

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2012-2013) 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

54TH Sitting

Tuesday, 23RD April, 2013

Assembly convened at 2.23 p.m.

Prayers

[Mdm. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Hon. Speaker presiding after suspension of the sitting

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I would just like to indicate that the Hon. Speaker will be here to resume presiding over the House after the break at six o' clock.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS

MOTION

BUDGET SPEECH 2013 – MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2013

“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 2013 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2013-03-25;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2013, of a total sum of **one hundred and ninety four billion, three hundred and forty three million, seven hundred and sixty four thousand, eight hundred and seventy three dollars (\$194,343,764,873), excluding fourteen billion, and four hundred and ninety six million, six hundred and seventy nine thousand, one hundred and twenty seven dollars (\$14,496,679,127)** 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*]

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the Assembly will resolve itself into the Committee of Supply to continue consideration the Estimates of Expenditure for the year 2013.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply

In Committee of Supply

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Members, we are now in Committee of Supply. We will now proceed accordingly with the Sub-Committee resolution schedule and we will commence today with Agency 77, Cuyuni /Mazaruni.

Agency: 77 Region 7: Cuyuni/Mazaruni

Current Expenditure

Programme: 771 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$117,284,000

Ms. Hastings: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: I have noticed that there was no allocation for the year 2011, none for the year 2012, however, there appears to be \$19 million for this year. Could the Hon. Minister explain why the change and give us the names of the buildings that will be maintained?

Minister of Local Government and Regional Development [Mr. G. Persaud]: The change of the allocation recorded, under line item 6242, is because of the shifting of those buildings that are administrative buildings, but were under public works. Those buildings on which work will be done this year, under programme one, would be the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) main office, Bartica, an estimated sum of \$6 million, regional guest house, Bartica, estimated \$5 million, the Amerindian hostel, Kamarang - \$3 million, regatta pavilion, Bartica - \$3 million, Amerindian hostel, Bartica - \$2 million.

Ms. Hastings: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I notice that there is an increase of three. Could the Hon. Minister kindly say to this Committee the designation of the three persons and their emoluments?

Mr. G. Persaud: They are two Accounts Clerk, salary at \$47,605 each, and one Stores Clerk – 37,657 monthly.

Mr. T. Williams: Could the Hon. Minister say why there is the increase of about \$1 million for line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants?

Mr. G. Persaud: The allocation increase, under line item 6231, is to cater for an additional all-terrain vehicle (ATV) and the Suzuki vehicle, PHH 1028, which is now fully operational, once again.

Mr. T. Williams: Line item 6265 – Other Transport, Travel and Postage: I would like the Hon. Minister, once again, to justify the increase?

Mr. G. Persaud: The increase, under line item 6265, is to enhance the monitoring and evaluation role of the administration and it will entail increase in both hires as well as aircraft.

Mr. T. Williams: Line item 6283 – Cleaning and Extermination Services: There is almost a request for double allocation. Would the Minister be kind to share?

Mr. G. Persaud: The increase is basically to cater for addition bins that will be provided in various parts of the region, particularly Bartica, Kamarang and the Kurupung areas.

Mr. T. Williams: Line item 6111 – Administrative: We see no movement in the number of administrative staff, but, of course, there is a request for increase allocation. Could the Hon. Minister enlighten us?

Mr. G. Persaud: The number remains the same, but one Assistant Regional Executive Officer (AREO) was promoted...

Mdm. Chairperson: I am not saying that it is you, but could we try to identify where that sound is coming from and whose phone, so that we can correct it?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you Mdm. Chairperson, but it is not from around me.

Mdm. Chairperson: I am not saying that it is you because it is disturbing me and I am sure it is disturbing you also.

Mr. G. Persaud: Yes Mdm. Chairperson.

Mdm. Chairperson: Please proceed.

Mr. G. Persaud: There was the promotion of one Assistant Regional Executive Officer to the position of Deputy Regional Executive Officer. It is the same individual with a higher position and thus the increase in salary.

Mr. T. Williams: We come back to the issue of travel and under line item 6261 the allocation remained quite constant for two years and now there is a request increase for about \$600,000. Could the Hon. Minister say why?

Mr. G. Persaud: With the addition of the Deputy Regional Executive Officer, it means that there will be greater movement in the region and so that is catered for in that increase.

Mr. Bulkan: It is a follow-up to line item 6242 to the question asked by the Hon. Member Ms. Hastings. The Hon. Minister, in his explanations as to why there was no budgetary allocation, under this line item, in the previous years and there is one for \$19 million for this year, was that they were transferred from public works, where they used to be previously, to the regional

administration. This is a very alarming development and it is yet another proof of what we have been saying, which is that there seems to be a deliberate policy to marginalise and miniaturise the elected element of the RDCs.

Under public works, and if I can refer to Volume 2 of these Estimates, programme 772...

Mdm. Chairperson: Mr. Bulkan, we are at programme Regional Administration and Finance.

Mr. Bulkan: The explanation, which we were just given, was that it was transferred from public works to regional administration. That is what the Hon. Minister said.

Mdm. Chairperson: Okay.

Mr. Bulkan: And under public works the objective, as stated at the beginning, states, “To ensure the continued enhancement and sustainability of the physical infrastructure and provide electricity and water to facilitate the continued development of the communities in the region”. It goes on to list the strategies, impacts and indicators. The explanation, which we have just been given, flies in the face of all these statements. In fact, it makes a mockery of them. I am kindly requesting, via you, Mdm. Chairperson, if consideration can be given to remove and reinstate this expenditure for it to go back under public works, where it lays originally, so that the elected element of the RDC can perform its oversight function.

Mr. G. Persaud: It is unfortunate that we have to be going backwards all of the time but suffice to say that the Regional Democratic Council presides at the policy level over all programmes under the regional administration. That is not rocket science. There is nothing that restrains or restricts the Regional Democratic Council, the elected officials, as described by the Hon. Member, from seeking to exercise policy directions and perform their duties, as prescribed under this statute, over any and every programme.

The movement here is based on what was requested, by this House, that we have the programme budgeting being done in the manner that it ought to be reflected. That is what we are doing.

Mr. Bulkan: Follow-up. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to explain who, in this House, requested that this expenditure be shifted from public works to the regional administration?

Mr. G. Persaud: As I have said, repeatedly, over the past two days, and I am doing so today, is that, in one voice, this House requested that programme budgeting be done in the manner that it ought to be done, all expenditure, under a particular programme, be catered for under that programme. That is what we are doing.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mdm. Chairperson, through you, to the Minister. Line item 6231, Hon. Minister, could you kindly tell the House what is the number of vehicles that this administration has?

Mr. G. Persaud: There is one outboard engine, a 40-horsepower, one ATV and one vehicle, PHH1028.

Mrs. Lawrence: I note in the capital expenditure that that region is going to acquire some other vehicles. I would like to know where it has provided for spares and servicing of these equipment and vehicle.

Mr. G. Persaud: Those spares are catered for under the public works department, something that we will definitely correct in Budget 2014.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Line item 6211 - Expenses Specific to the Agency: Could the Hon. Minister kindly tell us in detail how he intends to spend this \$15.3 million.

Mr. G. Persaud: The expenses, under line item 6211, are projected and estimated as follows:

- Fuel to transport regional councillors by boat from Philippi, Jawalla, Kako to Kamarang and return - \$780,000;
- Provision of meals and accommodation for councillors from Philippi, Jawalla, Kako whilst at Kamarang and to board aircraft return - \$600,000;
- Airfare from Kamarang to Ogle for councillors from Philippi, Jawalla, Kako and return – 41.8 million;
- Airfare from Kaikan to Ogle - \$360,000;
- Transportation from Issano to Bartica and return by jet boat for councillors - \$198,000;
- Transportation upper Mazaruni, six councillors, by vehicle and boat from Georgetown to Bartica and return - \$900,000;

- Accommodation and meals provided at Bartica for seven councillors from middle and upper Mazaruni - \$600,000;
- Refreshment and meals provided to councillors and officers attending RDC meetings - \$1,080,000;
- Transportation of eight councillors from Bartica and its environs to attend meetings - \$60,000;
- Attendance to meeting organised by other agencies, by the Regional Chairman, Regional Vice-Chairman - \$600,000;
- Visit to communities by boat, in the region, by Regional Chairman and Vice Chairman, including cost of fuel - \$1.2 million;
- Payment of stipend to regional councillors - \$1,560,000;
- Payment of stipend to Amerindian village captains - \$4,080,000;
- Payment of Utility Bills for Regional Chairman - \$480, 000;
- Servicing of air conditioner unit - \$160,000;
- Refreshments for Regional Chairman's office - \$240,000;
- Purchase of fuel for vehicle assigned to the Regional Chairman's office - \$602,000.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Follow-up. Could the Minister say how many Amerindian captains will be paid?

Mr. G. Persaud: It will be 17 Amerindian captains.

Mr. Sharma: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Could the Hon. Minister give the designation for the three persons and the salaries?

Mr. G. Persaud: Mdm. Chairperson, I have answered that question already. I do not know if you would like me to repeat the response.

Mdm. Chairperson: No.

Mr. Sharma: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricant: Did the Hon. Minister indicate that a new vehicle will be added to the fleet?

Mdm. Chairperson: Yes. He did. I cannot remember what type of...

Mr. Sharma: Could the Hon. Minister state the type of vehicle and where it is located under the capital expenditure? There is no vehicle there stated in the capital expenditure?

Mr. G. Persaud: Another Hon. Member alluded that there will be a vehicle but not specifically under any programme. That is what the Hon. Member stated under the capital programme.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Minister, what is your answer? I think the Hon. Member is asking specifically about programme 771.

Mr. G. Persaud: I did not say that the administration will be having a vehicle this year under programme 771. I agreed with the Hon. Member when that Hon. Member stated that there will be a new vehicle under the capital programme this year.

Mdm. Chairperson: Is it for the region?

Mr. G. Persaud: Yes Mdm. Chairperson.

Mr. Sharma: There is the increase for fuel, will the Hon. Minister explain why? Is it because of the ATV being operational?

Mr. G. Persaud: Here, again, that was question was asked by the Hon. Member here and I answered that question.

Mr. Sharma: Line item 6264 – Vehicles Spares and Service: Is this a cut and paste error?

Mr. G. Persaud: Here, again, I am wondering what is happening because this is the third time that I am asked the same question.

Mdm. Chairperson: Is it under this same head, programme 771?

Mr. G. Persaud: Yes Mdm. Chairperson. The Hon. Member Mrs. Lawrence asked a question on this very line item 6264.

Mdm. Chairperson: I think it is the cut and paste that might have been new.

Why are we hearing this feedback all of the time?

Hon. Members: It is the system.

Mrs. Lawrence: Line item 6281 – Security Services: I note that the agency requested some \$8.2 million for the year 2012 and spent \$6.2 million. At that time there were not any buildings under this agency. Could the Hon. Minister tell us why there is the reduced amount allocated?

Mr. G. Persaud: I am advised that one building, which was placed under the administration programme, the Youth Choice Building, should not have been placed under that programme and that security is catered for under the education programme.

Mrs. Lawrence: Line item 6282 - Equipment and Maintenance: I notice that it has been reduced quite significantly here, the amount that the agency is asking for. Are we going to see you come back to the House with a supplemental budget?

Mr. G. Persaud: That is a very worthwhile observation. There were air conditioning units, which were giving a lot of trouble, and those were placed during the course of last year and that should take the maintenance cost down significantly.

Mdm. Chairperson: I have been advised by the technician that once people have blackberries, even if they are on vibrate, and they are fairly close to the microphone they will pick up... We are just asking you, even if you have them on silent or vibrate, to move them away from the microphone if or when you are seeking to make a contribution to the House.

Programme: 771 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$117,284,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 771 - Regional Administration and Finance - \$2,500,000

Ms. Hastings: Project 2601900 – Furniture and Equipment - Administration: I have noticed that the Minister is going to purchase a risograph, air conditioning units, a suite and a refrigerator. Could the Minister kindly tell this House where these equipments will be placed?

Mr. G. Persaud: The risograph will be placed in the region administration building in Bartica; the refrigerator and air conditioning unit are for the Personnel Department and the Stores in Bartica; there will be three suites, one will be for the Regional Chairman's office, one will be for the Regional Vice Chairman's office and third is for the regional administration.

Programme: 771 - Regional Administration and Finance - \$2,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

2.53 p.m.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 772 – Public Works - \$151,736,000

Ms. Hastings: Line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this Assembly which roads will be maintained with this allocation?

Mr. G. Persaud: Repairs to sections of the West Bartica Housing Scheme road, that is, 1,800 by 12 feet, Double Bituminous Surface Treatment (DBST) surface - \$8,750,000, repairs to sections of Fourth Avenue, Bartica, DBST surface, 1,000 by 14 feet, estimated \$8 million, repairs to sections of Agatash main road, DBST surface 1,000 by 14 feet, estimated \$8,750,000, repairs to sections of Mongreppo Hill, west road, DBST surface, 1,750 by 12 feet - \$8.5 million, the Kamarang/Waramadong road, cut and clear trees, fill holes with laterite, farm to market roads, 18 miles, \$5 million estimated.

Ms. Hastings: Line item 6283 – Cleaning and Extermination Services: I have noticed that it is budgeted for \$700,000 in the year 2012 and for this year there is \$1,740,000. Could the Hon. Minister say which buildings will benefit from this allocation?

Mr. G. Persaud: I am advised that all the buildings under public works, in Bartica, would be benefiting from this expenditure through the engagement of Cevon's Waste Management Services to provide the cleaning and extermination services.

Ms. Hastings: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarship): Could the Hon. Minister say which persons will benefit from this training?

Mr. G. Persaud: There will be two sets of training, both in the areas of AutoCAD, and the five officers, within the programme, will all benefit from both phases.

Ms. Hastings: Line item 6281 – Security Services: I noticed that there is no allocation. Is there not any Government property that needs to be secured under public works?

Mr. G. Persaud: It is that with the security situation in the region, it has started regularising and placing them under the respective programmes. Unfortunately, it is still a work in progress. The region has not been able to complete that in time for Budget 2013. By Budget 2014, it would have regularised the buildings, the vehicle spares, maintenance of infrastructure as well as security. Those are the four components that we are working on.

Mrs. Lawrence: Minister, I note that for the programme, 772 - Public Works, for this region that the total amount allocated was reduced. I want to draw your attention to maintenance of infrastructure, line items 6251, 6252, 6253, 6254 and 6255. We are talking about roads, bridges, drains, sea and river defence and other infrastructures. There is a mere \$7 million increase. I note that I read it in the newspaper a few months ago and I saw the residents of Bartica blocking the roads, and so on. I would like to know if this money is adequate for the amount of maintenance that will be expected to be carried out for this year.

Mr. G. Persaud: I am advised that the Minister of Public Works, when its budget is approved, would reflect significant inputs, particularly in road maintenance in the region, and also to assist in one or two other infrastructures maintenance. Outside of that, region will certainly seek, in a prioritised manner, to effect maintenance works that will cause our facilities to provide the kind of comforts necessary to occupants.

Mrs. Lawrence: I am very happy to hear that Hon. Minister. I am quite certain that the residents of Region 7 are also happy to hear that. May I therefore, through the Chairperson, turn your attention to line item 6271 – Telephone Charges? In the year 2011 \$132,000 was used. In the year 2012 \$150,000 was used. Could you tell the Committee why in the year 2013 you are proposing to use some \$650,000?

Mr. G. Persaud: During the year 2012, we would have recognised that a number of satellite services were available to various villages. We were hamstrung that we did not capture budgetary provision to tap in to such services, thereby enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness in which we could have delivered services in the region. The increase reflected in Budget 2013 is to respond to that need.

Mrs. Lawrence: Could the Hon. Minister turn his attention to line item 6284 – Other? I note that last year the region went over the budget of \$750,000; some \$1.2 million was used. Could the

Minister kindly tell us whether that will happen again this year? I see only \$750,000 is budgeted for.

Mr. G. Persaud: I am advised that during last year, because of two instances, the region had to invest in hiring of boats to cater for two emergencies and that is the reason why the cost went that high. This year it is expected that with more of the engines working the region would not have to hire such, as an emergency arises.

Mrs. Lawrence: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: Mr. Minister, could you kindly tell the Committee what the region administration has put in place to ensure that we do not see the comments, such as that written, on page 201, by the Auditor General being repeated in his next report? He spoke of the logbooks and other related records were examined and revealed several discrepancies of which one is that the log books were not written up and, hence, both the stores requisition books and the ledgers were not properly written up and they only had partial information in them. Could he kindly tell us what measures will be put in place to ensure that we account for this \$11.1 million?

Mr. G. Persaud: That finding of the Auditor General is of concern to us. We would have sought to pay careful attention and setting mechanism in place to prevent and avoid such an entry. There was some initial misinterpretation with regard to the use of log books and those we were able to clarify. It was first thought that, for the out board engines, and so on, the very logbooks, which were used for boats, and so on, for the vehicles, should have been in place but that was clarified. As I said, and we know there must be a record now, it will not be the identical logbook for those types of transportation mechanism.

With the appointment of the Deputy Regional Executive Officer (DREO) we are hoping now that... We have seen systems that would have been put in place with regard to the maintenance of log books and detailing specific information, with regard to the use of the fuel consuming vehicles and equipment.

Mr. Bulkan: I would like to return to line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings. We can see that last year of the \$18 million, which was allocated, all of it, save and except \$11,000, was spent and in the previous year almost \$23 million was spent. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to give us an insight as to what informed the policy decision to remove this allocation

from public works, as we saw, to regional administration? It is if, for example, it was a decision of the council or if perhaps it was due to some inadequacy, whether real or perceived on the part of the public works subcommittee to effectively and efficiently discharge that function.

Mr. G. Persaud: The programme public works, in the region, is accommodated in an administration building. There is no building in the region that is registered as a building of the public works programme. The administration buildings, education buildings and health buildings are identifiable and are catered for in the budget, but there is no public works building, so there is no allocation under the line item 6242. The Hon. Member would have pointed us to the allocation in the year 2012 of \$18 million and to identify that that was spent with the exception of \$11,000. The allocations for those very buildings this year is \$19 million.

Mr. Bulkan: It is a follow-up, please, Mdm. Chairperson. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say if in the previous years, when this allocation was made under the public works, it was also housed in the regional administration building?

Mr. G. Persaud: The response is yes.

Mr. Bulkan: This is why I respectfully asked if the Minister would be prepared to give us an insight as to what informed this policy change.

Mr. G. Persaud: If we go through our procurement laws, if we go through the programme budgeting mechanism, all the answers are there. They are very clear. That is the reason why we treat with engineers under public works and not with teachers under public works; we do not treat with health workers under public works, but we treat with them under health.

Mr. Bulkan: Finally - I do not want to detain the Committee - would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say yes or no as to if this was a request of the RDC?

Mr. G. Persaud: This is a policy decision. It is a policy that we have adopted, here, in this honourable House.

Ms. Hastings: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: Hon. Minister, I notice you budgeted for the year 2012 to the amount of \$9,800,000, however, \$7,299,000 was actually spent. Could the Minister justify his request for the year 2013 budget to the amount of \$9.8 million?

Mr. G. Persaud: I am advised that during the year 2012 the power company had some difficulties and there were prolonged period, in the year 2012, in which there was no electricity. We are confident that the system is up and running more efficiently now and so the consumption will increase.

Ms. Selman: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: The actual money spent in the year 2011 was \$9 million, the year 2012, it was \$9.5 million and the revised was \$11,050 million. Given the additional areas to be serviced this year, could the Hon. Minister say whether this is adequate fuel and lubricants?

Mr. G. Persaud: I am advised that the allocation for this year will suffice providing that the cost of fuel remains as it is.

Programme: 772 – Public Works - \$151,736,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 772 - Public Works - \$38,500,000

Ms. Hastings: Project 1401100 – Roads: “Construction and rehabilitation of roads.” Could the Hon. Minister give us the details of the project cost for each road that is intended to repair?

Mr. G. Persaud: Section of roadway West India Housing Scheme - \$12 million, approximately 350 by 14 feet, construction of roadway, Track X, Caribisi Hill, Bartica, approximately \$8 million, 1,260 feet new road, roadway Bamfort Point - \$5 million estimated, upgrade approximately 800 feet of roadway to DBST surface, inclusive of drains.

Mr. T. Williams: My question to the Hon. Minister is under this said project which the previous question was asked. I would like to know if, under the region or the Ministry of Public Works, any expenditure will be done on the Four Mile Road which, of course, last year attracted much attention in its process. It is located in an area where there is a school. I know the question was previously asked about more roads and the Minister said that there are some works to be done under the Ministry of Public Works, but we would not be revisiting roads under this heading. I

would like to know what will be done to Four Mile Road, whether there is maintenance schedule or any sort of works.

Mr. G. Persaud: Four Mile Road is not catered for under Budget 2013, this year. I wish to advise the Hon Member to please raise that when the Ministry of Public Works budget would be presented.

Programme: 772 - Public Works - \$38,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 773 – Education Delivery - \$803,709,000

Ms. Hastings: Line item 6281 – Security Services: I would like to ask the Hon. Minister if he has catered for all 32 schools and education buildings in Region 7 to have a 24-hour service. If not, why?

Mr. G. Persaud: The response is no because the allocation caters for all the schools in Bartica and Waramadong Secondary School, at this point in time.

Ms. Hastings: For how many hours, Mr. Minister?

Mr. G. Persaud: The secondary institutions, it will be for 24 hours and the primary and nursery schools, it will be for 16 hours.

Ms. Hastings: Follow-up. I remember that this question was asked sometime last year, for you to list the programme, the locations and the amount of guards that were allocated to schools and health centres. The Minister had laid in this House that the education office at Kamarang had guards to the amount of two, the hospital two, in which, Cde. Minister, to my knowledge, there has never been any security guards at the education office neither at the Kamarang Hospital. Could the Minister please give us an insight on that?

Mr. G. Persaud: I do not understand the question and its relevance to this here, now. We are dealing with education; I am willing to respond any question on education. I can respond to the question of health when we are dealing with the health programme.

Ms. Hastings: Through you Mdm. Chairperson, I will rephrase my question and just deal with the question on education. I am simply saying, Cde. Minister, that last year the question was asked in this House for you to identify the number of guards that were at the following school, Waramadong Secondary School, and the education office at Kamarang. You had laid in the House that the amount of guards, who were at Waramadong Secondary School, was amounted to six and the guards at Kamarang's education office was two, but I am saying, to my knowledge, that there has never been any security guards. Was it an entitlement or the actual staff that you gave to us last year?

Mr. G. Persaud: I am advised that Waramadong Secondary School continues to have guard. It was projected that there should have been guards at the education sub office at Kamarang and the region was unable to secure the services of persons. That is how the Estimates are. It is always projected to have this done and if it was done, it would be reported and if it was not done, it is reported.

Ms. Hastings: How many guards the region intends to have for this year? If not, how soon is it going to have those guards placed at those institutions?

Mr. G. Persaud: When the Hon. Member asked the question for Kamarang's education office, I said Waramadong Secondary School. I did not name the department of education sub office at Kamarang. The Hon. Member, maybe, was thinking about the other question and lost that piece of my response.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Minister, in fairness to the Member, she rephrased the question, dealing specifically with education and Waramadong Secondary School. That was her question. Her observation was that there were no guards there. She was asking about that. We are not dealing with health now. You were quite right when you indicated to her that she needed to wait until we get to health, to deal with health. She rephrased and was dealing just with education.

Mr. G. Persaud: That is what I was speaking about. On the list for the year 2013, when the Hon. Member asked the coverage, I stated all the schools in Bartica and the secondary school at Waramadong. The list for the year 2013 does not cater for the building, which the Hon. Member was asking me about, in Kamarang, the education office at Kamarang. It is not on the list for

security provision in the year 2013 because, maybe, the administration learnt that it could not have attracted persons in the year 2012, so it did not repeat it in the year 2013.

3.23 p.m.

Ms. Hastings: Line item 6265 – Other Transport, Travel and Postage – could the Hon. Minister say if under this line item he caters for the transportation of National Grade Six, Grade Four and Grade Two Examination papers?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you, Hon. Member. The response is yes.

Ms. Hastings: Mdm. Chairperson, through you, why I asked is because we had a recent incident where the National Grade Four Examination papers from the Upper Mazaruni schools were nowhere to be found. Up to this day, the children have not received their National Grade Four Examination results. That is why I am asking if it is being catered for in any of these line items.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you, Hon. Member. Mdm. Chairperson, things will go wrong; this is a human world. Whatever went wrong was not as a result of no money and lack of budgetary resources. Mdm. Chairperson, things will go wrong. That is the life that we all live and exist in.

Ms. Hastings: I agree with you that things will go wrong, but things will have a way to correct them. I hope that the Hon. Minister will find it necessary so that the children in the Hinterland can have equal access to quality education.

Mr. Bulkan: Thank you, Mdm. Chairperson. Line item 6292 – Dietary – Mdm. Chairperson, is the Hon. Minister in a position to state how much of this \$200 plus million allocated under this heading would be sourced from within Region 7? Is he in a position to state how much is sourced from within Region 7 and how much, if any, outside of the region?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. Mdm. Chairperson, the entire dietary requirements are contracted. So, we do not check to see where the contractor sources whatever he is required to provide. What we do check on and keep a close tab on is to ensure that we get what we are paying for.

Mr. Trotman: Mdm. Chairperson, I have a question on the same line item but first I would like to make an observation. I noted that under Ministry of Education's Dietary there is a large

subvention voted for that Ministry. My understanding is that that subvention was intended to satisfy the dietary needs throughout the regions. If this is so, I would like the Minister to say why it is that this is now occurring in this region. I note also that it occurred in Region 1 and I missed that, but I noticed that it is occurring here and presumably in Regions 8 and 9 also.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. Mdm. Chairperson, we have finished the estimate for the central Ministry of Education, but the Hon. Member has asked a very relevant question which I think needs to be answered. The allocation under the central Ministry of Education is primarily to deal with the School Feeding Programme in different the forms. Those dietary programmes that are catered for under Regional Administration, Education Programme are intended to provide meals for students who are part of our dorms in these regions.

Mr. T. Williams: I wish to take the Hon. Minister to line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants. Hon. Minister, how many vehicles service this department?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. I am advised that it is one 4×4 vehicle, five outboard engines, and three generators.

Mr. T. Williams: A follow up: are these five vehicles, or how many ever you listed, the vehicles that serviced the Region last year?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. I am advised the answer is yes, and there will be some additional this year.

Mr. T. Williams: How many additional vehicles will there be?

Mr. G. Persaud: Pardon me.

Mr. T. Williams: How many additional vehicles are you catering for?

Mr. G. Persaud: We are not catering for additional vehicles, but boats and engines.

Mr. T. Williams: How many boats and engines?

Mr. G. Persaud: Mdm. Chairperson, when we get to the capital expenditure, we can better deal with that. Thank you.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Members, please remember when you are asking questions that I also need to hear the questions.

Mr. T. Williams: So, the Hon. Minister is saying that an additional almost \$5 million for fuel is to take care of the additional boats to the fleet. Does this include any more work within the Region, Minister, or the same normal routines?

Mr. G. Persaud: The fuel allocation here under Education, Mdm. Chairperson, is not only to assist with the engines and the vehicles; it also assists us in providing support to the movement of students to and from schools around the Bartica area.

Mr. T. Williams: Line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence – we have almost another \$1 million increase.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. Mdm. Chairperson, the department of education has increased its supervisory staff and, as such, it is anticipated that there will be more visitations to our schools so as to assist in ensuring that curriculum delivery is being done in the manner as prescribed.

Mr. T. Williams: Mdm. Chairperson, I would like to take the Minister to line item 6265 – Other Transport, Travel and Postage. We also have a substantial allocation under other transport, travel and postage. Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to enlighten us on this?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. Mdm. Chairperson, under this head, it is intended to procure the services of water as well as air transportation for texts and exercise books, transporting our children from the dorms back to their respective villages at the end of the school term, also our teachers who are at the University of Guyana and Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE), for them to return home at the end of the academic year, and also to assist with the movement of items that form part of the School Feeding Programme.

Mr. T. Williams: Thank you, Mdm. Chairperson. I take the Hon. Minister to line item 6291 – National and Other Events. The cost for national and other events was quite constant for the last two budgets. I see the Minister now raising this by another \$1 million or so. Can you be kind enough, Sir, to explain?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you, Hon. Member. Mdm. Chairperson, the children of this region continue to participate, and not only participate but to win in education activities in and out of the region. This I think would have motivated the increase in allocation so that our children can continue to participate in the JOF Haynes debating competition, in which, last year, they did fairly well, the science fair and the national athletic championships, among others.

Mr. T. Williams: Thank you, Mdm. Chairperson. Under line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships) – can the Minister explain the increase for training and scholarships?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. Mdm. Chairperson, it is intended this year to have a series of cluster workshops within the three sub-regions for teachers and also for student-teachers in training. These workshops will seek to target areas such as curriculum development, child friendly school, more parent-teachers association collaboration, among other aspects of curriculum delivery, including methodology.

Mr. T. Williams: My final question, Mdm. Chairperson. I wish to take the Minister back to line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings. I note that in 2011 maintenance of buildings was at an excess of \$45 million, it went back to \$27 million in 2012 and now we have a request for \$40 million. I wish to ask the Minister to tell this House what exactly will be done with the \$40 million.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you, Hon. Member. Mdm. Chairperson, it will be maintenance work on the Bartica Secondary School at \$3.5 million, looking at our windows, section of the wall, floor, roof, plumbing, electrical; Kamarang Primary School, Upper Mazaruni at \$5 million to do the roof, walls and floor; St. John the Baptist Primary School to do the windows, sections of the walls, plumbing, electrical wiring at \$1.5 million; Kwebenang Primary School, Upper Mazaruni, maintenance of windows, floor, washrooms, plumbing at \$2 million; Imbaimadai Primary School: the maintenance of floors, roofs, stairway at \$4 million; Kako Primary School, similar works - maintenance of the roof, floors and stairways at \$3 million; Waramadong Secondary School, four shales, maintenance of windows, floor, roof and electrical works at \$3.5 million; the HM's quarters at Kaburi Primary School, maintenance work of stairway, roof and floor at \$2 million; Chinowieng Primary School, maintenance work of the floor, roof, stairways and plumbing at \$4 million; teachers quarters at Bartica, maintenance works on the windows,

electrical works, works on the roof at \$2 million; teachers quarters at Waramadong at \$3 million for the maintenance of roof, floor, windows and electrical works; teachers quarters at Issano at \$6.5 million, repairs and maintenance works to windows, floors, gutters roofs and electrical works.

Ms. Hastings: Thank you Mdm. Chairperson. I would like to take the Minister to line item 6284 – Other. Could the Hon. Minister give us what it entails?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you, Hon. Member. Mdm. Chairperson, this line item is intended to provide payments to our invigilators and supervisors for exams. It is also under this head that we pay for our advertisement notices. We also pay our porters and druggers from this head. We also pay our temporary sweeper/cleaners from this head.

Ms. Hastings: Thank you, Hon. Minister. Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure – could the Hon. Minister give us the details of that expenditure?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you, Hon. Member. Mdm. Chairperson, it is the maintenance of fence at Two Mile Primary School at \$2.5 million, sanitary block at Waramadong Secondary School at \$2 million, generally landscaping and landfilling at the various school compounds at a sum of \$5 million for five nursery schools, 32 primary schools and three secondary schools; a water supply system at Three Mile Secondary School at \$1 million; an electrical system at Three Mile Secondary School at \$2 million, that is the installation of a standby generator set; electrical system at Waramadong Secondary School at \$2 million; a laundry area at Waramadong Secondary School at \$3 million; sanitary block at Chinowieng Primary School at \$2.5 million, and the fence at Waramadong Secondary School at \$3.5 million.

Ms. Hastings: Could the Hon. Minister say if there is any allocation made to equip the new Jawalla Nursery School? If there is, under which line item is it to have a source of electricity?

Mr. G. Persaud: There is no allocation under the current budget for electricity to Jawalla Nursery School.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mdm. Chairperson. Line item 6292 – Dietary – the Hon. Minister made a statement to the effect that the department may not be concerned about the price, but about the supply being supplied. It means that, in effect, like the Ministry of Health, where drugs

are overpriced in terms of paying seven times and eight times more and so forth. Could the Hon. Minister say in relation to the sum of \$201 million voted here what a meal comprises of and what is the cost? Apparently, the cost is not the factor here.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you, Hon. Member. Mdm. Chairperson, I cannot recall – I know I am getting very old – having said here that we do not pay attention to pricing. Mdm. Chairperson, this is the National Assembly; it is not sitting on a television station and saying what you want. We have to be responsible.

Mdm. Chairperson: It is a National Assembly. I think we understand that.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much, Mdm. Chairperson. What we are seeking here is to provide meals for children, 450 of them at Waramadong Secondary School dorms, 62 of them at Bartica Secondary School dorms and 64 of them at Three Mile Secondary School dorms. These are the nation's children in that Region. So, every year, through the Public Procurement and Tender Administration Procedures, advertisements and the procurement processes are ventured into. Contracts are awarded, people supply and then these supplies are verified by the respective administrations at the regional level and at the school level and then they are taken into use to provide and meet the dietary needs of our children. So, this is what this whole line item is about. I do not think there are fixed menus. These areas depend a lot in terms of what is available and very much seasonal.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Mr. Sharma, before you ask your next question, I would like to draw to the Assembly's attention that by the time we got to the beginning of the Estimates, it was just about 2.30 p.m. An hour and a half will take us to 4.00 p.m. on Region 7, which is the allotted time. So I just want you to keep that in mind because we have to go to the capital expenditure for Education and then I think we will go to Health, both current and capital. By 4.00 p.m., we would want to begin or be about to begin Region 8 because Region 8 is scheduled for an hour. It is proposed that we take the break at 5.00 p.m. after we finish Region 8, and Region 9, which, in fact, according to our schedule, is supposed have half of an hour before the break and half of an hour after the break. We will take the entire region immediately after the break. I just want to have that bit of housekeeping announcement made so that nobody is caught by surprise. So, as

we ask questions, and also as the Ministers answers, let us try to ensure that we do justice to not only Region 7, but also to Region 8 which is coming immediately hereafter.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you. Can the Minister say what the price is per meal, any meal, the cheapest, the highest or an average? Can he say something?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. Mdm. Chairperson, I do not have the breakdown as per meal. As I said, the menu will determine the cost of the meal. Because we are dealing with the nation's children, we have to be very careful with monotony and all of that. What I can share with the Hon. Member, if he is interested, Mdm. Chairperson, is the annual cost for the Waramadong Secondary School dorms - \$175 million; for the Bartica dorms - \$12 million and for the Three Miles dorms - \$12 million.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mdm. Chairperson. I would just like to remind the Hon. Member that this National Assembly is receiving a different dietary. A meal is different every day, but it is one price we pay every day as I should know it. It does not mean whether we are eating fish or chicken; we are paying one price. Thank you.

Mr. Felix: Thank you, Mdm. Chairperson. I would like to invite the Hon. Minister's attention to line item 6281 – Security Services – and to enquire how many sites under the Ministry of Education are intended to be protected and which security company or companies have been awarded the contract.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. Strategic Action Security is the security provider that was awarded the contract in 2012. As I said previously, the procurement for 2013 is at the level of the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board. There are 14 locations for which security is provided under the education programme. Did you ask for the location, Hon. Member?

Mr. Felix: Yes, thank you.

Mr. G. Persaud: Precious Gems Nursery School, Bartica, Hill View Nursery School, Future Build Nursery School, Beach View Nursery School, St. John's Primary School, St. Anthony's Primary School, Two Miles Primary School, Akatash Primary School, Bartica Secondary dorms, the resource centre at Bartica, Waramadong Secondary School and the Youth Choice building.

Mr. Felix: Thank you very much. Do you have a system of checkers for the security, particularly after 6.00 p.m.?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. The response is yes.

Programme: 773 – Education Delivery – \$803,709,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 773 – Education Delivery – \$54,860,000

Ms. Hastings: Thank you, Mdm. Chairperson. Project code 2402100 – Land and Water Transport: I notice here that the Minister intends to purchase boats and outboard engines. Could he say which organisations or schools will benefit from these purchases?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you, Hon. Member. Mdm. Chairperson, the three outboard engines of 15 horsepower will be allocated as follows: Waramadong Secondary School, Paruima Primary School and Philippi Primary School. The two dug-out boats would be for Philippi and Paruima.

Ms. Hastings: Project code 1204100 – Buildings-Education – you have here construction of primary schools at Kaburi. Could you please give us the cost for each project?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you, Hon. Member. Mdm. Chairperson, Kaburi Primary School, Seventy-two Miles, Bartica, Potaro, 80×31 at \$16 million; rehabilitation and expansion of the Itabali Primary School, 96×38 - \$17.7 million; construction of the sanitary block, six compartments, at Karau Primary, Lower Mazaruni, - \$5.3 million.

3.53 p.m.

Ms. Hastings: Project code 2504400 – Furniture and Equipment - Education: could you kindly say which schools you intend to furnish with furniture and equipment?

Mr. G. Persaud: The large cupboards would be distributed by the Department of Education based on requests. The nursery sets of furniture would be distributed to Jawalla, Philippi, and Kako nurseries. The desks and benches, type A, B, and C, would be distributed to the schools as requested by the head teachers to the Department of Education. The student lockers would be at

the Waramadong Secondary School dorms and, similarly, the 20 bunk beds would be for the Waramadong Secondary dorms. The heavy-duty gas stove would be for the Bartica Secondary School. The nursery outdoor play equipment – three sets – would be for Jawalla, Philippi and Paruima respectively. The heavy-duty washing machine is intended for the Three Miles Secondary School dorms.

Ms. Baveghems: When the Hon. Minister comes here and tells us about the things that his Ministry is doing in the regions, does he go and see for himself if they are being done and how often?

Mr. G. Persaud: I would love to but I do not think it is possible to check on everything in every place. Through the eyes of the administrators, community members, community leaders and even us in this honourable House, we devise mechanisms by which we get feedback. The Auditor General, for sure, does verify whatever is budgeted and programmed and gives us a feedback on how well they have been executed.

Programme: 773 – Education Delivery - \$54,860,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mdm. Chairperson: I just want to remind you that we are five minutes away from impinging on Region 8's time.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 774 – Health Services - \$312,776,000

Ms. Hastings: Line item 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skilled: there is an increase of five persons for 2013. Could the Hon. Minister give us the designations of those five and their salaries?

Mr. G. Persaud: They are two midwives, one laboratory technician, and two community health workers.

Programme: 774 – Health Services - \$312,776,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 774 – Health Services - \$37,700,000

Dr. Norton: Project code 2601800 – Furniture and Equipment – Health: could the Hon. Minister say in which centre the ultrasound equipment, portable x-ray, and foetal monitors will be placed?

Mr. G. Persaud: The ultrasound equipment will go to Kamarang Hospital; the portable x-ray unit will go to Kamarang as well; and the foetal monitors will go the Bartica and Kamarang hospitals.

Dr. Norton: I take it that the Hon. Minister can assure me that adequate training will be done in the use of these equipment.

Mr. G. Persaud: Yes, I am assured of that.

Dr. Norton: Project code 2081300 – Other Equipment - the purchase and installation of this generator at the Bartica Hospital: taking into consideration what took place recently at the New Amsterdam Regional Hospital where the generator, for some reason or the other, did not kick in while somebody was in the operating theatre, could the Hon. Minister say what type of generator will be at the Bartica Hospital and the power that the generator would be able to provide?

Mr. G. Persaud: Presently, our generator is a 40 KVA which is at the Bartica Hospital. Our request is to purchase a 100 KVA generator to replace that generator so as to achieve what was best described by the Hon. Member. The present generator, just for information, will be moved to the Three Miles Secondary dorms.

Dr. Norton: Project code 1204200 – Buildings - Health: could the Hon. Minister explain the rehabilitation and extension that will take place at the Bartica and Kamarang Hospitals? What is the nature of the extensions?

Mr. G. Persaud: At the Kamarang Hospital, it is intended to extend the office space for the medex and the government medical officer. For Bartica, the works will be around the outpatient department and the maternity department. The Kamarang Hospital works are projected to cost \$5 million. The Bartica Hospital works are projected to cost \$7 million. The work at Jawalla would be a 15x10 extension and that is projected to cost around \$5.6 million.

Mr. T. Williams: After spending over \$37 million in the health sector in Bartica, by whom, what, when and how will the garbage situation be addressed? At present, there are about 800 yards of garbage being spread about the front street which repeatedly haunt the lives of the people who commute the streets. The people of Bartica are also asking what kind of mechanism will be used to address this. I hereby ask the Minister if he wishes to shed some light on same.

Mr. G. Persaud: Although it is not a line item, I understand the importance of the issue raised by the Hon. Member and, Mdm. Chairperson, with your permission, I can offer a response.

Mdm. Chairperson: Go ahead.

Mr. G. Persaud: The garbage situation in Bartica is not too far from what was described by the Hon. Member. The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development has concluded a process of what is called the Regional Solid Waste Management Mechanism. Only recently, the regional administration, Region 7 signed on to a contractual agreement with Cevons Waste Management to manage, operate, and maintain a landfill site in the Bartica community. My understanding is that works have commenced on the roadway leading to that landfill site and so, very shortly, I think, the operations will commence.

Mr. Greenidge: What part of the Port Kaituma problem the Minister perceives to have arisen from the disposal of solid waste on land? As I have seen it, the waterfront is, itself, the repository of a good deal of the solid waste.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Member, we are at Region 7; we are not at Port Kaituma.

Mr. Greenidge: I am asking in relation to Bartica. Sorry about that.

Mr. G. Persaud: I did not understand you clearly, Mr. Greenidge.

Mr. Greenidge: I am saying that it seems to me that only part of the problem arose from the normal disposal of solid waste which can be fixed by a landfill. More enforcement is needed. If you go on the waterfront, not far from the stelling, and along the river itself, you will see tremendous dumping of waste there. It is a question of enforcement as well as the provision of a site for the solid waste from commercial enterprises and so forth. Is that part of the plan?

Mr. G. Persaud: I am in full agreement with the Hon. Member. Enforcement is something that we all need to work hand in hand on to ensure that it is done and done in a fair, transparent and consistent manner. A couple of months ago, in all the regions, except for Region 4, handbills and flyers were circulated to households reminding them of our obligations as citizens with regards to the disposal of solid and other waste and also very subtly reminding all of us about the penalties *vis-a-vis* indiscriminate disposal of solid waste. That process will intensify as these private entrepreneurs take to implementing and managing the solid waste programme in those regions.

Programme: 774 – Health Services - \$37,700,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mdm. Chairperson: I want to remind you that it is now ten minutes past four o'clock. One hour has been allocated to Region 8. I just want to remind Hon. Members of that as the officers get themselves ready. Please keep that in mind as you ask your questions so that everyone is given an opportunity.

Agency: 78 Region 8: Potaro/Siparuni

Current Expenditure

Programme: 781 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$61,002,000

Mr. Nagamootoo: I just would like to refer to the position raised yesterday by the Hon. Member, Mr. Bulkan, as regards the Standing Orders. I am very much appreciative of your guidance on the matter – it was not a ruling – and wish to ask some general questions, now that the question has been put, in keeping with Standing Order 75 (2). The question is: could the Hon. Minister tell this honourable House whether there has been any consultation on the Estimates submitted for Region 8 with the Chairman and members of the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) of that Region. I have some follow-up questions.

Mr. G. Persaud: I am advised that there were consultations between the administration and the Council to the extent that the Council submitted an additional request which was taken into consideration and became part of the entire package that was submitted to the Ministry of Finance. We have that submission signed by the Chairman with the additional aspect.

Mr. Nagamootoo: I am somewhat baffled by the answer given because the Region 8 Chairman...and in that Region the Alliance For Change (AFC)...this is local government. There is central government and local government. And it presupposes that there must be a very significant input into the expenditures for the Region from the elected body.

The Chairman had, the Hon. Minister is saying, an input. Some addendum was made. I am asking him whether these estimates are the estimates from the RDC, the governing body of that Region, or are these estimates as submitted by the Regional Executive Officer (REO) in whom a no-confidence motion was passed by the RDC.

The point was made by the Hon. Member, Mr. Bulkan, yesterday that this is part and parcel of the problem that we have here. We are asked to give consideration to these Estimates and the elected representatives of the people, in the Regions themselves, have been bypassed in making a significant and meaningful contribution to a programme that they intend to benefit from, based on their own needs and necessities. This makes a farce, if I may say so, of this process of consultative and representative democracy.

Mr. G. Persaud: We were treated by the Hon. Member to some opinions and I do not know whether I should respond to them, but, in the interest of transparency and all of that, I would not like to disappoint any Guyanese by not standing up for the public officers and elected officials in Region 8, irrespective of who may attempt to lay claim.

The estimates that we have in front of us were submitted through a process which was engaged in by all of the other nine Regions. The regional administrations and Regional Democratic Councils played their roles in this process to the extent that the Regional Chairman said that after the submission was made that - he had a discourse with me in my office and a similar discourse with my Permanent Secretary - he wished to submit some additional bits. I have that in writing. The submission was made. I gave a commitment to the Regional Chairman, which I kept, of ensuring that that submission which came after the deadline was presented to the Hon. Minister of Finance. What we have here is an outcome of the collective work of the Council and administration. I have heard this before - allegations, accusations and statements being made - that some sections were not involved.

When we are finished with these Estimates, all of us would have an opportunity to journey into Region 8 and we can ask the people if the allocations in the Budget will help to make a difference in their lives. And I think that is what we are all interested in. There is no one on the Council who will be able to say to us that he or she is unaware of anything that is approved here. The minutes will definitely prove that the various heads of departments at the various committees of the RDC made their presentations since July last year. From time to time, councillors meet at sub-committee and identify issues and problems that need to be addressed by the coming budget.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Just one follow-up.

Mdm. Chairperson: Is this a question, Hon. Member?

Mr. Nagamootoo: It is a question.

Mdm. Chairperson: We have had opening statements so far from both sides. We are now going to questions.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Would the Hon. Minister provide this House with the proposals that were made? I think he used the word “bits”. Could he provide us with a list of those bits which were made by the Regional Chairman? If he does not want to do so today and say it openly, he could provide it in writing.

Mr. G. Persaud: Only a couple of minutes ago, I heard claim made by the Hon. Member that this Chairman is an AFC Chairman and I am certain that he is a member of the AFC family and it is so much easier to get things from your family members.

Mdm. Chairperson: I do not know if the Regional Chairman will be sanctioned if he was to pass on official RDC information.

Mr. G. Persaud: I can assure you that he would not be sanctioned, Mdm. Chairperson.

Mdm. Chairperson: The question, Hon. Member, is: are you prepared to lay with the Member, obviously not now, a list of what came from the RDC?

Mr. G. Persaud: I am always willing to provide any information. Whatever I received, I passed it on. So, I do not have it. I passed it on, as I said, to the Ministry of Finance. That is what I did. That is the commitment I gave; that is the commitment I kept.

Mdm. Chairperson: They will have to ask the Minister of Finance.

Ms. Teixeira: Mdm. Chairperson, I know that during question time it is not usual to look at this side of the House but I would like to ask the Minister a direct question so it is absolutely clear. Minister, were the documents which came from RDC 8 with regards to the budget proposals 2013 signed by the Regional Chairman and the REO?

Mr. G. Persaud: The Estimates themselves are not required to have the signature of the elected officials. Sometimes some elected officials would volunteer their signature. There are other times they would decline, as did Chairman of Region 4. He does not sign the Estimates because he would say that that is not his duty. He would deal with the maintenance aspect. I am not sure whether they were signed by both persons, but I know for sure that they had to be signed by the accounting officer.

Mr. Greenidge: In accordance with our own understanding of the legislation, the question I want to ask is: did the local democratic organ body actually look at the sum of money cleared by the Ministry of Finance and had an input, at all, into the allocation under the different heads that are shown here? That is really the issue. Who has the last say – not as regards the total; that is the Government's responsibility – as regards the allocation of the sums to the different subheads? That is really where the issue turns. The Minister keeps telling us a long set of other stories. Can he say that the local authority had a say in the final sum approved by the Ministry of Finance and allocated among the different heads?

Mr. G. Persaud: The sums that are approved by the Ministry of Finance are not sums which are blocked. As they are presented here, this is what is approved by the Ministry of Finance. It is according to line item. That is how it is for all Regions and all agencies.

Ms. Marcello: Line item 6111 – Administrative: I notice that for 2012 there was one administrator and for 2013 there are two administrators. Can the Hon. Minister say where the second administrator will be located?

Mr. G. Persaud: The other person is an Assistant Regional Executive Officer (AREO) and this officer will be located at Kato in the North Pakaraimas.

Ms. Marcello: Line item 6265 – Other Transport, Travel and Postage: can the Hon. Minister say how many vehicles the administrative office has at its disposal at the moment?

4.23 p.m.

Mr. G. Persaud: Mdm. Chair, I think the Hon. Member meant line item 6264 – Vehicle Spares and Service - if that is so, I would provide the response because line item 6265 does not necessarily deal with vehicles. Line item 6264: one 4 X 4 and six All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) are part of this programme. The 4 X 4 is based at Mahdia, two of the ATVs are at Mahdia, three are based at Kato, one at Kurukubaru and one at Monkey Mountain.

Ms. Marcello: Line Item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: is the \$2.5 million adequate for the six vehicles you are talking about?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you Hon. Member. Mdm. Chair, that is a very important question given the cost of fuel in the region. In order to ensure that we practice proper management of our resources, we seek to purchase the fuel and then move the fuel into the mountains. This should be sufficient for us.

Mr. Trotman: Line Item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I note that there has been an increase by seven persons in this category. Can you, for the benefit of the House, indicate to us what are those positions added and can you also say what is the relevant remuneration?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you Hon. Member. Mdm. Chair, the seven additional positions include: one District Development Officer (DDO), salaried \$69,355; two Hinterland Affairs Workers, salaried at \$49,234; one Radio Operator at a salary of \$41,083; one Stores Clerk at a salary of \$41,083; one Accounts Clerk at a salary of \$41,083; and one Typist/Clerk at a salary of \$41,083.

Mr. Trotman: Thank you Minister; a follow-up question: can you indicate what the five highest paid persons in that category are?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you Hon. Member. The five highest salaries we have are: a District Development Officer II at \$69,355; another District Development Officer at the same salary; a

Personnel Officer at \$59,285; an Accounts Clerk II at \$55,819 and an Accounts Clerk at \$47,622.

Mr. Trotman: Line Item 6211, Mdm. Chair: can the Minister say what the expenses specific to this agency are? I will keep the other question as a follow-up.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much Hon. Member. Mdm. Chair, line item 6211 breakdown: Regional Chairman's travelling to Georgetown, \$1.588 million; Vice Chairman's travelling to Georgetown, \$1 million; Regional Democratic Council (RDC) meetings \$3.2 million – for food and air fare. Regional Chairman and team's visit around the Region, \$1.392 million; stipend for captains of villages and regional councillors, \$5.928 million; Vice Chairman's travel around the Region, meals and gas, \$144,000; purchase of stationery and janitorial supplies for the offices of the Chairman and Vice Chairman, \$200,000; purchase of telephone cards for the Chairman and Vice Chairman, \$100,000; purchase of gas for the Chairman's ATV 200,000; purchase of newspapers on a daily basis for the Chairman's office 82,000; to cater for repairs to the Regional Chairman's ATV \$150,000; purchase of diary for councillors, \$48,000.

Mr. Trotman: A follow-up question Mdm. Chair: under this head, I wonder if the Minister can say if the Regional Chairman is entitled to countersign these expenses when they occur. Is the REO supposed to pass them through him so he can have a sense of what is taking place and countersign?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you Hon. Member. The Regional Chairman under this line item exercises much direction, and in all circumstances expenditure under this line item must have the concurrence of the Regional Chairman, save and except for those expenditures that are fixed and routine, such as stipend. In terms of the Regional Chairman signing on that is an option if the Chairman so wishes or not. Signing is part of the responsibility of the Regional Executive Officer who is the accounting officer.

Mr. Trotman: Mdm. Chair, a follow-up question: even though the Minister said signing on is an option will he agree that these expenses are supposed to be brought to the attention of the Regional Chairman?

Mr. G. Persaud: Yes, Mdm. Chair.

Mr. Trotman: A follow-up question: will he be surprised if he is to understand that the Regional Chairman has been saying that a lot of these expenses have not been drawn to his attention and therefore, he has not been given an opportunity to even sign on?

Mr. G. Persaud: Mdm. Chair, I am not sure to what expenditure the Regional Chairman being referred to as having made certain statements is referring. It is unfortunate that the Regional Chairman would not have sought to have some dialogue and discourse on this issue with me. I met with the Regional Chairman since his appointment and he would have raised a number of issues with me, and there are other Hon. Members of this House who would have raised issues with me with regards to Region No. 8 and some issues therein. I met the Regional Chairman and his full council on two occasions. Had these issues been placed as part of the discussion then, certainly, I would have offered my guidance on them. But having heard them now I can assure the Hon. Member that I will seek to have dialogue with the Regional Chairman hoping he can bring to fore the issues and I can have discourse with both the Accounting Officer and Regional Chairman to resolve whatever issues may exist.

Mr. Trotman: Mdm. Chair, I want to take this opportunity to assure the Hon. Minister that I will make available to him a copy of a letter which the Regional Chairman had cause to write to the REO with respect to his failure to draw to his attention the question of expenses to which he is supposed to have knowledge of.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much Hon. Member.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you very much. Hon. Members I recognise Mr. Bulkan followed by Mrs. Lowe and I want to draw to your attention that we are still on the first head. There are eight heads and we are on head one. We all know what the time is, so please keep that in mind.

Mr. Bulkan: Mdm. Chair, can I respectfully refer the Minister to page 351 where the programme objective for this programme says that one of the objectives is to undertake consultations with, among other bodies, neighbourhood democratic councils – plural. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to inform this House what are the names of these Neighbourhood Democratic Councils.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you Hon. Member. Mdm. Chair, this is a generic legend that is used. In Region No. 8 there are no Neighbourhood Democratic Councils that were constituted as a result of elections that were held in 1994.

Mr. Bulkan: A follow-up question please, Mdm. Chair: this is a shocking state of affairs. I do not know what the meaning of the word “generic” is to which the Minister refers. The information we are looking at here says Agency 78, Region No. 8, Potaro/Siparuni and it lists a programme objective. I am shocked to learn what the Hon. Minister is saying. What is stated here goes on to refer to promoting efficient and optimal use. Would the Hon. Minister agree with me that if this level of attentiveness and carelessness is present in the mission statement it does little to inspire confidence in Members of this House with those charged and entrusted with the capacity to manage the affairs of this region?

Mr. G. Persaud: Mdm. Chair, it is so unfortunate. I do not enjoy doing what I am about to do, but it is necessary that I do it.

Mdm. Chairperson: Once it does not infringe any rule.

Mr. G. Persaud: Mdm. Chair, Guyana as it stands, is subdivided into a number of areas that are designated neighbourhood democratic councils, but for the purpose of elections in 1994 we sought to bring to the fore elections in 71 out of 129 local authority areas. So that being what it is if we are managing the affairs of our country then a basic lesson in geography on our six-tier system of governance must be a prerequisite for all of us. So there are a number of Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs) in Region No. 8 by way of the demarcation of boundaries but these have not been activated by way of elections just like on the Linden/Soesdyke Highway. It is for that reason the legend in itself is cast in expectation that whenever these bodies are brought to the fore as an elected body that they will be taken into the process.

Mr. Bulkan: Mdm. Chair, line item 6281: would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to inform us which buildings will be protected under this budgetary proposal of \$1.48 million?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you Hon. Member. Mdm. Chair, buildings in the administrative compound at Mahdia.

Mr. Bulkan: A follow-up question, Mdm. Chair: yesterday we heard that in Region No. 6 the buildings that were provided security under the regional administration included the building of the Regional Chairman. Would the Hon. Minister be prepared to say why in this instance the Regional Chairman of Region No. 8 does not enjoy a similar facility?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you Hon. Member. Mdm. Chair, no Regional Chairman in Region No. 8 had security attached to his/her quarters because the quarter is in the compound where the police station rests.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Member Mrs. Lowe. And after Mrs. Lowe I am going to put the question because we still have seven more heads. I will take Ms. Lowe and the Ms. Marcello and then I will put the question so we can move onto the other heads.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Thank you Mdm. Chair. Line Item 6271 – Telephone Charges: Hon. Minister I did hear you mention that some phone cards were purchased under another line item so I am wondering what the \$400,000 is for under telephone. Who will benefit here?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you Hon. Member. Mdm. Chair, the phone cards under line item 6211 are intended for the Chairman, the Vice Chairman and councillors therein. The allocation under line item 6271 is for the administration, meeting their cell phone charges.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Thank you Hon. Minister. Line Item 6272: can you say how many buildings benefit from this \$4.4 million in electricity charges?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you Hon. Member. Mdm. Chair, the buildings now metered are the administrative office buildings, the regional chairman's residence, the regional chairman's office, the stores, the guest house and the security lighting around the Mahdia compound.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Line Item 6302 – Training Including Scholarships - I notice \$367,000 identified. What type of training and how many persons?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you Hon. Member. Mdm. Chair, supervisory management training, human resource management training, clerical and office practice training; all these trainings will be done by the Public Service Ministry in Georgetown. The six staff members will periodically benefit during this year from the allocation.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Thank you. Line Item 6116 – Contracted Employees: you did mention Hon. Minister that two of the contracted employees are hinterland affairs workers. Could you detail their job description please?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you Hon. Member. Mdm. Chair, these are public service positions so the job descriptions will be with the Public Service Commission and Public Service Ministry. I understand they are available online. If the Hon. Member has difficulty I can seek to get copies for her.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: I will appreciate that, thank you.

Ms. Marcello: Mdm. Chair, let me carry the Minister back to line item 6264: I was told by previous Regional Democratic Council (RDC) Councillors that a vehicle was purchased under the previous administration for Marowa and up to now no vehicle has been assigned to that area. Can the Hon. Minister say or inform this House what has become of that vehicle?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much Hon. Member. Mdm. Chair, I am advised that the administration has no knowledge of such a purchase. That is the most I can say at this point in time.

Ms. Marcello: Thank you. Can the Hon. Minister assure this House that such provisions will be made in 2014 Budget? Because since the school and the health centre became functional the workers find it difficult to come in and out of that area since the area is very remote.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much Hon. Member. May I advise Hon. Member that budget starts in July at the region, village and community levels. I cannot give any commitment with regards to what was requested Mdm. Chair, that will be interfering in the process. I cannot do that.

Programme: 781 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$61,002,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 781 - Regional Administration and Finance - \$2,600,000

Programme: 781 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$2,600,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 782 – Public Works - \$113,381,000

Mrs. Lawrence: Hon. Minister may I refer you to page 356, the line item under Maintenance of Infrastructure, of roads bridges, drains, sea and river defences and other infrastructure works: I note that you have been allocated some \$55.8 million here. Looking at the Auditor General's Report for 2011 – this region has always had issues with regards to accountability for maintenance works – page 202 through 205 we note that \$9 million have been overpaid to contractors. Most of these works as outlined here and I would like you to take a look for yourself. One does not have to be a contractor or engineer to note these works were not done or the necessary materials were not used. This problem continues to happen in the region. I want to highlight one in particular. On page 204 a contractor was awarded a contract for repairs to the Mahdia roadway. When the Auditor General's engineers visited that particular worksite they found absolutely no work done but the contractor was paid \$4.9 million. I am bothered about that and hope you are. Perhaps you can tell us in 2013 what is being done to ensure that officers are surcharged for giving people public moneys for works not done. That is what we want to know, Sir.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much Hon. Member. Mdm. Chair, I must agree with the sentiments expressed by the Hon. Member. Region No. 8 is a very difficult region in terms of executing infrastructure developmental works. That is because of the terrain and the challenges that exist with regards to moving building and other materials. I wish to assure the Hon. Member that the works referred to on page 204, I am advised that at last the work was completed and based on the specification, but it is a statement of fact that we have had prolonged delays in the completion of some of our works in that region. In order to ensure that we have stronger, more consistent monitoring we would have brought on board some of the officers that I would have shared just a while ago. We are strengthening our monitoring and evaluation systems. We are also hoping to have as many contractors as possible going into the region. They said it is not too

much of an attractive region because of the challenges there. So we are hoping to do better in every year as we move through our project implementation.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mdm. Chair, I heard the Minister and of all the plans he has but I think the fundamental thing is missing in his response. The fact is that persons are being paid for work that is not done means that somebody is issuing cheques. And this is happening over and over again. As I said, there are things that can be seen, for example, a window that is not there, posts that are not there, the mesh for the fence is not there. What are you doing internally? You are going to look at getting better contractors and engineers but what are you doing internally with regards to payment to these persons?

Further, Sir, I would like to ask through the Chair whether contractors who do road works in this particular region using the gravel from the side of the road or a few feet away are charged for that gravel by the region. If not, why not? If it is a village does the village council get paid for the gravel?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much Hon. Member. I am advised that the region because they are not rate collectors they do not charge. The councils, however, in whose boundaries such deposits are located, work out arrangements with the contractors in those regions.

Mr. Trotman: Mdm. Chair, I want to follow-up from where the Hon. Member Lawrence has left off using the same line item she referred to, because there is an urgent need for us to do some actual monitoring in relation to the works that are done in that region. I want to ask the Minister, in the interest of saving time, if he is prepared to lay over in this House a list of all the maintenance works that have to be done under these heads? They should be specific and should also have a cost so when we go out there to check – it is important to go outside there to find out what is happening because we believe a lot of things are not happening in the interest of the people and hence my question to the Minister.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you Hon. Member. Mdm. Chair, yes, we will do as requested. However, I must add that as far as practicable road works in the North Pakaraimas are most often done by the councils themselves. In 2012 the Hon. Member of Parliament and others who frequented those areas would know that almost all our internal roads in the North Pakaraimas were done by the village councils themselves.

4.53 p.m.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Norton; I see the Hon. Member Ms. Marcello. Hon. Member please keep in mind the time because the time will come when some areas, we will not be able to entertain any questions and I will just have to propose and put the question. Just keep that in mind as you ask you questions. Go ahead Dr. Norton.

Dr. Norton: Could the Hon. Minister say to this Hon. House, why should a practice of giving the contract to the Village Councils is not followed particularly in the south of the Rupununi? The Village Councils or the villagers themselves are saying, they can do the roads better and that they have done it better before and they do not know who the people are that are going into their villages and building roads that do not last.

I would also like to ask the Hon. Minister if he can tell us whether or not the contractors being supervised by whoever, is employing them with regards to their mode of employing or the emoluments to the employees, for instance in the village of Shea, the young in the village was being paid \$1000 for a truck load of boulders.

Mr. G. Persaud: In the interest of time and everything else I wish to urge the Hon. Member that when we move into Region No. 9 that he raise those issues and I will deal with them because they are all Region No. 9 cast issues.

Mdm. Chairperson: Yes it is Region No. 9, I did note that. Hon. Member Ms. Marcello.

Ms. Marcello: I am looking at line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads, as well as line item 6252 – Maintenance of Bridges, but let me focus on line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads first: I would like the Hon. Minister to assure me if any allocations have been made for the maintenance of roads from Brian Sucre Junction to Tumatumari and Brian Sucre Junction to Micobie.

The other one – Maintenance of Bridges: I would like to ask the Minister if any allocations have been made for the maintenance of the bridge between the Brian Sucre Junction and Mahdia, the Tiger Creek Bridge, which is almost falling off?

Mr. G. Persaud: The road works that are planned here: Mahdia Airstrip Road, Mahdia internal roads, Kawau to Mountain Foot, Mahdia to Princeville, Kaibarupai to Waipa and Tuseneng to Waiong. The bridges are Princeville, Kurukubaru and Orinduik.

To the direct areas identified by the Hon. Member, those areas constitute the main highway and those areas are the responsibility of the Ministry of Public Works. I urge the Hon. Member to raise those questions again when the Hon. Member Minister Robeson Benn will make his presentation.

Programme: 782 – Public Works - \$113,381,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 782 – Public Works - \$48,500,000

Mr. Sharma: In 2011, a sum of \$8.950 million was voted for a road at School Junction to Seven Miles Junction. This amount was paid and certified as work completed, but a physical verification revealed no work was done. Can the Hon. Minister say if this Regional Economic Officer (REO) was dismissed and if so if he is employed in some other Ministry – maybe the Office of the President?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you Hon. Member. Mdm. Chairperson, growing up can be a very difficult thing; I am really learning now. I recognise that the Auditor General's Report for 2011 was presented and is available. I am aware too that we have not had scrutiny and discussions of the Auditor General Report. We have not receive from the Public Accounts Committee a report here, to this House, so that we can be guided with regards to based on the responses presented by the accounting entities to the Public Accounts Committee and how they would have deemed the responses and so on. It is a process as we all know and so I and our Ministry stand ready to act once the process is completed.

With regards to the former REO who was in that region during the period of 2011, that REO contract has ended and it has not been renewed. So I am not aware that that officer is at the Office of the President. Maybe the Hon. Member can provide documentary evidence so I can investigate.

Mdm. Chairperson: I do not think he said that a former REO was there, but it was probably an undertone as to whether he was there or not.

Programme: 782 – Public works - \$48,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 783 – Education Delivery - \$415,120,000

Ms. Marcello: Line Item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: I would be happy if the Minister could provide me with the list of buildings he would be maintaining this year with the allocation of \$27,500,000, to save time.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Minister the request is for a written submission: Would you be prepared to do that in the interest of time and given your ready agreement in the past to so provide?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you Mdm. Chairperson. As requested, but you are denying me an opportunity to share with the House some of the highlights.

Mdm. Chairperson: Well if the House agrees that we work until 5.30 a.m., we can share anything. But if we want to go to ten minutes past five, it would be difficult, Sir. It is for the House to decide, I am a servant of the House.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you Mdm. Chairperson, I will comply with your guidance.

Programme: 783 – Education Delivery - \$415,120,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 783 – Education Delivery - \$59,298,000

Ms. Marcello: Project Code 2402200 – Land and Water Transport: could the Hon. Minister say what kind of vehicle he intends to purchase?

Mr. G. Persaud: It is intended to be a 4x4 double cab vehicle.

Ms. Marcello: Where is it going?

Mr. G. Persaud: To the Department of Education, to be based in Mahdia.

Mr. Trotman: Project Code 1204400 – Buildings – Education: I am wondering if the Hon. Minister can lay over, in writing, the specifics and costs under this head.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you Hon. Member. Mdm. Chairperson, I will comply.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you. Hon. Minister I am sorry that you are being denied this opportunity. I appreciate your commitment to lay over, in writing, the requested information

Programme: 783 – Education Delivery - \$59,298,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 784 – Health Services - \$146,002,000

Dr. Norton: Line Item 6116 – Contracted Employees: could the Hon. Minister say if this increase by four Contracted Employees includes the officer to man the health post now under construction at Maikwak?

Mr. G. Persaud: The response is that there is an officer in training.

Dr. Norton: Line Item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): could the Hon. Minister say if in this, there is training for the use of the therapeutical ultrasound machine that is being procured under Capital Expenditure?

Mr. G. Persaud: I am advised that the doctor is being trained presently to use that equipment.

Ms. Marcello: Could the Hon. Minister say how many security guards we have at the hospital right now?

Mdm. Chairperson: Is it under line item 6281 – Security Services?

Ms. Marcello: Yes.

Mr. G. Persaud: I am advised that there are two guards.

Ms. Marcello: Do they normally supply 24 hours security right there?

Mr. G. Persaud: Two 12 hours, from 6 to 6.

Ms. Marcello: Let me turn my attention to line item 6264 – Vehicle Spares and Service: Can the Hon. Minister tell this House how many vehicles are at the hospital right now?

Mr. G. Persaud: I am advised that there are two 4x4 vehicles: licence plates PPP 1425 and PRR 3520 and an ATV CF 9170.

Ms. Marcello: Can the Hon. Minister say how many vehicles are operational?

Mr. G. Persaud: I am advised all three.

Ms. Marcello: I am knowledgeable that the vehicles that were before me are not operational, except for the Malaria vehicle that was given by Global Funds. That is operational – one vehicle.

Mr. G. Persaud: I am advised that the Malaria vehicle is PPP 1425, the other pick-up is PRR 3520 and the ATV is CF 9170; they are all operable.

Ms. Marcello: I was made to understand that the new vehicle is in the region's administrative office. Which area is it intended for?

Mr. G. Persaud: It is for the health service in Mahdia and the surrounding areas; it is based in Mahdia.

Ms. Marcello: In 2012, we were told that the truck and the ATV would be purchased for the hospital. Are we still getting our truck or does that cover the allocation for last year?

Mr. G. Persaud: The truck – there was a change in programme in 2012 and so the truck was not purchase because of the change in programme. Instead, the vehicle PRR 3520 was purchased; the ATV was purchased and is in the North Pakaraimas for the health services; the Parmakatoi Health Centre.

Ms. Marcello: Is the vehicle for the Parmakatoi Health Centre?

Mr. G. Persaud: I think I went too fast here and got caught up with the time speed. The ATV was purchased and is at the Parmakatoi Health Centre, the licence plate is CG 6824.

Ms. Marcello: I was made to understand, up to recently, two weeks ago, the Medex was saying there was no means of transportation. That he had an emergency at Bamboo Creek concerning a snake bite and he could not get there on time. He was asking if the Ministry could supply him with at least a 4x4 pick-up truck that he would be able to respond to these kinds of emergencies in a speedy manner.

Mr. G. Persaud: I am happy that the Hon. Member has not disputed that the ATV is at Parmakatoi but is now making a request for a 4x4 pick-up truck. The right place to start is at the regional area.

Programme: 784 – Health Services - \$146,002,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 784 – Health Services - \$40,400,000

Dr. Norton: Project Code 2402200 – Land and Water Transport, “Purchase of ambulance”: this question is particularly because of the response we got when we asked a question about the ambulance for the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs. Could the Hon. Minister say if this ambulance is fully equipped with space for a lying patient that is supposed to be brought here?

Mr. G. Persaud: I am advised that the ambulance would be so equipped and can allow for a patient to be in a lying position.

Programme: 784 – Health Services - \$40,400,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Member that brings us to the end of our pre-break work. Could the Assembly resume?

Assembly resumed

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Member, the Assembly having been resumed, we will take the suspension now. It is 5.15 p.m. and I will suggest to the Hon. Speaker that we

recommence at 6.05 p.m., in 50 minutes time. I think that is enough time. We now stand adjourned.

Sitting suspended at 5.15 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 6.35 p.m.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Hon. Members, we will resolve into Committee of Supply immediately.

Assembly in Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members I would like to start this evening by saying thank you to the Deputy Speaker for what I am told was an outstanding job. Where is she? She is not here. And to all those who expressed a desire to see me get well, I would like to say thank you, but I was not ill. I did miss you all, but I would not ask whether I was missed, but I did miss you all.

I was told Hon. Members that we were about to proceed on the consideration of the Estimates for Region Nos. 9 and 10 and then later on to address the Ministry of Public Works.

Agency: 79 Region 9: Upper Takatu/Upper Essequibo

Current Expenditure

Programme: 791 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$96,712,000

Mr. Allicock: Line Item 6116 – Contracted Employees: can the Hon. Minister say to this Hon. House, what are the designations of these three positions and their emoluments?

Mr. G. Persaud: Deputy REO, salary \$186,665; system administrator, \$83,374 and assistant secretary- finance, salary \$83,374.

Mr. Allicock: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: can the Hon. Minister give a list of the top five contracted employees, their designations and emoluments?

Mr. G. Persaud: District development officers, three of them, salaried at \$57,649, a fourth district development officer \$49,827 and a boat hand \$42,293.

Mr. Allicock: A follow-up question: can the Hon. Minister say whether there are any vacancies?

Mr. G. Persaud: If there are vacancies in the region, I would say “yes” and those vacancies are advertised by the Public Service Commission.

Mr. Allicock: Follow-up to that: Can the Hon. Minister say if he is confident that he has enough staff to manage this huge region effectively?

Mr. G. Persaud: I responded to a general question and I am having another general question. I will seek to honour the question with a response, but urge that we stick to the line item and the programme.

Under this programme, programme one, I think, we not only have adequate but competent and efficient staff who are willing to see the programmes through.

Mr. Allicock: Line Item 6211 – Expenses Specific to the Agency: in 2011, \$24.1 million was spent; in 2012, \$25.1 million was budgeted for and \$23.7 million was spent; in 2013, \$28.1 million is budgeted for, can the Hon. Minister give an explanation for the increase of \$4.4 million?

Mr. G. Persaud: The increase is partly attributed to greater monitoring and evaluation by elected official on the council as well as the establishment of internet facilities at the Regional Vice-Chairman’s office in Aishalton.

Mr. Allicock: Line Item 6281 – Security Services: Can the Hon. Minister identify the security company that provides this service and state whether the system of competitive bidding was utilised.

Mr. G. Persaud: The security company is Strategic Action and as usual the competitive bidding process, in keeping with the Procurement Act, was ventured into and that is the outcome.

Mr. Allicock: This is a follow-up question: can the Hon. Minister say if there is adequate security now?

Mr. G. Persaud: I am advised that what is requested in the Estimates will be adequate to provide the kinds of security envisaged by the Regional Administration, but I must acknowledge too that the security company would have encountered difficulties, in some locations, to recruit guards at a consistent level.

Mr. Allicock: Line Item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): can the Hon. Minister say who will benefit from this training and which areas of training will be targeted.

6.44 p.m.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. For training there are three interventions and they will all be under the watchful and experienced eye of the Public Service Ministry: Certificate in Supervisory Management (Level I) as well as Certificate in Supervisory Management (Level II), Government Accounting Procedures. In these three training programmes, the accounting one will benefit the staff members in the accounting units; for the Certificate in Supervisory Management, two staff members from the middle management grouping of the administration and Certificate in Supervisory Management is for an additional two staff members who would have completed Module I in 2012.

Programme: 791 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$96,712,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 791 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$8,900,000

Mr. Allicock: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Project Code 1204900: can the Hon. Minister explain to this honourable House the activities for rehabilitation of the hostel? What does it entail?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. Mr. Chairman, the scope of work entails changing of windows, insulation, changing members in the ceiling, the walls of the building, painting the building, as well as renovation work on the floor, size 80 x 30 feet to the tune of \$4.5 million.

Mr. Allicock: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. Project Code 2402400: can the Hon. Minister say where these items will be based?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you, Hon. Member. The purchase of the 25-foot aluminium boat and the 15 horsepower outboard engine at the cost of \$1.7 million would be located in the Lethem area.

Programme: 791 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$8,900,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 792 – Agriculture - \$21,951,000

Mr. Allicock: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Line Items 6114, 6115 and 6116: can the Hon. Minister say, in his honest opinion, whether the region is adequately staffed in anticipation of the agricultural development for this region?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. Agriculture in the region is supported very significantly by the Central Ministry so very often the technical expertise that rest with the Central Ministry of Agriculture will be deployed at convenient times to offer the kinds of support required by farmers in the region. That being as it is, the response is “yes”.

Mr. Allicock: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. Line Item 6242: can the Hon. Minister identify the buildings for maintenance and their individual costs?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. Rehabilitation to fence the nursery at St. Ignatius would be 28 x 60 feet and it is expected to cost \$1 million. Rehabilitation to the fence and nursery shed at St. Ignatius, 80 x 100 feet, are expected to cost \$1 million and rehabilitation of the roof of the bond at St. Ignatius, \$1.7 million projected, dimensions are 28 x 60 feet. This is all part of the agri-diversification programme that is launched by the Ministry of Agriculture and is partnered by the Regional Administration and is centred at the St. Ignatius Secondary School compound.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line Item 6302- Training (Including Scholarships): Hon. Minister, I noticed that you have \$1.1 million earmarked for training. Can

you say what category of training and how many persons will be trained and if any agri-extension officers will be trained? Thank you.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. Several extension officers as well as farmers, community leaders, will be trained by this allocation in the year 2013. Thirty persons from each community would be brought together from the deep south and they would be part of a NARI training programme and that programme would be for a three-day duration and, similarly, there will be another programme in the South Pakaraimas in which 240 persons from various communities would be brought together and be exposed to a number of training concepts including crop husbandry and agri-diversification, use of pesticides, insecticides and so on.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: A follow-up question please, on the same line item: confirming that 30 persons will be drawn from six villages in the deep south, how many of them will be agri-extension officers? These officers are very important. They have to go out into the fields to visit the farmers. Thank you

Mr. G. Persaud: Six of those persons would be extension officers.

Programme: 792 – Agriculture - \$21,951,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 792 – Agriculture - \$16,000,000

Mr. Allicock: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Project Code 1701400: can the Hon. Minister give specifics as to the four projects, the estimated cost for each activity and a possible commencement date?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you, Hon. Member. Rehabilitation of Livestock Foreman Quarters at St. Ignatius: Presently the programme is forced to rent accommodation for this officer. It is intended to expend \$5.1 million this year to construct a building that will provide the necessary accommodation for this staff member.

Rehabilitation of nurseries at Karasabi and Annai will be to the tune of an estimated \$1 million each. When completed these projects will enable farmers to obtain planting materials, reinforce nursery beds, install proper water systems.

The third activity under this programme is rehabilitation of extension officers' quarters at Karasabi. This is estimated to cost \$5 million and it is to provide accommodation for the agricultural extension assistant stationed at Karasabi; dimension of building 25 x 30 feet and it is intended to rehabilitated windows, doors, floor, walls, painting and works on the sanitary facility.

Purchase of solar panels and accessories and installation of the same: \$2,355,000 for officers' quarters at Aishalton, Karasabi and Annai. Each set will consist of two panels – 135 watts each, one battery, 245 charger regulator – 2000 watts, inverter – 2000 watts. Three swing fog machines at an estimated cost of \$433,000 each – \$1.299 million – and this is to assist farmers in the fight against acushi ants in Parabara and Achiwuib.

The final item: Four four burner stoves complete with cylinders at the cost of \$60,000 each – \$240,000 – for officers' quarters Aishalton, Karasabi, Annai and St. Ignatius.

Mr. Allicock: Thank you very much. A follow-up question: am I to understand that there would be extensions officers now in place?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you, Hon. Member. The response is “yes”.

Programme: 792 – Agriculture - \$16,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 793 – Public Works – \$104,352,000

Mr. Allicock: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Line Item 6242: Can the Hon. Minister identify the buildings for maintenance and their individual costs?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. R-Number 30 living quarters at Lethem at a cost of \$3.5 million. Works would be done on doors, window frames, floors, electrical circuit, painting and guttering. Liver quarters R-Number 71 at Annai: It is expected to have work

done on the doors, window frames, flooring, electrical circuit, as well as the plumbing and this is expected to cost \$3.5 million. RCR-Number 111 Storage Bond: It is intended to have work done on the windows, doors, walls, painting of the building, et cetera at a cost of \$1.2 million. R-Number 17 Living Quarters at Lethem: Servicing of the entire electrical system, repairs to doors, windows, painting of walls, repair to floor, roof, gutters and service the entire plumbing system at a cost of \$3 million. R-Number 29 Living Quarters, Lethem: Servicing of the entire electrical system, doors, windows, painting of walls, repair to roof, floor, gutters and plumbing system at a cost of \$3 million. Living Quarters R-Number 18 at Lethem: Maintenance and repair of defective windows, doors, roof, plumbing, painting, etcetera. R-Number 37B Living Quarters at Lethem: Servicing of the entire electrical system, repairs to floor, roof, gutters and plumbing system, \$3 million.

Mr. Allicock: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. Line Item 6251: can the Hon. Minister identify the roads that are to be maintained and their individual costs?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you, Hon. Member. Lethem, DBST road – \$9 million; Culvert City, St Ignatius internal roads, 3 miles – \$7 million; raising, grading, compacting, shaping of existing road, repairs to eroded sections in Aishalton Village, 3-mile stretch, \$4 million; raising, grading, compacting, shaping of existing road, repairs to eroded sections in Sand Creek Village, 2 miles stretch, estimated cost of \$3.5 million; grading, compacting, shaping of existing road in Kurupukari, approximately 3-mile stretch, estimated cost \$4 million.

Mr. Allicock: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. Line Item 6255: can the Hon. Minister explain to the honourable House what other infrastructure is for maintenance? Where is the other infrastructure?

Mr. G. Persaud: This year the \$7 million allocated under the Maintenance of Other Infrastructure would be used to do rehabilitation work to the fence and replacing of defective materials at the government building R-Number 15 in Lethem, an estimated 250 feet at a cost of \$2 million. Similar work should be done at the Karasabi admin compound at a cost of \$2 million. Rehabilitation to the trestle, government building R-Number 17 at Lethem; that is projected to cost \$2 million. Rehabilitation to the internal fencing at the following compounds: R-Number 24, R-Number 25, R-Number 26 at a cost of \$1 million.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is any of this money for bridges – particularly the ones that cause a problem every year?

Mr. G. Persaud: Yes, Mr. Chairman, there is \$18 million proved for bridges in the current estimate.

Mr. Bulkan: A follow-up question, please, Mr. Chairman. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to lay over the details for the very project that you enquired about?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you, Hon. Member. It is a very short list of five, so I can run that through very quickly: Jawari Bridge, South Pakaraimas at a cost of \$4 million, 40 x 15 feet; Karasabi, Bridge Number 1, 30 x 15 feet, \$3 million; San Jose Bridge, 60 x 15 feet, \$4 million; Mountain Point Bridge, 30 x 15 feet, \$3 million and Parabara Bridge Number 1, 40 x 15 feet, \$4 million.

Ms. Wade: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a follow-up question on line item 6251 - Maintenance of Roads: can the Hon. Minister say what criteria were used to identify those roads in that line item? Taking into consideration, Hon. Minister, the state of the Farm to Market Kumu Road. Those farmers are suffering. The road is deplorable.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. One would recognise that Region 9 is our largest region, geographically, and because of that the expanse between the 56 and growing number of villages, in terms of distance, is extremely long and so it has been and it will always be a challenge to maintain all of our road linkages in this beautiful savannah region of ours, but with every passing year and the support of this honourable House we have been making the task easier.

Mr. Chairman: That sound like an essay you are reading.

Mr. G. Persaud: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Did someone write it up for you.

Mr. G. Persaud: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, go ahead.

Mr. G. Persaud: We are hoping that whichever road would not have been listed this year that the villagers and the process in that region would have, by priority, identified these above those. Thank you.

Programme: 793 – Public Works - \$104,352,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 793 – Public Works – \$158,091,000

Mr. Allicock: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Project Code 1100900: can the Hon. Minister give specific dimensions of work for each bridge, cost and possible commencement date?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. Upgrade of the Macaw Bridge at a cost of \$9 million. It is 50 feet on the access road to the South Rupununi and this work entails concrete structure with wooden decking with revetment wall. Construction of the Sawariwau Bridge is projected to cost \$9 million, a concrete structure with wooden decking and curb walls with revetment, 80-foot access link to Baitun. The third is a construction of a bridge at Sand Creek, projected to cost \$20 million, concrete structure with wooden decking, 150 feet over the Sand Creek River.

Mr. Allicock: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. A follow-up question: is the Hon. Minister aware that the Kabanau Bridge is in dire need of support?

Mr. G. Persaud: I am advised that the Regional Administration is aware of the need to do some work on that bridge and that they are looking at avenues in ensuring that such work would be completed.

Dr. Norton: Just a follow-up question, Mr. Chairman: taking into consideration the fact that the rainy season is about to commence and the dire state in which this bridge is in, could you be more specific? Let us know exactly when you intend to start repair works on this bridge which the villagers down south are in so much need of so that they can communicate with Lethem.

Mr. G. Persaud: I am afraid, Hon. Member, that I would not be able to give you that commitment because that is something that we have not completed. It is something that surfaced a short while ago and it is receiving attention.

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, we were even contemplating treating the situation that this bridge lies in as a subject of emergency and I would be happy if the Minister does take this into consideration.

7.14 p.m.

This is the only means by which a sick person, or anybody else, can cross from Aishalton Village to get down to Lethem. It has been like this for the longest while. Could I urge the Minister to do all in his capacity to tell this Committee exactly if that is all that can be done for those Guyanese, way down south, who are in need, at this moment, for this bridge to be repaired?

Mr. G. Persaud: I have heard your guidance and it is noted.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, in a situation such as this where, in fact, this bridge is the only means of passage, would the Ministry of Public Works be able to render any assistance to your Ministry, perhaps, to carry out emergency works?

Mr. G. Persaud: I hear you, Mr. Chairman. That is the reason I am saying that this matter needs to be discussed in a consultative environment and we will handle, it Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I know when it comes to the bridges too in the Iwokrama Forest and the Mabura road, and so forth, the Ministry also intervenes there.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Follow-up to the same project. Hon. Minister, I heard you say that the bridge at Sawariwau will have a link to Baitun. Would the residents of Baitun be able to use the bridge and come out to Lethem during the rainy season?

Mr. G. Persaud: I think that is the reason it is being constructed.

Mr. Bulkan: Project 1401300, with roads, the capital project, reference number 372, would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to provide some further details for the projects that are to be funded?

Mr. G. Persaud: Construction of asphaltic roads in Lethem - \$26 million, upgrading of the Massara access road, two miles - \$14,942, 000, upgrading of access road to Nappi, one mile - \$2.6 million, Hiawa - \$2.6 million, for one mile, Parishara, one mile - \$2.6 million, Quarrie, one mile - \$2.6 million, upgrading of Shiriri access road, two miles - \$6 million, continuation of access road to Aishalton, 1.5 miles - \$4.5 million.

Programme: 793 – Public Works - \$158,091,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 794 – Education Delivery - \$609,892,000

Mr. Allicock: Line item 6284 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister explain the activity under this line item?

Mr. G. Persaud: This line item is used to provide payments for services provided by the temporary sweeper/cleaners. It is also used to provide payments to our invigilators and supervisors for exams. It is used to provide stipend to our volunteer teachers and to fund valedictory functions for officers under the education programme.

Mr. Allicock: Follow-up. I am aware that the Minister is aware that there is an outstanding payment at the Annai Secondary School. Up to present, this is still an outstanding matter where the providers of food items to the school are still not paid and workers are still not paid. Could the Hon. Minister say whether this could be possible now?

Mr. G. Persaud: Outstanding payments are deemed, in accounting terms, as liabilities. There is a process by which Government responds to liabilities. That process is never found in the current Estimates, so what we are dealing with is expenditure for the year 2013. The year 2011 expenditures, to which the Hon. Member is referring, are indeed expenditures that are outstanding and so if there is sufficient saving during the course this year, once again, the system, to treat with liabilities, will be activated, but I am hoping that the region can clear that liability.

Mr. Allicock: I would have thought that the Hon. Minister would have seen this as a very important matter. It is payment to persons who have already done the job; it is not that they are waiting there... I would like to implore upon the Minister to see what means could be made available so that those persons get satisfaction. I brought this up in my first budget speech, which was last year, where the same thing was said that if there were *left left*, as we would say, they would get that. They deserve more than this Hon. Minister.

Mr. G. Persaud: I just do not want to be unkind to anyone, but, as I said, the system to deal with liabilities is clear. What the Hon. Member seems to be insinuating is that the Minister has the power to break the laws and rules. That is not. I would not like to create more work for the Members of the Public Accounts Committee. The rules and procedures must and will be followed. It is unfortunate, but we have to be rule based.

Mr. B. Williams: I would like to talk about hot meals. Line item 6292 – Dietary: It is a big sum of \$62 million. Could the Hon. Minister say where this expenditure is directed?

Mr. G. Persaud: The allocation under, line item 6292, is intended to provide for the dietary needs of our students at the dormitories. There are 185 students at Annai, 190 at Saint Ignatius, 60 at Sand Creek and 85 at Aishalton.

Mr. B. William: Follow-up. Could the Hon. Minister say what is the nature of those meals?

Mr. G. Persaud: Three meals per day, breakfast, lunch and dinner. Whatever is the specific menu I do not have that, but I will give the number and the cost per centre - Annai - \$20.9 million, Saint Ignatius - \$20.5 million, Sand Creek - \$7.7 million and Aishalton - \$13.3 million. Those give the total of \$62.5 million.

Mr. B. Williams: Follow-up. Is the Hon. Minister aware about a diet of cassava bread and peanut butter - daily diet?

Mr. Chairman: Minister, one second. Hon. Member Mr. Williams, are you saying that daily, as in only? Is that all that the students get or they get that as one of the three meals? I am aware of the...

Mr. B. Williams: I have been told by the residents that that is the nature of the meal - cassava bread and peanut butter.

Mr. G. Persaud: If I may. Because we are all human beings we do not know it all and sometimes limited information can cause us to misrepresent a situation.

The Hon. Member seems to mixing up some of our snacks hot meal programmes with what takes place at our dormitories. These are live-in students and I have not heard any such complain. Cassava is one of the basic staples of the people of the Rupununi. That is a statement of fact, and so it cannot be used as if it is a meal, which is demeaning in any way. I think, that now having said that, the Hon. Member follow-up question will seek to point him the direction he really...

Mr. Chairman: Minister, this matter has been going on for the last three weeks. It keeps coming up. I am aware of the peanut butter and cassava bread because, as you said, one, it is part of the staples and, secondly, the peanut butter is supposed to provide protein. I would hope that is not the only meal. Certainly I am aware of it and in discussions, several years ago, some nutritionist did tell me that it is recommended, and so forth. I understand that, but by now we should be able to clarify this because this matter has been going on for the past three weeks.

Mr. B. Williams: I do not know why the Hon. Minister is arrogating to himself to determine what I am thinking. I never said anything about the meal being demeaning.

Mr. G. Persaud: I was just being kind to the Hon. Member.

Mr. B. Williams: Yes, but he does not have the ability to interpret what I am saying.

[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Let us hear the question.

Mr. B. Williams: Could the Hon. Minister say whether he would classify cassava bread and peanut butter as hot meals?

Mr. G. Persaud: Whatever the people, in any part of this country, find as acceptable to be a meal I have no difficulty with that.

Mr. B. Williams: The Hon. Minister must know that the residents are totally against it and they want hot meals. That is what they are saying; they want hot meals to be cooked every day. I am talking about Karasabai, Pai Pang and Tiger Pond.

Mr. G. Persaud: It is unfortunate...

Mr. Chairman: One second Minister. Ms. Sukhai, I know that you are Minister and you have knowledge but, as I said, this matter has been stirring in the air for the last three weeks and a definitive statement could have been made a long time ago. I am personally aware of it. I know that it is a staple. I know that the peanut butter not only provides employment to the manufacturer but there is some nutritional value. We need to have it clarified.

In terms of the Minister of Education, the Clerk advises, as I had known in previous Parliaments, that a Minister must be in his or her seat to be able to address the House. I see that you are determined to be heard.

Minister of Education [Ms. Manickchand]: I believe that it is a simple issue. I think Mr. Basil Williams wants an answer because he is interested too. There are a couple of things here. One is that there are dormitories that house our children and they get three square meals per day. Those meals are not cassava bread and peanut butter, although they may be recipients of the snack also.

Then there is a school feeding snack that is offered to most of the children in Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9 and that is separate from the meals which Minister Persaud was speaking about. That snack is offered to all of the children, whether they are in the dorms or out of the dorms. Some of the children in the dorms, although they are secondary schoolchildren, they would receive that as a snack internally but not in the school because the snack is provided from nursery to Grade Two. That snack is given as, what the Minister called, a hot meal, because in some school there are the hot meal programme too. This money here is not given to provide peanut butter and cassava bread to every student, as the Hon. Member mentioned.

What I want to point out is that in the dorms we are housing secondary school students. Secondary school students do not get this snack that the Hon. Member spoke of. The Hon. Member spoke of Karasabai and somewhere else, those are not dorms, so we are talking about two different things. No dorm exists in Karasabai, so clearly the Hon. Member Mr. Basil

Williams is speaking about a different thing from the children in the dorms. I think we need to clear that up.

Deputy Speaker [Mrs. Backer]: Mr. Chairman, through you, I think we can have some closure, at least in my mind, on this matter. This is line item 6292, Dietary, the question was asked, I think, for both Regions 7 and 8. When the Hon. Member Mr. Sharma sought to get what was the cost of the meal, there was a lot of laughter, and all of that, but it was a very serious question because we accept that the children... I am not talking about peanut butter now and cassava bread I am speaking about the meals for the children in the dorms. The Hon. Minister must be in a position to say to us the estimated cost - we do not expect that they will have the same thing every breakfast - for breakfast is \$100 per day. We do not want to know what they had yesterday or the day before. Lunch is \$300 and dinner is...The Hon. Member Mr. Sharma asked that question and everybody laughed. Members were saying that the children do not have the same thing every day, so how could they give a figure. The Hon. Member tried to compare it with what we have here, that we would have a figure for our dinner here, but it would not be the same thing that we would get.

I am respectfully asking the Hon. Minister because what the Hon. Member did was that he gave us the figure for the whole year for each dorm, this is in Region 7. What we are trying to find out, Sir, is: What is the cost per child, per day, to feed them because there must have a figure - \$200 for lunch, \$300 for breakfast and \$500 for dinner? If we get that then that would help us and we would not get this big argument about biscuit and peanut butter, or whatever. You must be able to tell us, Hon. Minister

Mr. B. Williams: I must thank the Hon. Minister of Education. She has addressed my question.

Mr. G. Persaud: You are ignorant.

Mr. B. Williams: It is clear that the Minister is saying that I am ignorant. I do not know, but I am just a LLB (Honours) plus others. The point I want to make to the Minister is that I am not talking about dorms. I am saying that the residents in the villages are saying that that is the only the children get and they do not want that.

Mr. Chairman: I do not think that comes under this Minister.

Mr. G. Persaud: To the Hon. Member, I said to him that he was misguided. He did not follow me and he sought to contest it. Indeed, he is out of order because line item 6292 is not relevant to his concerns and so he is out of order there. He did not want to listen. That is the problem.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, the Deputy Speaker raised an issue which I believe will bring closure to this. Just give us an idea of what it costs per day or per month to feed or to take care of a child under this head and then we move on. There are other questions.

We are hours behind where we should be. I need us to move to Region 10 within a reasonable time and to wrap up. Minister, it is if you are in a position to do the computation, if not you can provide them and we move on.

Mr. G. Persaud: I will seek to provide the information.

Mr. B. Williams: Line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence or line item 6265 – Other Transport, Travel and Postage: Since the Hon. Minister is saying that dietary was not dealing with the meals in the schools in the villages, I am asking which of these two heads has he catered for transportation to take schoolchildren to school.

Mr. G. Persaud: We would have had this discourse already. If the Hon. Member can be specific, then I will respond.

Mr. Chairman: In an effort to move us forward, are we, under any line item in programme 793, addressing transportation of children to school? If so, could you put us that in the direction where that is? If not, we will move on.

Mr. G. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, the question is not straightforward as you seem to be putting it, because we cater for children movement at the end of the term. That is catered for under the line item 6261 and it is also catered for under line item 6284. We also provide support in the form of fuel to some communities for the movement of children to and from. The Rupununi has a school in each one of the communities. It has a primary school, so children do not have to seek primary education outside. We are seeking to have primary schools in some of the satellite communities, as well.

Mr. Chairman: There is not daily travel to secondary schools.

Mr. G. Persaud: No.

Mr. Chairman: It is at the beginning of the term and at the end of the term children are transported.

Mr. G. Persaud: Yes. In some communities that are close proximity to secondary schools, through the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, from time to time transportation mechanism are made available to them and they are used partly for transporting children as well.

Dr. Norton: It is how could the Hon. Minister telling this honourable House that, in the Rupununi, schoolchildren, in the secondary schools, do not travel everyday to the secondary schools.

Mr. G. Persaud: I did not say that, Sir.

Dr. Norton: From Aranaputa Village, the children have to ride for at least one hour to get to the Annai Secondary School, every day and back.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: The same line item 6292, Dietary, I would like to say that I understand...
[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, some order please, so that we can hear Mrs. Garrido-Lowe.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: I would like to say that I understand the Hon. Member Mr. Basil Williams when he said that the primary schools really hate cassava bread and peanut snack that they are getting because they tend to get that every day. It has to be realised that Region 9 is not really a region for cassava bread, it is for farine.

Mr. Chairman: What is the question?

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: I was just clarifying that.

Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): Who will be trained and how many?

Mr. G. Persaud: Training would be done for Home Economics teachers at a cost of \$158, 000; the National Centre for Education, Resource and Development (NCERD) would be conducting a number of training programmes for teachers in curriculum delivery, it will be at a cost of \$742

500; the department of education, Region 9, would be doing a number of training seminars sessions and workshops in literacy, numeracy at a cost of \$390, 000; the department of education will also be embarking on a number of multi-grade teaching workshops for teachers in Grades C, D and E primary schools in the region, that is projected to cost \$390,000 and the department of education in collaboration with the central Ministry of Education will be undertaking a management training programme for school administrators as well.

The secondary school training would see seminars and workshops for parents as well as administrators, training also in information technology for school administrators and key staff in the secondary schools; School Based Assessment (SBA) training will also be done for secondary school teachers in the region and work study students would also go through orientation sessions as part of preparing them for the world of work.

7.44 p.m.

There will be a five-day orientation workshop for newly appointed school administrators and the Public Service Ministry will assist in training based on the roles and functions of invigilators and supervisors. NCERD will also be doing training on preparation and delivery of the curriculum.

Mr. Jones: It is specifically to line item 6292. Is the Hon. Minister aware that the student of the Aishalton dormitories, during last year, were fed three times per day with rice meal porridge, popularly known as *rice pop* and when they protested and queried they were told is due to the Opposition budget cut? Is the Minister aware of this?

Mr. G. Persaud: I am not aware of that.

Mr. Jones: Could the Minister please indicate to this Committee, to the media and to the residents of Region 9 if the budget cuts made to the Budget 2012, in any way, affected this line item?

Mr. G. Persaud: I am not sure what the question is. It is if the Hon. Member can restate it.

Mr. Jones: I repeat the question. Did the cuts that the Opposition made to the Budget 2012 in any way affected line item 6292, Dietary, to the dormitories of Region 9?

Mr. G. Persaud: I would not be in a position to evaluate that. I am dealing with the consideration of the 2013 Estimates.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member is asking the Minister to answer a question and we do not know who has made the allegation. How can a Minister answer a sweeping statement, as a question, has been asked by the Hon. Member? It is who knows who said it. It could have been someone in the community; it could have been someone in the press. He is not responsible for something that the Hon. Member is claiming.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, it is assumed that a person who assumes the office of a Minister could handle himself or herself. I think the Minister just was able to say that he was not aware and is in no position to answer to that, which I believe is the limit and extent to which he can go. The question was put and the question was answered. That is sufficient for me.

Programme: 794 - Education Delivery - \$609,892,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 794 - Education Delivery - \$72,125,000

Mr. Chairman: I am not entertaining any questions dealing with peanut butter, cassava bread or *rice pop*. Apparently those are the only questions that are going to come, so in view of that I put the question.

Programme: 794 - Education Delivery - \$72,125,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 795 – Health Services - \$206,186,000

Dr. Norton: It is because we are under health services, I refer directly to line item 6292, Dietary, and ask the Hon. Minister if the \$6,700,000, which is allocated to this line item, would be sufficient to change the situation as it exists now at the Aishalton Hospital where patients, from

the village itself, are not given food by the hospital and their relatives are asked to take food for them, bearing in mind that diet is the treatment of many ailments.

Mr. G. Persaud: I have listened to the Hon. Member very carefully and I must say that it is news to me that inpatients are having difficulties being provided with meal at the Aishalton Hospital. That is something that I will definitely look in to. In direct response to the question maybe it is for that reason that the regional administration has taken a decision that the subregional guest house will play an integral role in monitoring the preparation and serving of meals at the health institution.

Mr. B. Williams: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: Is the Hon. Minister aware that for the last three months personnel from Karasabai Health Centre have been requisitioning supplies in vain?

Mr. G. Persaud: I am unaware of that.

Mr. B. Williams: The Minister is aware now. Follow-up, but I will take it under another line item.

Mr. Chairman: Are you allowing Mr. Nandlall to scare you off? Do not let Mr. Nandlall cause you to back down. I noticed he waved a phone and you seemed to sit immediately. I do not know if he has something on that phone that scared you.

Programme: 795 – Health Services - \$206,186,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 795 - Health Services - \$24,300,000

Mr. B. Williams: Project 2505300 - Furniture and Equipment – Health: The profile page number is 381. Sir, I will ask the Hon. Minister if a dental chair is included under this head for the Karasabai Health Centre.

Mr. G. Persaud: The response is no.

Mr. B. Williams: It is no. Could the Hon. Minister say when this much needed item would be placed at the Karasabai Health Centre?

Mr. G. Persaud: The reason why the item is not listed here for procurement is because it is already in the region and is waiting to be installed.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Project 2402300 – Land Transport: “Purchase of vehicle.” I notice here that an ATV is being bought and it is for which community, because I would like to say that the Annai Hospital has a vehicle but it being used, according to the staff there, by the administrative staff, so when the hospital really needs it to transport sick patients, it cannot get it. Perhaps this ATV can be given to the administrative staff at Annai.

Mr. G. Persaud: It is unfortunate that the issue with Annai was not raised under the current expenditure, but under the capital expenditure the ATV will be procured. As it is stated, it is intended for the health workers, the medex at Sand Creek, to facilitate that medex movement to Sawariwau, Ruruwau, Kataur and Shulinab.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Follow-up. Hon. Minister, is there some way that either the Minister of Health, or whoever the appropriate person is, to intervene in this matter and make sure that the Annai Hospital gets the service of its vehicle, so that the patients can really benefit?

Mr. G. Persaud: As I said, just now, it is unfortunate that that issue was not brought under the current programme, but I think it is deserving of a response. The issue with regard to vehicle not being available to health is more of an allegation and that is because there is an issue with regard to custody of this vehicle. It is not that it is not available, but it is custody. The vehicle is under the control of the sub regional administration. That is how it is across the country.

Mr. Chairman: It is under the control of the administration but it is assigned to health department.

Mr. G. Persaud: Yes Sir.

Mr. Chairman: As you can see, an obvious difficulty would arise there, Minister.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Would health not get first preference?

Mr. Chairman: Again, going into the regions and the possession of assets, and control, is a major issue in villages. It causes all kinds of rift and then it gets in between families and friends. Certainly, if health is a priority, as it always should be, and there is the movement or transportation of patients there has to be some system that ensures, not on a discretionary basis but on an absolute needs basis, that the health facility gets access to the vehicle assigned to it. Maybe, that is something that the Ministry needs to ensure.

Mr. G. Persaud: Yes Sir. That is what is happening.

Dr. Norton: Could the Hon. Minister say under project 2505300, Furniture and Equipment – Health, how many of the patients’ monitors will be acquired and for which centres in Region 9?

Mr. G. Persaud: Four such patients’ monitors will be acquired and they will be for the emergency room at the Lethem Hospital.

Ms. Ferguson: A follow-up to Hon. Member Mr. Basil Williams’ question, with regard to the health equipment there in Karasabai. The Hon. Minister said that the equipment was sent up. Could he say when the equipment was assigned to the area?

Mr. G. Persaud: I said that the equipment was in the region and it was to be set up. I cannot recall saying that anything was sent anywhere.

Mr. Chairman: The question is that when it was sent to Region 9. That is a fair question. The components or parts would have had to be trucked in for flown in.

Mr. G. Persaud: I am advised that the equipment is at Karasabai Health Centre and it will be set up as soon as the technician is available.

Ms. Ferguson: I have asked the Hon. Minister a simple question. That is, when was the equipment sent?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much Hon. Member for your very simple question, I do not have that answer now, but I will provide it when it is available.

Programme: 795 - Health Services - \$24,300,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, two hours have been set aside, so this will take us to 10.00 p.m. Then at 10.00.p.m. we will commence the Ministry of Public Works and that will be for another two hours. We will be here until midnight. Members, of course, could circumvent all this if they move expeditiously, and we can leave here much earlier. Hon. Members, I will start immediately with Region 10, reminding you, of course, that refreshments are available in the lounge. We will not be taking a formal break. Could the personnel and technical officers for Region 10 come forward? Minister Whittaker, are you dealing with Region 10? You are, Sir. I see. Or it could be that Minister Whittaker considers himself as the brave one of the two.

Agency: 80 Region 10: Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice

Current Expenditure

Programme: 801 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$130,232,000

Ms. Kissoon: Line item 6111 – Administrative: Could the Hon. Minister identify or list the four new positions and the emoluments that go with them?

Mr. Whittaker: The four positions are Principal Assistant Secretary, emolument - \$159,215 per month, Assistant Regional Executive Officer, emolument - \$102,366, Deputy Regional Executive Officer, emolument - \$191,540 and an Administrative Assistant, emolument - \$60,224.

Ms. Kissoon: Line item 6211 – Expenses Specific to the Agency: Could the Hon. Minister please expenses specific to the agency under this head?

Mr. Whittaker: Line item 6211, Expenses Specific to the Agency, this amount is going to be used to pay stipend to 16 regional councillors at the rate of \$10,000 each; to pay stipend to 10 Amerindian Toshias, a total of \$2.4 million for the entire year and these are expected to cover...; there is a \$1.56 million travelling expenses for councillors attending the monthly statutory and committee meetings; there is a provision of \$1.2 million for meals for those attending the statutory meetings at the Regional Democratic Council; maintenance of the Regional Chairman's vehicle, a brand new vehicle, PNN 7756, \$900,000, and maintenance of computers, fax machines, air conditioners units.

There is also a provision of \$6 million for community outreaches interactive sessions in the Berbice River. There are eight in the Berbice River, four in the Demerara River and they are reaching out to 30 other communities. There is also a \$2.42 million for the purchase office janitorial, hospitality and other supplies and \$1 million to cover utilities services, such as telephone and electricity bills.

Ms. Kissoon: Line item 6264 – Vehicles Spares and Services: Could the Hon. Minister say whether the Regional Vice Chairman’s vehicle is listed under this line item for services?

Mr. Whittaker: The answer is no. It is for routine and major repairs to PNN 6736. It is the vehicle assigned to the office of the REO.

Ms. Kissoon: Could the Hon. Minister say why the Regional Vice Chairman vehicle is not listed under this line item or which is line item it would be listed under?

Mr. Whittaker: The Regional Vice Chairman has his personal vehicle which he acquired using the duty-free concession that was made available to him. It could not be that it is put under the expenses specific to the agency. That would be highly irregular.

Ms. Kissoon: I remember last year asking that question and I was told that the Regional Vice Chairman has a vehicle that is working in proper conditions. At a meeting at the statutory level, in fact with the councillors, we were told that the Regional Vice Chairman has a vehicle, which is assigned to him, that is in proper working condition, and this is not so.

Mr. Whittaker: Notwithstanding the fact that the Regional Vice Chairman vehicle has his personal vehicle, which he uses around the community, once he has assignments, which takes him outside of there, a vehicle is made available to him, a vehicle with a driver, by the regional administration.

Ms. Kissoon: Thank you very much Mr. Minister, but I will let you know that is not so.

Line item 6281 – Security Services: Could the Hon. Minister say what are the rates being paid to the security company for this service?

Mr. Whittaker: The name of the security service is Strategic Action Security Services...

Ms. Kissoon: That is known.

Mr. Whittaker: ...and the rate paid is \$150 per hour.

Ms. Kissoon: This matter was raised in this National Assembly and there was an issue where the security guards were receiving \$120 per hour. They were told that they would have been given the additional money. It was not paid to them. Could the Hon. Minister say whether that sum is catered for under this line item?

Mr. Whittaker: The RDC's arrangement is with the contracting company service provider and it is not with the security guards. If the company pays the guards that, it is a matter which has to be resolved, but the RDC's arrangement is with the security company.

Ms. Kissoon: The security service said that it is awaiting the money from the RDC to pay the security guards, the remaining \$30 retroactive from, I think, March of last year. I was just enquiring.

Programme: 801 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$130,232,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 801 - Regional Administration and Finance - \$23,100,000

Ms. Kissoon: Could the Hon. Minister say what amount is allocated for the Amerindian hostel and the amount for the main office at Wismar?

Mr. Whittaker: The sum of \$2.5 million is made available for renovation and modification to the Amerindian hostel at Burnham Drive, Wismar and the sum of \$18.5 million for the reconstruction of the agricultural main office in Section C, Christianburg, Wismar.

Ms. Kissoon: Project 2505500 – Furniture and Equipment – Administration: Which department will those items be purchased for and whose control they will be under?

Mr. Whittaker: In fact, the first two items, the photocopier and the filing cabinets, will be for the Accounting Unit and the digital camera will be for the Engineering Department.

Programme: 801 - Regional Administration and Finance - \$23,100,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 802 – Public Works - \$131,923,000

Mr. Morian: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister give me a breakdown of the buildings to be maintained?

Mr. Whittaker: There are a number of buildings here to be maintained.

Mr. Morian: I would appreciate if the Hon. Minister would lay it. I will be happy.

Mr. Whittaker: There is a building identified as staff quarters.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, excuse me. How many buildings are listed there? The Member is making a request for the document to be laid.

Mr. Whittaker: There are 12 buildings.

Mr. Chairman: If you have no objections to the document being made available to the Member, the Member is prepared to accept it. We can move on.

Mr. Morian: Thank you very much.

Mr. Whittaker: I have no objection.

Mr. Morian: For the maintenance of roads, I guess it is the same format, but there is one thing I want to add here.

Mr. Chairman: Are you asking about roads?

Mr. Morian: Yes. It is roads. Line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads: The Hon. Minister could do the same thing, but there is a question that I want to pose here.

Mr. Chairman: We have to be sure, first, that works will be done on roads, and if there is a list that the Minister will be willing to lay it over.

Mr. Whittaker: Yes Mr. Chairman. There are quite a number of roads that are there.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Morian: I am aware that the request under this line item is not the sum; hence there will be a need for prioritisation as to the work in the year 2013. My question is: Who prioritises which road is done in Region 10?

8.14 p.m.

Mr. Whittaker: Mr. Chairman, the priorities would have been ordered by the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) working with the administration.

Mr. Morian: I do not think you got the question, Sir. When a budget request is made, the sum that comes back to the region often times is not the amount that we requested, so you go back to your plan and you priorities which roads based on the releases. My question is: who does that prioritisation in Region 10?

Mr. Whittaker: Mr. Chairman, when the RDC becomes aware – this only happens under the current programme – of the amount of funds that is allocated, it is the RDC that does that under the current programme.

Mr. Morian: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: The Minister answered that when the money is returned... I think you answered the question. You gave the answer in your question. When the money is returned and it is insufficient to the Region, the Region then determines what it can do with what little it has or with whatever it has.

Mr. Morian: I asked that question because there is the administration and there is the Regional Democratic Council, Chairman and City Councillors. My question is directed squarely at where this prioritisation takes place.

Mr. Chairman: The Minister is saying at the RDC.

Ms. Kissoon: Line item 6252 – Maintenance of Bridges – could the Hon. Minister list the bridges and the cost attached to each bridge?

Mr. Chairman: It is one bridge. That is the construction of a concrete bridge with rails and revetment at Rockstone.

Programme: 802 – Public Works – \$131,923,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 802 – Public Works – \$115,501,000

Ms. Kissoon: Could the Hon. Minister give a breakdown of allocation for the roads under this project?

Mr. Whittaker: Yes, Mr. Chairman. There is the completion of the rehabilitation of the internal access road with Double Bituminous Surface Treatment (DBST), the one leading in Kwakwani. There is the completion, rehabilitation and upgrading of the Fairweather carriageway at Wisroc, the upgrading of the Fairweather carriageway to asphaltic concrete at the Wisroc entrance and junction, the upgrading of the main access road to central Mackenzie district, that is where the nursery, primary and secondary schools, the day-care centre, and the health facilities are located...

Ms. Kissoon: Mr. Minister, just excuse me before you continue. I would like the cost attached to each. You already have those listed here.

Mr. Whittaker: For Kwakwani, it is \$2.8 million. The Wisroc Bridge is \$4.6 million, and then the one to the Wisroc entrance and junction is \$14 million. The one leading to central Mackenzie, the business district, is \$9 million. Then there is the construction of Fairweather surface to asphaltic concrete in Fourth Street, Silvertown area at \$6.2 million. Finally, there is the upgrading of sections of DBST carriageway with asphaltic concrete at Dacama Circle at \$12 million. It is a total of \$48.6 million.

Ms. Kissoon: Could the Hon. Minister say under project code 1101000 – Bridges – the cost of the revetment at Rockstone?

Mr. Whittaker: It is \$18 million.

Ms. Kissoon: project code 1901700 – Infrastructural Development – could the Hon. Minister please give us a breakdown - allocation and cost - for each project?

Mr. Whittaker: Mr. Chairman, we have a total of \$31.4 million for a number of projects: construction of revetment and erosion control structure, this is phase three, at Wisroc at \$6.5 million; the upgrading of drainage system at Wisroc junction to Winifred Gaskin Highway at \$10.5 million; continued upgrading of drainage system in Second Street, Keith Austin, Canvas City at \$5.2 million; the upgrading of drainage system in Block 22 Access, Fordyce Street at \$7.6 million and the upgrading of drainage system at Central Mackenzie, Greenheart Street at \$1.6 million.

Mr. Morian: Project code 1902200 – Agricultural Development – could the Hon. Minister give me a breakdown of that item please?

Mr. Whittaker: Thank you, Hon. Member. Mr. Chairman, essentially there are three projects here. The first one is the upgrading of that track of land in the Middle East hideout area. This is phase one, the upgrading of the laterite, loom and bauxite capping, a total of 7,000 metres at a cost of \$6 million. Project two is the dredging and desilting of the lake, approximately 400ft × 210ft width at Plantation Fairs Rust at \$2.5 million. Then the third one is revetment and erosion control structures and desilting of the creek in Silverballi Street Mackenzie at \$9 million.

Ms. Kissoon: A follow up on project code 2404800 – Land and Water Transport - Public Works – could the Hon. Minister say how often desilting is carried out at Plantation Fairs Rust?

Mr. Whittaker: I did not get that question. Could you repeat?

Ms. Kissoon: Project code 1902200 – Agricultural Development – the dredging and desilting of the lake at Plantation Fairs Rust, could the Hon. Minister say how often desilting is carried out at Plantation Fairs Rust?

Mr. Whittaker: Mr. Chairman, this project is all about reclaiming farmland. So it is the very first time that it is being done.

Ms. Kissoon: Is it Fairs Rust?

Mr. Whittaker: Yes.

Ms. Kissoon: Is it the lake at Plantation Fairs Rust.

Mr. Whittaker: It is for cash crop farming.

Ms. Kissoon: That is the first time it is being done. Is that what you are saying, Hon. Minister?

Mr. Whittaker: That is what I am advised; it is the first time it is being done. It is reclaiming of farmland for the purpose of cash crop farming. A number of farmers would benefit.

Ms. Kissoon: Mr. Chairman, a follow up: Hon. Minister, I am aware that works were done to this area before.

Mr. Chairman: The Minister had said that he is advised.

Mr. Whittaker: I am informed that it is not the same area.

Programme: 802 – Public Works – \$115,501,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 803 – Education Delivery – \$1,278,148,000

Ms. Kissoon: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure – could the Hon. Minister say how much of this money is allocated for maintenance works at the students hostel in Amelia Ward?

Mr. Whittaker: Mr. Chairman, the answer to that question is \$600,000.

Ms. Kissoon: Could the Hon. Minister say if the works will be done to the male or female dorms or both male and female dorms and what works will be done?

Mr. Whittaker: Works will be done on the male dorms.

Ms. Kissoon: And what works will be done, the nature of the works?

Mr. Whittaker: In fact, Mr. Chairman, there are two different bits of work that will be done under line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure. Six hundred thousand dollars will be spent, and, under line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings – an additional \$800,000 will be

spent. This is both on the male and female washrooms and, in fact, on the entire building, electrical systems, and maintenance of gutters, et cetera.

Ms. Kissoon: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Morian: Mr. Chairman, under line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings – I am enquiring if moneys are here to maintain buildings like the teachers quarters on Blueberry Hill.

Mr. Whittaker: The answer is no.

Mr. Morian: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister say if there is a plan to repair these buildings later this year or next year?

Mr. Whittaker: I am informed that if there are savings, certainly it can be done.

Programme: 803 – Education Delivery – \$1,278,148,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 803 – Education Delivery – \$60,327,000

Ms. Kissoon: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Project code 1205200 – Buildings - Education – could the Hon. Minister provide us with a breakdown cost for each and what will be done to the Kwakwani Secondary School for completion of works there?

Mr. Whittaker: Thank you, Hon. Member. Mr. Chairman, the completion of the extension of the Kwakwani Secondary School for which \$2.75 million is available will include the electrical installation, completion of the roofs, ceiling and floor, painting and decoration. There is the construction of a D grade nursery school at the Ituni district at a cost of \$8.2 million, the construction of a E grade primary school at Roraima at a cost of \$10 million, the extension of the Mackenzie Secondary School at the cost of \$14 million, the enclosure of the teachers quarters, teachers houses at Kwakwani which will make provision for two additional teachers with a family of four at \$4.274 million, then there is the installation of swings at four school compounds at Mackenzie Primary, Bamia, Christianburg and Regma at \$2.4 million.

Mr. Morian: Project code 2505400 – Furniture and Equipment - Education – there is a sum here of \$10 million for the purchase of furniture and equipment for schools. I would like to know the value of furniture going to indigenous communities in the Berbice River and what their locations are.

Mr. Whittaker: Mr. Chairman, while I can say that there is furniture going to schools in the River, I am not in a position to give the precise number. I know listed here – you would have to bear with me as I do some extraction... Mr. Chairman, I am sorry about that. I am informed that the schools in the riverine area got their allocations in 2012 and so the focus here is on the central areas.

Mr. Morian: A follow up question, Mr. Chairman: is it that the schools in the riverine areas have enough furniture because they have their quota? Let me ask the question differently. Did the quota satisfy the needs in the riverine areas or is there still additional furniture to be sent to satisfy the needs?

Mr. Whittaker: I am informed that there are 60 plus pairs of benches and desks from the 2012 purchases that are to go into schools in the riverine areas.

Mr. Morian: Sir, that is not my question. My question was if the quota that you sent in 2012 satisfied the demand or the desire there.

Mr. Whittaker: The answer is yes.

Mr. Morian: Right.

Ms. Kissoon: Mr. Chairman, a follow up: could the Hon. Minister say when the benches and desks will be sent to the riverine areas? What I understood you to say just now was that they were not sent as yet. Secondly, is there any provision for furniture under this item for the New Silver City Secondary School?

Mr. Whittaker: Mr. Chairman, there are some tables and chairs for students of three secondary schools. These are the New Silver City Secondary, Wisburg Secondary and Christianburg/Wismar Secondary. In respect of the furniture that has to go into the schools in the

riverine area, all efforts will be made to have these furniture go in there during the month of May.

Programme: 803 – Education Delivery – \$60,327,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 804 – Health Services – \$265,588,000

Ms. Kissoon: Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure – could the Hon. Minister say how much of this money is allocated for maintenance works at the Wismar Hospital and could he also list the other infrastructure under this line item and the cost attached to each. If it is too much, you can lay it over Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: Who suggested that, Mr. Nadir? Minister there is a suggestion, which seems to be accepted, that you lay over whatever available material you have, if that is no problem.

Mr. Whittaker: Certainly, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Kissoon: Could you answer for the Wismar Hospital? I asked for the Wismar Hospital.

Mr. Whittaker: There is no allocation for the Wismar Hospital under the current programme.

Mr. Morian: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies – I noted in 2012, \$7.495 million and then in 2013, \$7 million. I would like to know if the Minister could give me a justification of the lower figure in 2013.

Mr. Whittaker: Mr. Chairman, my understanding is that \$7 million is adequate to take care of the needs for 2013.

Mr. Morian: Mr. Chairman, that is not the question I asked. I am asking for the justification for \$7.49 million. Are you saying that we had a greater demand for drugs last year than we would have this year? That is my question. How did you come up with the \$7 million as it relates to demand?

Mr. Whittaker: I am informed that this allocation is used to acquire drugs and medicine for emergency use and, because of the improvement in service delivery et cetera, there is justification in the reduction.

Ms. Kissoon: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6284 – Other – could the Hon. Minister indicate what other goods and services will be purchased under this line item?

Mr. Whittaker: This allocation, Mr. Chairman, is to cover payment for three additional part-time cleaners for Rockstone, Malali and Muritaro.

Programme: 804 – Health Services – \$265,588,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 804 – Health Services – \$51,200,000

Ms. Kissoon: Cde. Chairman, project code 1205300 – Buildings - Health – could the Hon. Minister provide dimensions and costs of each of the projects under this head?

Mr. Whittaker: Mr. Chairman, we have the completion of the rehabilitation of the Kwakwani Hospital. The contract sum was \$5.5 million and in this year's provision for completion there is \$3.8 million. There is the completion of the construction of the medex quarters at Hururu. The contract sum was \$4.7 million and this year's provision of \$2.4 million is expected to complete that work. There is the construction of Vivienne Paris Health Centre, 62ft × 22ft; it is a complete structure at \$13.5 million. There is construction of a driveway to the morgue and extension of the dentistry and laboratory department in the Upper Demerara Hospital - \$3.2 million is provided here. Finally, there are some electrical works at the said Upper Demerara Hospital for which there is a provision of \$1.096 million.

Ms. Kissoon: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, a follow up: could the Hon. Minister say for the construction of the Vivienne Parris Health Centre where that building will be constructed? Is it at the old site or is there a new site?

Mr. Whittaker: It is at the old site.

Ms. Kissoon: Cde. Chairman, project code 2403500 – Land and Water Transport – Health – could the Hon. Minister say what are the types of boats, how many will be bought, the number and horsepower of the engines, which communities will benefit, and also of the ambulance to be purchased where it will be assigned and the cost for these items?

Mr. Whittaker: Thank you, Hon. Member. Mr. Chairman, there is an aluminium boat for which \$500,000 is budgeted and that is for the Kimbia Health Centre and a wooden boat for which \$200,000 is allocated for the Riverview Health Centre. The outboard engines are three in number. There is a voted provision of \$1.5 million. These are expected to be located at Kalkuni, Wiruni and Kimbia Health Centres. Finally, the ambulance for which there is a voted provision of \$12.0 million, is for the Upper Demerara Hospital.

Ms. Kissoon: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Project code 2505600 – Furniture and Equipment - Health – could the Hon. Minister say if these are the priority equipment and, secondly, whether a refrigerator will be placed at the Wismar Hospital, Upper Demerara.

Mr. Whittaker: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, under this programme, the RDC would be acquiring six refrigerators, but none of them is for the Wismar Hospital. They are for Kwakwani, Hururu, Sand Hills, De Velde and Upper Demerara.

8.44 p.m.

There is a \$13 million provision. Among the items to be acquired are autoclaves for the Upper Demerara Hospital at a cost of \$1.1 million; haemoglobin (HB) meter for health centres and health posts - \$0.750 million; suction machine for Upper Demerara - \$150,000; [inaudible] for Kwakwani Hospital - \$300,000; haematology analyser, Reflotron centre fuse all for the Upper Demerara Hospital at a total cost of \$8.110 million.

There will be the acquisition of 15 office chairs for health centres, health posts and the Upper Demerara Hospital. These are at a cost of \$175,000; four executive chairs for Vivienne Parris, Christianburg, Amelias Ward and Regional Health Officer's (RHO) office - \$200,000; six office desks at a voted provision of \$300,000 and these are for Christianburg, Amelias Ward, One Mile, Upper Demerara Hospital and the Environmental Unit; there is a filing cabinet for which there is a provision of \$45,000 and this is for the Environmental Unit; complete double beds – six in all-

for Kwakwani, Hururu and Sand Hills at a cost of \$360,000; five single beds complete - \$228,000 for Kwakwani, Hururu, Sand Hills and De Velde.

Ms. Kissoon: Hon. Minister, could you kindly lay over that information to us because there is still another Ministry to deal with.

Mr. Whittaker: Mr. Chairman, I just have three more items.

Ms. Kissoon: I would still like you to lay it so that we can have it in writing.

Mr. Whittaker: Let me read the three: six stoves for Kwakwani, Hururu and Sand Hills - \$240,000; six refrigerators - \$600,000 for Kwakwani, Hururu and Sand Hills, De Velde, Upper Demerara; and \$42 million for an examination couch for Wikki/Kalkuni. The document will certainly be laid.

Programme: 804 – Health Services - \$51,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: I am pleased to report that this concludes consideration of the Estimates for Region 10.

Agency: 31 Ministry of Public Works

Current Expenditure

Programme: 311 – Ministry Administration - \$506,215,000

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: could the Hon. Minister state the designations and salaries of the five employees to be added this year?

Minister of Public Works [Mr. Benn]: The five employees are: two accounts clerks, two office assistants and one driver - the accounts clerks at a salary of \$47,605 each; the driver's salary is \$41,083; and the office assistant's salary is \$37,657.

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: we see an amount of \$23,949,000 budgeted for this year. The same amount was budgeted last year. Almost a similar amount was also budgeted in 2011. Could the Hon. Minister state, having regard to the fact that

we have so many problems with electricity in this country, what, if any, steps his Ministry is taking to reduce this high electricity bill?

Mr. Benn: The figure has remained constant. We have, indeed, added new equipment – computers and other electronic equipment – in the various areas. Otherwise, these charges are for the Ministry's buildings. The figure remains constant and we require them to take measures to not leave lights on, not leave on equipment when they are not tactically in use.

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: And there is the use of energy-saving bulbs, et cetera.

Mr. Benn: We have installed energy-saving bulbs in various parts of the Ministry, compliments of the Hon. Prime Minister.

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): could the Hon. Minister state what training or scholarships are contemplated under this line item?

Mr. Benn: This is training for staff in computer usage and seminars for electrical contractors.

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: there is an allocation of \$300 million for the Transport and Harbours Department (T&HD). Could the Hon. Minister state what this sum of money is going to be used for?

Mr. Benn: This is for the fuel support to the Transport and Harbours Department.

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: Last year, there was an allocation of \$500 million; this year, there is an allocation of 300 million. Even now, with the operation of the two Chinese vessels, one would have anticipated an increase. I do not know whether the Minister can explain this reduction, having regard to the fact that there are new vessels in operation.

Mr. Benn: Last year's request related also to the payment of outstanding liabilities of the Transport and Harbours Department. The issue of fuel consumption on the newer vessels is one of concern because, in fact, the fuel consumption is much higher on the current vessels.

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: Under the said line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - could the Hon. Minister indicate whether any sum in this subsidy has been

allocated to the renovation or preparation of the wharves in Georgetown and Vreed-en-Hoop where the speedboats cross every single day?

Mr. Benn: It is not under this line item. In fact, I do not think that we have under any line item for Vreed-en-Hoop and Stabroek. What we plan to do and what the engineers, along with the officials of the Demerara Harbour Bridge (DHB) and the support of the Maritime Administration Department (MARAD), are looking at is putting in new floating ramps for both Stabroek and Vreed-en-Hoop for the water taxi operations.

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: Is there an indication, Hon. Minister, as to when this idea that they have will actually bear fruit?

Mr. Benn: We expect that within two or three months this should be resolved. There is a conceptual design out but there are issues with the surveying, elevations and so on. They are working at it. For each location, a particular design is needed because of the configuration of the particular locations.

Mr. Greenidge: Might I ask the Minister to cast his eyes back to line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - for which he explained that the subvention this year to T&HD is meant to be a subsidy to meet the fuel cost – \$300 million – and that in previous years the subvention included liabilities. Could the Hon. Minister tell us what these liabilities were in 2012? Is the entire \$300 million being requested meant for solely fuel?

Mr. Benn: I did say that \$300 million is identified for fuel support to the Transport and Harbours Department for this year. The liabilities which the T&HD have racked up variously relate to the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) and other organisations of the Government.

Mr. Greenidge: I am asking specifically what the liability in 2012 was. On what basis would liabilities be racked up for GRA and the National Insurance Scheme (NIS)? These are meant to be statutory obligations. How is it that the T&HD would allow them to be accumulated?

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman and Hon. Members, you may recall that the Transport and Harbours Department has been undergoing a transition since the Berbice Bridge was put into place. The Transport and Harbours Department lost 60% of its revenues and because of that – and everything was not obvious, at the time, that that amount of money was no longer available –

these liabilities were racked up and the Ministry of Finance provided the sums to cover those liabilities.

I could get to you the 2012 year end liabilities. We could provide those figures for you in a few days.

Mr. Greenidge: I would appreciate that, Hon. Minister. You said entities including GRA. Am I to assume that there are others of any significance?

Mr. Benn: I do not have the 2012 figures with me here but I am aware that we were behind a couple of months on payments to NIS and GRA.

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: Same line item: could the Hon. Minister state whether the training of pilots is contemplated under the subvention for the Transport and Harbours Department?

Mr. Benn: No, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to say again – I think did mention it in my Budget presentation – that we have 24 young persons who are being trained specifically as mariners to take up, ultimately, duties as captains and pilots. Those young people are undergoing the initial phase of that training now and just now they will be going onto vessels and being in live training environment. They will be moving from the classroom to the boats within a couple of weeks.

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: Could the Hon. Minister state how long this training is going to last? And, at the conclusion of that training, what is the level of certification that will be given to these pilots?

Mr. Benn: It takes quite a number of years for one to ultimately become a pilot. One has to become a boatswain and pass all of those levels on the vessels. They have to put in sea time and it may take seven to 10 years for one to become a pilot and one may have to be defined for particular estuaries. Be that as it may, the initial training requires them to put in sea time, pass certain examinations at various levels and get enough sea time to become qualified, ultimately, with a lot of experience and practical training to become pilots. A pilot is a higher level than a boat captain.

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: I appreciate that, Mr. Minister. Could you state what the current situation with trained pilots in this country is?

Mr. Benn: We have had a situation – which is why we initiated this programme of restarting the training of people – where both captains and pilots were either old or had moved on to other areas in the Caribbean and elsewhere for employment. There is ostensibly overall, I would say, a shortage of pilots which means that the Harbour Master or the men who are administrating maritime safety or training may have to support, from time to time, because they are also pilots. Be that as it may, one thing which has changed just now in terms of the efficiency in the use of pilots has been the fact that last year we acquired a second-hand, fast pilot boat. Instead of a situation where the pilot boat went out at four to six knots, we acquired a vessel which goes 16 to 18 knots. The turnaround, comfort and the navigation system with respect to that operation have been greatly optimised. That is a saving on the activity at the moor but there is, indeed, a situation where the pilots are older and we are working at replacing them.

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: I appreciate that, Hon. Minister. Mr. Minister, having regard to the reports of the Shipping Association of Guyana (SAG) that the Demerara bar had had become silted up and there was need for dredging of the Demerara Harbour, could you indicate to us how many skilled pilots you have and how many you need? A fast vessel is good but if one has to navigate in a passage that is much narrower than before, then I believe that one would require a different level of skill.

Mr. Benn: The issues relating to the channel and the bar have nothing much really to do with the number of pilots. The vessel which we just acquired has navigation system and also finding depth sounding systems on it to be able to say at what depths the vessel is moving on and it also has Global Positioning System (GPS) backup online and the tracks are plotted for the channel. It is not like the old days when one had to depend on a sextant on a map and soundings as one went along. It is much different now but it is a problem that we have to keep working on.

Mr. Greenidge: Notwithstanding all of that, would the Minister be so kind as to tell us the number of pilots needed for the traffic that he currently has, whether they are going out in fancy advanced boats or not?

Mr. Benn: I do not have the number at the moment. I know that in terms of trained pilots – I stand to be corrected but we will get the number later – we had six.

Mr. Greenidge: How many do you need?

Mr. Benn: Six trained pilots but two of those persons may be in administrative positions, meaning that they would have to support if there is a problem or if there is a great demand at any particular point in time.

Mr. Greenidge: You are not telling me how many you need.

Mr. Benn: I would say that six standing operational pilots for now should be adequate.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, the Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan, had mentioned to me earlier in the week that there may be a problem with the Lighthouse and those pilots and captains have been complaining that line of sight is being affected. Have you heard anything about that?

Mr. Benn: I am not sure it is the right point in time for what we are discussing.

Mr. Chairman: We are discussing navigation.

Mr. Benn: There is a discussion with respect to the construction of the Marriott and changes that we have to make to the height of the light on the Lighthouse to maintain a light at the top of the Lighthouse.

Mr. Chairman: I see.

Ms. Ferguson: Cde. Chairman, I crave your indulgence. Hon. Minister, under line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - you reported that the Transport and Harbours Department is currently in a transition mode and, as a result of that, it was unable to pay NIS and GRA. Apart from the Transport and Harbours Department not being able to pay NIS and GRA...

Mr. Benn: I did not say that; I said that the Transport and Harbours Department was behind.

Ms. Ferguson: The Transport and Harbours Department was behind on those payments. Apart from those payments, there are persons who are currently on retirement, who are currently employed and not in receipt of their gratuity since 2010 – if my memory serves me accurately – to current and persons are not being paid their vacation allowances on time. However, apart from all of that, can you say to this honourable House how many fleet of vessels there are currently and how many are operable.

Mr. Chairman: How many vessels are in the operation of the T&HD? Maybe, you would like to break them down per county or region. I know that some are in Essequibo and some are in Northwest. I think I read somewhere that the MV Kimbia was being decommissioned.

Mr. Benn: The Hon. Member referred me to line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. I am not sure where the issue of the number of vessels...I thought she was...

Mr. Chairman: If the T&HD is receiving a subsidy for fuel, then it necessarily follows that we need to know how many vessels are being fuelled with this subsidy. That is a fair question.

Mr. Benn: The current operating vessels on the Essequibo are the Sabanto and the Kanawan. Those are the two new Chinese constructed vessels. We have the MV Makouria and the Malali; those are the Makouria class vessels. The Torani is set aside at the moment. The MV Sandaka is on the Berbice passage. The MV Barima is coming out of dock. The MV Lady Northcote is operating on the Northwest Passage. The Kimbia is in dock and the Bonasika is in dock.

Ms. Ferguson: The Kimbia has been in dock since 2012 and the MV Barima for some three years now. These boats are not in operation. However, let me just remind the Hon. Minister and this House that during the examination of the Estimates last year, my Hon. Colleague, Cde. Volda Lawrence, asked the question about how many vessels the T&HD had and he responded that it had eight. She further asked when last an audit was done on the T&HD and he said since 2003. The Hon. Minister had promised last year that he was going to have audits for the years 2004 to 2010 tabled.

9.14 p.m.

Another year is here and we are yet to get those audited statements. Can you say when those statements will be tabled in the National Assembly? Cde. Chairman let me say this: the Transport and Harbours Department (T&HD) is suffering at this moment; people are not paid on time; are not receiving gratuity; employees are working under strenuous conditions.

Mr. Chairman: I think we get that point. The Minister needs to be given a chance to respond. You have said a lot. The question is having stated last year there will be audited statements presented can the Minister update us.

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chair, can I try to provide some clarifications?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Benn: The Kimbia only went into dock six weeks ago. The Barima went into repairs last year for major engine changes; complete overhaul and change of engines. *[Interruption]* I can get the time for you but I am saying it has not been three years since the Barima has been out of service. The Barima was in service at least up to mid last or the third quarter. I am just clarifying those two issues.

The financial statements from 2003 to 2008 have been completed. There was an issue with the loss of records at the time of some floods and we were working to get that fixed. I think I did say that. For the years in question and based on these financial statements being completed the audits are being done continuously since last year. I am sorry if, maybe, I did say we would have been able to present them last year. We have not yet been able to present them but we are working diligently at this.

On the question of the cash flow situation, issues relating to gratuity are issues which are being paid out of the Ministry of Finance. If a person has to get gratuity and comes to the Transport and Harbours Department a statement is done and payments are effected through the Ministry of Finance. The issue may be that many former employees of the Transport and Harbours Department are actually overseas and do not make claims, or prefer to wait a couple of years before they come back to make a claim for the gratuity and then there is a hiatus with respect to processing those claims. That indeed is a problem because they may come back after three, four or five years and then want all the money in a lump sum, and if the sum does not meet the cash flow situation at the time it has to be refunded from the Ministry of Finance.

Programme: 311 – Ministry Administration - \$506,215,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 311 – Ministry Administration - \$28,300,000

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister indicate the nature of the rehabilitation work to be done to the Oranapai Towers.

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, the repairs to the Oranapai Towers, which is the Office of the Prime Minister, relates to the roof, ceiling and walls of the building.

Programme: 311 – Ministry Administration - \$28,300,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 312 – Public Works - \$1,314,230,000

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: could the Hon. Minister state what is responsible for this huge jump from 12 to 241 contracted employees between 2012 and 2013?

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, Hon. Members, the huge jump is related to the Sea Defence which was previously paid under Public Works coming into the Ministry programme at the moment; that is for 127 employees. For the Works Services Group coming also under the Ministry in this year's Budget there are 106 employees. *[Interruption]* These would have been previously treated under Capital. Fourteen employees for the Public Works bring the total to 247 employees. That is the numbers relating to the jump.

Mr. T. Williams: Mr. Chair, may I take the Minister's attention to line item 6223 – Office Materials and Supplies: Hon. Minister, can you inform us of what is responsible for this massive increase.

Mr. Benn: Thank you Mr. Chairman and Hon. Member. All the subheads for the charges from line items 6221 to 6302 have increased due mainly to the transfer of the Sea Defence and the Work Services staff; these are the related expenses.

Mr. T. Williams: Could I ask therefore Mr. Chair for the Minister to look at item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence has increased substantially.

Mr. Benn: Yes, thank you Mr. Chairman. Hon. Member it is for the very same reason because we brought over the staff previously from Capital to these heads. The related expenses have come across so you are now seeing it here where you would not have seen it - previous years expenditure requirements.

Mr. T. Williams: Hon. Minister should we therefore adopt the same argument for line items 6261, 6271– Telephone Charges, and Clearing and Extermination Services?

Mr. Benn: That is correct Hon. Member.

Mr. Trotman: Line Item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads: I am asking this question out of sheer ignorance. I want to know if the Minister can advise if his Ministry is responsible for the maintenance of roads in the South Ruimveldt area.

Mr. Benn: The Ministry is not responsible, but we feel responsible. I believe I have advised previously in this Hon. House that aside from the maintenance from the declared public roads we have a programme where we look at urban roads and miscellaneous roads. There are scheduled roads under urban and miscellaneous roads. When things get pretty bad or transportation flow is affected our Force Account Unit goes out and does other maintenance works which may not necessarily be slated or detailed in our programmes.

Mr. Trotman: A follow-up question Mr. Chairman: because of the Minister's statement I am wondering if he is prepared to consider the Aubrey Barker Road as a road which can be addressed under the conditions he just spoke about. That road is in a terrible shape. When the rain sets up it is flooded and when the rain falls it disappears so I am wondering if under these circumstances he is prepared to take it into consideration.

Mr. Benn: I want to advise the Hon. Member that last year we did spend moneys repairing the Aubrey Barker Road on the eastern extremities, and we also raised and cleaned the walkway on the northern side of the road. The problem mainly with the road relates to the drainage in the area. It is not one that we have scheduled under our urban roads for this year, but we have a little engineering study in relation to the drainage of the area, the problem which has to be resolved first before we can do better work on the road. That is the system really.

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, just another follow-up question: there is a school located in that area and a lot of primary school-aged children have to use that road under those wet conditions. I am wondering if the Minister is prepared to take on addressing that road as a matter of urgency. The conditions are extremely dreadful for those young users.

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, I am sure that the persons related to the schools will say we were there last year on a number of occasions and that we raised the walkway to that school. The issues in relation to the drainage overall has to be considered to have improvement in the area. We cannot do anything major on the road other than minor repairs to keep it trafficable until the issue of drainage is resolved in the area – the general area. That relates to squatting on the dams, the blocking of the drains by poor or ill advised construction of driveways at different elevations and so on.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Two questions to the Hon. Minister. This is a follow-up question on the question of the schedule of roads. When the Hon. Minister Ganga Persaud was speaking about roads in the hinterland area he indicated that the Minister of Public Works will be addressing certain roads. I would like to specifically now ask the Minister whether he has a plan for the rehabilitation of the road from the Bartica airstrip to the Bartica township. That is the first question.

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure if we are at that head. I am prepared but I was hoping that we were going through our programme in a structured way. Let me say for the Bartica road we had an allocation two years ago with respect to repairs on the road which did not address the question of drainage along the road. *[Interruption]* Sir, it did not address funding for draining going up on the slope of the road. It meant even though we did the road when there was torrential rainfall the road was cut in a couple of places. Based on allocations we have it is being delayed and we are unhappy about the delays. We know there was some protest, issues raised about the rate at which the work is going, but the drain is being put in now and we are going back to fix that road.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: At the end of it, what quality of road will you have there, please, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Benn: The engineers are looking at this question. Down to the flat and beyond the school we basically have had a DBST road. I have asked them to consider the question of putting in either a concrete road or finding some way of going up and doing an asphalted concrete road. It is expensive but we have to see which solution is the best. But the critical thing is the drain along the side of the road.

Mr. Chairman: I recognise Ms. Wade, then Ms. Ferguson and Mr. Williams.

Mr. Benn: Let me just say under the budget for this road, under the capital for that road work itself there is just \$25 million.

Ms. Wade: Thank you Mr. Chairman the same line item. Hon. Minister can you say if roads in Region 5 are listed for maintenance?

Mr. Benn: I am not sure if we have Region 5 listed. We have listings of roads for Region 5 which we passed on to the region. The region is executing those roads.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I am yielding.

Mr. T. Williams: Mr. Chairman, through you I would like to ask the Minister about line item 6294, what constitutes "Other"? I think in the same breadth in the interest of time can he shed some light on item 6302, scholarships for the first time after about two years.

Mr. Benn: These relate to rental of office equipment, repairs to vehicles, bank charges, advertisements and items like that.

Mr. T. Williams: Line Item 6302 – Scholarships.

Mr. Chairman: What about it?

Mr. T. Williams: An explanation; no scholarships for the previous two years; I am just asking the Minister to shed some light on this.

Mr. Benn: The \$4 million dollars is intended for training of the engineering staff - national training, computers, or any specialist courses they may have to undertake in-country. It is a small allocation.

Programme: 312 – Public Works - \$1,314,230,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme 312 – Public Works - \$12,852,393,000

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, are we taking pages 429 and 430 together?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, pages 429 to 431.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I am going to page 430. Project Code 1402900 – Amaila Access Road: I have several questions for the Hon. Minister on this allocation of \$2.35 billion being provided for this project. Could the Hon. Minister state what the original contract sum was for this road that was agreed between the Government of Guyana and Synergy Inc.? The original contract sum for the entire road.

Mr. Benn: The original contract sum was an amount of US\$14.5 million.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, and the completion date for that contract. What was the completion date for the original contract? Would it be December, 2011 Minister?

Mr. Chairman: You can put it to him. You can lead him. You have the facts I suspect. These facts have made the newspapers, the air waves and the television for months and years. What is the date you are suggesting Mr. Harmon.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I am suggesting December, 2011.

Mr. Chairman: Is the Minister in a position to doubt that date?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The original contract of US\$14.5 million.

Mr. Chairman: You may ask the Minister if he is in a position to doubt that date.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Are you in position to agree or disagree with December, 2011 as the actual date of completion for the first contract for the entire road?

Mr. Benn: That was the date.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Could the Hon. Minister state what is the current date for completion of the road, a new contract.

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman I believe on a number of occasions we discussed the difficulties we have had with this road and its contracting. The dates we were just working to presuppose that at the end of July this year we would have had all sections, going from two to six basically completed. The section which we had difficulty with in terms of scheduling - and I think we had some discussion on this before – related largely to section seven. Under the current arrangements we would not see a completion of this road substantially, inclusive of section seven, until the end of December of this year.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister on the same line item could I draw your attention to profile page 116 which is the accompanying profile page. We see there the planned duration is up to 31st December, 2014. But yet you are indicating to this Hon. House that the planned date for completion is December, 2013. Is that a mistake Hon. Minister or is it that the profile page is wrong? If it is could we surcharge the Minister of Finance, perhaps, for a printing error?

Mr. Benn: I am speaking Mr. Chairman with respect to the road, and the date we have is the end of the year as I just said - December 2013.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister would you agree with me that both cannot be right? Project Code 1402900 – Amaila Access Road: the legend refers to page 116. When one looks there Hon. Minister one sees the planned duration is from January last year to 31st December, 2014. We are asking, for the benefit of ourselves and the Nation, whether it would be correct to tell our supporters that the projected date for the completion of this access road is December, 2014 and not 2013 as you are saying.

Mr. Benn: The completion of the road physically is to December, 2013. The issues in relation to retention and other fees will roll out in terms of paper work to December 2014.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Thank you very much. Minister could you state at the time when the contract with Synergy Inc. was terminated how much money was paid under the contract?

Mr. Chairman: Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon, a lot of what you are speaking to I believe is in the public domain. This exercise is not to necessarily embarrass or to seek to humiliate but you may

lead. I believe information as to how much has been paid off, and what Government was seeking to recover, is in the public domain. If you have that information you can go ahead and speak to it and I doubt the Minister will deny the figures you put to him.

Mr. Ramjattan: Hon. Minister the contracts with two of the contractors who took over from Fip Motilall or Synergy Inc. are they also terminated now? If I may continue the question, is some Chinese company coming in to complete the road?

Mr. Benn: Thank you Hon. Member. In the interest of getting the road completed according to the schedule which we now have in place we have terminated, as was previously advised, the contract with Bovell Construction, and we also terminated the contract with HN Pasha Construction.

Mr. Ramjattan: Who replaced them?

Mr. Benn: In relation to achieving the schedules we have indeed signed a contract with China Railway First Group to complete the difficult section seven of the road.

Mr. Ramjattan: I also want to know if the environmental impact study in relation to this road has also been completed. I am not talking about the hydro project itself.

9.44 p.m.

Mr. Benn: We have environmental impact study on the road and I would say that the environmental requirements with respect to the road are pretty stringent. We have the International Development Bank (IDB) involved and there are teams in now. At the moment, we have, I think, four or five teams and these are environmental teams, which are located on the road and we are doing everything; animal counts, tracking of animals, prevention of the hunting, gathering and so on for animals and monitoring the impacts also with respect to human access.

It is pretty stringent, but we are working at it. We have...

Mr. Ramjattan: Has it been completed?

Mr. Benn: No, it is an ongoing thing. There are reports made every month for the various sections with respect to the environmental compliance and changes that they may require from

time to time to protect the animals and so on. [Mr. Ramjattan: The flora and fauna.] The Flora and Fauna, the amount of clearing that we do and the rehabilitation we are required to make as we go along.

Mr. Greenidge: A follow-up to the same question: could the Minister tell us whether the closure of the financing for the substantive project itself that is the fall is linked to the completion of the road in any way?

Mr. Benn: Yes, there are indeed schedules that we have to meet with respect to the construction of the road so that the heavy equipment could move up onto the dam site.

Mr. Greenidge: Would the Minister be good enough to tell us what specific deadline they are currently working to in relation to that financing. [Mr. Benn: The financing...] Yes, just let me explain why I am asking. You indicated a specific deadline by which the road and the conclusion of the funding for the road itself would be completed and I am trying to see how that is linked to the closure of the financing.

Mr. Benn: We have to be ready with the road and the requisite bridges for the road and other river crossings by December, 2013. That is linked to the financing and arrangements; I do not have all of that particular information that...

Mr. Greenidge: That is good enough.

Mr. Benn: We can get it for you though, but the intention is that we have to be ready by the end of this year.

Mr. Benn: Thank you very much. My last question on this matter: the last set of discussions I had and obviously they are not official discussions, with the prospective builders suggested that the deadline for the completion of the road was, I believe, July, 2013. Has that been change because you now tell us it is December, 2013? Why is there a difference?

Mr. Benn: Well I am saying that the all the discussions that we have had in respect to the upsets in construction, tendering, contracting and so on has brought us to the point where it has been accepted that we have to achieve substantial completion of this road by the end of this year; December, 2013. There was an intention to get it by July of this year, but it has slipped. Well you

know all the issues. We have had issues and there are still issues on the ground, but the current accepted position is the end of year.

Mr. Greenidge: What does that mean in terms of the current estimated cost; the consequences for the cost of the contract, the final package. The July deadline was linked to a cost, so since the time has slipped, what implication does that have for the cost at which the contractors would provide the...?

Mr. Benn: For the various sections we are now evaluating what impact it would have on the estimated cost for the various sections. We are looking at that. There are two problems as I said, one is that we did have the estimates, there were delays, upsets and we have had too, as I said, two terminations and those evaluations are on their way just now to be able to determine what the final cost maybe. But, we will be able to share those with you as it is determined.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Minister, you are budgeting \$2,350,000,000 for this project. These Estimates will take us to the end of 2013, could the Hon. Minister state whether this sum here will be able to see the road completed by December, 2013?

Mr. Benn: At this time, based on preliminary evaluations, no, we are assessing this matter at this moment and as I said we will provide information as it becomes available; the best estimates.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Hon. Minister the Kangaruma Bridge, is that a portion of a particular section of the road that is going to be built or is there as special contract to be awarded for the construction of that bridge or the crossing, I think?

Mr. Benn: Actually the Kangaruma Bridge is about 80 miles or more to the South West.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Which bridge is it?

Mr. Benn: It is the Kuribrong Bridge.

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

Mr. Benn: The Geo-technical works, assessments and designs are being done now for the Kuribrong Bridge and the determination will have to be made based on the design for a contract for its construction.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: So the bridge is not part of the contract for any of the sections from one to seven that has already been contracted out.

Mr. Benn: No the bridge is separate.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Are there any other bridges of this type that will require a separate contract and if so, what is the sum of money we are looking at?

Mr. Benn: No, this is the only significant river crossing, except for the Essequibo River along the alignment. On the Essequibo River we will be barging the equipment over. The Kuribrong Bridge is the bridge which has to be built.

Mr. Ramjattan: I want to come back to project code 1402700 – Highway improvement East Bank Demerara: I notice that it is said in the Legend here that this \$1.2 billion is mainly for four items: construction, feasibility and design, road safety and road maintenance.

Can give us a general estimate as to how much or what portion of this \$1.2 billion will go for number one, two, three and four, just for my edification?

Mr. Benn: Can you repeat which project code it is?

Mr. Ramjattan: Project Code 1402700 – Highway improvement East Bank Demerara.

Mr. Chairman: One second Mr. Ramjattan. Hon. Members are there any other questions pertaining to the Amalia Falls.

Mr. Ramjattan: I do not have any.

Mr. Chairman: No, you do not, but... Ms. Wade, do you have a question? Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon do you have a question? Are there any questions for the Amalia Falls? In fairness to the Minister I would like him to be able to sectionalise, if I can put it that way, his responses.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman it would have been appropriate for the Minister to give us a true picture as to what is our financial commitment to this road, including the bridges. What I am trying to get from the Minister is, in addition to those seven sections of roads, what is the likely cost of the bridge that has to be built over the two rivers that he has spoken about?

Mr. Benn: It is one river...

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: And a pontoon service.

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, I did say that they are now detailing the information with respect to the... based on the changes that we have just undertaken to get the project done and I will provide that information.

If I can give some figures, dissection, according to contract amounts and we can put the numbers to you – provide them. Section 2 - \$336.1 million, section 3 - \$373 million, section 4 - \$246 million, section 5 - \$182.4 million, section 6 (a) - \$145 million, section 6 (c) \$76 million, section 7, the one under difficulty, was \$839 million and the Kuribrong Bridge had a figure of \$393 million assigned.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister may I invite you to move the necessary motion for us to go beyond 10 p.m. We have to resume the Assembly and then you can move the motion.

Assembly resumed

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO. 10(1)

Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs [Mr. Hinds]: Mr. Speaker, I propose that we suspend Standing Orders No. 10, so that we can complete the work scheduled for this evening.

Mr. Speaker: I am grateful, thank you.

Question put, and agreed to.

Standing Order suspended.

In Committee of Supply

Mr. T. Williams: Notwithstanding the fact that this road has been the subject of much discussion, in and outside of the Parliament and we have various questions trying to understand the cost and the changing of figures and all situations. I would like to ask the Minister what is the length of the Amalia Road? What distance of road will we have when this is done?

Mr. Benn: It is 185 kilometres of road. Let me say that there are some adjustments ongoing in section two because the original alignment went through a very swampy area and a couple of machines were lost in that area. The diversion on that is some three kilometres. At the end of the day we do not anticipate that the road will be greater than 190 kilometres.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Several questions were asked before, leading up to what I want to ask, but I would like to make an observation. Recently, there were the deaths of two pilots who were, according to the newspapers report, doing some type of aerial survey, did their work have anything to do with the environmental study? I would like to ask the Minister, he just mentioned about the swamps and so on, that the contractors who worked on the road, whether there was no adequate environmental studies done so that the contractors encountered hostile territory in terms of undulating, protrusion of overgrowth and trees and swamps, which when we talk about a \$5.2 billion project, started off with \$3 billion, there was a question that was asked before; whether we would have any further over range. I want the Minister to give the assurance to this House that the environmental studies have in fact been done to the extent that now it will facilitate the completion of the road, now that these contractors who have lost equipment worth millions of dollars in the swamps and that you would not have similar experiences.

We want an assurance because we had proposed cuts to this item. We wanted to have; to use the words of the Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson, “We want the Government to come clean on this project.” a lot depends on it. We have had protracted delay already and whether or not, the question is, has this environmental study been completed or we are not facing a situation of where the cart was placed before the horse.

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, I would like to assure the Hon. Member that an environmental study was done for the road and we will get soft copies to provide to the Hon. Members on both sides. The unfortunate loss of two foreign pilots related to Light Detection and Ranging Survey (LIDAR) for a simple photogrammetric optimisation route way work aerial survey that they were doing related to the dam site area, the impoundment area and the power line alignment.

They were asked also to take another look as they were flying on section seven, towards the end which has a great boulder slope. Their work was related to the dam site, the impoundment area and the power line alignment; that was what their work was related to.

It was a design and build contract arrangement from the beginning. The original contractor undertook the design and build, and undertook the alignment. I believe maybe due to management on the ground perhaps took too much risk with some of the excavators and naturally lost two of them in the swamps.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The original contract for this road included clearance for the transmission lines along the route. Could the Hon. Minister state whether we are likely to see another contract now being awarded for the clearance of the transmission lines, in light of the aerial survey that was being done? Is that going to be an addition sum, based on what we are being asked here to approve?

Mr. Benn: The request so far, we have contemplated the doing of transmission lines clearing, as I said we are doing re-evaluations of all the sums expended and changes which have to be made. Based on those determinations, we will go back to the Ministry of Finance for advice.

Ms. Wade: Project Code 1500402 – Emergency Works: Hon. Minister you are aware that the five miles Burma Road attracted protest actions in 2012; I am wondering how much money will be spent on that road and what type of building materials will be used and if the entire five miles will be done?

Mr. Benn: I am sorry Mr. Chairman and Hon. Member, this head refers to Emergency Works in respect of sea defences. These are rehabilitation works for sea defences.

With respect to Burma Roads, I know a discussion has been entered upon. On the question of the prevention of continued destruction or damage to the road and what interventions we have to seek to be able to bring it back into a good trafficable state.

Ms. Wade: Project Code – 1401800: under “Miscellaneous Roads” can you say how many roads will be done in Region 5?

Mr. Benn: We are prepared to give you the lists of all the roads, so have no fear about that. In Region 5, we have under “Miscellaneous Roads” five roads identified for \$86.7 million.

Ms. Wade: I did not get that Minister.

Mr. Benn: Let me just say on the question of the Amaila Project, I know that there was a discussion at the Office of the President, I think on March 8th, latest, where the Members of the Opposition's Leadership were briefed and documents tabled with respect to this road. We will supplant and bring in more information as we go along.

Mr. Ramjattan: I will like to ask a question in respect to Project Code 1402700 – Highway improvement East Bank Demerara: that is the four lane highway. I just wanted from the four areas that the money will go to, a general sum as to what each area will get, for example, the construction from Providence to Diamond, the design from Grove to Timehri and so on – out of the \$1.2 billion.

Mr. Benn: For the whole project – the Highway improvement of the East Bank of Demerara, these works are underway and \$1 billion is identified with respect to the works. Providence to Diamond, there is implementation support, which is \$100 million that relates to the specialist supervision needed.

There is a routine management maintenance system for \$95 million and related road safety works for \$38.9 million. There are audits and monitoring for \$5 million. By Lots; Lot 1 under Dipcon Engineering is \$344 million; Lot 2 under Geico Construction Company Limited is \$394 million; Lot 3 under BK International is \$262 million.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister on that road, I have a question, which some maybe embarrassed to ask. What is the plan to take care of all that water that was stored in the Canals and for its discharge? I am no engineer, but where is that water to go because for centuries we stored water in canals joining that from the cane fields, et cetera. Where is that water to go?

Mr. Benn: Concrete drains are being constructed now in replacement of those canals. They are going to diversion areas to Kokers and a lined drain is five times more effective than a normal drain. It may be smaller but more effective or has comparable effects.

Mr. Allicock: Project Code 1402300 – Georgetown – Lethem Road: could the Hon. Minister provide a brief description of the nature of studies to be conducted reference the Lethem – Georgetown Road?

Mr. Benn: The work that is being done, required too, is the biodiversity study for the road alignment and that was requested. That is the work being done right now by Conservation International.

Ms. Kisson: Project Code 1201900 – Infrastructural Development - “Provision for street lighting: could the Hon. Minister say how much is allocated to Linden, which areas in Linden will get these lights and give the breakdown of the cost for each area?”

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, in fact this is a misnomer, we really do not do street lighting; we do highway lighting. This provision is for lights along the highways. In a minute we will give you the areas.

We need to complete street lighting from No. 61 to No. 74 villages, there is retention on that of \$1 million; Bell Vue to Patenia \$9 million to be done; for Linden, highway lighting, I see again, \$12 million; for the Abary Bridge itself - the approaches on the bridge - \$1.5 million; Moleson Creek \$1.5 million; and Nos. 44 to 54 Villages, \$10 million.

Ms. Kisson: A follow-up question: could the Hon. Minister identify the areas on the highway where the lights will be located or place?

Mr. Benn: We could get that information to you. There was a design done by the engineers responsible for highway lighting and traffic lights and there are studies for the area; we have that information, which we could get to you.

Let me apologise to the Hon. Member Ms. Wade.

10.14 p.m.

I did promise the Hon. Member, Ms. Wade, last year... I think I said, for the Hansard, that I will light you up this year and that was last year. That is what the Hansard says. **[Mrs. Backer: What did you mean?]** She knows what I meant because we were discussing highway lighting. It is a promise I have yet been unable to keep. The Hon. Member has been on me on this issue for the last two years and I will endeavour to deal with this issue this year. My apologies.

Ms. Selman: Thank, Mr. Chairman. Project Code 1403000: could the Hon. Minister provide in writing the following: the selected main roads to be upgraded and constructed and the cost

associated with each road, the purpose of the studies to be undertaken and the proposed duration and the cost attached to the upgrading of road from the Rupert Craig Highway to the East Bank Public Road Junction at Houston? In writing, Hon. Minister.

Mr. Benn: Sorry, Hon. Member. Could you repeat the line item?

Ms. Selman: Project Code 1403000.

Mr. Benn: Thank you, Hon. Member. Project Code 1403000 - the Road Network Expansion Project: this relates to the civil works for the Sheriff Street-Mandela upgrade and, in the first instance, an expenditure of \$55 million. Then there is a design of the East Bank Berbice Road and a design for the Canals No. 1 and No. 2 Road and design for the West Bank Demerara Road all in the amount of \$100 million.

Ms. Selman: Mr. Chairman, I had respectfully requested that the Minister provide it in writing in view of our time constraints.

Mr. Benn: Yes we can provide but there are the design elements for those roads.

Ms. Wade: I did not get the answer properly from the Hon. Minister. How many roads will be done in Region 5?

Mr. Benn: We gave her the number of roads. I think that we did say “five roads”.

Ms. Wade: Minister, please name the five for me.

Mr. Benn: We will have to give you the listing of the roads. I did say, for Region 5, five roads for \$87 million. We could give you the names of the roads.

Programme: 312 – Public Works - \$12,852,393,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 313 – Transport- \$66,611,000

Mr. Ramjattan: I notice that this agency has one employee here and we are doing a \$60 million... Could you explain this for me, Mr. Minister? This is on pages 136-137. I noticed one

employee. I cannot remember asking in previous years but I notice that this is just with one employee and there is \$66 million allocated. What is this about?

Mr. Benn: I am not sure which line item you are referring to but... This is our Aerodrome Inspector.

Mr. Ramjattan: Aerodrome Inspector?

Mr. Benn: Yes, for hinterland airstrips.

Mr. Ramjattan: Is it one Aerodrome Inspector?

Mr. Benn: Yes but the \$66 million is not for him alone. It is for works and materials and so on.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Ramjattan, are you proceeding?

Mr. Ramjattan: That is alright. I understand him.

Mr. Benn: Just let me say that the Aerodrome Inspector's salary is \$133,000 per month.

Programme: 313 – Transport - \$66,611,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 313 – Transport- \$5,631,331,000

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I refer to project code 1600900 - CJIA Modernisation Project: I have a couple of questions for the Minister but the first is for the Minister to indicate the work that is expected to be done in 2013 and the actual sums that have been allocated for each specific item of work.

Mr. Benn: Thank you. The planned works for 2013 in United States Dollars because the other dollars are large. Site investigation design - \$7,183,700; backfilling of terminal area - \$5,026,127; as-built drawings - \$100,000; civil buildings - \$3,973,344. You do not need to write. I will give you the paper.

Runway excavation of organics – that is the swamp areas – \$6,104,152; site office and accommodation – \$710,000; temporary roads, et cetera - \$350,000. That is for a total of \$23,447,323 on contract for this year. Work on the car park for \$555,600; consultation fees - \$1,967,950. A total of \$2,523,550. A grand total of \$25,970,874 as per the budget for this year.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: A follow-up question, please: in the bill of quantities in the contract for the work to be done at the airport you had a preliminary sum of \$8,000,284,383 and for the construction, which is at (b), \$122,531,917,000. The question I would like to ask the Hon. Minister is: What work has been done under what is called preliminaries and in the second stage construction, where are we now?

Mr. Benn: The preliminary work relates to the preliminary design phases, final engineer designs based on geotechnical investigations, offsite preparations, the bringing in and the mobilisation of engineers and other technical people. Those are the normal preliminaries in terms of the personnel and on the ground works.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Is this phase completed?

Mr. Benn: No. It is underway. It is ongoing.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Is there a contemplation that there is also going to be an environmental impact assessment to be done in relation to the project itself?

Mr. Benn: There is an environmental impact assessment. In fact it is both an environmental and social management plan. I will provide you with a copy. It is quite large. We have some soft copies here. We will provide it to you.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Minister, in the contemplation of that plan, in fact, I understand that an impact assessment would have been done prior to the preparation of that plan. Is there an allocation in the sums that you are asking us for today, an allocation for the relocation of the persons who are living in the environs of the airport?

Mr. Benn: No. I presume that you are referring to persons squatting on the airport land. Am I correct that it is those persons you are...?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I am saying persons who are living or residing there.

Mr. Benn: They are living there but in terms of their legal status with respect to airport land they are squatting. There is no allocation with respect specifically in relation to that issue. This has been an ongoing issue in terms of discussion and it upsets from time to time. We have been having meetings. We have a group which has been meeting fortnightly for the last three months at least between various Ministries to work out the approach to dealing with this issue and this is an organised approach to the issue.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Minister, even if you consider them to be squatters, what I am asking you is whether you have made an allocation of funds for those squatters, as you term them, to be moved to some other place; to be resettle in some other place in a structured way.

Mr. Benn: We have not made any allocation. We have made no call with respect to this matter as yet. It is still being finalised. We are discussing a number of options with respect to them taking up lands which may be available at the Ministry of Housing and Water through its Central Housing and Planning Authority. We are looking at the issues so that there would be a satisfactory resolution of this matter.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, another question. There are two institutions that are in the immediate vicinity also of the expansion; that is to say the prisons at Timehri and the Guyana Defence Force installation at Timehri. Have you made any allocation for the removal, if any, of those two institutions?

Mr. Benn: They are also squatters on the airport land. We are having a comprehensive approach to this matter and this is the reason there is a multi-stakeholder or multi-sectoral approach. There are discussions initiated with respect to the options for removal and discussion on the way, with the Guyana Defence Force and discussions initiated initially with the or notification given to the Ministry of Home Affairs as to these requirements. We are working on these issues and there is no allocation with respect to any squatter on airport land. [**Mrs. Backer:** What are you going to do with the prisoners, release them?] I am saying that there is no allocation. We are working on these issues. We have fortnightly meetings of a committee which is dealing with this matter.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Minister. This has to do with, I believe, the actual design of the new airport and the actual situation that is occurring now at the airport. I think that we read only recently that while a passenger was at the check-in counter he

collapsed and I believe that a person died and that some time earlier another person died while they were there. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us what, if any, medical facilities are in place at the Timehri Airport and what else he is going to do to deal with this situation?

Mr. Benn: The standard situation and for which the airport is licensed or approved is that there is a port health person there. This is the first person who died at the check-in counter. While doing his documentation he collapsed and died in an instant. When the medical person came to him he had no pulse and when they took him to the Guyana Defense Force (GDF), which is supposed to be the ambulance provider with the doctor there as well, they confirmed that he had, in fact, died. With the other gentleman I think that he may have been... This happened in the public car park so there was not an immediate awareness of it and also when they got to him there was not much that could have been done and he died, subsequently, at the hospital. But I have been in discussion pertaining to these matters at a recent management meeting last week. I have asked the airport personnel to buy an ambulance and have it here to double up on what options are there for immediate assistance properly outfitted, but in both of these cases not much help could have been provided, I am advised.

Mrs. Hughes: Minister, I was wondering if you could explain, given the current experience with Skeldon, what specific measures are being put in place to ensure the development of our tourism industry and also our airline sector that would justify such a project?

Mr. Benn: We have the feasibility study and the other studies. We are currently in some discussions with potential airlines: British Airways, JetBlue, Virgin Atlantic, West Jet, Air Canada, Copa and Gull. The Ministry of Tourism has been working hard on this matter too. I know that they are also in discussion, even up to today, with the provider who has indicated that they will withdraw – that is Delta Airlines.

In terms of the overall development of transportation, tourism and so on... In the first instance, the project is justifiable on the capacity constraints both in terms of the building, based on the number of passengers who go and come to our country, and also the length of the runway. Just for those two things alone, we have to do this project. The length of runway is unsustainable for larger aircrafts, more fuel efficient aircrafts as well as longer haul aircrafts, so the runway issue is an imperative one. We know we had the Caribbean Airlines problem too.

In terms of the building: The building is too small. People who go through it at peak know what happens there. In spite of all of these issues the numbers continue to grow. There has been an 8% growth in passenger demand in the facility over the last three or four years and as of March we had 4% already in terms of the figures of the first quarter. [**Mrs. Backer:** What figures?] The figures of passengers moving through the airport.

Mrs. Hughes: A follow up question: Minister, since the time I was President of the Tourism Association, which was more than a decade ago, we were speaking to Virgin Airlines. Which specific airline can you say have been confirmed or expected to come into Guyana within the next three months, for example?

Mr. Benn: We do not have any as yet in place. We are in intense discussions with these airlines and for some of these airlines – particularly JetBlue where they are having discussions – the runway length is an issue. The capacity geometry is a restriction at the moment.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, what equipment does JetBlue use that requires this long runway? In Barbados they use a very small aircraft.

Mr. Benn: Airbus 320 and they have confirmed in writing that they have an issue with the runway length.

Mrs. Hughes: Minister, can you say how many Guyanese are going to be employed in this project and at what stages?

Mr. Benn: We anticipate that over the life of this project some 600 persons would be employed, Guyanese.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, may I just follow-up question on the last question? What in the contract with China Harbour gives you the impression that numbers as large as 600 would follow in the course of the construction of this project? How does it differ, in other words, from the other contract – Marriot?

Mr. Benn: I think that we provided the contract. We did provide the contract.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, I asked him ‘what in the contract gives him that impression’ because... Yes, I have seen the contract. I have seen some amendment to the original contract

pertaining to employment and the requirements that the contractor has in that contract or you agree to as regards the employment of Guyanese.

Mr. Benn: I am not aware of any amendment to the contract. I know that there is no amendment to the contract. In the contract at 9 of 76, clause 6, there is an agreement to make sure that the proportion of the Chinese labour and the nationals would be 6:4; which means 60:40, except special, technical, skilled personnel. Basically, there is a 60% to 40% split between Chinese and nationals; particularly in relation to special technical persons – special skills.

Mr. Greenidge: It is those special skills that I was worried about and who would define them. That was why I was asking how you could be so sure.

Mr. Benn: We will work at this with the contractor.

Mr. Greenidge: On answering an earlier question the Minister said that the runway itself would justify the project. I would not hold him to those words, but words to that effect; that the viability or justification was based upon the runway by itself as well as...

Ms. Teixeira: He said two areas that were imperative.

Mr. Greenidge: I took it perhaps more generously than you intended. It is not a handicap if that is what he said but anyhow if he wants to correct me I am quite open... He said also that the extension of the airport building, itself, was a justification. What I want to ask has to do with phasing or with timing in terms of the plans as they stand at the moment. What is the phasing of the work that you have in mind in term of the extension of the runway or, if you like, the sequencing – the extension of the runway, the clearing of the area around the airport in terms of the possibility of resettlement and the extension of the building itself? What is the sequence, what is the timing, associated with these different bits of work?

Mr. Benn: The activities will be done concurrently. There is an expected completion date of August, 2015.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Chairman, this is a contract basically from a loan of almost \$31 billion and for the interest of 2%, if my math is correct, we will have to pay \$600 million alone on the principle. My concern and question would be: At the time when we were told that a contract was

entered into for the extension of the airport in Jamaica – October or so of 2011 – why was the contract for the loan only executed in November, 2012? Was there a misrepresentation that was made to this House that the contract for the project was executed on the basis that money was guaranteed for it?

10.44 p.m.

This matter came up last year and we were questioning the feasibility of this venture. It was only after we left here that I was given a copy that showed that the contract with Export-Import (EXIM) Bank of China was executed one full year after the contract for this project. Am I correct, Mr. Minister, because I have serious reservation about the way this contract, for this airport, has been executed? In fact, it was started in the contract that it was for the extension of the airport. Is it still an extension of the airport or is it going to be a new airport?

Mr. Benn: I think I have repeatedly said here, and clearly, that a new airport building will be built. The runway and the areas on the airside and the hard strands for the aircraft will be extended. With respect to the issues of the contract and the approval of the finances, I am not sure, that it was a condition that there has to be a contract before there was a loan approval. This is the requirement, as I am advised, with respect to the EXIM Bank, and that was the procedure that was followed.

You simply cannot decide that you are building something anywhere and you do not have a contract to so do.

Mr. Ramjattan: You have to get the money first.

Mr. Benn: No.

Mr. Ramjattan: You do not have any money and you are going to sign a contract.

Mr. Benn: This contract...

Mr. Chairman: Minister, last year you spoke about the window of opportunity. I think there was a meeting in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Benn: I said that. I want to refer to the Hon. Member, with respect to that. This is a Government of China funded contract and its requirement, through the EXIM Bank, was that the company, which would get the arrangement, with respect, had to have had a contract.

Mr. Nagamootoo: I have a copy of the contract, “The Government Concessional Loan Agreement.” I think we need to know very careful that this is a loan that the people have to pay back. The contract states in (c), in the Whereas clause:

“Ministry of Public Works and Communications of Guyana and China Harbour Engineering Company Ltd. have entered into, on November 11, 2011, the contract for the extension of the Cheddi Jagan International Airport, Guyana for the purpose of the implementation of the project entered by and between Ministry and Public Works and Communication of Guyana and China Harbour Engineering Company Ltd on the 11 November, 2011 with the total sum of US\$138 million.”

My question is very specific. My profession happens to be that I am lawyer. I cannot enter a contract when I have no money. Was this misrepresentation to the Guyanese people?

Now the contract, which was signed with the bank, was one year after, so we did not secure the capacity and means by which we could have committed \$31 billion to be repaid by the people of this country to build an airport that we did not know that there was going to be a loan for it. That is the fundamental issue with this project.

I will ask the other issue in relation to whether, at that time, a feasibility study was conducted, whether feasibility studies in relation to the design, the model of the airport, the need for it to be committed in relation to any other need for money, scarce resources in Guyana. Those are the fundamental issues that would determine our attitude on the vote of this issue.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, last year the Minister spoke at length on this issue. He said that the nations were invited to an Expo or a meeting in Trinidad and Tobago and the offer was made. The window of opportunity was small and the Government decided to act on the basis of assurances that if it contracted the company the loan would have been extended. That was what, I believe, was said last year. Minister, certainly, you need to clarify. It does appear as if the cart came before the horse, but I am just repeating what was said last year.

Minister of Finance [Dr. Singh]: Mr. Speaker, if I may, you are absolutely correct in your recollection of my colleague's and, more generally, the Government's explanation on this matter. You are right that there was in fact a high-level China-Caribbean Development Summit that was being held in Port-of -Spain at the time, China-Caribbean development event, at which this, as you have described it, narrow window of opportunity existed for projects to be submitted for consideration and the Government of Guyana submitted the airport project.

I will say too that the documents, to which the Hon. Mr. Nagamootoo referred, are in fact documents that were voluntarily and publicly made available by this Government in the National Assembly. The loan agreement, for example, was tabled in the National Assembly by the Government.

There really is no mystery on this matter. It is, in fact, the standard practice at China EXIM Bank - indeed at a number of the other bilateral financing institutions, particularly the EXIM Banks, but I can certainly speak for China EXIM Bank and if I am not mistaken India EXIM Bank also - and the standard procedures are that those institutions will not approve, formally, a loan to finance a project unless there exists a contract between the potential borrower of that financing and the company of the nationality of the lending country. China EXIM Bank will not approve a loan to finance a project, notwithstanding that the project may be within a framework of a bilateral corporation agreement, Government to Government, so there may be an overall framework agreement between the Government of Guyana and the Ministry of *Mufcum* - I think that is what it is called in China, which is essentially its Foreign Trade and Commerce Ministry - which is a broad agreement to say that the two Governments will collaborate on commencing this project. China EXIM Bank, the financial institution, will not approve the loan, formally, unless there exists and has been executed a contract between the borrowing government, or entity, and a Chinese company. That is exactly what happened in the current instance and it is not a unique instance in that regard at all.

Mr. Nagamootoo: This clearly indicates that this is not a concessional loan; it is a conditional loan, because if a government is going to lock our people into a loan arrangement we ought to be able, as a sovereign State, to have alternative avenues to secure financing. It is not to enter into a contract that it is bound to go to the EXIM Bank of China. There are loans available in which we could have gone worldwide. Was there any alternative source explored whereby we could

have had a loan for less than 2% per annum to pay this money? That is why I am saying that we have placed ourselves into jeopardy into fixing a conditional loan under the guise of a concessional loan. This arrangement could not be explained away the way we are being told here, in this House. We demand to be able to have this matter openly ventilated, that this was a reckless misadventure, a financial misadventure at this point in time.

The Minister said that we do not have an airline in place. We are spending \$31 billion and a Minister responsible for the sector is saying that we do not have an airline in place and we are making eight air bridges for eight aircraft and we do not have one in place. After Delta would have gone, with EZ Jet has gone, and Redjet has gone, would be left with Caribbean Airline Limited and Suriname Airline.

What does that point here, to a fiscal misadventure? In fact, if there was the feasibility we would have known that this would have been, perhaps, one of the most expensive operations in relation to passenger loads. If Guyana is taken, with ten years of passengers load here, it would be a very high cost per passenger to invest this money when it cannot guarantee that an airline can be provided.

Dr. Singh: Let me say, first of all, that, setting aside the dramatics and the histrionics on display, the first point that I would like to make is that all loans have conditions and if that makes them a conditional loan – whatever that means - then so be it. Every loan agreement, which I have seen, has a multitude of conditions imposed on each part of the loan. Indeed a loan agreement of an individual borrower of a standard housing mortgage in Guyana and lending financial institutions has conditions. If that makes it a “conditional loan”, in Mr. Nagamootoo’s words, then so be it.

This loan agreement, as every other loan agreement, imposed conditions and obligations on both parties to the agreement, so there is no excitement or mystery in describing it as a conditional loan agreement.

The question of *concessional*ity is a question of a technical comparison, a quantitative arithmetic comparison, between the terms of financing in question and the market terms that are available. The relevant terms essentially are the interest rate charged, the grace period allowed before repayment commences and the full repayment period – the maturity period of the loan.

There is a standard methodology used in the financial community, and in the development community to set these three parameters up – interest rate, grace period and repayment period – against currently prevailing market rates and computing, based on that comparison, very standard formula of those two terms, standard markets terms, which are obtainable on the one hand, and the terms of the financing, in question, on the other hand, to what is called an implied grant element. Once the implied grant element is above a certain threshold the loan is deemed concessional. That is what determines *concessional*. In the current instance the China EXIM Bank terms meet the *concessional* criteria. The fact that the loans have conditions prior and other conditions do not remove the *concessional* of the financial terms of agreement. That is the first point I want to make.

This is a concessional loan, as indicated on the title of the loan agreement, tabled in this National Assembly and as confirmed by the computational assessment of the loans applicable implied grant element.

Secondly, the Hon. Member asked: Were there other options to financing that contract - a contract, having been executed? The short answer to that is that there were other options. One of which would have been to finance the project locally using local resources. Another would have been to approach another potential lender, a few out there who are potentially available to us. In the current instance, given that this project has been identified as a priority project, that is, within the framework of the China-Caribbean Development Summit, to which you alluded to, Sir, and to which I alluded to subsequently, it was identified in government to government discussions as a high priority; it was treated as such by the Chinese authorities and so the Chinese were the logical potential borrower of choice, especially given that having placed it on the bilateral cooperation agenda, a Chinese company then was engaged and the Chinese Government then executed with us a framework agreement under which this loan agreement was then approved by China EXIM Bank. The short answer, indeed, would have been yes. One could have explored indefinitely any other potential source of financing.

I will say that concessional resources are extremely scarce, especially now. There are no financial institutions that have an envelope as potentially as large as the China EXIM Bank envelope of resources for the Caribbean, even the multilateral institutions, because the multilateral institutions have country allocations formally that make a particular envelope of

resources available for Guyana projects and a particular envelope of resources available for Trinidad projects. I say this without fear of contradiction that there are no financial institutions that have, readily available, such envelopes of resources to finance concessional resources.

Of course, there are non concessional resources out there, including borrowing on the market. I will say that borrowing on the market... and this point was actually made publicly. If we had to borrow on the market ... plus a traditional market margin there would have been no grace period because the commercial market, particularly, does not give a grace period, the maturity of repayment would have been much shorter and the interest rate much larger. This point was actually made about a year ago when this project was the subject of some amount of public debate. I think it was around that time that the loan agreement was tabled too. That is really the background of this.

I should add that this project was, in fact, approved by this National Assembly for inclusion in the 2012 Estimates and that is a relevant point too. This Assembly, in its deliberate judgement, approved this project in the year 2012, making resources available for the payment of a mobilisation advance which has since been done. I hope that clarifies the matter and puts it rest, Sir.

Mr. Ramjattan: I wish to ask a couple of questions.

In relation to the hours of work, because we come back to conditional and concessional, I understand from the contract here 10 hours per day must be guaranteed and also Government agreed to pay \$1.4 million daily for any delay in the construction works. That does not seem to be concessional at all. In any event, I want to get back to the cost. Is it true, Mr. Minister, through you Mr. Chairman, that the construction arrangement here does not include a new car park, nor internal roads, nor the handling area, it does not include the new cargo area that is the fuel farm and the removal of the existing terminal?

In the area of this contract it must have a new car park. Do you not want a new car park? Do you not want an internal set of roads? Do you not want handling equipment area? You want to make this a laughing matter. We are trying to get down the business here. Do you not want a new cargo area? If it does not provide for those, \$138 million is a lot of money.

Mr. Benn: We, in great detail, as the Hon. Finance Minister just indicated, presented on this project and its costing. I would remind that there was \$138 million with respect to the loan and \$12 million which was the Government of Guyana's contribution for the project. The Hon. Member is, in fact, stating elements which he is already aware of, which exists in the document and which he has heard of before.

Mr. Chairman: For the benefit of the other...

Mr. Benn: I will print and share to all Hon. Members the details to the totals but let me say what they are in the main: the preliminaries - \$8.3 million, the site investigation design fees - \$7.2 million, this is rounded of course, the runway extension - \$58 million, the terminal building - \$47 million, the international apron - \$16.9 million, the handling equipment - \$7.9 million, the storage treatment station - \$94,000, oil tankage - \$285,000, the removal of the old terminal building - \$1.3 million, the car park - US\$2,728,000. These are figures which were provided before. I would have them copied now and provided to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: We would be most grateful because I would like...

Mr. Ramjattan, does that answer those questions?

Mr. Ramjattan: It does not answer all the questions, as to what was not.

Mr. Benn: The Hon. Member Mr. Nagamootoo previously - I wanted to answer the question - stated that there were no planes and we want to build the extensions, and so on. The fact is that for the sustainability and to overcome the capacity constraints we have to building these new things for the new designs, new models and new trends in aircraft, which are doing international travel now. The aircraft, which normally travels now, will be phased out over the next few years and we have to be ready for the new wave of aircraft that are coming in. It is not true to say that we do not have any planes. There is Caribbean Airlines Limited anyway; there is Suriname Airways, There were Redjet and EZ Jet which have come and gone unfortunately under a highly competitive environment. To stand and say that we do not have any planes and that we are...*[inaudible]* There is Liat. In the same basis, maybe, we should have not encouraged and facilitated the investment at the Ogle Aerodrome. I am not sure what the logic is. **[Mrs. Backer:** Have you invested in Ogle?] Yes. It is the Government of Guyana.

Hon. Members, this is indeed a significant project. We would not come to the National Assembly; we would not have made the representations; we would not have made the arrangements with the Chinese's Government and its people with respect to this loan if it was considered to be important for Guyana. The developments... [**Mr. Greenidge:** ... consider it to be...] I am saying it is what we consider it to be. I am saying that we consider it to be important to Guyana and its development and its continued improvement in its economy and the sustainment of its economy. I am surprised, after having, last year, the approval of this honourable House...

Mr. Ramjattan: We never knew that you got the money.

Mr. Benn: But we did pay the initial amounts.

Mr. Ramjattan: It is \$10 million ten months after.

I want to make this quite clear. Last year April, when we were here...

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, I am on the floor. Mr. Chairman, could I please be allowed to make the point? Again, it was in this honourable House last year, and I repeat the words honourable House, we approved the initial funds with respect to the Cheddi Jagan International Airport Project. I am not sure if for all of the things, which we plan on doing, that we should just stop. I am not sure that when we have an environment where the economy grows and is expected to continue to grow that we should be listening to things which talks about, perhaps, the stoppage of the East Bank Demerara road expansion project and now the Cheddi Jagan International Airport project. The Hon. Members, on that side, proposed that they would remove \$1 billion from that project which meant that it would have had to stop in mid step.

Mr. Ramjattan: You stopped Makeswar 'Fip' Motilall and everybody. You knocked off two contractors. You have gone and brought all kind of contractors and now you are telling us these things.

Mr. Benn: I called out here for the three contractors for the East Bank Demerara road project, its expansion Project. I pointed out for the contractors, what works they were doing and what we contemplated. I am saying fundamentally that this Parliament is not merely a political institution but a developmental institution for the country. We could have the critiques and the discussions,

but it could not be that having agreed...*[Interruption from the Opposition Members]*. I am not saying that we must...

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Minister, be focused.

Mr. Benn: The documents, the contracts were laid in this House, last year, in great detail with respect to this project and I am very surprised that, at this point in time, we would be engendering a discussion of this sort and that the Hon. Member would not know the breakdowns which he was provided for last year.

Mr. Ramjattan: April month we did not know a cheque was under investigation for corruption.

Mr. Benn: We have heard all kinds of allegations; the company refuted these. The Hon. Member can and has... He is a lawyer too. There are, in fact, two lawyers there, who I recognise on that side of the House, and they can take all the steps, with respect to this matter. I am saying, at this point in time, I cannot see how the questions being raised here, with respect to this project, in this manner, could stand any proper scrutiny. I am saying that the questions have been asked and I am referring to those.

Mr. Nagamootoo: I just want to clear this issue which is very important. The Hon. Minister of Finance said that we voted here last year for a sum of money for mobilisation. If we did so I submit, with respect, that we did so through misrepresentation. We voted in April of last year for \$4.3 billion but we did not discover, at that point in time, that the contract for that money had not been signed with EXIM Bank until November. What we are being told in this House, almost as a threat, that “Yes, you voted this and therefore you have to vote again...”

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Nagamootoo, if in April of last year, you voted in favour, would it have made a difference to your vote if the contract had been signed?

Mr. Nagamootoo: It is because we did not realise then that there was no money.

Mr. Chairman: But assuming that the contract had been signed in March...

11. 14 p.m.

Mr. Nagamootoo: If this contract had failed we would have been surcharged for four additional billion dollars that we had voted in this House. If this Government has gone and spent this money and we did not have a loan to cover it would have come through taxation or we would have had to borrow more, our debt would have surpassed \$400 billion right now. We are paying \$10 billion last year in interest alone. Where are we taking this nation with the debt we are accumulating for projects for which we have no clear vision, no clear use for this kind of projects? We are wasting the people's money and we are making their lives poor.

Mr. Hinds: I think I would like to bring this House to attention again on the presentation by the Hon. Minister of Finance. I do think, Sir, that for me too, when I came into Government many of these larger jobs, which are done, go through many stages of iteration, as the Minister of Finance pointed out, there is this framework agreement that is reached at this highest level of the President, or very high level on the two sides, a commitment to provide the financing, and then there is the going ahead and to make the arrangements for the contractor, who would do the job; there is a set price. A price is finally worked out. Along the way too, the environmental studies may have been done, and so on, then the agreement is made and the formal arrangement through the loan is made.

This, I would say, seems to be quite against contrary to our normal experiences, but this is the way, I have found too, that these large projects are done. To some extent, in the case of Amaila Falls Hydropower Project, it is found that it takes a long time to get to the end because of the process that involves a lot of things. It involves the environmental studies, and so on.

I would like to say to the Hon. Member over there, Mr. Nagamootoo, that nothing wrong was done in this process; there was no attempt to hide things or any things. I think it is just the nature of these large projects.

Proposed Amendment to motion on Notice Paper number 184

Amendment to be moved in the Committee of Supply of the National Assembly for the Estimates of Expenditure for the fiscal year 2013.

That the amount shown in Column 4 for Agencies, Accounts Codes and Descriptions, listed below reduced by the amounts shown in column 5.

Page 431; 31:Ministry of Public Works – 1600900 – CJIA Modernisation Project; provided \$5,353,000,000; reduction (Col. 5) \$5,352,999,999; proposed (Col. 6) \$1.00. [*Mr. Greenidge*]

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, as you are aware, there is a motion standing in my name and I would like to invite you, if you are kind enough, to put the question.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, may I, with your permission Sir, say once again that our responsibility in preparing the national budget in any one year involves making the best possible projections of what our anticipated inflows will be and what our anticipated expenditures will be. If we anticipate at the start of the year, given the state of negotiations with a particular development partner, in this case the Government of China and the China EXIM Bank, that during the course of the year a project will be approved, contact executed and work commenced or payments required, then it is our obligation to make the best possible projections and include them in the national budget. We did so in the year 2012 as a result of which the project was included and subject to scrutiny by this House. If, at the time, we were asked whether the loan agreement was approved or at what state or stage of approval it was we would have answered at that time. That question was not asked. The project was approved. I hasten to add that the project enjoys widespread, strong popular support.

The private sector, for example, has publicly said that this is an important developmental project that has its support. The Opposition might feel comfortable discarding and ignoring the views of the private sector but we do not, as responsible Government, enjoy the luxury saying, such as my friends on that side of the House are currently suggesting, ignore the views of the private sector. We do not have that luxury. May I appeal again that this project, given its importance, receive the unanimous support of this House?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I will put the question that we approve the sum stated in the Estimates for capital expenditures for the Ministry of Public Works but I will have the amendment that is proposed in the motion by Mr. Greenidge first. The amendment comes dated received 16th of April, 2013 for Order Paper 17th of April, 2013 and so I will put that question that we approve of that motion before I put that we approve the complete Estimates. Ring the bell please.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, could we be guided by which motion Mr. Greenidge tabled to do with this particular item? We are seeing one from the Alliance For Change (AFC), but not from Mr. Greenidge. It is if you can remind us of which motion it is and the number of it, please.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. It is Notice Paper number 184 published on the 16th of April; date received is 16th of April, 2013; date for Order Paper is 17th April 2013. I am about to put the question now.

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, I want us to be clear on this issue, before you put this matter to a vote, that we have and we are prepared to provide all the information again, any additional information the Hon. Member of the House would like, with respect to this matter.

Mr. Nadir: The motion by Mr. Greenidge, which he is intended to prosecute, would engender a debate also.

Mr. Chairman: We have had a debate I can tell you.

Mr. Nadir: Well we had a debate on the project but not specifically on the motion to amend. There are specific Standing Orders to that. I am rising to make a small contribution because...

Mr. Chairman: There is a motion on the floor. I will be hard-pressed to shut out a Member from speaking to it.

Mr. Nadir: I have heard very good arguments from all sides of the House for and against this project, but in my mind we have known and heard that there is a contract executed. I think there was someone pointing to the fact that there might be liquidated damages should we not meet those contractual arrangements, now, if we consider delaying this project or not approving for these provisions in these Estimates. I just want to ask the Minister of Finance, most likely, what will now be our exposure, in terms of the cost, with respect to those contracts we have signed? It is going to be very important also.

Mr. B. Williams: He is finished. Once a question is put, unless there is an amendment, there is no debate.

Mr. Chairman: Well, the truth is that I have not put the question formally. Mr. Isaacs advised that as long as there is an amendment in the form of a motion a debate may take place.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, Standing Order 75(2), "...and therefore an amendment has been proposed and a debate may take place on that question."

Mr. Chairman: I am satisfied. I just wanted a second opinion from a learned practitioner of parliamentary matters

Motion put.

Mr. Hinds: Division.

Bell rang.

Committee divided: Ayes 33, Noes 32, as follows:

Ayes

Mr. T. Williams

Ms. Marcello

Dr. Ramayya

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe

Mrs. Hughes

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Ramjattan

Ms. Ferguson

Mr. Morian

Ms. R. Williams

Mr. Jones

Mr. Adams

Mrs. Baveghems

Mr. Sharma

Mr. Bulkan

Mr. Bond

Ms. Kissoon

Mr. Trotman

Ms. Selman

Mr. Allicock

Ms. Wade

Mr. Felix

Ms. Hastings

Mr. Scott

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon

Mr. Greenidge

Mrs. Backer

Dr. Norton

Mrs. Lawrence

Mr. B. Williams

Ms. Ally

Dr. Roopnarine

Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger

Noes

Mr. Jaffarally

Mr. Damon

Dr. Persaud

Rev. Gilbert

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Neendkumar

Mr. Lumumba

Mr. Chand

Ms. Shadick

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Nadir

Ms. Teixeira

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Whittaker

Mr. Baksh

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai

Mr. G. Persaud

Ms. Manickchand

Mr. Benn

Dr. Anthony

Mr. Ali

Dr. Ramsaran

Dr. Westford

Mr. R. Persaud

Dr. Singh

Mr. Nandlall

Dr. Ramsammy

Mr. Rohee

Mr. Hinds

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I would like to bring to your attention that there was a problem with this motion in the name of Mr. Greenidge. The cut, which Mr. Greenidge proposes, to make is more than what is in the budget, therefore this motion is null and void. We cannot remove from the heading what is not in the heading and, therefore, motion 182 that is being put to the vote, I am asking that it be declared null and void.

Mr. B. Williams: Mr. Chairman, I understand that you refer to the number of the motion as 184.

Mr. Chairman: I am dealing with Notice Paper 184

Mr. B. Williams: Yes. The Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira mentioned 182.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I specifically asked you about Mr. Greenidge's motion...

Mr. Chairman: I said that it was number 184.

Ms. Teixeira: ...because Mr. Ramjattan did not table his motion. Mr. Greenidge cannot table Mr. Ramjattan's motion, which is on the floor. There are two motions, 182 and 184, and that is why I asked that we be reminded by you of Mr. Greenidge's motion. I specifically asked. Maybe Mr. Chairman, Members do not understand what I am getting at. Mr. Greenidge's motion states, the

heading that he wishes to amend, \$5,353,000,000 and he is cutting \$5,352,999,000 therefore the cut that he is proposing supersedes or is greater than is in the budget head, which is impossible.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, may I ask that the motion be further amended?

Mr. Chairman: I will have to take advice on that. This comes on a Notice Paper anything to deal with these motions, notice has to be given, clear days.

Mr. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ramjattan's motion also is cutting more than what is in the budget item, both have mistakes, Mr. Ramjattan has \$5,353,000,000 and Mr. Greenidge's motion is cutting \$999,000 more than what is in the budget. Neither motion can be put therefore, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I am going to take a five minutes recess. We will resume in Assembly.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Isaacs, please adjourn to my Chamber.

Sitting suspended at 11.33 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 11.58 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Members. We will resume in Committee of Supply immediately.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I am grateful for your indulgence of affording the Clerk and me the opportunity to review the matter that was placed before us, that is, that the sums that were placed in the Notice Paper were greater than that which the Estimates provided for. We have also had the opportunity to confer with several Members of both sides of the House, particularly Mr. Ramjattan, Mr. Williams, and Mrs. Backer and the Minister of Finance. The Clerk has advised and I have considered that as is the amendments that were put cannot stand.

I have since been advised by Mr. Williams, Mrs. Backer and Mr. Ramjattan that the Opposition will, therefore, when I put the question for the programme, vote against it. I now formally put that Programme 311 which is the entire programme for...

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, if I can interrupt you, with respect, Standing Order 76(6) should be kept in mind.

Mr. Chairman: Standing Order 76(6)?

Ms. Teixeira: I am just asking you to keep it in mind, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: About a head? We conferred with the Budget director, Ms. Roopnauth, who advised that the entire Ministry of Public Works is not being touched, but just the programme which comprises transport. Let me get that page. Which page is it?

Ms. Teixeira: It is page 431.

Mr. Chairman: I have advised the Members that they stand or fall by their decision. It includes commitments to the European Union (EU) with regards to the Ogle aerodrome, the equipment for civil aviation and Hinterland coastal airstrips. Therefore, I put the question that Programme 311 stand part of the Estimates.

Question put.

Members: Division.

Division bell rang.

Mr. Benn: Mr. Chairman, I want to be clear that this relates to the Hinterland and coastal airstrip...

Mr. Chairman: All of that... They are very aware.

Mr. Benn: Equipment and Civil Aviation.

Members (Opposition): Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Benn: Ogle aerodrome?

Members (Opposition): Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Benn: It is unbelievable.

Mr. Chairman: Perhaps.

Committee divided: Ayes 30, Noes 33, as follows:

Noes

Mr. T. Williams

Mrs. Marcello

Dr. Ramayya

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe

Mrs. Hughes

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Ramjattan

Ms. Ferguson

Mr. Morian

Ms. Williams

Mr. Jones

Mr. Adams

Ms. Baveghems

Mr. Sharma

Mr. Bulkan

Mr. Bond

Ms. Kissoon

Mr. Trotman

Ms. Selman

Mr. Allicock

Ms. Wade

Mr. Felix

Ms. Hastings

Mr. Scott

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon

Mr. Greenidge

Mrs. Backer

Dr. Norton

Mrs. Lawrence

Mr. B. Williams

Ms. Ally

Dr. Roopnarine

Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger

Ayes

Mr. Jaffarally

Mr. Damon

Dr. Persaud

Rev. Dr. Gilbert

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Neendkumar

Mr. Lumumba

Mr. Chand

Ms. Shadick

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Nadir

Ms. Teixeira

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Whittaker

Mr. Baksh

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai

Mr. G. Persaud

Ms. Manickchand

Mr. Benn

Dr. Anthony

Mr. Ali

Dr. Ramsaran

Dr. Westford

Mr. R. Persaud

Dr. Singh

Mr. Nandlall

Dr. Ramsammy

Mr. Rohee

Mr. Hinds

Question negatived.

Motion not carried.

Programme: 313 – Transport - \$5,631,331,000 was not agreed to.

Mr. Chairman: That concludes our business for tonight. Please resume the Assembly.

Assembly resumed.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker and Hon. Members, I propose that we adjourn until later this day, Wednesday, 24th April, 2013 at 2.00 p.m.

Adjourned accordingly at 12.06 a.m.