

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2012) OF THE TENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

15TH Sitting

Friday, 20TH April, 2012

Assembly convened at 2.05 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Official opening of the wheelchair ramp

Mr. Speaker: We did announce yesterday that the wheelchair ramp would be opened. That was successfully done at 1.30 p.m. this afternoon. Thank you to all Members of Parliament, Minister Webster and Mrs. Catherine Hughes for speaking and other Members of staff for being present.

Clarification to references made in Mrs. Backer's speech

Mr. Speaker: By way of announcement, because I had given a public commitment, and it is with reference to a speech given by Mrs. Backer. Hon. Member and Minister Mrs. Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett had intimated that Mrs. Backer speech had contained references that may have raised issues of ethnicity. I did, with the benefit of the Hansard Department, obtain a copy of that speech. I have read it and I have found three references to issues of an ethnic nature, but I do not believe that any negative connotation was meant necessarily by Mrs. Backer. I believe that she was quoting from published works and statements by Dr. Tyrone Ferguson and Dr. Mark Kirton.

I, therefore, do not believe that there is any matter of any great moment and the Minister was entitled to her opinion, but, I believe, Mrs. Backer was stating the opinion of others.

An objective view regarding Minister of Health's budget

Mr. Speaker: The other matter of which I wish to speak to is a matter raised last evening by the Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge, regarding Estimates contained in the Ministry of Health's budget and records pertaining to the supplementary provisions which were denied by this House. I have had the cause to speak with a number of persons, including one person outside of Guyana to ensure that I had an objective view. I am satisfied Hon. Members that, as the Hon. Minister stated, it is a fact that there was expenditure, whether or not this National Assembly has approved that expenditure. It is a fact. As the Speaker, I have no authority to interfere with or to change anything in that record, because it is not a record generated by this House. What the Minister may wish to consider, or the House may wish to consider, advising the Minister, is that there be an asterisk, perhaps with a little note to state "subject to approval". But there is nothing which states that it cannot or should not have been included. Those are my short announcements; pronouncements for this afternoon.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTION

BUDGET SPEECH 2012 - MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2012

“WHEREAS the Constitution of Guyana requires that Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure 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 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of Guyana for the financial year 2012 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2012-03-30;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2012, of a total sum of **one hundred and seventy nine billion, six hundred and ninety six million, five hundred and forty six thousand dollar (\$179,696,546,000), excluding thirteen billion, and eighty four million, seven hundred and thirty five thousand dollars (\$13,084,735,000)** which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the undermentioned schedule, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to make further provision in respect of finance.” [*Minister of Finance*]

Mr. Speaker: Before we begin the considerations of the Estimates, I do not know if I am the only one that for some reason... I think Minister Benn drew it to my attention last night, that the air in the House seems to have change over the days. It seems very hot and clammy. I do not know whether the air conditioning units are functioning at an optimum, or whether or not the filters need to be cleaned, but we will put the fans on. I believe that, as what was done last evening, we may open the windows to let some fresh air in and some of the air in here out. But I have been noticing, for the last two or three days, that something did not feel right, indeed. It is something that we apologise for, if there is any inconvenience. This is something that we will have to have the technicians to check on.

The Assembly would now resolve itself into Committee of Supply to begin the considerations of the Estimates of Expenditure for the year 2012.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply

In Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: We are in Committee of Supply and to commence the afternoon’s proceedings we have today the Ministry of Public Works, the Ministry of Agriculture, those two should take us to our 5 o’ clock break, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, a new Ministry, from 6.00 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. and the Public Service Ministry from 7.30 to 9.00 p.m. I am hoping that we will be far more expeditious that we were over the last two days and that we will get

through these rather quickly. It is a Friday and I am sure that many of you would wish to go to your homes. Some of you have come from out of town and wish an opportunity, perhaps, to return to your homes. With that said, I now proceed in accordance with the Committee's resolution schedule.

Agency: 31 Ministry of Public Works

Current Expenditure

Programme: 311 - Ministry Administration - \$683,908,000

Mr. Harmon: Line item 6114 - Clerical and Office Support: Would the Hon. Minister explain the reason why Clerical and Office Support staff would be reduced by more than twenty-five per cent in 2012?

Minister of Public Works [Mr. Benn]: The reduction is due to persons being removed from statutory to contracted employees.

Mr. Harmon: A follow-up. In the staffing details, the contracted employees, I see an increase by one, from 2011 to 2012. Could the Hon. Minister explain?

Mr. Benn: This is as a result of attrition due to people leaving or retiring from the Ministry.

Mr. Harmon: Could the Hon. Minister explain, with a staff of twenty-four in 2011 and a budgeted allocation of \$11,746,000, why with a reduced staff to seventeen the figures remain the same?

Mr. Benn: This is as a result of increases in emoluments - the eight per cent increase.

Mr. Harmon: Mr. Chairman, are you taking pages 132 and 133 together or are you taking page 132 and then page 133?

Mr. Chairman: You can go to pages 132 and 133.

Mr. Harmon: I go to page 133, line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. Could the Hon. Minister provide this Committee with the details of the Subsidies and Contribution to Local Organisation, having regards to the fact that in 2010 subsidies

amounted to \$50 million, in 2011 subsidies amounted to \$50 million and in 2012 the budgeted allocation is \$500 million? Could the Hon. Minister please explain?

Mr. Benn: This is as a result of allowances being made for a subsidy for the Transport and Harbours Department with respect to fuel in an amount of \$500 million.

Deputy Speaker [Mrs. Backer]: If we can go back to line item 6115 – Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled - in answer to a question about line item 6114 - Clerical and Other Support Staff - the Hon. Minister explained that the reason why the figure was the same, although there was a reduction in staff, was due to increases in wages. Could the Hon. Minister, looking now at line Item 6115 - Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled - in which it was the same last year and it is same that is budgeting for and there is an increase of two members, say why for this year it did not reflect an increase to take care of the increase in salaries which was just spoken about? Or is it that the “Semi-skilled Operatives and Unskilled” will benefit from no increase?

Mr. Benn: I repeat that it is a reflection of the change in staff.

Mrs. Backer: I do not think the Hon. Minister is with me. Line item 6115 - Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled - the revised budget for last year was \$6.123 million. At that line item, there is a proposed increase in staff by two, yet the figure for this year is identical to last year. His explanation given for the one before is that although there was a reduction the increase is because of, somebody muttered over there, an eight per cent – but it is an increased. Why is there not an increase reflected in that figure?

Mr. Benn: Well, I am not sure that an increase in a figure necessarily has to be reflected. The categories of which persons are employed are what are important.

Mrs. Backer: It is the last question, Mr. Chairman. I do not think I will get an answer. “Clerical and Office Support:” Are you saying Hon. Minister, Mr. Benn, that those fourteen people who the Ministry intends to employ this year will get no increase in salary?

Mr. Benn: I did not say that.

Mrs. Backer: No. I am asking you. Are you saying that?

Mr. Benn: I did not say it.

Mrs. Backer: Will they get an increase then? Could you answer that?

Mr. Benn: Obviously, like every other category of Government's employees, increases are paid.

Mrs. Backer: Will that particular category, Minister Benn, ...?

Mr. Benn: Every category.

Mrs. Backer: Minister Benn, I am asking you specifically. We are going line by line.

Mr. Benn: I have said, Mr. Chairman, it relates to what levels persons are employed at and certainly every person in the Government services will get increases. Other than that, we will be carrying out some type of discriminatory policy.

Mr. Ramjattan: It is a follow-up on a previous question asked in relation to the \$500 million. It is a fuel subsidy being projected, for what? Is it for the roll-on roll-off ferry that is there? What specifically is it going towards?

Mr. Benn: It is fuel subsidies for all of the vessels. The Ministry has always made provisions for fuel, and it is being made for all vessels.

Mr. Ramjattan: How much is being made for the roll-on roll-off ferries which have now come from China?

Mr. Benn: It is an amount of \$112.5 million. It is \$125 million, sorry

Mrs. Lawrence: To the Hon. Minister, a follow-up, same line item 6321- Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Could the Minister tell us how many vessels he catered for using the \$50 million that was allocated both for 2010 and 2011?

Mr. Benn: There are eight vessels, Mr. Chairman.

Mrs. Lawrence: Follow-up, Mr. Chairman. Could the Hon. Minister then now tell us how many more vessels will be adding to the fleet?

Mr. Benn: As the vessels get older they use more fuel. The Ministry is intended not to utilise continuously them because of the advent of the two new vessels. That will reduce the operation

hours on the two which are basically replaced. I do not want to speak about a fleet addition. The number of operational vessels remains the same, which is eight in number.

Mrs. Lawrence: Follow-up to the Hon. Minister.

Mr. Minister, I am a little slow and not so good as you, so I am asking you to have some patience with me. You just said that there are eight, in number of vehicles, which are in use...

Mr. Benn: It is eight, in the number of vessels.

Mrs. Lawrence: It is vessels.

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, it is operational vessels.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, could you kindly protect me? Look at my size to the Minister.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead Hon. Member.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Minister, I would ask that you allow me to ask the question. Eight vessels were there and \$50 million was being used for two years, prior to now. You, to my understanding, just indicated that this year 2012 all eight vessels will not be used because of their age. I am asking, whether I am clear on that, that those would not be used. If those are not being used, Sir, and you proposed to bring two new vessels on board at \$125 million. That would be \$250 million. The question is, Sir, why then have you asked for an allocation of this large amount?

Mr. Benn: I think I did say that there were going to be eight operational vessels. I did not talk about the entire fleet. I said that the Ministry was making the provision which relates to all of those vessels. There has been a longer travel time for all of the vessels since they have been moved over to the Essequibo passage. This requires much more fuel than they would have if they were still on the Berbice passage and that is basically the fundamental reason why there is the increase. There have been, in the past, some cross subsidies from the Maritime Administration Department (MARAD) to the Transport and Harbours Department with respect to its fuel needs. There are some changes in the MARAD revenues, which has made it necessary for some of this funding to be taken over from central Government.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, through you, Mr. Chairman, line item 6281- Security Services: We see that last year \$41.48 million was budgeted for, but the revised is \$19.5 million, a decrease of just over one hundred per cent. Could the Hon. Minister explain how that came about? Is it that some of our buildings were not...? We are still on pages 132 and 133. This would be on page 133.

Mr. Benn: In the first instance, there were some shortages of guard services, the number of persons being provided, and there was also an increase in amount of locations required. That is the reason for the difference.

Mrs. Backer: Could the Hon. Minister please indicate which locations were scheduled at the time of the budget, in 2011, to be provided with guard service but came off of the list for whatever reasons?

Mr. Benn: The issue is the inadequate number of guards being provided.

Mrs. Backer: You also said that it was because of a reduced amount of places they had to guard.

Mr. Benn: No. I think I said that there are some locations which were increased and there were not coverage for them, such as the railway embankment.

Mrs. Backer: Could I respectfully ask the Hon. Minister which guard service provided security services in 2011, for the Ministry?

Mr. Benn: They were the United Associated Security and Domestic Security (UASDS) and the Special Constabulary.

Mrs. Backer: What is that please, Minister?

Mr. Benn: It is United Associated Security and Domestic Security. Also there was the Special Constabulary.

Mrs. Backer: Could you indicate...?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Deputy Speaker, the question should come through the Chair.

Mrs. Backer: Yes. It is through you, Sir. It is much easier to look at you, actually. It is because of the angle I am at. I do not know why people find that funny. Sir, through you, could the Hon. Minister indicate which guard service will be providing service this year?

Mr. Benn: There is a Strategic Action Security Service which services were procured through public procurement tendering process, which will provide much of the services this year.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, you said much of the service. Could you say who will be providing the other?

Mr. Benn: It is the Special Constabulary.

Mr. Ramjattan: In view of the fact that the subsidies will be \$500 million this year. That is line item 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants. Could I ask the question, the other expenses in relation to fuel under this Agency 31...? There is a subsidy of \$500 million, what is generally the fuel cost? Could we have that? Or is that question not allowed to be answered?

Mr. Benn: Is it for the Transport and Harbours Department?

Mr. Ramjattan: Yes. It is for the Transport and Harbours Department. Is it that every aspect for fuel of the Transport and Harbours Department is subsidised?

Mr. Benn: It is not every aspect. The Transport and Harbours Department, as much as it can, pays out of its current revenue every week for fuel. So it pays for a portion of the fuel. I cannot give the figure offhand, but it is probably about twenty to twenty-five per cent of the fuel cost.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, to the Hon. Minister, line item 6321- Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisation: As he correctly stated, it is only going to Transport and Harbours Department. We have given it \$50 million over the years and now we are giving it \$500 million. Could the Hon. Minister tell this House when was the last audited report for this organisation laid in the National Assembly and what was the year?

Mr. Benn: I am advised that the last audited statement was for the year 2003.

Mrs. Backer: We did not hear that.

Mr. Benn: It was for the year 2003.

Mrs. Lawrence: I am quite certain that the Minister is concerned with the present state of affair of those reports. So I am asking the Minister if he can kindly inform the House what provisions are being made to ensure that this entity brings its accounts up to date and lays its reports, especially the back dated reports, in this House in this year. Thank you.

Mr. Benn: The final audits are in progress, at the moment, and certainly they can be laid in the House this year.

Mrs. Lawrence: A follow-up. Could the Hon. Minister kindly tell us the audits, which are in progress, are for what years?

Mr. Benn: The audits which are in progress now are for the years 2004 to 2010.

Programme: 311 – Ministry Administration - \$683,908,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 311 - Ministry Administration – \$ 19,500,000

Mr. Morian: Could the Hon. Minister, under project 1201800 - Government Buildings - state which buildings are to be rehabilitated?

Mr. Benn: The buildings, which are being considered for rehabilitation, are the Prime Minister's Office, Wright's Lane, Kingston, the residence of the Prime Minister and the De Winkle building which is the building mainly housing the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development and the Public Service Commission.

Mrs. Lawrence: Project 2507200 - Furnishings – Government Quarters: Could the Hon. Minister tell this House which office those item will be for?

Mr. Benn: Those items are for the Ministry of Public Works, largely in replacement of the Administrative Office furniture.

Programme: 311 – Ministry Administration - \$19,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

2.35 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: I just wish to announce that as per commitment given last evening, the Hon. Minister of Amerindian Affairs has supplied to the Clerk's Office and to me, as Speaker, a bundle of documents which she undertook to present to Hon. Member Trotman and other Members who requested them. So if you do not have them already they will be provided to you in due course. Thank you very much Hon. Minister.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 312 – Public Works - \$820,953,000

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, through you. I am looking at line item 6116 – Contracted Employees. We see a figure of twelve for this year. Hon. Minister, could you indicate to us what positions those twelve contracted workers will hold, or presently hold?

Mr. Benn: Those contracted employees relate to a Chief Electrical Inspector, six Engineers, two Electrical Technicians, two Office Assistants and a Tool Room Attendant.

Mrs. Backer: Through you, Mr. Chairman. I am looking now... Well, there is nobody there for this year, at all, but let me rephrase it, because I know you will say that there is nothing there, I cannot ask. Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: What efforts have been made in terms of the Minister contracting staff to actually fill the technical offices that his Ministry requires to be run at its optimum? If you bear with me Hon. Member and look at page 516, which has the list of pensionable post, under the "Public Works", we see that ideally there should be a Chief Sea and River Defence Officer and a Chief Works Officer - that is under administrative. Does the Ministry have anyone on its contracted staff who carries out either or both of those functions?

Mr. Benn: The Chief Works Officer is to my right, the Chief Sea and River Defence Officer is over one to my left. Those positions are filled under the Works Services Group.

Mrs. Lawrence: Line item 6252 – Maintenance of Bridges: Would the Hon. Minister tell us how many bridges his Ministry intends to do maintenance work on?

Mr. Benn: With respect to the number of bridges, well, I cannot give the full number, but I will say that it is all the bridges from Vlissengen Road all along Mandela Avenue, maintenance; it is

all the bridges on the East Coast Demerara Public Road, under Lot 2, from Ogle to Buxton; it is all the bridges in need of repairs, under Lot 3, on the East Bank Demerara Public Road, the Linden/Soesdyke Highway, again the Sheriff Street/Mandela Avenue and the West Coast Demerara Public Road. Specifically, with respect to work along the embankment, a bridge, which is called the 29th Bridge, at Liliendaal, will be repaired and two bridges, going on to Moleson Creek, on the Corentyne Coast Road. There is also a bridge to be done at Log Wood on the East Coast Demerara, specifically, and repairs to bridges near the Mahaica Market. There is also repairs to be done to a deteriorated reinforced bridge deck on Vlissengen Road/Cemetery Road; repairs to a timber bridges and rails along the access road to Mocha-Arcadia, bridges themselves. There will also be repairs to culverts. There will be minor bridges and repairs which will also be done under maintenance.

Mrs. Lawrence: Follow-up. Would the Hon. Minister tell us how much of this allocation will go towards to the 29th Bridge on the railway embankment?

Mr. Benn: There is \$9 million assigned for this activity. This work will actually be done by the officials of the Demerara Harbour Bridge because many of the bridges along the railway embankment are what is called Acrow panel bridges, which is similar to the bridge type and construction for the Demerara Harbour Bridge. The Ministry has given the Demerara Harbour Bridge the work to do all those Acrow panel bridges, all the way to Moleson Creek.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, just for my own edification, what obtains to the bridges on the Lethem trail because the rainy season is coming again?

Mr. Benn: Those bridges are under capital project, or also under Hinterland roads, and those bridges have been improved, I think, to forty tons gross vehicle weight over the last two years.

Mr. Ramjattan: Line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads: I notice that there is a big increase there. How much of that is assigned for the Campbellville area - more directly Delph Street?

Mr. Benn: I do not know if I would want to stand up and to respond to a vested interest question.

Mr. Chairman: But I think, in so far, it is the general question for Campbellville. Is there anything for Campbellville?

Mr. Benn: The Ministry main work relates to declared public roads and the access roads to the declared public roads. The Ministry does work under miscellaneous roads in the villages, outside an amount which it gets approval for and there is also an Urban Roads Programme in which the Ministry will rank, prioritise and determine which roads it will do in the various areas. So we will arrive at the Hon. Member's road in due course.

Ms. Selman: Line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads: Could the Hon. Minister tell this National Assembly whether the main roads in Sections “A” to “F” Sophia have been identified for rehabilitation use in this provision?

Mr. Chairman: Which roads in Sophia? Is it Section F?

Ms. Selman: It is Sections A to F, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: It will be all the roads in those sections.

Mr. Benn: Sophia is under the Central Housing and Planning Authority (CH&PA). I note there are interventions being made, variously, under the Community Roads Improvement Project (CRIP). The Ministry has intervened in Sophia, I think, for two of the main access roads, last year, and for this year it has scheduled, under the Urban Roads Programme, for “B” Field, Sophia, an amount of \$33 million.

Mrs. Lawrence: Would the Hon. Minister indicate whether, under line item 6251, any moneys are allocated for Georgetown roads?

Mr. Benn: Yes. There is under the Urban Roads Programme, for Georgetown, many roads which are identified. Under the Urban Roads Programme, there is a long list of roads for which details could be provided. The Ministry has been constrained to do roads, which otherwise would not have been done, just to make sure that the traffic flows properly.

Mrs. Lawrence: I just want to take the Minister's offer of providing that list of the roads for Georgetown.

Mr. Benn: I have here some CDs with all of the roads inclusive - this is capital programme - with their amounts which are proposed. We can provide those.

Mrs. Lawrence: Unfortunately, Hon. Minister, I was not one of the persons who received a laptop.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, do you have information stored on a CD?

Mr. Benn: For the capital programme, there are the CDs here. At least, I have my documents with respect to the Miscellaneous Roads Programme and with respect to the Urban Roads Programme. So we have them all, as proposed, documented.

Mr. Chairman: What I would suggest Hon. Members - actually I am quite impressed that we are going to a non-paperless format – is that if the Minister would submit them to the Clerk's Office it would undertake to do the printing for the Hon. Member Mrs. Lawrence and it will accept your CDs ROM.

Mr. Benn: Sorry Mr. Chairman. I just want to point out that there is the Urban Roads Programme, inclusive of Georgetown, in hard copy and also the Miscellaneous Roads Programme in hard copy. I did say also that we have them also on CDs.

Mr. Chairman: We will accept everything that you have and make arrangement for the Member to have it.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, though you, Mr. Chairman, 6254 – Maintenance of Sea and River Defences: We see a figure of \$200.5 million. Hon. Minister, could you indicate where would the main expenditure be?

Mr. Benn: In all of the districts, for maintenance, there will be expenditure. If I have to say a particular one at Johanna Cecelia, \$19 million, with respect to works there. Bendorff, Sparta/Roden Rust, Good Hope pump station to Annandale pump station - \$4 million, \$5 million, these are maintenance we are speaking of, not capital project.

Mrs. Backer: I know. I could read.

Mr. Basil Williams: Line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads: Could the Hon. Minister indicate what works he intends to do with respect to the roads on the East Coast of Demerara? Could he identify the areas?

Mr. Benn: On the East Coast of Demerara, the Ministry intends to continue the work it has been doing, in terms of basic maintenance of pothole, patching and overlaying in this year. As we are aware, the work will continue with respect to the construction of the four-lane highway which is under the capital programme, but basic maintenance will be done along the East Coast Demerara Public Road.

Mr. B. Williams: I was really trying to get some specificity whether it will be Golden Grove, Buxton or Plaisance. Perhaps the Hon. Minister can give such indication.

Mr. Benn: I repeat, again, that the Ministry's work relates primarily to the declared public roads and the access to those. So the declared East Coast Demerara Public Road and the Embankment Road will be attended to, throughout.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: We see quite a substantial figure of a \$140 million. Hon. Member, is electricity for street lights under this section?

Mr. Benn: Yes Mr. Chairman. The Hon. Member is correct. It is for street lights and also for traffic lights. On the declared public roads, that is.

Mrs. Backer: Minister, I see that there is no proposed increase from last year. Should I take that as indication that there is no intention or policy which does not include increasing street lights during this year, the fact that the figure is the same as last year?

Mr. Benn: There is a small allocation, I believe, under the capital programme, which will speak to highway lighting and what is usually done, since the Ministry has savings in respect of the amount of moneys it has spent on the design-type of highway lighting, is that it would transfer those savings to other areas and that is the way much of the Essequibo Coast roads were able to be done last year.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6281 – Security Services: Hon. Minister, could you say which building or buildings benefited from security services during last year or which buildings will benefit this year?

Mr. Benn: The security services relate to the Ministry's buildings, offices, worksites and outline stations.

Mrs. Backer: Could you, Hon. Minister, through you, Mr. Chairman, indicate which security service will be providing security services this year?

Mr. Benn: I think I said before, Mr. Chairman, it will be the Special Constabulary and the Strategic Action Security Service.

Mrs. Backer: I do not think that you said it before. You said it under another line item.

Mr. Benn: But I said it before.

Mrs. Backer: But it is under another line item. We have to ask under each line item. If you do not want me to ask, well indicate that.

Mr. Chairman: Both of you are correct. He did say it before. In fact, a Member has the right to ask the same question even if it may appear redundant.

Ms. Wade: Would the Hon. Minister tell us under line item 6254 – Maintenance of Sea and River Defence – if Region 5 is down for work? If yes, how much of this budgetary amount will be spent?

Mr. Benn: Is this for current expenditure? The Ministry itself has an excavator doing maintenance work in Region 5. Under capital works, hundreds of millions, or billions, of dollars have been spent with respect to sea defence protection in Region 5 and it will continue. The works have to continue.

Ms. Selman: Line item 6252 – Maintenance of Bridges: Could the Hon. Minister indicate whether the bridge connecting A Field and B Field Sophia to Guyhoc will be maintained, using this provision?

Mr. Benn: I think that bridge relates to either the Mayor and City Council or the Central Housing and Planning Authority.

Mr. Chairman: Is not to your Ministry?

Mr. Benn: We would help if there is a need, but I am saying it is not catered for, because it is not under our portfolio.

Ms. Selman: Line item 6254 – Maintenance of Sea and River Defences: Could the Hon. Minister say what sum is allocated for Region 2, sea defences, and which are the areas in Region 2?

Mr. Benn: I think I did say before that for Johanna Cecelia, \$19 million was provided for, for Region 2. There is also an excavator for our force account work out there.

Ms. Selman: Could the Hon. Minister say how much, the same line item which is 6254, Maintenance of River and Sea Defences, of the budgetary allocation has been provided for, if any, for the East Bank of Demerara, Region 4, and which are areas?

Mr. Benn: The Ministry does not have any works now under current expenditure for East Bank of Demerara. It does force accounts works there. Under capital expenditure, even now, it has the works just completed for river defence at Good Hope and there was work which was being done recently at Craig on the East Bank of Demerara.

Mr. Selman: It is line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads – again. Mr. Minister, could you tell me if the roads in Caneville and Samantha Point will be maintained under this sum?

Mr. Benn: No. Again, it is either Central Housing and Planning or the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, with respect to those roads.

Ms. Ferguson: Line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence: I have noticed a huge increase in the travel and subsistence. Could the Minister explain?

Mr. Benn: This relates specifically to the travel and subsistence for the Electrical Inspectorate Division. There are officers who are going out to the regions to do their inspections and checks, and for maintenance works too in buildings.

Mr. B. Williams: Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Could the Hon. Minister indicate the “Other Infrastructure” this \$55,800,000 is supposed to relate to?

Mr. Benn: This refers to the maintenance of traffic lights, highway lighting, repairs to guard huts, and all those things.

Mrs. Lawrence: Line item 6264 – Vehicles Spares and Service: Could the Hon. Minister tell us how many vehicles, in the Ministry of Public Works’ fleet, are presently over six years?

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, it sounds like a trick question. I would venture that eighty per cent of all of the Ministry’s vehicles is over six years.

Mr. B. Williams: Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Could the Hon. Minister indicate whether those items under “Other Infrastructure” are also on the CD. If so, could he make the CD available to us?

Mr. Benn: No. We have the details here, though, on these three pages, and they could be provided to the Member.

Mr. B. Williams: I would be most grateful for that. There is a normal timeline which has been occurred in this National Assembly.

Mr. Benn: I could give you my copy now.

Mr. B. Williams: Thank you very much. I will take it now.

Ms. Selman: I would wish to have a copy too. So do not give him the copy, Hon. Minister.

Mr. Chairman: What I would like, Hon. Members, is that all documents flow through the Clerk’s Office so that we have a clearinghouse. That is the only way I can assure that they stand as a record. So while it may be very convenient for Ministers to pass documents to Members of Parliament, I would ask that they go through the Clerk’s Office so that there could be a record of receipt and delivery.

Mrs. Lawrence: Line item 6264 – Vehicle Spares and Service: Could the Hon. Minister tell this House what his Ministry, under Public Works, is doing to reduce the high cost for vehicles spares and services? We noted that from 2010 it has moved from \$27.8 million to \$30.7 million in 2011, and now the Minister is asking for an allocation of \$33 million?

Mr. Benn: The Ministry is asking for what, I believe, is about \$10 million increase. Fundamentally, the vehicles are older, aged, and secondly, there are now excavators, heavy-duty equipment, in the sea defences and other areas. The cost of maintenance for those pieces of

equipment is significantly higher, say for normal road vehicles. So it is equipment maintenance for heavier equipment.

3.05 p.m.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, would the Hon. Minister kindly tell this House whether the request for spares and service for the vehicles goes out to tender?

Mr. Benn: Yes it does. There are pre-qualified tenders and there are some agencies which are the sole supplier for certain pieces of equipment. Like if there is a Doosan excavator, we can only get the parts from that agency.

Programme: 312 – Public Works - \$820,953,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 312 – Public Works - \$12,856,689,000

Mr. Harmon: Mr. Chairman, Project Code 1207200 – Administration and Management – could the Hon. Minister provide details of the administrative and management cost for the work services group in the amount of \$354 million?

Mr. Benn: Employment cost relates to an amount of \$221.8 million. There are other charges which relate to \$36 million in an amount of \$258 million for the work services group. We have a breakdown which can be provided.

Mr. Chairman: Would you be willing to accept that breakdown?

Mr. Harmon: Yes Mr. Chairman. Could the Hon. Minister indicate what work the Work Services Group does and who are the persons in the group?

Mr. Benn: The Work Services Group is the premiere engineering, coordinating, designing and implementing group for the Government and people of Guyana and its work relates to all of the work that we do in the Ministry. Simply, the implementation of the project with respect to roads and bridges, the planning work with respect to new projects and the designs thereof, the consultancy and procurement of those services, the design of various things on request from

other Ministries due for review and implementation. This is our core engineering group of the Government with respect to public works. So for the sea defences, the roads and the bridges, there is a Central Transport Planning Unit which relates to planning for futuristic, ongoing changes for transport, airports and all of those things. It is basically where in other cases it would be a department of transport in other jurisdictions. It is a department of transport type arrangements like in other jurisdictions.

Mr. Harmon: Project Code 1208200 – Bridges Rehabilitation II – Transport Infrastructure Project- could the Hon. Minister state what portion of the sum of \$845 million has been allocated to (a) completion of Lot “A” bridges and culverts from Timehri to Rosignol and (b) commencement of Lot “B” culverts on the West Coast of Berbice?

Mr. Benn: With respect to Lot “A”, an amount of \$65 million is provided. With respect to Lot B, \$325.9 million is allocated. Supervision for Lot “A” is an amount of \$21.5 million and Lot “B” \$55 million.

Mr. B. Williams: Project Code 1208200 - Bridges Rehabilitation II – Transport Infrastructure Project- in respect of Lot “A”, how many bridges have you identified in Georgetown and East Coast from the Timehri to Rosignol route, Hon. Minister?

Mr. Benn: This is the third phase. We have done 80-odd bridges previously from Mahaica/Mahaicony, Rosignol and from Timehri.

Mr. B. Williams: A follow up question: what does that mean? Out of this \$852 million you have just identified, how many more bridges or culverts are there remaining in this phase between Georgetown and Rosignol that you have identified?

Mr. Benn: 80 bridges and 11 culverts are to be rebuilt, while three culverts are to be repaired.

Mr. Allen: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Project 1600400 – Stellings – how much of this allotted sum will be used for the rehabilitation work at Port Kaituma?

Mr. Benn: \$10 million of \$15 million will be spent at the Port Kaituma Stelling.

Mr. Allen: Can the Hon. Minister say when this project is expected to start?

Mr. Benn: The tender documents are now being prepared. Once we are out of the rainy season, it should be on.

Mr. Harmon: A follow up question - could the Hon. Minister state when the ticketing system at Parika and Supenaam will be completed?

Mr. Benn: This system is being implemented even now as we speak.

Mr. Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I do not know whether the Hon. Minister can answer the question - if he chooses to. When will this project be completed?

Mr. Benn: This will be completed in 6 weeks time.

Mr. Morian: Mr. Chairman, Project Code 1401800 – Miscellaneous Roads – can the Minister state the number of roads to be constructed in Region 10 and the roads to be rehabilitated in Region 10?

Mr. Benn: Region 10 is not under the Miscellaneous Roads head.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, there are a number of persons waiting to ask questions. So what is the answer?

Mr. Benn: May I just explain, Mr. Chairman, that he referred to Miscellaneous Roads and not Urban Roads. For Region 10, what he may have an interest in is under Urban Roads.

Mr. Morian: Mr. Chairman, I would like to add a follow-up question here. I am looking in Volume 3, reference 108, and it states here under Description of Project, “Completion of roads in Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10” and the Project Title is “Miscellaneous Roads”.

Mr. Benn: This relates to the roll over components – roads we have done or are completing now in 2012. The retention payments would have to be made.

Mr. Morian: Mr. Chairman, the question still stands. I will like to know, which are the roads?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, are you in a position to answer that question? Which are the roads?

Hon. Members, I can tell you that I have been looking at other jurisdictions and how they address their financial estimates - looking for a better way to get this done. I think Canada had some amendments, Singapore and some other countries. But certainly not because this is the way it has always been done means we have to stay doing it this way.

Mr. Benn: Yes, Mr. Chairman, for those roll over roads, we have it as Lot 1 and Lot 2, not the details like the number and name of roads, but that information can be provided.

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Member has indicated that he is ready to receive it as soon as it is ready, within the reasonable time.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Project Code 1402300 – Georgetown-Lethem Road – \$20.5 million for the feasibility studies: could the Hon. Minister kindly say from where to where the feasibility study is being done?

Mr. Benn: We have to pay for the completion of the studies for the entire road. I think I reported in the debate that we have completed the study. We have received the completed study but we are doing reviews which should be finalised by the end of this month. So this is for the entire road and the final payments to SNC-Lavalin for the Study that it has done.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Thank you Hon. Minister. Is it a grant or a loan?

Mr. Benn: This is a grant from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Government contributed US\$200,000 to this study.

Mr. T. Williams: Project 1402900 – Amaila Access Road – can the Hon. Minister say how many kilometres of road are expected to be completed under this provision?

Mr. Benn: The entire length of road for 205 kilometres will be completed.

Mr. Allicock: Project 1402300 – Georgetown-Lethem Road- can the Hon. Minister say what the scope for this feasibility study is?

Mr. Benn: We have had a pre-feasibility study done by Mott MacDonald to determine the cost of doing the road based on appropriate designs and the economic feasibility for doing this road. The detailed feasibility study relates to determine by more engineering effort, the alignment, the

vehicle loading, the amount of traffic anticipated and all of those things over particular horizons or what the feasibility of building this road is.

Mr. Allicock: Project Code 14020600 – Road Improvement and Rehabilitation Programme – can the Hon. Minister say whether there is any allowance for the road construction from Georgetown to Lethem?

Mr. Benn: That amount, as I said, was a specific IDB Programme so there is no allocation for Georgetown to Lethem or Linden to Lethem under that. But you are aware, of course, that work is being done now on that road under other Heads.

Ms. Selman: Project Code 1401800 – Miscellaneous Roads – could the Hon. Minister please provide the stretches of roads to be completed on the East Bank of Demerara and at what cost? And, further, could the Hon. Minister provide the list of the stretches of roads to be completed and rehabilitated on the East Bank of Demerara, Region 4?

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, I committed to giving the list, both in hard copy and electronically, of all the roads in all the areas.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, that material will be distributed by the Parliament Office, perhaps by Monday.

Mr. B. Williams: Under the last project, the Minister spoke to several categories on his compact disc (CD). Is the Hon. Minister saying that for every category that is in the Estimates, it is on the CDs – urban, the Community Road Improvement Projects (CRIPs) and Miscellaneous?

Mr. Benn: I think that I was very specific in saying that we were giving for the miscellaneous roads and the urban roads on the CD. The CRIP roads relate to programmes under the Ministry of Housing and Water.

Mr. B. Williams: Project Code 1208200 – Bridges and Rehabilitation II – Transport Infrastructure Project: when one looks at the profile, item 2, “continuation of Road Maintenance Management System Programme” how much of the \$845 million is catering to this item? That is the first question I wish to ask.

Mr. Benn: The reference is to the Routine Maintenance Management System and \$10 million is allocated for that.

Mr. B. Williams: Is that the Routine Maintenance Management System?

Mr. Benn: Yes. That is run by algorithms on the computer based on data collected by the inspectors in the field. It is put in and based on rankings and so on, the work is a proportion to do work on the roads. This is in addition to Force Account Unitwork. It is a road maintenance programme.

Mr. B. Williams: Are roads on the East Coast subsumed under this?

Mr. Benn: It is a declared public roads network.

Mr. Allen: Project Code 2700100 – Reconditioning/Construction of Ships – can the Hon. Minister tell us, when will the vessel, the North Court be docked? Follow up to that, will there be any other vessel put in place or any mechanism put in place when that vessel will be taken off?

Mr. Benn: The vessel will be docked in the last half of this year and it will be replaced with the Barima.

Mr. Allen: The Kimbia is also supposed to be docked. Can the Minister say what time the Kimbia will be docked and what will be in place for that?

Mr. Benn: The replacement vessel in respect of dockings for the North West District passage is the Barima. The Kimbia will be docked towards the last half of this year, not before July.

Mr. Harmon: Project Code 1402900 – Amaila Access Road – could the Hon. Minister state whether contracts have been awarded for this sum of money allocated and, if so, the name of the companies to which these contracts have been awarded?

Mr. Benn: The operatives with respect to the sections of the road relate to Section 2 to the Ministry of Public Works sports account, Section 3 to the Toolsie Persaud Quarries Inc., Section 4 to the Toolsie Persaud Quarries Inc., Section 5 to Ivor Allen, Section 6 being proposed initially for the Bovell Construction Company – this is not resolved just yet – and for Section 7, bids have

been received from China Railway Construction Group, B&J joint venture and from Pasha Engineering.

Mr. Harmon: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister state, at the end of this construction, what quality or road is expected?

Mr. Benn: What is intended at the end is an unpaved road which can take, I think, up to 120 metric tonnes capacity loading to be able to carry in the largest elements for the construction of the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project which is the generator units.

Mr. Harmon: One follow-up question please- could the Hon. Minister state what the position is with respect to the sums of money allocated in the previous Budget to Mr. Fip Motilall and what the situation is with respect to the damages and penalties for the work he did not do?

Mr. Benn: The Ministry did not assign any moneys to any person called Fip Motilall.

Mr. Harmon: Could the Hon. Minister state what sums of money have been allocated to the Synergy Holdings Inc.?

Mr. Benn: An amount of US\$5,876,410 was paid to Synergy Holdings Inc. for works done. If I might add, the Ministry of Public Works has levied on the bond related to this project in an amount of US\$1.54 million.

3.35 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Nagamootoo do you have a follow up to this?

Mr. Nagamootoo: May I with your permission, Mr. Chairman, ask for a follow up question or perhaps two?

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Mr. Nagamootoo: In view of the waste of tax payers' money on the "Fip Motilall fiasco", this project was in the sum, the same line item 1402900 – Amaila Access Road. The total cost was GD \$3.7 billion. The follow up is that contracts having been executed or considered, can the Hon. Minister say, through you, Mr. Chairman, whether there is the percentage of total costs for

these projects to be executed in performance bond. These, not Motilall, that was a waste of taxpayers' money; I am speaking of the new contracts.

Mr. Benn: Like with all other contracts of the Government there is the standard 10% performance bond which is executed before a contract could be assigned. Let me say particularly to the Hon. Member, and I repeat, the very Hon. Member, spoke about the waste of taxpayers' money. I want to advise the Hon. Member that the contract with Synergy Holdings Inc. was terminated in respect of their failure to advance the project according to the time lines they were contracted to. The payments which have been made to Synergy Holdings Inc. are payments for works done, certified and qualified on the ground by Consulting Engineers with respect to work done. I repeat further that we have sued and we have levied against the bonds of that company in an amount of US \$1.5 million.

I can further state that we have seized all the equipment related to this company in respect of the activity out there. This assertion being made in this Hon. House about a waste of taxpayers' money in respect of our responsibilities to execute this project, I take objection to.

Mr. T. Williams: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Project Code 1403000 - can the Hon. Minister tell this House how old is the dredge Steve N and when last it was rehabilitated?

Mr. Benn: The dredger Steve N is 29 years old. It has just come out of rehab docking because of the deficit in dredging on the Demerara and the Essequibo Harbour we are doing examinations of how we will make up that deficit by capital dredging and maintenance dredging. The dredge is old and we are looking towards replacement of the vessel ultimately.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Under project code 1403000 – Road Network and Expansion Project – and I am now referring to reference number 115 under description of project. Number one reads, “design, upgrading and construction of selected main roads throughout Guyana. However, I recognised under the legend that it is a provisions for consultancy services. Could the Hon. Minister say which selected main roads throughout Guyana are to be done? Can he provide this Hon. House with such information?

Mr. Benn: This is provision for the necessary consultancies with respect to the four-way expansions and other roads throughout the country. If I may be more specific, the widening on

the East Coast Public Road from Better Hope to Buxton and then Golden Grove, and on the East Bank of Demerara from Providence to Diamond with ancillary related structures. I will add that we are at the advanced stages of preparation for a transport sector loan from the Inter America Development Bank to the value of US \$66 million. The Consultancies for the expansion of Sheriff Street and Mandela Avenue Road corner would be paid out of this. Those are a number of the roads that are being paid for by consultancy.

Mr. Nagamootoo: May I with your permission, Mr. Chairman, ask a follow up to that question in the same agency head. Can the Hon. Minister say for this entire project which is about in excess of \$14 billion what would be the employment impact of this contract?

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, if I could venture to broad-brush without the project being implemented just yet, the works being done on the East Coast roads employ in excess of 400 men, both on the road itself and...

Mr. Chairman: Does that include women? I have seen some women on the side.

Mr. Benn: Yes, there are some women who do tractor signalisation and there are some women engineers as well on the project. I am using men as a broad term for human.

Mr. Chairman: This is 2012 Hon. Minister. Let us celebrate the women.

Mr. Benn: Let me say men and women. So right now in excess of 400 men and women are directly employed on the project on the East Coast. The multiplier is usually five in terms of related jobs down the line for these projects. So, on the East Coast alone it is 2000 persons. A similar number just now for the East Bank and for the other roads that we do throughout the country, similar numbers will obtain. Direct employment offhand now on the work being done on major public roads, including works of the Ministry, I would say that we have about 3000 persons directly employed one way or the other, up and down the line.

Ms. Wade: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Project code 1500402 – Emergency Works – could the Hon. Minister tell us how much of this budgetary sum will be spent in Region 5? Can the Minister name the areas and the name of the contractor that will carry out these works? Thank you.

Mr. Benn: I am glad that the Hon. Member raised this and I think I did refer to it before. In Region 5, \$205 million will be spent on the works which continue at Brahan, Kingelly, Hope and Abary.

Ms. Wade: Could the Hon. Minister inform us the name of the contractor?

Mr. Benn: These have not been contract out as yet. I think there is only one contractor, A&S who is out at Abary, and M&B contracting.

Mrs. Lawrence: Could the Hon. Minister at item 1401500 – Bartica\Issano\Mahdia Road – the legend tells us that this allocation of \$20 million is for rehabilitation of sections of the road at Bartica, Issano and Mahdia. Could the Hon. Minister kindly tell us whether the Tiger Hill section of the Mahdia road will be taken into consideration under this allocation?

Mr. Benn: No, I think the Hon. Member is referring to two distinct roads.

Mrs. Lawrence: Project Code 1401500.

Mr. Benn: This is the Bartica\Issano\Mahdia Road.

Mrs. Lawrence: Yes, and it is Mahdia that I am asking about, Tiger Hill – the hill into Mahdia- whether you will be doing that part.

Mr. Benn: I think the Tiger Hill section is the other road route; it is not the Bartica\Issano route.

Mrs. Lawrence: It is Mahdia that I am asking about.

Mr. Benn: I am saying that this is the Bartica\Issano\Mahdia road. That is what I am saying. The Tiger Hill road or portion of road is the one which comes through Mabura. Bartica, between 1-Mile and 5-Mile we have to do drainage works to critical sections. We always loose the surface because of the steepness of the road and the water flowing down. We have to do patching of patching of pot holes and DBST works between Miles 1 and Miles 3 of Bartica. This is what this amount is for. Works related to the Mabura\Mahdia road through Mango Landing will be done by force account under Hinterland Roads.

Mrs. Lawrence: Since the Minister has been kind enough to share that information with me, could I further ask the Minister whether the works that he has just referred to, that will be done to

that section of the road, whether it will be the entire road or just a section. I am asking about Tiger Hill because we have had two accidents there and the residents are concerned about the state of that hill presently.

Mr. Benn: We will attend by force account and contract to this portion of the road. I know that the Hon. Member has been saying that the accidents relate to the condition of the road. We have found that usually the accident which occur do so because of the good state of the road.

Mr. Chairman: The grading is what causes the accident.

Mr. Benn: People speed on the roads recklessly and this is where we are having the problem.

Mr. Chairman: Is it when the road is graded.

Mr. Benn: No, that is not the position that we have taken.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Project code 1401800 – Miscellaneous Roads - Project description: Construction and Rehabilitation of Roads in Region 1, et cetera. In Region 1 where exactly is this road being constructed/rehabilitated and at what cost? Thank you.

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, this allocation is intended to take care of roads particularly in the Port Kaituma area.

Mr. Allen: A follow up to that Mr. Chairman, can the Hon. Minister say who would be the contractors, and out of this sum, how much is allocated for that area?

Mr. Benn: We have not let out a contract as yet in respect to this work, Mr. Chairman. Just to be clear, they will be the internal roads of Port Kaituma and the rehabilitation of the Airstrip road, along with a new parallel airstrip road and associated drainage. This is what it is intended to do, and it is in the details of the documents.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Yes, Mr. Chairman. The Hon. Minister just mentioned that he does not have an allocation as yet. I was wondering that if you have allocation then for the rest of the roads, how did you manage to come up with the \$1.5 billion if you do not have quotations and such?

Mr. Benn: I think I did say that we have not let out a contract for the road as yet. We have the engineers estimates, but we do not have tenders and so done with respect to the roads.

Mr. T. Williams: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Under project code 2601000 – Navigational Aids – can the Hon. Minister say which buoys and beacons will be serviced and rehabilitated under this allocation?

Mr. Benn: I do not have at hand the exact buoys and beacons to be maintained. There are some which we are replacing on the Essequibo Passage through Chalmers Point. The difficulty usually with this type of thing is that you may have a buoy and beacon now and then in a couple weeks it is no longer there. It is sometimes either stolen because of the solar cells and so which some people take a penchant to or they may be run over by some tug or trailing barge. We have the allocations based on the needs and we will be doing the replacement as needed and necessary. \$35 million dollars is allocated for that.

Let me just say to the previous member that we putting in a new radio system in the light house, an upgrading. We are upgrading the lighting system of the lighthouse, upgrading the buoys and beacons specifically costing \$12.5 million. The acquisition of various spares for the lighting system and for the buoys and beacons costing \$10 million, and we are also facilitating the construction buoys and beacons in an amount of \$4 million.

Mr. Jones: Comrade Chairman, project code 1500402 – Emergency Works – could the Hon. Minister inform this House of the exact areas in Region 2 slated for sea defence works?

Mr. Benn: Thank you Mr. Chairman. The prime areas are Hampton Court, Aurora and Makeshift in an amount of \$228.8 million.

Mr. Jones: Project Code 1401900 – Urban Roads – could the Hon. Minister inform this House if the road from Linden to Kwakwani is slated to be worked on this year?

Mr. Benn: This road is being maintained even now by the Force Account Unit. I was last informed that the travel time between Linden and Ituni was 35 minutes which worried me greatly.

Mr. Chairman: Are you saying that from Linden to Ituni is 35 minutes?

Mr. Benn: 35 minutes.

Mr. Chairman: Is it Mr. Willis who is driving?

Mr. Benn: I am telling you that our technicians stood on the road and clocked minibuses travelling from Linden to Ituni in 35 minutes, not to mention the cars which are also going up there.

Mr. Chairman: I know cars are on the trail, but it sounds a little dangerous in 35 minutes.

Mr. Harmon: Mr. Chairman, my question has been answered.

Mr. Jones: Project Code 1500405 – Sea Defences – could the Hon. Minister explain which areas in Region 2 are slated for these works.

Mr. Benn: I think the Hon. Member is referring to those foreign funded. For Region 2 those are Aurora, Makeshift, Onderneeming, Johanna Cecelia, Zorg, Lima, Hampton Court, Devonshire Castle, Walton Hall and Eliza. There are also amounts for supply of armour rocks to Zeelandia and Makeshift.

Mr. Jones: A follow up Mr. Chairman - could the Hon. Minister explain how is it that under emergency works that you have Hampton Court and Makeshift slated in the same area to be done under sea defence?

Mr. Benn: There are different lengths in the areas which are being done. Some are under maintenance and the others are under rehabilitation.

Programme: 312 – Public Works – 12,856,689,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 313 – Transport – \$60,408,000

Mrs. Backer: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. Through you to the Minister, I see that you have total staffing of one person under this head. Could you inform the National Assembly that that one contracted employee, what is his or her function?

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman the singular person there is the Specialist Aerodromes Inspector.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you very much. I see that under line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure – \$40 million. Could you indicate, Hon. Minister, what this figure covers?

Mr. Benn: This \$40 million is the stein for the maintenance of the said Aerodromes related to the inspector.

Mrs. Backer: A follow up question - did you say Aerodrome, as in one Aerodrome?

Mr. Benn: Aerodromes. Let me say Airstrips, they are forty-two in number.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, does this include the airstrips at Leguan and Wakenaam?

Mr. Benn: There is an airstrip built at Wakenaam and the normal maintenance will have to be done to that. At Leguan, the acquisition of the land for the building of the airstrip is in dispute in Court between private parties. We have been unable to access the suitable landing area. So, the airstrip is not yet built at Leguan.

Mrs. Backer: Just to get you very clear. Hon. Minister, through you Mr. Chairman, are you saying that the Airstrip at Leguan has been built and is functional - the one at Wakenaam?

Mr. Benn: I repeat that an airstrip has been built at Wakenaam and is in service. The airstrip intended to have been built at Leguan was not built because of disputes between private owner parties. As a result, we have not been able to access the suitable landing place most suitable to build the airstrip. We are awaiting the outcome of that matter before we can proceed further on that construction.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, just for the information of the House, could you indicate whether there are scheduled air services to Wakenaam and the cost, if there is?

Mr. Benn: Scheduled air services really relate to Timehri, Ogle and three or four other airstrips in Guyana. The other forty or more airstrips are available for use as people determine it.

Mrs. Backer: One last follow up question, Hon. Minister, through you Mr. Chairman, could you indicate to this Hon. House, as far as you know, whether Wakenaam airstrip has been used by anyone since construction on an ongoing or a regular basis?

Mr. Benn: I am aware that the airstrip has been used since it has been constructed.

Mrs. Backer: Once?

Mr. Benn: More than once. Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member may want to continue to be facetious on the issue. The airstrip at Wakenaam has been built, it is being used and it will continue to be used both for domestic and civilian purposes, as well as for security purposes.

4.05 p.m.

Mr. Trotman: I refer to Line Item 6265, can the Minister say what are the costs associated with the items under this head?

Mr. Benn: Is it Line Item 6265 - Airstrips?

Mr. Trotman: Under Transport, Travel and Postage.

Mr. Benn: Just a minute.

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, if it would help the Minister I would take the information in writing.

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, this refers to the cost for the licensing of aerodromes. [Mrs. Backer: So how it becomes an expense?] It is an expense because on request from persons' money has to be spent to fly to areas to inspect and or to license, a new aerodrome or have something in particular done to any aerodrome which may have some issues.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, through you Mr. Chair, line item 6284 – Other - the figure is \$1.247 million Hon. Minister could you share with us what that covers?

Mr. Benn: This is for payments that the Ministry has to actually make to the Guyana Civil Aviation Authority for the licenses for the aerodromes.

Programme 313 – Transport - \$60,408,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 313 – Transport - \$4,830,000,000

Mr. Harmon: Mr. Chairman, through you, project code 1600999 – Cheddie Jagan International Airport (CJIA) Modernisation Project. Could the Hon. Minister state whether contracts have been awarded for (i) the construction of a new terminal building, (ii) the construction the apron, taxiway and extension to the main runway, and (iii) the design and construction of the car park et cetera? And could the Hon. Minister state whether these contracts have been awarded and whether these contracts could be made available to this Hon. House?

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, yes, I can remind the Hon. Gentleman that we did provide this signed contract document to this Hon. House.

Mr. Chairman: The Minister is correct. That was amongst the bundle of documents submitted some weeks ago.

Mrs. Backer: Project Code 1600200 - Hinterland/Coastal Airstrips - Rehabilitation of Airstrips. Mr. Chair, when we look at profile page 122 we see three airstrips for rehabilitation. Hon. Minister could you give us the breakdown of the money assigned to each airstrip.

Mr. Benn: We intend to rehabilitate the Lethem, Imbaimadai and Ekereku Bottom airstrips. We have engineering estimates for these in amounts of \$50 million for Lethem, \$60 million for Imbaimadai and \$30 million for Ekereku Bottom totaling \$140 million. Detailed engineering will be done and the final amounts will depend on the bids received.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you very much; a follow-up question please, and I take the opportunity if you would allow me to make it a more general question. Hon. Minister through you Mr. Chair, do these interior airstrips have security attached to them? The reason I am asking particularly is because recently there were incidents at Port Kaituma with cattle going on to the airstrip causing accidents, landings having to be aborted and so forth. Do we have any security provision for these three and in general, for the other interior airstrips?

Mr. Benn: The Interior airstrips which are close to populated areas mostly have local contractors who are required to maintain and work with issues relating to the safety of the airstrips. The police for the area are supposed to be there when there are landings at those airstrips to take care of related issues for security, wandering cattle, general public safety and such like.

The airstrip at Port Kaituma was actually fenced at great expense. The problem we have had is that persons have been cutting the fence to allow cattle through because Guyanese like to take a short cut, somehow. I think that I said before, with respect to expenditure for roads at Port Kaituma, that we are thinking to do a parallel road which we hope will assist with this problem.

Ms. Hastings: Hon. Minister a follow-up on question – Airstrips - project code 1600200: Could the Hon. Minister provide this House with the contract? If it is already contracted, who is the contractor for Imbaimadai airstrip? From past experience with the Kamarang airstrip, we will be in a better position to monitor the project if a contract is provided. Thank you.

Mr. Benn: I do not know if the Hon. Member is referring to the three airstrips. There is no contract as yet, but they will be available because they are public documents. We are relying on engineer's estimates. The local contractors who provide basic maintenance services and safety checks are on basic pay with respect to the work they do.

Mr. Nagamootoo: I refer to project code 1600900 - CJIA Modernisation Project - I notice this is a project in excess of \$32 billion. I want to ask the Hon. Minister if this amount is a loan or a grant.

Mr. Benn: This project is intended to be financed out of a loan from the Exim Bank of China.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Kindly a follow-up question on the employment impact of this project. Can the Minister say whether it is anticipated that there will be a local as well as a foreign component of employment to this contract and, secondly, what is the percentage of foreign employees to local employees?

Mr. Benn: The detailing engineering is now being worked at with respect to the number of...
[**Mr. Ramjattan:** The engineering.] Mr. Chairman, I think we are speaking here of estimates. I repeat that the detailed engineering and logistics with respect to the works and the work-scheduling is being looked at. The employment impact will be very large. We anticipate that at various points in time, over 600 persons will be employed on this project. The split between nationals and foreigners working on the project is 40/60.

Programme 313 – Transport - \$4,830,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members that brings us to an end of a marathon session on the Ministry of Public Works. Thanks to you Hon. Minister and your technical staff. I thank all of the Members of the Opposition who have asked very pertinent and probing questions. Hon. Minister you are reminded that you gave commitments to supply a raft of documents. The Clerk's office will be expecting them in due course and will make arrangements to share them out.

Agency: 21 Ministry of Agriculture

Current Expenditure

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration - \$6,709,398,000

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, line item 6116. I note under this head that there has been a 50% increase of staff for 2012 over 2011. Can the Minister inform this Hon. House first, why is this so, and second, can he also indicate to this Hon. House who are the senior persons falling in this new category?

Minister of Agriculture [Dr. Ramsammy]: Mr. Chairman, the increase in the number of contracted employees is mainly due to the addition of 28 graduates returning from scholarship programmes in Cuba and so forth. In terms of the contracted employees do you want the top four or five persons in this category?

Mr. Trotman: Yes, Mr. Chairman, the most senior of those persons...

Dr. Ramsammy: ...of the total 86 persons?

Mr. Chairman: The trend has been, Hon. Minister, for the top five or the highest paid of those.

Dr. Ramsammy: I know what we have been doing, but I think he is asking for the 28 new persons.

Mr. Chairman: I think he meant of all.

Dr. Ramsammy: I am going to answer both just in case.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Dr. Ramsammy: In the category of contracted employees, there are two persons at GS14 and their salary is approximately \$500,000. This includes the Permanent Secretary. There are two persons at GS13 and their salary is approximately \$300,000. All of the rest are between GS1 and GS9 which is about \$41,000 to under \$150,000.

In terms the new persons, all of the graduates are in the same GS9 range.

Mr. Trotman: I refer now to line item 6117 - Temporary Employees - can the Minister inform this House who make up this category?

Dr. Ramsammy: In this programme, it is gardeners. There are a number of persons who are eligible to receive support from gardeners provided by the Ministry of Agriculture. They include Ministers, the Speaker...

Mr. Chairman: No, I do not have a gardener. But thank you for telling me that I am entitled.

Dr. Ramsammy: I am just saying eligible people include the Leader of the Opposition. Through the period of time not everyone has taken advantage of this privilege. I, in my entire time as Minister, never did; but there are gardeners.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman line item 6284 - could the Hon. Minister tell this House why there was the increase of some 150% in 2011 and why we are seeing an allocation now with a 75% reduction?

Dr. Ramsammy: There is a reduction from \$8.1 million to approximately \$5 million. The reduction is due mainly to the fact that in 2011 there was an intense "Grow More Food Campaign" and there were payments made to Government Information news Agency (GINA), for internet bills, and the hosting of a website. Also, under this line item we cater for the National Cane Farming Committee.

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you. I have a follow-up question to the Minister. Could you kindly tell us if there will be any more programmes like the "Grow More Food Campaign" where you will be spending moneys for these persons who seem to be temporary?

Dr. Ramsammy: It is not a temporary campaign; we are continuing the campaign. We have integrated the campaign in other activities as for example, in the agriculture diversification programme, the weed programme et cetera.

Mrs. Lawrence: Line Item 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - if we turn to page 397, which gives an outline of those agencies, I note that the first agency is the drainage and irrigation board which will receive \$1.1 billion in 2012. Could the Hon. Minister tell us when will Act 8 of 2004, which stipulates that there should be a separate accounting department for this particular agency, come into play?

Dr. Ramsammy: This is an issue that we are grappling with. The truth is that the Ministry of Agriculture has sought to gain efficiency and save cost by having a single accounting department dealing with the various agencies. The alternative is to create different accounting departments and have a bloated number of persons that will have to do the work. I think that we could do this efficiently by sharing the accounting department whilst maintaining autonomy of the agency to expend their money.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chair, a follow-up question to the Minister. While I do not have the Act in front of me, I know that this is one of the issues that the Auditor General speaks to every year in his comments. I am proposing to the Minister that if the Government does not intend to adhere to the Act that they seek to amend it because this was since 2004 and we are now in 2012, so either one or the other should be done.

Dr. Ramsammy: I hear the Member and I have grappled with this personally as Minister of Health as the same comment was made about the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation. As the Minister of Health, I had discussion with the Auditor General. I believe that we can resolve this issue to the satisfaction of the Auditor General. My Permanent Secretary (P.S.) and I will be inviting the Auditor General to have discussions and make our proposals on how to actually achieve efficiency by sharing accounting departments and also gain the autonomy that the Act is proposing. If the proposals we have are not favourable to the Auditor General, then we will have to find another way of complying with the law or amending as proposed by the Auditor General.

Mrs. Lawrence: I am at the same agency and allocation. While I note that in 2012 there is a reduction of some \$300 million, could the Minister tell this Hon. House what portion of this money will be allocated for Drainage and Irrigation works in the Georgetown area?

Dr. Ramsammy: Can I reserve an answer to that until we get to the capital items?

Mrs. Lawrence: I thought that this would have gone to maintenance.

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes and I have a list of all the works to be done.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, I am very grateful for the cooperation by the Minister and would like to ask the Minister whether I can visit him at his office so that we can have an interaction about the amounts of moneys allocated for Georgetown. [Mr. Williams: You will take that chance?]

Mr. Chairman: Would you say yes?

Dr. Ramsammy: Now that the Hon. Member Williams has quieted down I would like through you, Mr. Chairman, to say to the Hon. Member Volda Lawrence that it will be my pleasure. Just let me know when you can make it.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members it has occurred to me and I think that I mentioned it last night that most of the questions asked could have been asked and answered before if there was more formal interaction between Ministers and their shadow counterparts, maybe on a quarterly or monthly basis. We would not have to go through this process. One way that we could get through this is if there was not just an informal or casual interaction, but a monthly or quarterly briefing facilitated by this Parliament Office to ensure that there is an interchange of ideas and information.

The answer is yes, and you could visit at an appointed time I suppose.

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you Mr. Chairman. I would go down the list to Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA). Could the Minister tell us why there is this increase? What programmes are in place for this increase and what specifically would be the highlighted programme for this entity this year?

Dr. Ramsammy: This entity was established by an Act and is only now being fully activated. There are a number of departments of the Ministry that have been integrated to the GLDA. The increase in allocation reflects the fact that the GLDA has now been able to put the mechanisms in place for full implementation and activation of this authority. For example it had not take up the farm that was under National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI); it had not take up the St. Ignatius pasture and had not taken up Ebini, but all of those are now taken up and that accounts for an increase.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, through you the Guyana School of Agriculture. Could the Minister tell us what is the purpose of the increase in the allocation for 2012? What do you intend to do, Sir.

Dr. Ramsammy: The Guyana School of Agriculture has served the Ministry of Agriculture and the country well. A number of people now working in the Ministry as senior officials were graduates from the Guyana School of Agriculture. Indeed we have been expanding our programme. Recently, we opened up a new campus for the Guyana School of Agriculture in Essequibo, for example. When that programme started not all of the activities, not all the training programmes that exist at Mon Repos were at Essequibo, so we are adding new programmes all the time and expanding the activities.

4.35 p.m.

At the Guyana School of Agriculture itself we are increasing activities, for example, in the area of food processing, training students in producing processed foods, research is continuing and we are expanding some of the farms. New areas of training such as in bio-energy, it is a new curriculum.

Mrs. Lawrence: Could the Minister kindly inform the House as to whether there will be any capital works coming out of this subvention?

Dr. Ramsammy: No these are all operational current expenses. The capital expense will come under the Capital Project of the Ministry.

Mrs. Lawrence: We are moving on very nicely Sir. Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister tell this House what the \$4 billion to GuySuCo is intended to do; what areas is it intended to cover and what would be the gains from investing this \$4 billion in GuySuCo?

Dr. Ramsammy: From the Ministry of Finance, releases will be made to GuySuCo amounting to \$4 billion this year. It will be utilised to meet its operational expenses. It is not earmarked for a specific expenditure, but it will be part of the pool of resources for GuySuCo to meet its operational expenses.

GuySuCo estimated on a signal that in terms of its budget for 2012 it is likely to face a deficit. The Government has signalled its intention to support GuySuCo by meeting this projected deficit.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman to the Minister. I am aware that deficits do not just happen that they arise out of one shortfall or the other or poor management of the funds. Could the Minister tell us, having had GuySuCo make its proposal to you, whether there will be a body or committee that would have looked at the issues with GuySuCo to ensure that having placed this \$4billion into the entity, that for the next year GuySuCo would be on the road to viability in terms of sustaining itself?

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes, there is a National Action Committee through the Ministry of Finance, also as a part of the Cabinet oversight that is looking at the activity and the functioning of GuySuCo.

The problems started with the 36% reduction in the European price for sugar, which was compounded by the lost in terms of the Euro versus the US dollar. We hope that with this input GuySuCo will reach its target of 265,000 tonnes this year and with the remedy of the problems at Skeldon we will in fact see a GuySuCo that will be operating at a deficit which is less and will soon reach the stage of profitability again.

Mrs. Lawrence: Follow up Mr. Chairman to the Hon. Minister. Minister I know you just took over this entity, but I will like to ask, since it is a subvention entity under this particular Ministry and the European prices, which you mentioned, as part of the problem of them having a deficit,

whether nothing was done prior to make provisions for these expenses for which they will incur, given the fact that the revenues was going to go down?

Dr. Ramsammy: As the Hon. Member would recall, there was very short notice of the European's intention of cutting the price, in terms of the Euros versus the US dollar that was not something we could have anticipated. At one time we gained through that, but with the negotiations this year we have come to an agreement that the Europeans will pay this year in US dollars so that that compounded loss would not be experienced.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, just a follow up on the last answer of the Minister. I was a little surprised to hear that the sugar price fall arose from short notice. Are you speaking about the annual price negotiation or the sugar price fall? Might I just remind the Minister that The Cotonou Agreement was signed in the year 2000. Even before we signed that agreement the Europeans indicated that the arrangement for the sale of sugar would change and studies were done at that time in which Guyana was singled out as being probably the only viable sugar producer in the region based upon anticipated falls in the sugar price. I do not think that it is accurate to say that the sugar price decreased, whether it is 36% we are speaking of or another, would have been a surprise. Thank you.

Dr. Ramsammy: Mr. Chairman, I know I am new and I am not supposed to be aware, but I was aware of an intention by the Europeans. However, in the year 2000 there was no indication to the extent of that cut. In fact, the 36% cut was far more abrupt than anyone thought, it was going to be phased in, there was very little phasing in and that is the truth. The fact is there was a 36% cut and Guyana did not have the long phased in period that was signalled at the time.

Mr. Greenidge: I am sorry to prolong this. I am not going to engage in any further comment on it, just to say to you that as the ACP (The African, Caribbean and Pacific) representative who was at the time involved in the negotiations together with Sir Shirdath (Sonny) Ramphal and others, I think the Minister might wish to perhaps put his points a little less strongly. I do not think it is correct to say that there was no notice... [*Interruption*]

Dr. Ramsammy: It was a short notice.

Mr. Greenidge: I beg to differ as to the shortness of the notice because even from the ACP we funded the studies and Guyana was well aware for a long time, as were the others, that these changes were coming. Thank you.

Dr. Ramsammy: Mr. Chairman, I will accept that we agree to disagree.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. I know that the Hon. Member, Mr. Robert Persaud, has a lot of knowledge on this.

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you Mr. Chairman. I wish that the other Members would allow me to have my conversation with the Hon. Dr. Ramsammy. I am on the same entity, GuySuCo; the Minister mentioned that there is an Action Committee presently in place to review the operations of GuySuCo. I would want to ask the Minister - rather I am asking the Minister - given the controversy of GuySuCo, the Government is saying one thing and the perception is another, if whether the he would give any consideration for the representatives of the two Opposition parties to either sit and observe or become a member of this Action Committee?

Dr. Ramsammy: This is a committee of the Cabinet. In terms of the proposal that the Hon. Member is making, that is a proposal I would suggest is presented at the levels of the Leaders who are now talking.

Mr. Trotman: I want to continue under the same Line Item and to refer here to the MMA/ADA (Mahaica Mahaicony Abary/Agriculture Development Authority) Programme. The question I want to pose to the Minister is this, in view of the fact that MMA/ADA over the years have not been performing very well, do you believe Mr. Minister that the agency as it is presently constituted, has the capacity to deliver the service that it is suppose to the stakeholders?

Dr. Ramsammy: Mr. Chairman, my answer is yes, I believe that when we look at the functioning of the MMA, the fact is that this year there was more land put under cultivation for rice than ever in the history of the MMA. Therefore, I would think that they are doing a good job. There is always a better job that can be done, but they are doing a good job at this point.

Mr. Trotman: Notwithstanding the answer given by the Minister, the fact that there have been numerous complaints by farmers by so-called beneficiaries of the service, I am still wondering if

it is that the Ministry should give consideration to a greater involvement of farmers in the management of the agency?

Dr. Ramsammy: The farmers are represented on the board, there are regular meetings with farmers and I believe the Hon. Member, Ms. Wade, is also a member of the board.

Ms. Selman: She is a farmer too.

Mr. Trotman: Notwithstanding the answer that the Minister has given, there still are numerous weaknesses in the overall performance of the agency and I am not talking here about token involvement but real involvement and hence, my question of greater involvement by farmers in the whole management of the agency?

Dr. Ramsammy: I do not believe that the participation is token at this time and I need to underline that, there is always need to improve our services. I would not stand here and say the MMA is functioning at a level that it cannot improve anymore. There is room for improvement and we are working on that. We are working with farmers not just at the level of the board, but within the communities so that we can get optimal results. The truth also is that the major problems we face right now has more to do with the fact that the MMA scheme, only Phase One was completed and Phases Two and Three are things we are looking at now.

Even if we improve the participation and God comes down and give us the best managers until...

Ms. Selman: Do not call God in this, because I will call Jesus and Jesus will vote for you all.

Dr. Ramsammy: Alright Jesus then. Even if we do that, unless we also address Phases Two and Three, we are not going to get optimal results out of this programme.

Mr. Greenidge: I am glad to hear the Minister's portrayal of the problem with which I agree largely as regards the need to move on with implementing Phases Two and Three. What I would like to ask however is, what is the nature of the involvement that currently exists and what does the Minister anticipates by way of involvement of the farmers in the overall administration. Board level is one dimension, what else do you have in mind? The Minister seems sympathetic to improving the involvement with a view to enhancing efficiency and I would hear a bit of view on that.

Dr. Ramsammy: We have to organise the community farmers and others a bit more. There have been regular meetings, but these meetings have to be more formalised. It is for that reason that the professionals at that Ministry led by me are now holding regular meetings. I believe it is the second Wednesday of every month at the MMA office, inviting the farmers to come.

In addition to that we are establishing community farming groups to participate with us. It was one of those meetings that, in fact, have led to a decision to place a pump at Pine Ground in Mahaicony.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members just to say that the Committee of Supply system is not for us to go too much into policy. Our committees system, the Standing and Sectoral Committees, I am hoping that immediately after budget, after we have a required break, we can go straight into committees. Members can go deeper into policies, have their programme directors come and give presentations and so forth and ask the questions, but this is for us to look at the Estimates. But, as I said there is paucity of contact I think between this side and that and quite apart from the meeting the Hon. Member, Mrs. Lawrence, will be having. I am hoping that when the committees are activated, we can go far deeper into what is happening in the individual Ministries.

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration -\$6,709,398 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration -\$4,852,274

Mrs. Lawrence: I am looking at Project 1301600 – National Drainage and Irrigation Authority. Could the Minister tell us and I am looking at Item 3 of the Project Profiles of what the project includes, construction of Pump stations, how many pump stations will be constructed and what is the cost for the construction of the pump stations? Alright, let me just leave it at that.

Dr. Ramsammy: Under this Line Item there will be eight pump stations built. On a later item you will see that we are going to be putting down eight fixed site pumps, but under this

programme the pump stations will be built. I think I had announced... [*Interruption*] Well Windsor Forest is one - I am going to try and remember them from the top of my head

Mrs. Lawrence: Just tell me the regions.

Dr. Ramsammy: Regions 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you Mr. Chairman. I am looking at Project 1301800 – Drainage and Irrigation Support Project, the Project Profiles tells me that this is for the maintenance and rehabilitation of community drains, culverts and parapets. I am looking and I note Region 4 is listed. I am asking the Minister if he can tell me whether in the Region 4 allocation, if there is any allocation for Georgetown.

Dr. Ramsammy: The answer is yes.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, can I ask another question; a follow up. The residents of Kitty, North Ruimveldt and South Ruimveldt, amongst other areas in the Georgetown area have been suffering tremendously from the backing up of drains. I am asking you two questions, whether any work will be done in these areas and you will note I did not call my area and whether for the North Ruimveldt area, which takes the longest to drain - in terms of North Ruimveldt and South Ruimveldt – whether you are looking at putting a pump there to drain that particular area from that water. There is the Well Street and Kaikan Street that has always been under water. I am really appealing to you for those residents.

Dr. Ramsammy: Mr. Chairman, the drainage of the City, the main responsibility...

Mr. Chairman: Is it not the Mayor and City Council?

Dr. Ramsammy: ...Is the Mayor and City Council, however, this programme is intended to supplement. Let me just say this, there are six pumps that operate in Georgetown. Two are operated by the NDIA (National Drainage and Irrigation Authority) now – Kitty and Liliendaal, the other four are by the Municipality and we rarely have all four of those functioning. During the last flood here, only one was functioning after we provided the vacuum or hydraulic oil.

There are 11 sluices that operate and we have to take care of that. The NDIA's responsibility is not to go and put the pumps in these places, but if those pumps and sluices are working and the internal drains are kept clean, we should have less of a problem. This programme is to complement, in terms of that, the Georgetown area would benefit through theirs. The specific North Ruimveldt area through this programme would benefit from a sum of \$222 million.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, may I ask the Minister if whether he is in a position to give us an indication of the criteria by which they decide where they would intervene within Georgetown? I am asking that because I am aware that some areas are flooded chronically and they seem to attract no support or attention at all.

Dr. Ramsammy: This is for work within the community drains to help clean them and one of the criteria utilised has been the historical need because some areas get flooded more than others.

Mr. Greenidge: I was just going to say that perhaps the Minister may wish to give consideration not arising from special interest to the area between Bel Air Gardens and Bel Air Springs which seems to underlie...

Mr. Chairman: That is a notorious area that floods all the time.

Mr. Greenidge: It is not only that it floods all the time, Mr. Chairman, you may like to know that the characteristics of the flooding is this, within two or three hours of the rain stopping that is when the real flood begins. The water then runs off from Kitty into that area and it seems that no one...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member you may wish to make an appointment with the Minister to discuss it with him.

Dr. Ramsammy: Mr. Chairman, I have made arrangements with the Hon. Members Dr. Rupert Roonarine, who I have been informed is the spokesperson for agriculture and the Hon. Member, Prakash Ramjattan, who told me that he is the agriculture shadow. They can come to me, but I also know that my officers are listening and those areas we will take it into...

Mrs. Lawrence: Hon. Minister, you mentioned this allocation for the North Ruimveldt area, but I just want to know if whether within this allocation there are plans to divert or remove that

particular area from the connection to the Liliendaal pump. Previously when there was no Sophia there were no problem, but with the invent of the Sophia Housing Scheme they are having continuous problem. So I do not know if in your plan there is anything to correct that.

Dr. Ramsammy: Mr. Chairman, I know that my officers are here and instead of me telling them second hand they are hearing. When I meet with them tomorrow I will make sure they are taking these proposals into consideration.

Ms. Selman: This is a follow up to all the questions which went before. Could we be told what exactly has been done with the \$322.174 million spent since 2010? We are unaware that anything has been done since the project was supposed to reduce the risk of flooding and improve the East Bank Demerara Conservancy system.

Dr. Ramsammy: What Line Item?

Ms. Selman: Project 1301800 – Drainage and Irrigation Support Project, the same Line Item.

Dr. Ramsammy: Mr. Chairman, I have already explained that the major responsibility within the community and the municipality is not the NDIA. This is to complement internal drains and so on. In no way is this meant to prevent all the floods. It is to ensure that the internal drains and so in the community are kept cleaned. But it does not remove the responsibility of the NDCs of the municipalities and the regional authorities and citizens I might add.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members I think this is a convenient time to take the suspension. Unfortunately we have not covered as much ground. On the resumption I am going to be a little stricter in terms of sticking to the Estimates and I hope that we move expeditiously. Please replace the Mace.

Assembly resumed.

Sitting suspended at 5.03 p.m.

6.06 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 6.06 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Members. This session has resumed and we will go immediately into Committee of Supply.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, at the moment that we took the suspension I believe that the Hon. Member, Mr. Trotman, who is not here now, was about to put a question. He is not here and so I propose...

Mr. B. Williams: If it pleases you, Mr. Chairman, I had intended to ask a question before we left on the first line item. Could the Hon. Minister confirm, in relation to the drainage works, if he has earmarked any draining works for the East Coast, especially where we have the terrible flooding at the back of those villages on the East Coast?

Mr. Chairman: Is this on a particular line item or is this just a general...

Mr. B. Williams: Line item 1301800.

Dr. Ramsammy: I think I know what the Hon. Member wants to ask but it is under the wrong line item. He is asking about the community drainage and irrigation. This is (line item 1301800, Drainage and Irrigation Support Project), as I said, the work that we are doing to compliment what Neighbourhood Diplomatic Councils (NDCs), Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs) and municipalities are doing; these are the Drainage and Irrigation (D and I) Workers.

If he wanted to ask about 1301600, National Drainage and Irrigation Authority...

Mr. Chairman: We are not there as yet. A lot of this information is anticipated, can be anticipated and can be supplied without us having to rise to ask it formally when we can just share some information. Members seem particularly concerned, and rightfully so, about drains and roads in their communities and their constituents communities. That is understandable.

Mr. B. Williams: This is exactly it, community drainage. That is what it says at this line item, "Support to community drainage and irrigation projects".

Dr. Ramsammy: In that case, if that is what the Hon. Member wants, this programme is throughout Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10. In the case of the East Coast it also exists in Industry, Plaisance, Better Hope, La Bonne Intention (LBI), Mon Repos, Beterverwagting (BV), Triumph, Buxton, Foulis, Haslington, Grove, Golden Grove, Nabaclis, Unity, Cane Grove, Enmore, Good Hope.

Mr. B. Williams: I thank the Minister.

Mr. Trotman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to refer the Hon. Minister to line item 1301700. My question to the Minister is: Can he indicate to us what amounts here are for grants and what are for loans? Can he indicate how the amount under "Other" is distributed?

Dr. Ramsammy: You are talking about 1301700.

Mr. Trotman: Yes, Mr. Minister.

Dr. Ramsammy: This item is a programme in which part of this has to do with the Northern Relief Channel and the second part deals with the acquisition of eight fixed pumps and six mobile pumps. We are all familiar with the Northern Relief Channel and \$1.2 billion of this amount is budgeted in 2012 to continue that work. There are four components to that.

The other part of it is a line of credit with the Indian Government, and under this programme \$820 million is for the acquisition of eight fixed site pumps and six mobile pumps. These pumps are to be located at Windsor Forest, Cane Grove, Pine Ground, Paradise, Enterprise, Black Bush Polder, Albion and Rose Hall Town.

Mr. Trotman: As a follow-up, Mr. Chairman, I am not sure if the Hon. Minister heard the second part of my question, which is: Can he indicate the source of this \$1.2 billion, whether it is a grant or a loan?

Dr. Ramsammy: The second half of the \$2.02 billion – the \$820 is from a line of credit from the Indian Government – the \$1.2 billion is a combination of a loan and funds from the Consolidated Fund.

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration – \$4,852,274,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 212 – Crops and Livestock Support Services – \$000

Mr. Chairman: There is a mistake on your schedule so we should be at pages 102 and 103

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, if I may, I noted that on page 423 we have capital items for crops and livestock while there is nothing current.

Mr. Chairman: Pages 102 and 103 concern Crops and Livestock Support Services.

Mrs. Lawrence: There is nothing current but there are capital expenditures.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 212 – Crops and Livestock Support Services – \$1,947,590,000

Mrs. Lawrence: My questions are on page 424, a continuation. I do not know if you are going to put it now – pages 423 and 424.

Mr. Chairman: We are at pages 423 and 424. Those two pages cover Programme 212.

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am looking at Project Code 1301900, Mangrove Management. Could the Hon. Minister tell us which areas work will be done in for 2012?

Dr. Ramsammy: There will be planting of about 220 seedlings in Wellington Park, East Berbice will have 54,000 seedlings, No. 6 to 8 Villages on the West Coast of Berbice will have 78,000 seedlings and at Felicity/Montrose on the East Coast of Demerara there will be 88,000 seedlings. There will also be a project to install one breakwater using geotube technology at Victoria on the East Coast. The project will rehabilitate three groynes at Success, Mon Repos and the Greenfield/Bellfield Area. These will replace the old worn out groynes at these locations.

Mrs. Lawrence: A follow-up on that same line item for the Hon. Minister: I noted that included in this allocation is training and public awareness. My question to you is: Will this training be done for person both on the East and West Coast and the Corentyne of Berbice or will it be specific to a group of persons from within your Ministry or the Agriculture School?

Dr. Ramsammy: There will be training and also public awareness programmes in all the communities along the East Coast, in Region 5 and in Region 6, particularly where the mangrove is critical. There will also be additional training for technical people and we also work with community groups in terms of social programmes, for example, the Victoria Mangrove Co-op. and we train them in terms of doing micro enterprise industries.

Mrs. Lawrence: A follow-up question: Hon. Minister, could you kindly tell us whether this work is going out to tender or whether you are going to use the community groups which you had used in the past to do these works?

Dr. Ramsammy: In terms of the planting, Hon. Member?

Mrs. Lawrence: Yes.

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes, community groups are going to be utilised.

Mrs. Lawrence: You are going to do the same now?

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes.

Mr. Allcock: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Project Code 2801400 - Rural Enterprise and Agricultural Development (READ): Can the Hon. Minister say what this really entails? Could he throw some more light on the scope of the same?

Dr. Ramsammy: I am going to try to stick to the Chairman's instructions, as before, and not go through... Part of this programme is to support community groups in building rural enterprises for their livelihood; for example, the bulk of the money in this allocation will support a micro enterprise. We have contracted out with Institute of Private Enterprise Development (IPED) and

they will be making available grants and loans – part will be a grant and part would be a loan. Since we started to allocate money from last year into IPED for this project, there is presently about \$180 million in IPED for this programme. That would be a major part of the READ Project. There are other things to it but instead of going into all of the activities I think that that is one that will occupy a lot of our attention this year.

Mr. Allicock: Would the Regional Agricultural Section be fully involved?

Dr. Ramsammy: We would certainly hope so. We have been familiarising not only our officers but the Regions' officers about this programme so we would hope that everyone becomes engaged so that people could benefit throughout the 10 Regions.

Ms. Wade: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Project Code 1300600: Could the Minister tell us how much of this budgetary sum will be spent at the Abary Conservancy Dam?

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes, Mr. Chairman. \$55.8 million will be spent on structures and improvement of the Abary Conservancy and Control Structures.

Ms. Wade: Just a follow-up: Taking into consideration that the benefits of this project is to increase agriculture and to reduce the flooding in this area, Mr. Minister, will these works bring relief to the farmers?

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes, Hon. Member. We would hope that it would reduce the problems we have there; whether or not it will eliminate the problem is another issue. It is an incremental improvement so we hope to see significant improvement.

Mrs. Garrido-Low: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A follow-up on Project Code 2801400: I am hoping that the Hon. Minister can tell me if Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9 – the hinterland regions – will be benefiting from the marketing opportunities of this project. Thank you

Dr. Ramsammy: I did not hear. Which Project Code are you talking about?

Mrs. Garrido-Low: Project Code 2801400 - Rural Enterprise and Agricultural Development.

Dr. Ramsammy: The answer is “yes” and some communities are already benefiting from this programme.

Mrs. Garrido-Low: Thank you Hon. Member.

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, Project Code 1301200: I wonder if the Minister can say what aspects of this programme are supposed to be addressed in 2012. Secondly, if I may, can he say if the amount being provided comes from a loan or a grant or both and in what amounts?

Dr. Ramsammy: Is this Project Code 1301200?

Mr. D. Trotman: Yes, Hon. Member.

Dr. Ramsammy: This is a loan programme with the International Development Bank (IDB) and it has a number of activities. One, for example, is the building of access roads in certain areas like Den Amstel, Bonasika, Golden Grove, Victoria and East Black Bush Polder; another would be building a structure in East Black Bush Polder; a relief channel is being built there with a sluice; there is also completion of the Rice Seed Facility at No. 6 Village; the supply of laboratory equipment at the Burma Rice Research station. Those are some of the activities that it will support.

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the Hon. Minister, Project Code 1700400: I noted that the legend speaks to the provision of books; could the Hon. Minister tell us what is the rationale given for books being under a capital item?

Dr. Ramsammy: This is \$28 million. Most of this money will be for the rehabilitation of buildings at the Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA); \$5 million of that amount of money is for that purpose; the rehabilitation of pens within the school campus. We have farms and pens where we teach students how to manage animals. There is also work to build the main campus road, the revetment of the livestock farm, farm equipment and also \$2 million to improve the library.

Mrs. Lawrence: I just want to know what the rationale is for putting the purchase of books in a capital budget and not as a current item.

Dr. Ramsammy: This is to improve the library and a number of other things, but you want to know why books...

Mrs. Lawrence: It does not have a long lifespan. It is a current expense.

Dr. Ramsammy: This is being made to the GSA.

Mrs. Lawrence: I thank the Minister for his answer. I guess I will have to pose it to the Minister of Finance. Since he is not here nor is there anyone else to represent him...

Programme: 212 – Crops and Livestock Support Services – \$1,947,590,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 213 – Fisheries – \$103,316,000

Mr. Trotman: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: I wonder if the Minister can address the question of a reduction in the number of contracted employees for 2012 and the fact that there was a deduction in the amount being requested. To my mind the numbers are not consistent. I wonder, secondly, if it is he can, for the benefit of this Hon. House, inform us about designations of the five senior persons and the emoluments they receive.

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes, Mr. Chairman. In terms of the five senior persons under “Contracted employees” there is: an Agriculture Programme Officer at GS9 at \$96,000; there is also a Fisheries Officer at GS9 with the same salary; there is an Extension Officer at GS9 with the same salary and there is a Senior Research Officer at GS11 with a salary of about \$250,000.

In terms of what the Hon. Member was as an anomaly that there is a reduction in the number but an increase in the budgeted sum: There are two things that go on in this category, and in all of the categories. Sometimes there is movement of staff – up or down – but there is also movement of staff upwards as people take higher positions and that is what happened here.

Ms. Selman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6242: Could the Hon. Minister say what buildings have been identified for maintenance?

Dr. Ramsammy: The buildings for maintenance are Anna Regina Fish Culture Station building, the installation of an air-condition (AC) unit and general maintenance at the head office concerning office gutters and an AC unit at that office.

Ms. Wade: Just a follow-up, can the Minister give is a break-down as to how the monies will be allocated?

Dr. Ramsammy: In terms of the Anna Regina Fish Culture building - \$2 million

The air-conditioning and floor work - \$500,000

At the head office, general maintenance for gutters and AC unit - \$500,000

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6302: Could the Hon. Minister kindly tell us whether any scholarships will be granted from this allocation? If so, what would be the area of training?

Dr. Ramsammy: There are no scholarships under this line item. The training is for farmers in aquaculture and all aspects of farm management and working with cooperative societies to train them as well.

6.36 p.m.

Ms. Selman: Line item 6281 – Security Services: Could the Hon. Minister name the security company?

Dr. Ramsammy: The security company is Strategic Action Security Service. That company was contracted after a tendering process. There were two companies which tendered and Strategic Action Security was lower bidder of the two. The other was Roshan Khan (RK) Guyana Security Service.

Ms. Selman: Could the Hon. Minister say which buildings or facilities security is provided for by the security company?

Dr. Ramsammy: It is the Aquaculture Station at Mon Repos.

Programme: 213 – Fisheries - \$103,316,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 213 – Fisheries - \$11,308,000

Programme: 213 – Fisheries - \$11,308,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services - \$365,913,000

Mrs. Lawrence: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: Could the Minister kindly inform the House what the number of its fleet is?

Dr. Ramsammy: For the Hydrometeorological Office, there are four vehicles.

Mrs. Lawrence: Line item 6264 – Vehicle Spares and Service: Could the Hon. Minister tell us whether there is any plan to review the vehicles which the Hydrometeorological Office has since the expenses for vehicle spares and services is thirty-four per cent of the amount for fuel and lubricants which the Ministry has allocated here?

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes. There is always a review. Whether that review correlates with the Ministry's ability to replace those vehicles is another matter. I think that all Ministries face this problem and there would be need, at some point, to replace those vehicles.

Mrs. Lawrence: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): Could the Hon. Minister tell the House whether, included in the \$18 million, there is any allocation for scholarships this year and, if so, in what areas?

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes. There are, first of all, two scholarships at the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology in Barbados to train persons at senior level in the technician course

for Meteorology. There is also training to be done locally in the area of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) training for the staff members at the Hydrometeorological Office.

Ms. Ferguson: Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Could the Hon. Minister say what are the other infrastructural works to be done?

Dr. Ramsammy: There would be work to be done at the staff quarters in Lethem; work to be done at the National Weather Watch Centre, to repair the fence there, also weeding and cleaning of the service's compound at the Observatory at the National Weather Watch Centre at Hyde Park, Timehri, and Brickdam, and landscaping work at the Observatory at the National Weather Watch Centre, which is at Timehri.

Mr. Trotman: My first question to the Minister is on line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence. Could the Minister indicate to us who are the persons who travel under this line item?

Dr. Ramsammy: It is all of the staff. There are staff who move from the Brickdam office to the National Weather Watch Centre at Timehri, but they also visit weather stations around the country.

Mr. Trotman: I would then want to refer the Minister's attention to line item 6265 – Other Transport, Travel and Postage. I wonder if he cares to address the question of transport, travel and postage, under this line item, the amount, and who do travel under this line item.

Dr. Ramsammy: Under this line item the airfares are paid for travelling. Boats are sometimes hired for when the staff have to go down the river.

Mr. Trotman: I would like to ask the Minister to address under "Other Goods and Services Purchased", the line item 6284 – Other. Could he tell this House what are the goods and services purchased under this line item?

Dr. Ramsammy: From this line item, stipends are paid to the meteorological and hydrological observers. Those are people who are not permanent staff, but they are hired as observers, in various parts of the country. The Ministry also pays its internet charges under this line item. This is particularly at the National Weather Watch Centre. It pays fees to the National Frequency

Management Unit, makes payment to the Government Information Agency (GINA) for advertisement and payment to customs and brokerage charges. It also pays Web Spiders for hosting the Hydrometeorological website.

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, I crave your indulgence. I want to take the Minister back to line item 6116 – Contracted Employees. I wonder, for the purpose of my own satisfaction and for the House's information, of course, if the Minister can indicate the areas in which those thirty contracted employees will be engaged, in 2012, and their designations.

Dr. Ramsammy: The contracted employees are the Meteorological Technicians. There are 13 of them and they work at the National Weather Watch Centre, but they also work in different parts of the country at the other weather stations. There are four Hydrometeorological Technical Assistants, Driver, Cleaner, Meteorologists, Accounts Clerks, Telecommunication Engineer, Senior Meteorological Technician, Electrical Engineer, Specialist Hydrologist, and a Meteorological Officer.

Mr. Trotman: There is a part of the question in which the Hon. Minister overlooked and that is the relevant emoluments for those persons.

Dr. Ramsammy: Under contracted employment, the highest paid is the Specialist Hydrologist, General Scale (GS) 11 at \$202,000 and that is followed by the Electrical Engineer at \$159,000, Meteorologist at \$151,000, Telecommunication Engineer at \$151,000. Everybody else is paid under \$100,000.

Ms. Ferguson: Under line item 6291 – National and Other Events - I notice that for last year there was an allocation of \$3.9 million and for this year I notice that \$4 million is being requested. Could the Hon. Minister explain the reason for this?

Dr. Ramsammy: It is \$100,000 more. If I had my way, I would have asked the Minister of Finance for much more, but the Minister of Finance, within what he could give, gave us a modest increase. We would like all of these activities to be a lot more than what they are right now, but we live with what we get.

Mr. Jones: A follow-up to line item 6284 – Other. The Hon. Minister explained that the money is also used for the placement of advertisements with GINA and others. Could he name the other agencies that the Ministry uses to advertise?

Dr. Ramsammy: The Ministry pays GINA for advertisements. I did not say “others.”

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Jones, GINA, when it receives requests, places the advertisements for the agency.

Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services - \$365,913,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 214 - Hydrometeorological Services - \$25,000,000

Programme: 214 - Hydrometeorological Services - \$25,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Agency: 24 Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment

Current Expenditure

Programme: 241 - Ministry Administration - \$74,460,000

Mr. Greenidge rose.

Mr. Chairman: I congratulate you, Mr. Greendige. The records will show that you would have asked the first question ever of this Ministry. That is going to be a historical...

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, I stood before him.

Mr. Chairman: I have to recognise the ranking Member in the front bench.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you Mr. Chairman. I understand the precedence, but I am not sure of the significance of the precedence. In relation to staffing which is shown at the bottom of page 123, I notice that the agency is catering for ten contracted employees. I wonder whether the Minister

might be good enough to indicate what categories of staff he has in mind. I have some other questions in relation to staffing, but perhaps he can start there.

Minister of Natural Resources and Environment [Mr. R. Persaud]: The ten contracted employees identified there are the Permanent Secretary, Internal Audit Manager, Stakeholders Coordinator, Stakeholders Support Officer, Personal Assistant, Senior Policy Analyst Adviser, Expenditure, Planning and Management Analyst, Confidential Secretary, Typist Clerk, Driver/Mechanic and Driver/Dispatcher.

Mr. Greenidge: Could the Minister tell us whether he is proposing to have staff seconded from any agencies to serve within the Ministry?

Mr. R. Persaud: The Ministry has been advised and applied to the Public Service Ministry for the necessary administrative support staff. We are also working very closely with the related agencies to avoid duplication and additional cost for the relevant experts who can support the Ministry in terms of its policy coordination because the intention of the Ministry is to administer, as well as to coordinate natural resources and environment policy and work with the various agencies. It is working both with the Public Service Ministry in assigning and redeploying staff, as well as sourcing from the relevant agencies the related experts that are necessary.

Mr. Greenidge: In relation to the latter explanation, about sourcing from related agencies, have any of those agencies been required to commit staff to the Ministry and to fund them specifically?

Mr. R. Persaud: Yes. The services of experts or related and necessary technical staff have been tapped and it would be an ongoing process in terms of three or four-month assignment, depending on the issues which are confronting the Ministry.

Mr. Greenidge: A follow-up, Mr. Chairman. Does the Minister envisage any staff being seconded, in that way, for longer periods and funded by these associated agencies or are they all short-term - the four-month?

Mr. R. Persaud: For the assignment and engagements of the Ministry, they are different which run over different periods. Take for instance, I am just citing an example, today, there were some discussions with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). It is a new initiative

and if we were to go outside of those agencies, it would be difficult to identify those skills. So what will be is that particular individuals, with those types of skills, would be assigned until the initiative gets going and we would have, as a nation, been able to satisfy our requirements. Different assignments last differing periods. I cannot definitively say that all would be for three or six months or for a year. It is dependent on the nature of the assignment and the engagement.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Minister, perhaps, you can let us know whether any of those agencies are being required to recruit new staff for that purpose, rather than seconding them.

Mr. R. Persaud: That is not currently envisioned.

Mr. Nagamootoo: I had wanted to ask a question which runs through the appropriations under line item 6116 – Contracted Employees. I waited until this new Ministry came on stream, under an energetic Minister who understands very much, I can say, the issue of labour and its import in Guyana. I want to know whether the Minister, through you Mr. Chairman, does not think that as a new Ministry, starting up, in order to grow the working class and the labour movement, should recruit through the public service procedures so that young people's careers can be developed in the country and it should not just put them all as contracted employees and they cannot get the benefit of learning in the working class environment.

Mr. R. Persaud: With your permission, Mr. Chairman...

Mr. Chairman: There was no line item and that was more of a policy statement. I think that because of the newness of your Ministry, I will permit it because I think that we all need to know what is happening in the Ministry. I know you would want the opportunity to respond.

Mr. R. Persaud: I am happy that you permitted the question. As I indicated, some component of the staffing will come from the Public Service Ministry. As I pointed out, the Ministry has already written to and has got permission...In fact, certain individuals within the public service have been identified for posting within the Ministry. If there are persons who might be on Government scholarships with the related skills - because this is a Ministry which requires certain set of skills - and those persons come back, in term of having satisfied certain requirements, and they are available within the public service, the Ministry has absolutely no

difficulty in absorbing those individuals, once there are positions and they have the requisite skills.

Mr. Chairman: Is that okay, Mr. Nagamootoo?

Mr. Nagamootoo: I understand that answer to mean, yes, and I am satisfied.

Mr. Chairman: I understood it to mean a yes, too.

Mr. Jones: Cde. Chairman, I was hoping to hear you say that a new precedent has been set: The first handsome MP to ask a question of the new Ministry. Since that has not been done, could the Hon. Minister tell us, under line item...

Mr. Chairman: It is not too late for me to say so.

Mr. Jones: ...6281 – Security Service - if this new Ministry is being housed in the Office of the President (OP)? Why is there a need for \$12 million?

Mr. R. Persaud: The Office of the President is the temporary location of the Ministry. A permanent location has been identified. In fact, there are two locations, one of which requires a substantial amount of work and the other location is currently occupied and is to be vacated before the end of the third quarter of this year. Certainly, security services would be required for those offices and buildings.

Mr. Allicock: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): Could the Hon. Minister elaborate a bit more for me to get a clearer picture?

Mr. R. Persaud: The training allocation there is envisioned to support the administrative staff, as well as some of the technical staff, with training which is offered and available in the country, at specialised institutions which make those courses and programmes available - take, for instance, information and communication technology. From time to time, international institutions may come and host workshops and training programmes, where there is the requirement to make some payment - be it environmental matters, instructive matters. It is to constantly allow the staff, without having to go overseas for prolonged period, to benefit from training programmes which are available in the country.

Programme: 241 - Ministry Administration - \$74,460,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 241 - Ministry Administration - \$28,000,000

Mr. Trotman: Project 2404900 – Land Transport: Could the Minister say to this honourable House how many vehicles are proposed to be purchased under this line item?

Mr. R. Persaud: It is two.

Mr. Trotman: A follow-up, Mr. Chairman: Could the Minister indicate the type of vehicles which will be purchased under this line item?

Mr. R. Persaud: Because a lot of the work entails travelling into the Hinterland, the Ministry hopes that it will have the resources that will allow it to have, at least, two double cab pickups, 4x4.

Mr. Trotman: Could the Minister state the procedure that is proposed to be used to acquire those vehicles?

Mr. R. Persaud: The Ministry will, and has no other choice, conform to the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board's (NPTAB) guidelines.

Programme: 241 - Ministry Administration - \$28,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

7.06 p.m.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 242 - Natural Resource Management - \$72,187,000

Mr. Chairman: The heat and humidity is rising and it can be unhealthy if we are not careful. We are at pages 124 - 125. I would like for us to go as quickly as we can because, as I said, apart from the place getting hot, some Members are developing, what seems as, sinus and other colds and allergies, and it can become unhealthy. I would like to see us all back here on Monday. So

we will go as quickly as we can without, of course, compromising the oversight function that we have.

It is not a quick thing. We are not going to compromise the oversight function. I was just saying that. I thought I heard a voice to the contrary.

Mr. Greenidge: Programme 242 seems, judging from page 125, that there is no staff envisaged during the course of the year. Is this correct, no staff at all?

Mr. R. Persaud: Under this particular programme the allocation is assigned to “Subsidies and Contribution to Local Organisation” and this is the direct subsidy to the Guyana Lands and Survey Commission. The Guyana Lands and Survey, as it is understood how it is constituted, as a semi-autonomous agency which would have resources from central Government as well as garnering its own resources from its own structure. The Guyana Lands and Survey Commission has just about one hundred and eighty-one staffers taking up the various positions and post, as it is required with a modern and first class Land Commission.

Mr. Greenidge: I thank the Minister for the explanation, but I had actually looked at that item and I was wondering whether he envisaged no filling of any positions here and it is if we can expect this page to remain, simply, for the purposes of reflecting the subvention to the local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

Mr. R. Persaud: You are correct.

Programme: 242 – Natural Resource Management - \$72,187,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 242 - Natural Resource Management – \$24,000,000

Mr. Allen: Could the Hon. Minister say to this House where in the Mabaruma district and the Port Kaituma district of Region 1 that those surveys will be taking place?

Mr. R. Persaud: The immediate emphasis is looking at the railway track which links Matthews Ridge to Port Kaituma. First, doing the occupational survey as well as the cadastral survey, both

for agricultural purposes and residential, as well as to determine in the alignment for the impending railway line which would have to be developed for the manganese operation.

Mr. Allen: What about the Mabaruma Subregion?

Mr. R. Persaud: We are looking at some areas within the Hososoro area, but also there are a number of outstanding requests. In fact, we do expect that we will be able to cover some of the other areas where there would have been outstanding requests, for that particular Subregion.

Programme: 242– Natural Resource Management - \$24,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 243 - Environmental Management - \$230,665,000

Mrs. Lawrence: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: I ask that we turn to page 397, National Parks Commission, \$98.3 million. Could the Hon. Minister kindly tell us what is the programme envisaged to spend this allocation on?

Mr. R. Persaud: The focus will be on the upgrade of the National Park, also the upgrade of the Zoological Park and the Botanical Gardens, but we need to point out too that the subvention here also will allow for us to support the National Parks Commission in meeting some of its general administration cost.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, through you, to the Hon. Minister. Could the Minister inform the House what proportion of this \$98.3 million will be spent on the Zoological Park and what will be the programmes for this year? What will it be focusing on?

Mr. R. Persaud: The Ministry is currently discussing with donors, the private sector, and there is a broad base committee which is called “Friends of the Zoo”, and based on the conclusion of those discussions then it would be able to surmise how much it will be getting from its friends out there, it will then finally determine the specific allocation that will be put to the Zoological Park as against the Botanical Gardens as well as the National Park.

Mrs. Lawrence: A follow-up. Is the Minister saying that this \$98.3 million was just plucked out of the air?

Mr. R. Persaud: Absolutely not. In fact if we look at the programme, there is currently a plan to improve the zoo. One is the physical infrastructure as well as having the necessary animals and the attraction for kids, and so forth. It will require, just for the zoo improvement alone, a minimum of \$40 million and \$50 million. This sum, here, because of the demands of the National Park and the Botanical Gardens, we are looking at, as much as possible, how it is that we can get the private sector and other stakeholders to support us in focusing on the zoo. Just recently there was the Rotary Club assisting in the National Park, in terms of having the children recreational area, which was a substantial investment made. Based on the response the Ministry will get, it will then finally be able to determine how much it will be able to allot in terms of capital investment in the Zoological Park itself.

Mrs. Lawrence: A follow-up. The present Ministry, in this budget, did allocate moneys for capital works to the Zoological Park. So the Minister is telling us that part of this money will go towards capital works and part will go towards, I hope, getting some animals for the zoo, for the empty cages that we now see. Sir, your explanation in terms of being able to analyse how much money you are going to put aside out of this... I mean you must have some estimate of what are your priorities, the fact that you are already catering for some things, that these are the other three things the people of Guyana can look forward to when they go to the Zoological Park.

Mr. R. Persaud: In terms of the reference to the capital programme, up until the 2nd of April the Kaieteur National Park was in fact part of National Parks Commission. With the establishment of the Protected Areas Commission, the Kaieteur Park went under it. When the submission was made, at the time of the submission and formulation of the budget, the Kaieteur National Park was catered for under the National Park's Commission. That, itself, with the ability to have the Protected Areas Commission going, the Ministry can then, going through the necessary formalities with the Ministry of Finance, be able to have some of those resources, which were assigned to the Kaieteur National Park, be assigned, in terms of improvement, to the Zoological Park. Specifically relating to the Zoological Park, it is the physical improvement, having the playground area properly maintained and upgraded. The pens, the Member spoke of, which are empty, it is to have those populated, as well as even to change the design, because if you go

around and look at zoos, across the world, the design that is here for our zoo is not in a way convenient, in terms of viewing and interacting. They look like prison cells rather than modern pens. Three such units have already been constructed, bringing them up to the modern era, and the Ministry intends to use some of that. So, specifically the answer to the question is the physical improvement to the children's area, populating the pens and improving the conditions of them.

Mr. Greenidge: Perhaps the Minister might, by way of a follow-up to the previous question, give us an indication later of what new animals are intended to acquire. In relation to the Protected Areas Commission, to which the Minister has made reference, could he tell us what falls under there, apart from the Kaieteur Park? Is it only the Kaieteur Park? Could he give us a breakdown of what is there – a listing?

Mr. R. Persaud: There are three declared protected areas in our country - Kaieteur National Park, the Shell Beach area and the Kanuku Mountains. That is not to say that those areas would be exclusively what constituted the Protected Areas Commission. As in the Ninth Parliament, we have passed the Protected Area Bill and it prescribes a mechanism through which the communities and organizations, and other stakeholders, can make applications for a particular area to be designated as such.

Mr. Greenidge: Would the Minister be good enough to tell us what exactly will be proposing to be done in those areas with the capital items indicated?

Mr. R. Persaud: Primarily, it is equipping the office, the secretariat of the Protected Areas Commission, and the Ministry is in discussion and about to finalise a programme with the bank Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), from the German Government, a grant, to allow it to start up and conduct, and do projects, in these areas which would support the Ministry being compliant with the law and ensuring that these areas are in fact the integrity of the ecosystem and that the biodiversity of these areas are maintained.

Mrs. Lawrence: Line item 6321 - Subsidies and Contribution to Local Organisations: I am looking at the subsidies, the list of organisations, page 397, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), an allocation of \$107.3 million. Mr. Minister, could you kindly tell us where this agency is located, how many staff is there and the positions?

Mr. R. Persaud: The EPA is located at Sophia, which was formerly the old Guyana Water Authority (GUYWA) headquarters, about a stone's throw from Congress Place. There are the Executive Director, the EMD Director, EITD Director, NRMD Director, Admin. Director, a Senior Environmental Officer - well, there are six Senior Environmental Officers - seven Senior Environmental officers who look at different subgroup with the wider issue, eight Senior Environmental Officers who look at research and development, nine Senior Environmental Officers who look at research and biodiversity issues, ten Special Projects Officers, which gives a complement of seventy-one employees.

Mrs. Lawrence: That sounds like the White House. Mr. Chairman, through you, to the Minister, are you saying to this House that there are no support staff and that everyone is an officer or a director?

Mr. R. Persaud: There are support staffers within there and I did not spell out. Take for instance, when I talked about the ten Projects Officers who fall within there, there are clerical staff within the EPA itself. We can go through the structure and we are happy to make it available to the Hon. Members, if she wishes.

Mrs. Lawrence: I do not need to have the structure, Mr. Minister. I have been trained by one of the best colleges in administration, so I do not need to have that structure. Could the Minister tell us what are the programmes the EPA will be doing this year?

Mr. Chairman: Minister, could you send the structure to this office? We need to have our own records here.

Mr. R. Persaud: I will, Mr. Chairman, as you so direct. The function of the EPA is clearly defined in the EPA Act. The annual programme is certainly in fulfillment of the Act itself. Let me expand.

- The first issue is looking, in terms of environmental education and awareness. A lot of emphasis is placed on that.
- The second issue looks in terms of monitoring, in terms of what is happening with industries and activities which have impact on the environment.

- The third area looks at enforcement, because we also have to ensure that the necessary, take for instance, companies, which have submitted environmental management plans, are in compliant.
- The fourth area also looks at the general policy direction and support and ensuring that the obligations, take for instance, on the convention and biodiversity and other related international obligations, are fulfilled, and also to guide policymakers for both national and international positions, in terms of the environment.

It is quite a robust programme, but I will also not hesitate to say that that is an area in which much more work is needed to be done, especially in an environmental awareness, environmental monitoring, and the Ministry does intend to embark on a much more aggressive programme, this year and onwards.

Programme: 243 – Environmental Management - \$230,665,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 243 - Environmental Management - \$29,740,000

Programme: 243 – Environmental Management - \$29,740,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 14 Public Service Ministry

Current Expenditure

Programme: 141- Public Service Management - \$632,396,000

Mr. B. Williams: Might I respectfully, Mr. Chairman, refer the Hon. Minister to line items 6111 to 6117, staffing details. Out of a workforce of forty-one, could the Hon. Minister confirm the twenty-four contracted employees?

Minister of Public Service Ministry [Dr. Westford]: So do, Mr. Chairman, confirmed.

Mr. B. Williams: Could the Hon. Minister confirm that those twenty-four opted to be contracted employees?

Dr. Westford: So do, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. B. Williams: Could the Hon. Minister confirm that the traditional public service, as we know it, has now been phased out?

Dr. Westford: I do not conform to that, Mr. Chairman. Those are all members of the traditional public service. Both the contracted and pensionable workers are all members of the traditional public service.

Mr. B. Williams: Could the Hon. Minister clarify whether she understands that there is a traditional public service in Guyana?

Dr. Westford: For the information of the Hon. Member, I, Dr. Jennifer Reginalda Ann Westford am the Minister of the traditional public service.

Mr. B. Williams: Is the traditional public service a career public service and pensionable?

Dr. Westford: The traditional public service, and I repeat...

Mr. B. Williams: It is "a career." Answer my question.

Dr. Westford: ... is a career public service and it consists of pensionable and non- pensionable officers. Those non-pensionable officers can be contracted officers or temporary officers.

Mr. B Williams: Could the Hon. Minister confirm that the categories of contracted employees are of recent vintage within the last decade?

Dr. Westford: I will not confirm to that, Sir. It has been there, before that.

Mr. B. Williams: Therefore, since the budget this year is \$6 billion for contracted employees, I am again asking the Hon. Minister to confirm that the traditional public service, as we know it, has been phased out by this Government.

Dr. Westford: Are we going to continue this on this line? Let me say that the traditional public service continues to be as it was.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister I was prepared to allow you to, as long as,... You seem quite willing to engage..., but I believe that the question has been asked and it has been answered. Is there any other question on a line item?

Mr. B. Williams: Yes please. Line item 6133 - Benefits and Allowances: Could the Hon. Minister say what those benefits are?

Dr. Westford: Those benefits and allowances pertain to workers' duty allowances, responsibility allowances and acting allowances.

Mr. B. Williams: Might I respectfully refer the Hon. Minister, Mr. Chairman, to line item 6117 - Temporary Employees. In that category there are two temporary employees. Could you say the category of workers those two employees are?

Dr. Westford: There is one Typist Clerk with a salary of \$45, 354 and one Senior Student Affairs Officer with a salary of \$97,699.

Mr. B. Williams: Could the Minister tell us, under line item 6133, Benefits and Allowances, which category of officers enjoy those benefits and allowances?

Dr. Westford: It is all of the staff, Sir. All of the public servants get those allowances that I mentioned.

Mr. B. Williams: Responsibility allowances, acting allowances and they are on contract. Could the Hon. Minister say whether those contracted employees get acting allowances?

Dr. Westford: Sir, I also said responsibility allowances. Any staff, whether on the pensionable or not, can assume the responsibility of a position and as such they are paid a responsibility allowance and or a duty allowance.

Mr. B. Williams: That means it is a new contract they are entering into, Hon, Minister. If you contract an employee is it not for specific category or a specific job in the public service?

Dr. Westford: Mr. Chairman, I think the Hon. Member...

Mr. B. Williams: Just answer the question.

Dr. Westford: It is not so.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Williams, I think the question, probing as they are, could best be put to the Minister in a sectoral committee, because they go interestingly enough to the issue of the policy of the Government, which I, myself, would like to sit on. I have admired your cross-examination skills but, be that as it may, I would like us to go into a line item.

Mr. B. Williams: But I am dealing with a line item, "Contracted Employees." If it is a contract it has to be for a specific job in the public service. I am asking the Hon. Minister to confirm that. So there cannot be that and then the person sliding around as though that person is in the traditional public service, acting up. So could the Hon. Minister answer that question, Mr. Chairman, that when the Ministry employs a contracted worker, on a contract, if it is not for a specific job?

Dr. Westford: Could I again insist that a contracted worker is a member of the traditional public service, has the same rights and enjoys the same benefits, and all conditions of service, as the pensionable worker. The difference is that the contracted worker can opt to be on the contracted establishment whereas the pensionable worker goes on the pensionable establishment.

7.36 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: I believed that the Minister had answered and I ask that you move on.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Line item 6302 –Training (including Scholarships): Could the Minister kindly elaborate on the training and scholarships?

Dr. Westford: Training as well as granting scholarships is done under this line item. Currently, there are one hundred and sixty students at the University of Guyana; there are one hundred and thirty continuing students and twenty new students who would have just commenced; there are also forty-eight students at the Government Technical Institute; there are forty-five students at the Guyana School of Agriculture. At the Carnegie School of Home Economics, twenty-two student, Burrowes School of Art, there are three students; the Business School, there are ten students; Global Technology, there are six students. There are also four students overseas, currently, two students in Canada who are doing dentistry and one is in the United States of America (USA), also is doing dentistry. There are, currently, twenty-five medical students who

are here, doing their internship, as a matter of fact, it is their sixth year from Cuba. They come under this line item here because they have to be paid a stipend from this line item. Also under this line item - well, the Hon. Member asked about scholarships, let me continue - there is also other local scholarships for Guyana Industrial Training Centre (GITC), to Government Technical Institute (GTI) and to assist, in some instances, persons who would have dropped out from school and would like to do Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) or Information Technology.

Mr. Greenidge: In relation to line item 6112 – Senior Technical - would the Hon. Minister be good enough to tell us exactly what functions this category of employee performs in relation to contracted officers alone and the pensionable staff on the other hand? I am wondering if they cover any Human Resources-type functions.

Dr. Westford: What are their functions?

Mr. Greenidge: Yes.

Dr. Westford: The Senior Technical Officers are officers who are at the senior level. For instance, at the Public Service Ministry, they will come under the Training Officers who will be the Personnel Officers, such as the senior Personnel Officers. There is no difference in performance of duties. If a person is on the pensionable employment that person is a Senior Personnel Officer. If a person is a contracted worker that person is a Senior Personnel Officer. They all perform the said duties. Is that your question?

Mr. Greenidge: I am really trying to determine the functions that those senior officers perform, *vis-a-vis* what we may call the two categories of employees, although the Minister, on the one hand,...I am not disputing whether there are within, what the Minister called the public service pensionable and contracted. I am not concerned about the functions of those two categories of officers. I am wondering about the function of the Technical Officers, in terms of the Human Resources-type services they provide to those two categories.

Dr. Westford: Is it their functions?

Mr. Greenidge: Yes. What are the Human Resources functions the technical staff perform *vis-a-vis* the employees within the public service - contracted and non-contracted?

Dr. Westford: I still do not get you.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, the Public Service Ministry is, I believe, intended to perform functions in relation to or in service to the employees' Ministries, and so forth, within the public service. Of those functions, some are Human Resources-type functions, so that in relation to officers who are on contract, which of those categories of officers can tell us something about job descriptions whether they have any responsibility in ensuring consistency across the public service, in terms of salaries terms of employment, and so forth? That is what I am trying to get to. Is that clear?

Mr. Chairman: Is it whether there is some form of compliance officers, Mr. Greenidge? Ensuring that across the Ministries...

Mr. Greenidge: That is correct.

Mr. Chairman: ...that there is compliant with public services rules.

Dr. Westford: I just said, within that bracket, there are the Personnel Officers or the Human Resources Development Officers. They are under that line item. They are the ones who are responsible for working with the Ministries' Human Resources department, which is in relation to employment benefits, doing the job descriptions - the things I gave the Member yesterday - and ensuring that they confirm to the standards. There is also, under this line item, the Training Officers who are responsible for training.

Mr. Greenidge: In that regard, then could the Minister tell us whether the functions they are performing are going to be falling in future or why that the amounts allocated to this category is lower now? Is it a trend or it is just a change over one year?

Dr. Westford: Which line item are we speaking to?

Mr. Greenidge: It is line item 6112 – Senior Technical.

Dr. Westford: Line item 6112 – Senior Technical: There is one officer there. That is under the pensionable establishment. There is such category of worker under the contracted employees.

Mr. Greenidge: So what I would like to know, then, is how many of your officers have those responsibilities, in terms of the public service and...?

Dr. Westford: Is it in terms of the Public Service Ministry, Sir?

Mr. Greenidge: How many of those officers carry out that Human Resources functions within the agency, whether contract or otherwise?

Dr. Westford: There is a total of twelve of those officers.

Mr. Greenidge: Has that number been steadied or has it been declining?

Dr. Westford: It has been steadied, Sir.

Mr. Greenidge: The Ministry then would be in a position, if we so desired, to give us an analysis of those issues pertaining to compliance and structure?

Dr. Westford: Certainly.

Mr. Sharma: I would like to ask the Hon. Minister: What is the authorised number of staffing for the various line items, line item 6111 to line item 6115?

Dr. Westford: Line item 6111 –Administrative - the authorised number is three; line item 6112 – Senior Technical - the authorised number is zero; line item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support - the authorised number is six; line item 6115 – Semi-Skilled and Operatives and Unskilled - the authorised number is five; line item 6116 – Contracted Employees - twenty-four; line item 6117 – Temporary Employees - two. May I inform you, Sir, that the authorised number of staff of any Ministry is those positions which have been authorised to be filled. That is the authorised position of any Ministry - those positions which have been given authorisation to be filled by the Public Service Ministry, which has that constitutional right.

Mr. Sharma: I do not agree with that statement. If, for example, in 2012 there is three, if in 2013 there is no one, then the authorised number is zero. The authorised position has to be fixed. It was there in 2005 and no explanation was given why it was taken out. Now, if I am to refer to pages 509 to 510, I think it will be “Appendix (Q),” it will stipulate designation but not the quantity of persons, so we need to have this transparency. So the Minister needs to revise this.

Dr. Westford: Sir, I take offence that the Hon. Member is insinuating that I am not saying the truth to this House. Sir, the authorised position of any Ministry is those positions which have been given the authorisation to be filled. That is the authorised position of any Ministry, Sir.

Mr. Greenidge: Is it possible to have a position authorised and not filled?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. A position may be authorised and be permitted to fill it, but it has not been filled.

Mr. Greenidge: The Hon. Minister is giving us a definition that is problematic. That is why I am trying to understand.

Dr. Westford: Sir, there are two things. There is an establishment of positions and there is an authorised establishment which is the people who are in those positions. For instance, the Parliament Office, Mr. Isaacs can come to the Public Service Ministry to have permission to create a position. So he may have a position created. If he does not seek or he does not get permission to fill that position, it has to be zero - if he does not have anyone there. So his authorised position is going to be zero because he has no authorisation to fill that position even though that position would have been created. There two separate things, Sir.

Mr. Greenidge: Could the Minister then...?

Dr. Westford: Sir, May I continue? It means that Mr. Isaacs can then write the Public Service Ministry to say, "Madam Minister, I have a vacancy, because I was given authorisation to fill, could I now be given the authority, the authorisation, to look for someone to fill that position?" It was to create; now if it can be filled. There are two separate things, Sir.

Mr. Greenidge: Is the Minister finished, Mr. Chairman? Because if she has completed what she is saying, I would like to know whether we can ask of the Hon. Minister the established strength, in relation to the Ministry.

Dr. Westford: The established strength of the Ministry of Public Service is exactly what is here.

Mrs. Backer: Where here?

Dr. Westford: That is listed from line item 6111 – Administrative - to line item 6117 – Temporary Employees. That is the established strength.

Mr. Greenidge: Is it that there is no post authorised and unfilled, and there has not been for the past two years?

Dr. Westford: Currently, there is no post which is not filled.

Mr. Sharma: I would like the Hon. Minister to refer to 2005 Estimates where those information were provided, and why it was omitted without any clarification. Those are very pertinent information for transparency. Please permit me, Mr. Chairman, line item 6116 – Contracted Employees - I would like the Hon. Minister to say: What amount of this voted provision, \$57,796,000, represented contract gratuity? Now contract gratuity is paid to contracted officers. The Minister is saying that personnel have the right to decide if they want to be on the permanent, or fixed establishment, or contract, but in contract employment individuals are entitled to a contract gratuity of twenty-two and a half per cent. This twenty-two and a half per cent is given in two six-month payments. At the end of the year, it will be equivalent to three months gross salary of that position.

Mr. Chairman: What is the question?

Mr. Sharma: The question is, out of the Minister's allocation of \$57,796,000, what per cent represent contract gratuity?

Dr. Westford: Which line item is it?

Mr. Chairman: He gave a line item.

Mr. Sharma: It is line item 6116.

Mr. Chairman: What percentage is gratuity for contracted workers?

Dr. Westford: I do not have a calculator here, but it is twenty-two and a half per cent of each person's salary, and the salaries differ, given six monthly, calculated on a three-month basis. Based upon the salary of the person, that is how it is calculated. I cannot sit here and give that figure broadly now.

Mr. Sharma: Could the Minister then say, from the \$57 million, what is the amount? Is \$20 million to be paid as contract gratuity out of this \$57 million?

Dr. Westford: Sir, I just answer. It is twenty-two and a half per cent based on the person's salary. Every staff here has a different salary.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman, if you may permit me, Sir. In this Budget 2012 the total number of employees is twenty-four thousand eight hundred and seventeen. Fifteen per cent represents contracted employees, with twenty-six per cent representing the total wages in this budget for contracted employees. So there is the understanding of what is happening here. Now, my question, Mr. Chairman, is if the twenty-four thousand individuals opt to be contracted employees what will be the position of the Government? It is if it could pay this amount of money.

Mr. Chairman: Could the Government pay the persons who opted to go on contract their gratuity?

Dr. Westford: Pardon me, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Is the Government in a position to pay the employees who have opted to go...?

Dr. Westford: Obviously Sir, the Government would not employ anyone if it is not in the position to pay the salaries. Mr. Sharma should know that. He was a contracted employee. Sorry Sir. The Hon. Member should know that. He was a contracted employee of my Ministry.

Mr. Chairman: He is entitled to ask questions. Do not get worked up.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman, the question was that in this budget here, my computation, that is taking out the Guyana Defence Force (GDF) - the GDF figures will not be shown here because for security purpose - there is twenty-four thousand eight hundred and seventeen employees here, if those employees all decide to go, with what the Minister said, for contracted employment.

Mr. Chairman: I see your point.

Mr. Sharma: Now this contracted employment will be given each of those twenty-four thousand persons three months gross salary, if they take the contract. Now, could the Government...? This

is a political question, because we could go on the platform and say we opt for all the public servants to be contracted.

Mr. Chairman: What Mr. Sharma is trying to do is to look into the future. That is to say, that if every employee of the twenty-four thousand decides to opt for a contract, in other words he is saying, that will jeopardise the ability of the Government to pay. Mr. Sharma, that is a matter that we cannot anticipate right now. I would expect that the Government and the Minister, she may wish to answer, to say, if at all that were to happen, what they will do.

Mr. Sharma: With all due respect, Mr. Chairman, this is the various comments coming out from each and every Minister that the option is given to the workers. I want to know if the workers now decide to take this option..., because they will be benefiting three months salary. They would not be getting twelve months salary; they will be getting fifteen months salary.

Mr. Chairman: I think the Hon. Member Mr. Sharma has raised a concern that we will have to flag, but it does not come as an issue to be answered specifically tonight, but certainly it does portend to a danger if a trend continues in this respect, or this regard, over another few years.

Mr. Nagamootoo: The line item 6116 – Contracted Employees - in this Ministry, and in all Ministries, so far, has attracted significant attention, at least from this side of the House, and the Hon. Minister did say that she is the head - she made a demonstration - of the entire traditional public service. First, my question is, as the head of the entire traditional public service, would the Hon. Minister be able to give us, either now or in writing later, what is the full complement of this traditional public service? [Mr. Lumumba: That is what you want to know.] I want to know that all the time. Secondly, what percentage is on the pensionable establishment? And thirdly, what percentage is between bands one and five of the pensionable establishment?

Dr. Westford: I do not think the Hon. Member can so request an answer to that question because that does not pertain to my budget.

Mr. Chairman: He has just asked the question. Would you be in a position to provide it next week or Monday?

Dr. Westford: The Hon. Member is asking: What is the complement of the traditional public service? How many are on the pensionable and how many are on contract? That does not pertain

to my budget. I can speak too my budget, as I have it in front of me. If he needs that information, he can ask it by way of a question, Sir.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Chairman, with your leave Sir, as a Member of this Parliament, considering the Estimates, I am, under the Standing Orders, permitted to question the entire agency. This is a Ministry that services a larger reservoir. This Estimates, here, if I may put it in a very bland way, permit this Ministry, with all these allocations, to do a certain function and the basic information required, as a Member of this Parliament, under the entire agency, is what is the strength that is being serviced by this money, if I am to vote for it, to approve? It is being approved for a purpose.

Now, I am going to ask another question. There are twenty-four employees who are contracted out of forty-one, out of an allocation of \$73 million, whether the Minister does not feel that there is a disproportionate allocation of money to the contracted employees as against the non-contracted employees in her Ministry. In terms of the question, that there are twenty-four contracted employees as against seventeen non-contracted employees, but the contracted employees are taking the hog of the vote, is that a satisfactory situation in the traditional public service?

Dr. Westford: Sir, I do not agree that there is any disproportion. Each staff within the public service is paid based on that staff's category and whether it seems as if a less quantity of contracted workers is attracting a lump sum of money than the pensionable workers, it is all based on the category of staff. We have heard in this House each category carries a different level of salary. If the Hon. Member would like to know what are the salaries of the contracted workers he can so ask and I can provide it for him.

Mr. Sharma: Just for the record. At the Public Service Ministry, I was not a contracted employee. I was a permanent public servant on the fixed establishment. Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: What is the number of vehicles in the fleet of vehicles and the approximate age of the vehicles and to whom the vehicles are assigned?

Dr. Westford: There is a fleet of eight vehicles. One vehicle is assigned to the Minister. Seven vehicles are within the Ministry's pool which services the Training Division and the Main

Office. The approximate ages of those vehicles: the oldest vehicle is approximately, I think, is of the year 1983, Sir, and the most recent vehicle is of the year 2004.

Mr. Sharma: Follow-up. Could the Hon. Minister say what contributed to the increase in the expenditure of \$1 million from the budgeted sum of \$3.013 million in 2011? Was it that the Ministry was involved in election activities, because this is what I was hearing from the other Ministries?

Dr. Westford: Can you repeat your question, Sir?

Mr. Sharma: The line item is 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants. There is an increase of \$1 million in the actual cost for fuel over the budgeted amount in 2011. What is the reason for the increase?

Mr. Chairman: It is to give a reason for the spike - whether it had anything to do with electioneering.

Dr. Westford: In 2011, there were sixty-seven students returning from Cuba. Those students, the Ministry was responsible for them during their sixth year and it had to provide transportation for them, taking them to Region 3, to various centres where there was training - to Region 6, Region 5. Four vehicles had to be assigned to do that work, Sir.

Mr. Sharma: Follow-up. Could the Hon. Minister indicate if any provision was made for fuel for the new vehicle to be bought this year? From the indication, from the capital, it looks as if it might be a six or eight-cylinder vehicle. There is a very minimal increase in this cost - in the fuel cost.

Dr. Westford: I see that the Hon. Member has been already looking at the capital budget. Yes, the Ministry is going to be buying one new vehicle for the Permanent Secretary, and, yes, that amount would cater for the fuel, using for all of those vehicles.

Mr. Sharma: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister give the details for the maintenance work of \$3 million?

Dr. Westford: That is going to be maintenance for two buildings. There are two buildings. The main building on Waterloo Street, \$2 million will be spent. That will be for the refurbishing of the roof and the western wall. On the Training Division, some work will also be done on the roof

and the stairway. Bearing in mind, I am housed in a building which is now one hundred and fifty three years old - a heritage building.

Mr. Sharma: Line item 6264 – Vehicles Spares and Service: Could the Hon. Minister say what contributed to the increase in expenditure in maintenance of vehicle, almost \$2 million, from the budgeted figure of 2011?

Dr. Westford: What is the line item please?

Mr. Sharma: It is line item 6264. It is what accounts for the \$2 million increase in vehicle spares?

Dr. Westford: Sir, that was revised in 2011 because of the additional work, as I mentioned, where those students had to be transported between Region 3 and Region 6.

8.06 p.m.

There was a crack in the engine block in one of our vehicles. The entire engine had to be changed and we did that instead of buying a new vehicle. It is a Hilux Surf, very good vehicle, very strong, so we opted to getting a new engine instead of buying a new vehicle which would not give us that service.

Mr. Sharma: I appreciate the answer, Mr. Chairman. Government usually buys duty free vehicles so I am wondering if the Minister took that into consideration - if the cost was realistic.

Mr. Chairman: Did you take into account that you could have purchased a duty free vehicle for the same or less?

Dr. Westford: Mr. Chairman, I will never get a 4x4 Hilux Surf for that amount of money. Those are the vehicles that we have so I can tell you the prices for those vehicles.

Mrs. Backer: I just want to go back, if you will permit me, Sir, to line items 6111 to 6117. There is a total of 41 staff but Minister, for your Ministry, the list of pensionable posts, the total figure is 59 and you are operating with a total staff of 41. Would you agree with me, Minister that your Ministry is operating at less than optimum?

Dr. Westford: Mr. Chairman, I disagree and I am wondering where the Hon. Member got that information.

Mrs. Backer: I got the information from pages 509 and 510 of Volume 1 of the *Estimates of the Public Sector*. Would you want to turn to it with me so we can go through it?

Dr. Westford: Mr. Chairman, a short while ago I mentioned that there are positions. If one looks at the very page that the Hon. Member is speaking about, under the agencies, each agency has positions and each agency has specific positions which are created for those agencies. It does not say “the persons employed”; it talks about the positions, the nomenclature of the positions. So the Hon. Member cannot say that my Ministry should operate with 50 or more persons.

Mrs. Backer: If the Minister would join me and turn to pages 509 and 510, she will see Agency 14 – Programme 1 – Public Service Management – Administrative – 26. You have three.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, do you feel that your Ministry is running at less than optimum?

Dr. Westford: No, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: You have given the answer.

Mrs. Backer: Could I then ask that the posts that are listed under pensionable posts, under Administrative, are 26 posts listed. Could the Minister share with the Hon. House the positions there- the list of pensionable posts that she feels are unnecessary and ought to be removed?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, can you give an answer to the best of your ability?

Dr. Westford: Sir, I have already said that those are the lists of pensionable posts created that exist, not the posts filled. The posts that are filled are the authorised for a position to be filled, it means those are the required staff that the Ministry or agency needs to function on. Before any organisation gets a position filled, it has to justify why they would like to have that. Not because the post was created means that we have a list of posts created. But to have them filled, the agency will have to justify, for example, it has “X” programmes to do and has to get so many persons to fill those positions. I reiterate, Sir, my Ministry is fully staffed.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister cannot have her cake and eat it. The list of pensionable posts under Administrative is 26 as at page 509. Do you agree with me that the list of pensionable posts has 26 under Administrative?

Dr. Westford: Yes there are 26 posts.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you. You are saying that you are at optimum. Could you then identify from within these 26 posts which are posts that you do not need?

Dr. Westford: Mr. Chairman, any post that is not given permission to be filled is not immediately needed. If there is a need for any post, it is filled.

Mrs. Backer: Could you then say, Hon. Minister, which – I am not going to go to all 59 – of these 26 posts which are unfilled by either contracted staff or pensionable? We will then interpret it to mean that they are not necessary.

Dr. Westford: Mr. Chairman, we have not filled, currently, the Deputy Permanent Secretary position that is listed here because we do not need it, Sir. If you look here you will see that we have three Principal Personnel Officers – one marked “management”. What we have done is to use the Principal Personnel Officer as a holistic person. We have not divided them into management, administration, et cetera. They all have to do the same functions. The Legal Officer: we do not have that position. All of our legal services are done by the Attorney General’s Office currently, so all of the legal officers are employed at the Attorney General’s Office.

Mrs. Backer: That is not true.

Dr. Westford: Sir, it is true. Our Legal Officer is basically for our scholarship programme.

Mrs. Backer: Sorry Sir. Is the Minister finished with just those four posts? There are 26.

Dr. Westford: Yes I am finished.

Mrs. Backer: If the Hon. Minister is saying that only those four posts are not necessary, then we can move on. I would really like her to answer for the purpose of the Hansard.

Dr. Westford: I am finished so we could move on. Let the Hansard reflect what I said.

Mrs. Backer: Sir, I will now have, since the Minister has not been helpful, I will now move on to - Senior Technical - there are seven people on the list of pensionable posts. You have, under your staffing, one. Could you indicate which ones were not deemed necessary?

Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs [Mr. Hinds]: Mr. Chairman, I would have thought that we would take an attitude on this question on rearranging to get better productivity and to reduce costs. I would have thought that we would have been pleased with such an arrangement.

Mrs. Backer: I appreciate the Hon. Prime Minister's answer, as I always do, but I would really be happy if the Hon. Minister would answer my specific question.

Dr. Westford: Mr. Chairman, under Senior Technical, I have employed one Systems Analyst, one Training Analyst, Training Officers I and II, Student Affairs Officer I and II and one Systems Administrator.

Mrs. Backer: We can go to line item 6114 - Clerical and Office Support – and you have, Hon. Minister, six persons and there are 13 posts listed in the list of pensionable posts. Of course, it may be more than 13 because these are just the posts. For example Typist Clerk II, I am sure you have more than one, as well as an Office Assistant. Could you identify within Clerical and Office Support, which are the posts that you do not deem necessary.

Dr. Westford: Sir, I have all of these positions employed.

Mrs. Backer: Could you indicate where they are?

Dr. Westford: I have, under Temporary Employees, as I mentioned before, two Typist Clerks. Under the Contracted Workers, I have accounts Clerk, Typist Clerk, Office Assistant and the Word Processing Operators.

Mr. Trotman: I want to refer the Minister to line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships) – and I am wondering, Mr. Chairman, if the Hon. Minister can, from her excellent records, produce for us a breakdown of all of those scholarship awardees along the line of gender, age and origin – origin meaning community that they came from?

Mr. Chairman: Could you provide that at the earliest opportunity on Monday?

Dr. Westford: Yes Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon Member Mr. Trotman, the information will be provided to you on Monday.

Mr. Trotman: Thank you.

Programme: 141 – Public Service Management - \$632,396,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital expenditure

Programme: 141 – Public Service Management - \$10,100,000

Mr. Sharma: Project Code 2402900 – Land Transport – a sum of \$6.5 million is allocated to purchase a vehicle. Can we have the description of the vehicle? Is it an open back vehicle, a four-wheel drive? What is the cubic centimetres (cc) capacity and who will this vehicle be assigned to when it is purchased?

Dr. Westford: It is to purchase a vehicle, as I said a short while ago when the Hon. Member asked about the fuel. I said it is to purchase a vehicle for the use of the Permanent Secretary. It is going to be a four-wheel drive vehicle, not an open back vehicle. It is going to be an enclosed vehicle that is 2000 cc or above.

Mr. Sharma: Does the Permanent Secretary have a vehicle presently?

Dr. Westford: No.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman, project code 2506200 – Office Furniture and Equipment – there is a sum here for the purchase of Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS). Can the Minister state the capacity, the load this UPS would carry?

Dr. Westford: I really cannot tell you the capacity but we are buying a UPS that is going to be able to take all of the load that the Ministry currently has. We have 15 computers and a network running because we carry the entire network of the public service.

Mr. Sharma: I do not know how the Government could have arrived at a figure of \$2.6 million if a study of the capacity required was not done.

Dr. Westford: I said I am not in a position to say the capacity. Before we could have made this budget estimate, we had the professionals coming in to do their analysis so that we could have known what we had to buy.

Programme: 141 – Public Service Management - \$10,100,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Assembly resumed

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Speaker: We have concluded our business for today. It has been a very long, tedious and difficult week. We look forward to seeing you next Monday. I wish to report that all Ministers who committed to provide information have done so, including Hon. Minister of Education, Ms. Priya Manickchand, save and except those who made commitments this evening. I would like to compliment both the Members of Parliament and the Ministers all for the tidy way in which we are working.

Mr. Hinds: Sir, I am pleased to move the motion that the House be adjourned to Monday, 23rd April, 2012 at two o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the House is adjourned to Monday, 23rd April, 2012 at two o'clock. Thank you very much.

Adjourned accordingly at 8.27 p.m.