have an increase in the budgetary allocation for 2018. Could the Hon. Minister say if the increase in 2018 includes the completion of Arapaima

Nursery School, Paipang Nursery School, Bashaidrun Nursery School and the five apartment Living Quarters for Teachers in Sand Creek?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer is yes.

Programme: 794 – Education Delivery - \$111,549,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 795 – Health Services - \$104,652,000

Dr. Mahadeo: Project code 1204800 – Buildings – Health: The status of this item is ongoing. We have \$56,636,000 for payment of retention, extension of the nurses' hostel and construction of maternity waiting home and extension of health post. Could the Hon. Minister say, for the projects that are on-going, how far are the projects and do we expect them to be completed by this year?

Mr. Bulkan: For the retention payment, I am advised that the project is about 95% completed. Full completion is expected before the end of the year. The provision sum for the retention is \$1,635,000.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 2402300 – Land and Water Transport: Fifteen million dollars was assigned for the purchase of an ambulance. Could the Minister advise us if this ambulance is only for use in the Lethem environs or if it would be used externally to Lethem, that is, the savannahs? If so, would it be properly equipped with four-wheel drive *et cetera*, so that it could manage the terrain?

9.49 p.m.

Project code 2505300 - Furniture and Equipment – Health – \$33,016,000: Would the region be acquiring these by its own public tender or would it be warranted to the Ministry of Public Health to procure for the region? Could you advice which system would be used?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that, with regards to the acquisition of the ambulance, the provision is to allow for an all-terrain ambulance that would be able to traverse the savannahs. It would be able to be used not only in the Lethem area but as far as Aishalton. This is why the allocation is the healthy sum of \$15 million for an ambulance.

The method of procurement for the equipment would be done *via* the region. But, of course, the budgeted sum is above what would be allowed by the regional tender board and awards would have to be done *via* the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB). The procurement process would be the responsibility of the region.

Dr. Mahadeo: Minister back to project code 1204800; you said a payment of retention would be completed by this month end. What about the nurses' hostel, maturity waiting home and health post? Would they be completed in the year 2018?

Mr. Bulkan: The expectation is that these three facilities would be fully completed in 2018. It is for the respective sums of \$20 million, \$14 million, and \$10.5 million by two, for the four buildings; and the expectation is that these four buildings would be completed in 2018.

Dr. Mahadeo: Could the Hon. Minister tell us what is the status of these four buildings now because the project is on-going?

Mr. Bulkan: No, I think the legend may be subject to a different interpretation; it speaks of extensions and it is not that a project has started. It is that there is an extension to the existing facility. That would apply in the case of the nurses' hostel at Lethem and the health post at Shulinab and Maruranau; it is an extension of the buildings that are currently there. In the case of the maturity waiting home at Annai, that is a totally new construction.

Dr. Mahadeo: But in the legend the status is "On-going".

Mr. Bulkan: Could the Hon. Member direct me, I cannot locate where it refers to "On-going"?

Dr. Mahadeo: Volume III.

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, Volume III, profile 368.

Dr. Mahadeo: Yes, number five states, "Status, On-going".

Mr. Bulkan: The "on-going" refers to the budgetary allocations in 2017, but not for those particular activities. These are all new construction activities; the extension as well as the construction of the waiting home.

Programme 795 – Health Services – \$104,652,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, this completes our efforts for today. Tomorrow we commence examining the Estimates that is due for the fourth day. Thank you very much for the effort in getting us to complete the third day on the third day.

Assembly resumed

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Speaker: I will invite the Vice President and Minister of Foreign Affairs to move the adjournment.

Vice President and Minister of Foreign Affairs [Mr. Greenidge]: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. I wish to recommend that this honourable House be adjourned to tomorrow the 14th December, 2017 at 10.00 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: The House stands adjourned until Thursday the 14th December, 2017 at 10.00 a.m.

Adjourned according at 9.55 p.m.