

# Official Report

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

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18<sup>TH</sup> Sitting

Wednesday, 25<sup>TH</sup> April, 2012

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*Sitting convened at 2.15 p.m.*

*Prayers*

*[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]*

## **ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER**

### **SECOND AND THIRD READINGS OF THE INCOME TAX (AMENDMENT BILL) 2012 - BILL NO. 4/2012**

**Mr. Speaker:** Good Afternoon Hon. Members. There is just one announcement, that is, on the Order Paper there is a Bill, the INCOME TAX (AMENDMENT) BILL 2012 Bill No. 4 of 2012, which was first published on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April, 2012. That Bill will go through its second and third readings after the Appropriation Bill is read tonight. So Members are asked to take note of that fact. Thank you very much.

## **PUBLIC BUSINESS**

## **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

## **MOTION**

### **BUDGET SPEECH 2012 – MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2012**

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

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

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

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, good afternoon, and members of the public. Hon. Members, the Assembly will now resolve itself into Committee of Supply for us to continue and conclude consideration of the Estimates of Expenditure for the year 2012.

*Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply*

*In Committee of Supply*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the House is now in Committee of Supply and as it has been, as the case before, we will proceed to consider the Estimates. Today’s Estimates, please Hon. Members we will commence at:

**Agency: 01 Office of the President**

**Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 011 – Administrative Services - \$1,438,903,000**

**Proposed Amendment to Motion on Notice Paper No. 52**

Amendment to be moved in the Committee of Supply of the National Assembly for the Estimates of Expenditure for the fiscal year 2012.

That the agencies, programmes, accounts, codes and descriptions, details of expenditure listed below be reduced by the amounts shown in columns 4.2 and 4.3 of column 4.

Page 33; 01 Office of the President – 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations; provided 918,719; reduction (Col 4.2) 211,570; proposed (Col 4.3) 707,149. *[Mr. Greenidge]*

**Mr. Greenidge:** I rise to speak to the motion on Notice Paper No. 52 which I think is before Members, and if it pleases you, Mr. Chairman, I will take these in turns. Page 33, Office of the President, line item 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - and the local organisation listed under this head is quite long: I would like to draw your attention to the motion which seeks to amend the total sum provided under this line item from \$918,719,000 to \$707,149,000. That is a reduction of \$211,570,000.

**Mr. Chairman:** Could I get that figure again, Hon. Member?

**Mr. Greenidge:** It is \$707,149,000.

**Mr. Chairman:** That is a reduction of how much please, Mr. Greenidge?

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mr. Chairman, it is a reduction of \$211,570,000 which would be... The intended reduction is intended to apply to two agencies only, that is, the Government Information Agency and the National Communications Network. The requested sums for which, in the Estimates, are \$130,398,000 and \$81,372,000 respectively. I hope that is clear, Mr. Chairman.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman, is this the clearest clarification from you? Is this an amendment to an amendment and has it been circulated in this House? It does not have to have the twenty-four hour, but it should have at least been circulated so that we would know exactly what is being proposed?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, it is an amendment to the amendment which I believe is permissible indeed. I have not seen it. I see something is being shared. The Clerk has received and is showing me a copy of the proposed amendment that has been stated by Mr. Greenidge. Hon. Members, there are three amendments proposed by Mr. Greenidge. Members may wish to speak to them and to any other item.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Mr. Chairman, if you may, Sir, I stand on the matter of clarification. Sir, could you kindly give us an outline of how we are going to proceed with the agencies before us, especially those agencies where there are motions for reduction or other against the estimated amount? Are we allowed to ask questions on these agencies, so if you could tell us how we go step by step? Thank you Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Well, as per the procedure we have been adopting, I will propose the question and Members are invited to ask any question and a discussion, and a debate, can ensue. At the appropriate time, when I am about to put the question, the Hon. Member may rise and indicate that he or she has an amendment at that stage to a particular head, but there is nothing stopping the questions as it has been, as the case before. At the time when the amendment is put, formally, it has to be seconded, and once it is seconded I will then have to put the amendment to the House for its approval. If it is approved, I will then have to put the question again for the head to be considered as amended and a vote taken, the ayes have it or the no have it; it is either carried or not carried. But, as it is, we proceed to ask as many questions as... What we have up to now is notice, or are notices, of an intention to move these amendments at the appropriate stage, but, until such time, as many questions should be asked and can be asked as it has been the case over the last five days.

**Ms. Teixeira:** May I ask then that an amendment to an amendment, by either side, should have at least be quickly recirculated in writing so it can be very clear what is the amount being reduced or amended, or which agency is being reduced?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon Members, an amendment to an amendment, in my opinion, does not require notice. However, it would have been tidier and best if we had these in written form. I have seen it, but I personally do not have a copy. The absence of the circulation or it not being circulated does not make it fatal and the amendment can still go ahead because notice of

intention to amend was given within the approved and expected time. But, indeed Members, if we are going to be doing anything, in terms of changing figures, no one should be taken by surprise and no one should be left to wonder, because this is a matter of serious calculations.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Line item 6231 - Fuel and Lubricant: Could the Hon. Minister kindly tell this House what is the total number of fleet?

**Mr. Chairman:** Who is answering?

**Ms. Shadick:** Mr. Chairman, I would just like to rise on a Point of Order. I just heard you and I had to check the relevant Standing Order. Standing Order 76, and I am reading Standing Order 76 (1), states:

“No amendment shall be moved in the Committee of Supply under this Standing Order until one day after that on which it was published...”

The word “it” has to refer to the amendment. I do not see that word “it” can refer to a notice of an amendment. Sir, you just said “notice of the amendment”.

**Mr. Chairman:** Well, yes. An amendment has been put for which there has been a notice for which the Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge gave notice that he intends to amend. It would be line item 6321, for example. He gave a figure, so there is no doubt as to his intention to amend line item 6321. He intends to amend line item 6321.

**Ms. Shadick:** Yes, Sir, but with all respect to you, this reads that the amendments must be published, and in a certain form. Now what I received were two different notices of amendment. The second one I got was an amendment of the first one. I do not know that that first notice was withdrawn and today when the Hon. Member got up he called a figure that is not in either of those notices. I think that the reason why, Mr. Chairman, these orders are so clear, that the amendment that is going to be done has to be published in a certain form and given those numbers. This here does not speak to notice to amendment.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, thank you very much. I value the benefit of your counsel and your opinion. I have given it a very careful consideration, all morning, and I believe that once a Member indicates an intention to amend a specific head he or she having done so, and that

requisite notices have been given, that adjustments could be made, but to move to say line item 6322, for which no notice has been given, would be completely out of the question. It is my opinion that the ...In fact, I will give you the reason why. A Member may move to do the amendment to the figure proposed that is beneficial to the Government, and the Government may indeed wish to have the Hon. Members amendment on the floor be taken after he or she has received satisfactory answers, and he now goes...so it is in the interest of the House that there be that fluidity, but certainly he cannot come with an entirely new head on the day. But as I said, I take your point; I have considered it. Thank you.

**Ms. Shadick:** Saying whether it will benefit either side of the House has never been a part of my submission to you. I am just trying to interpret what is in here and I think this is clear and Sir, if we intend to say that a notice of an amendment constitutes an amendment then I think these orders need to be changed.

**Mr. Chairman:** As I said I have given it long and careful, and overnight consideration, and all morning, and I am satisfied that notice to amend the head has been put in and as a last resort the Member may well stay with his original proposed amendment, or I believe some adjustments can be made if there was an error. But what the Standing Order sought to do is to give notice so that no side or Member is taken by surprise of a proposed amendment that was coming. That is the requirement that is being fulfilled and, I believe, has been fulfilled, and I have so ruled.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** On this line item 6116 - Contracted employees...

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Mr. Chairman, if I may. Mr. Ramjattan, my question was not answered.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** It is your question.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Mrs. Lawrence, I think for the benefit of all, could you repeat the question, please?

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Certainly Sir. Line item 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants, I am asking the question: What is the total number of the fleet?

**Minister in the Ministry of Finance [Bishop Edghill]:** The answer is seventy-six.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** A follow-up. Could the Hon. Minister kindly inform the House whether the seventy-six vehicles in the fleet are for departmental use or whether they are also for both departmental and individual uses? If they are assigned to individuals, can we know who are those persons and what designation they hold?

**Bishop Edghill:** They are both for departmental use as well as assigned to individuals. There are nine vehicles that are assigned to advisers: To the Civil Defence Commission (CDC) - seven, to the e-governance Unit - one, to the Finance Department - two, to the former President - one, His Excellency's secretary - one, the Head of the Presidential Secretariat (HPS) - three, to Minister Dr. Westford - one, to the Ministry of Education - one, to the Ministry of Natural Resources - three, to the Office of Climate Change - three, to the Office of the Prime Minister - two, to the Presidential Guards - nineteen, to Press and Publicity - one. There is an amendment that needs to be made here, Sir. To the Presidential Guards it would be twenty-one, nineteen plus two. To Protocol - two, to the Permanent Secretary – one, to the Permanent Secretary's Secretariat, which would include vehicles that are available to be used by guests coming in from overseas, which will carry number plates Government of Guyana (GOG), fourteen, and there are three GOG vehicles. The GOG vehicles are vehicles that are used when we have overseas delegations - foreign delegations.

**Deputy Speaker [Mrs. Backer]:** Could you please indicate the nine Advisers to whom vehicles are assigned to? Based on the ruling of the Hon. Chairman, as he sat in his chair ... I would be very grateful if you could give us the names of the nine advisers who have been assigned state vehicles?

**Bishop Edghill:** There are two advisers, presidential advisers, in whom is Ms. Gail Teixeira. There are two vehicles that are assigned, not to her, to the two advisers - Ms. Gail Teixeira and Mr. Odinga Lumumba. There is a vehicle that is assigned to Mr. Clive Lloyd; there is a vehicle that is assigned to Mr. Trevor Thomas; there is a vehicle that is assigned to Major General (ret.) Joe Singh; there is a vehicle that is assigned to Mr. Andrew Bishop; there is a vehicle that is assigned to Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud and one is assigned to Mr. Navin Chandarpal and Mrs. Indranie Chandarpal.

**Mrs. Backer:** Hon. Minister, is Mr. Trevor Thomas not the Permanent Secretary? I am just asking.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Trevor Thomas' designation is the Senior Deputy Secretary to Cabinet.

**Mrs. Backer:** Well, would the Hon. Minister agree with me that he would not be an adviser because you called his name, Hon. Minister, as being one of the people who are assigned...? You said that there are nine vehicles assigned to advisers and Mr. Trevor Thomas' name was called as one of those advisers. Would you agree with me that he cannot be the adviser and the Deputy Permanent Secretary to Cabinet?

**Mr. Chairman:** He said two advisers and seven other persons.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, the explanation that I have just given comprised with what you might want to term, for the purpose of administrative purposes, advisory, but there are two advisers and the designations of the others have been so said.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** The line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: Could the Minister indicate the salary of the top three contracted employees here? Or I could amend that, the top five.

**Bishop Edghill:** The designation will be Research Assistant, a salary of \$ 98,366, Maintenance Superintendent, a salary of \$66,052, an Information Technology (IT) Officer, a salary of \$63,558, a Field Auditor, a salary of \$75,665 and a driver whose salary is \$63,558.

**Mrs. Backer:** Hon. Minister, line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: Could you indicate, for the benefit of the House, if the former Member of the National Assembly, Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud, is and can be found under this item?

**Bishop Edghill:** The answer to that will be no.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Line item 6242: Could the Hon. Minister kindly tell us where the \$20 million is expected to be spent, on which buildings?

**Bishop Edghill:** Building "A", at New Garden Street, which is a wooden and a concrete building; building "B", at New Garden Street, which is a wooden and concrete building; building "C", New Garden Street, which is a wooden and concrete building; building "D", New Garden



Street, which is a wooden and concrete building; building “E”, New Garden Street, which is a wooden and concrete building; number six would be the barracks rooms and the guard waiting area, at New Garden Street, it is a wooden and concrete building; Castellani House, which is in the Castellani Compound, is a wooden and concrete building; there are three barracks rooms in the Castellani House Compound, the swimming pool and the changing area, Castellani Compound; the villa, Castellani House Compound, the Bedford House, New Garden Street, the Foreshaw Street residence, Queenstown, is a wooden and concrete building; State House which is on Main Street, a wooden and concrete building; the barracks rooms at State House which is a wooden and concrete building; the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre, High Street, Kingston and the Cheddi Research Centre, (annexe), at High Street, Kingston, both buildings are wooden and concrete.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Line item 6241 - Rental of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister kindly tell us what is the reason for the \$6 million increase in rental of buildings?

**Bishop Edghill:** The increase is to provide accommodation for the Hon. Minister within the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, accommodation for Mr. Clive Lloyd and accommodation for a volunteer who is presently with us in the country.

**Mrs. Backer:** A follow-up please. Could the Hon. Minister please indicate where the building is that Mr. Clive Lloyd is enjoying rental for?

**Bishop Edghill:** I am not sure if I should give exact address, but I can give the house, because there are other security considerations which must be... of where people live, but the residence is a residence that is being rented from Mr. Hans Barrow and it is located in the Queenstown area.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, on the issue of persons’ personal details, I think that we are entitled to ask the questions, but let us be mindful of the fact that there are people out there who may... Whether we agree or not, they are persons... and they are human beings and they are entitled to the protection, and some privacy, and, to the best extent possible, we should try to maintain that, and the dignity of this House, and the dignity of the human beings who we are bringing under question.

*2.45 p.m.*

**Mr. Chairman:** So I am sure that Mr. Clive Lloyd would not want people to know his exact location and who his neighbours are. But I am sure we have an idea and that the Minister would be able to share the details with a Member who really needs to know where he or she needs to find the former West Indies captain. Let us try to strike a proper balance, please, as we try to go after some of this information. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Line Item 6284 – Other - there is \$66 million as expenditure. Could the Minister indicate what this is about?

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, the Official Gazette takes up the biggest chunk - \$57,700,000.

**Mrs. Hughes:** Mr. Chairman, Line Item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Hon. Minister, could you tell me how many vehicles have been assigned to the National Communications Network (NCN) in 2010?

**Bishop Edghill:** I would like to be sure that I am answering correctly. Is the Hon. Member seeking to find out what vehicles were assigned from the Office of the President to NCN or the fleet of vehicles at NCN?

**Mr. Chairman:** I am not certain.

**Mrs. Hughes:** Hon. Minister, I am speaking of the fleet of vehicles assigned to NCN.

**Bishop Edghill:** There are no vehicles that are assigned from the Office of the President to NCN.

**Mrs. Hughes:** A clarification then - Mr. Minister, what is the number of vehicles that are used at NCN?

**Bishop Edghill:** NCN has 16 vehicles.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Line Item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - the very last agency, Presidential Guard Service, there is an allocation of \$244,175,000; could the Hon. Minister tell the House whether this is the only guard service that is used by the Office of the President?

**Bishop Edghill:** The answer to that would be no. The Presidential Guard Service takes care of specific matters as it relates to the President and those assigned.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Line Item 6281 – Security Services - could the Minister kindly tell the House which security service provides this service to the Office of the President?

**Bishop Edghill:** There are two security services under this head: one supplies security to the swimming pool at Castellani House, which is BM Soat and there is Brans Security Service that provides security to the Permanent Secretary's (PS) residence.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Line Item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – more specifically, Institute of Applied Science and Technology (IAST) - could the Hon. Minister indicate how many people are employed at the Institute? And I would like to know the emoluments of the top three persons.

**Bishop Edghill:** There are 46 members of staff at the IAST. There is a Director and the salary of that Director is \$467,460. There is a Deputy Director and the salary of that Deputy Director is \$233,730. And there is a Chief Accountant whose salary is \$150,000.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. On page 396, under Agency Code 01: Government Information Agency – could the Hon. Minister explain the reason for the huge increase for 2012 – that is \$130,398,000 as against the total amount budgeted for 2011 which was \$111,496,000? Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Which line item is that Hon. Member?

**Ms. Ferguson:** I am more or less at page 396 under Agency code 01: Government Information Agency - Line Item 6321.

**Bishop Edghill:** It has to do with the increase of salary that was given and an increase in programming.

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Mr. Chairman, through you, would the Hon. Minister say whether the Government Information Agency (GINA), Castellani House and the Presidential Guard are departments of the Office of the President?

**Mr. Chairman:** Please repeat Mr. Nagamootoo. I, personally, did not hear.

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** I am asking a question under line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. The explanatory page 396 of the Estimates has a number of, what I consider to be, organisations. My question is whether the Presidential Guard, Government Information Agency and Castellani House – there are some others – are departments of the Office of the President.

**Bishop Edghill:** The answer to that question is no. They are treated as subvention agencies.

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Would the Hon. Minister be able to say which year the audited accounts for GINA and NCN were laid in this Parliament and for what year?

**Bishop Edghill:** Both GINA and NCN are up-to-date as of 2010.

**Mr. Chairman:** The question is: have they been laid in this House, as far as you are aware?

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** A follow up question on that: I asked for which year the audited accounts were laid in the National Assembly. I am not asking whether they are up-to-date. That is a different matter. They have to report for moneys in this House that were allocated in this House. I have some here for 2002 and 2003.

**Bishop Edghill:** We are not aware that these agencies' audited accounts have to be laid in the House separately.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** May I follow up? We have the Auditor General's Report which was accepted by this House.

**Mr. Chairman:** Which year is that?

**Mrs. Lawrence:** This one is 2009, but I am not speaking to the year of the Report. The Hon. Minister said that he is not aware that those reports should be laid here. We accepted this document and I am reading from page 24, paragraph 66. The Auditor General, in his open remarks, said:

“The Office of the President is still to lay reports in the National Assembly of the audited accounts for the following statutory entities under its control.”

And then he listed all of those under the Office of the President and he gave the years for when the last reports were laid. So I submit this, Sir, and ask whether the Hon. Minister could kindly tell this House, when were the last reports for the National Communications Network and the Guyana Information Agency along with the Guyana Energy Agency laid in this National Assembly?

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, I would ask that I be given some time to respond to this question so that it can be properly researched.

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** I would like to ask a final...

**Mr. Chairman:** One second Mr. Nagamootoo. Does the Hon. Minister need to seek advice? Being a new Minister, most naturally he would need to be both advised as well as to be brought up to speed with what transpired before he was assigned. Some of it might actually be legal advice so I would have no objection to that request for time to answer. Mr. Nagamootoo...

**Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Nandlall]:** If I may intervene to say that...

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** I am on my feet Your Honour. Is the Member rising on a Point of Order?

**Mr. Chairman:** I did in fact...

**Hon. Member:** He is the attorney General.

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** So what if he is the Attorney General? He is a Member of Parliament and I am on my feet.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Nagamootoo...

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** I was on my feet when he rose, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** I was about to engage the Minister of Legal Affairs so I will hear him.

**Mr. Nandlall:** We are in the National Assembly and parliamentary behaviour requires decorum. The Hon. Member, Mrs Volda Lawrence, identified a statement from the Auditor General's Report in which the Auditor General identified statutory agencies whose reports are to be laid in

the National Assembly. Both GINA and NCN are non-statutory agencies. Hence, that can be an explanation as to why those reports are not here. Thank you very much, Sir.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Mr. Chairman...

**Mr. Chairman:** Mrs. Lawrence, the Minister has asked for some time to respond and...

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Mr. Chairman, for the record, a Point of Order: we cannot accept a document in here from the Auditor General of this country on a Committee where it was approved by the Members of both sides of this House, came to this National Assembly and was approved year after year which lists all of the bodies that fall under the Office of the President and now get up to say that it is not correct. So can we kindly correct the records on that?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, we will proceed with the questions being asked. Mr. Nagamootoo, could you ask your question please?

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Mr. Chairman, along the line of my Hon. Colleague under line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations- I have here an extract of the Auditor General's Report, *Promoting Good Governance, Transparency And Improved Public Accountability*, fiscal year 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2010. And the Office of the President, under paragraph 67 of the Report laid in this Assembly – I see it was handed to your learned and distinguished colleague, Mr. Ramkarran – said that the National Communications Network and the Government Information Agency are listed here as bodies in the Auditor General's Report to lay reports in the National Assembly. There had been an antecedent of this of reports laid for the year 2003. So was the Hon. Minister mistaken when he said that there was no requirement to account to this House by agencies, these propaganda arms, to which this Government is asking us to give more moneys – that they have no accountability to this House? Was that a mistake when he said so?

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, I would seriously ask the Hon. Member, Mr. Nagamootoo, not to twist words that I would have used in this House for his own convenience because I have never said that.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman, just a point of information in that the Hon. Mrs. Lawrence talked about the 2009 Auditor General's Report that was approved by this House. Mrs. Volda Lawrence

may have forgotten that the Public Accounts Committee Report of its review of the 2009 Auditor General's Report was circulated in the House, but it was never circulated nor debated due to Mrs. Lawrence's absence and the dissolution of Parliament. Therefore, I just want to say that when the impression is given that we approved the Report and we have not reached such stage as yet.

Secondly, whilst Mr. Nagamootoo may refer to the 2010 Auditor General's Report as a reference, that Report has to go before the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) for review. In the earlier Auditor General's Reports, Mr. Chairman, the Treasury Memorandum that is required to be issued by the Minister of Finance in relation to the previous Auditor General's Report and what action would be taken in relation to the recommendations of the PAC are part of the records of this House.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** I rise on Standing Order No. 44, on a Point of Order, I refer to the comments made by the Hon. Member, Ms. Gail Teixeira and I would like to remind the Hon. Member that this Report of the Auditor General is presented to the Speaker; it is then laid in this National Assembly; accepted by this National Assembly; and then it goes to the Public Accounts Committee. The Report to which the Hon. Member, Ms. Gail Teixeira, is speaking is the Public Accounts Committee's Report after examination of this very record that is presented and accepted by this House.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman...

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Mr. Chairman, may I ask that we move on?

**Mr. Chairman:** I am going to bring it to an end.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman, these reports are not accepted by the House. They are given to the Speaker and they are laid in the House as reports. They are not accepted because there are no votes at that time.

**Mr. Chairman:** This debate on the issue as to whether or not the Auditor General lays, hands over or presents has been brought to an end. The discussion and the question is, rather, raised by Mr. Nagamootoo, whether there is any audited accounts for these agencies which are available. It would appear, given the answer, that the Minister said that Government was not aware that it was required to. That is an opinion of the Government. We have an opinion submitted by the Auditor

General's Office which seems to suggest otherwise. At the end of the day, we have two opinions. How do we move on from there? Could we just ask the questions? We have two opinions. The Hon. Minister said he needs time to provide the answer.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Mr. Chairman, if you may, I have two questions. One, the Hon. Minister indicated that he needs some time. Could he kindly tell us whether it will be tomorrow, Monday or Thursday of next week? And, secondly, could the Hon. Minister kindly inform this House as to whether these organisations which receive moneys from the Office of the President, if at the 31<sup>st</sup> December, is there any money remaining in its account as unspent – whether these moneys are returned to the Consolidated Fund?

**Bishop Edghill:** The answer to that is yes. The money is returned to the Consolidated Fund.

**Mr. Chairman:** In terms of how much time you think it will take for you to take advice and be advised about the...

**Bishop Edghill:** The question that was put to me that I asked for time for had to do with the laying of audited reports in this House. I responded by saying that we are not aware that these reports are to be laid separately to the House. I have said that from the beginning and that is why I took offence. What I can say is that the auditing of these entities is not something that is in way backlog or that is a difficulty. For example, NCN is in possession, presently, of audited reports from 2004 to 2009. GINA would need some time to give me an exact status as to where it is. I would not give to this House information that is not factual so that is why I am asking for time.

**Ms. Teixeira:** There are 11 items listed under line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. Some are covered by statute and where the statute requires that the reports be tabled in the National Assembly, for all the agencies under this particular type of heading, they comply. Some may not be up-to-date. In this particular case, of these 11 agencies, I would like the Hon. Members to find the statute that requires that these reports be tabled in the House. If the House is now asking, in 2012, that it so desires that then it requires that there be amendment to the statutes for those that are covered by statute and/or the Minister is being asked to provide the reports which are not required, by statute, to be laid.



**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Mr. Chairman, through you, would the Hon. Minister be able to confirm that this National Assembly, under line item 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, had been asked, in 2007, to allocate \$106 million; in 2008, \$95 million; in 2009, \$98 million; in 2010, \$99 million; and in 2011, \$111 million to the Guyana Information Agency, and a request is now being asked for \$130 million approval by this Assembly? Is the Minister aware that there is a requirement for this House to be informed as to how the moneys had been spent?

**Bishop Edghill:** Let me just indicate that we are prepared to provide every piece of information that is requested to Members of this Hon. House. There is no intent on the part of the Government to hide any piece of information. The documents that were referred to are not with us here so I would not give this House misleading information. I am giving an undertaking that within seven days we will provide the information to the House.

Secondly, as it relates to the increases over the years, I am sure that the Hon. Member is aware of salary increases that have been given that would contribute to increase. There is increase in operational cost and there has even been the addition of staff. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, I would like to say that if, in fact, for years passed the accounts were not laid when they ought to have been laid and that this House in the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth parliaments, approved budgetary allocations, then the House has to take some blame for that for never asking. But if there is an undertaking for them to be provided, I think that in pursuit of knowledge, the offer having been made, we should all be interested in receiving those documents.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mr. Chairman, I am seeking some clarification as regards the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act 2003 as so far as it applies to agencies receiving public funds. Part VI – Public Funds - of that Act has a section pertaining to extra-budgetary funds and section 39 (5) (d) reads as follows, if I may:

“Subject to any other law, the officials charged with the management of an Extra-budgetary Fund shall, with respect to the Fund –

(d) prepare an annual report on financial operations of the Fund for presentation, together with the report of the Auditor General thereon, to the National Assembly and publication for general information and any other requirements stipulated by the Minister.”

Minister in this case is the Minister of Finance. Is it the Minister’s understanding that this section of the Act does not apply to GINA and NCN?

**Minister of Finance [Dr. Singh]:** Mr. Chairman, let me first of all say that section 39 does not apply to either of these two entities for the very simple reason that section 39 (1) says:

“An Extra-budgetary Fund may be created by an Act, which legislation shall set out...”

Section 39 (1) has (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e).

In the case of both GINA and NCN, neither of these two entities is established by specific legislation. In fact, in the case of NCN, that is a company registered under the Companies Act and it complies with provisions that govern a Government company.

*3.15 p.m.*

My colleagues in the House would recall that the Companies Act has provisions that apply to Government companies, including certain governance and accountability provisions. NCN complies with those provisions including, in so far as it relates to the preparation of audited accounts, separate audited accounts as recorded by the Companies Act, audited by the Auditor General and the tabling in the National Assembly of those audited accounts. In fact, I recalled not so long that audited accounts for NCN were brought to the National Assembly. I do not recall, off the top of my head, the year to which the most recent set related, but I do know that it was either very late in the Ninth Parliament or very early in the Tenth Parliament. A set of audited accounts did come in relation to NCN. Like I said, I am sure the parliamentary records would reflect that. Like I said, it is either late in the Ninth Parliament or early in the Tenth. I recall vividly because the first year was not a complete year, but a partial year because NCN was created in the middle of a year. That stood out in my mind at the time. That is the case with respect to NCN. Like I said, I am sure the parliamentary records will reflect that.

We are, like in the case of all other Government companies, working diligently to ensure the audits are completed on time and that those audited accounts come to the National Assembly in accordance with the relevant statutory provisions.

In the case of GINA, that entity not having been set up by a specific statute in its own right, the expenditure incurred by GINA is, in fact, audited as a part of the audit of the programme under which it falls, this being the Office of the President. At the time that the audit is done of Office of the President Programme 011 - Administrative Services - the expenditure incurred by an entity such as GINA would be audited in the course of that exercise. I hope that that is helpful in clarifying this matter. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Hon. Members the issue before us is whether or not GINA, NCN and these other agencies ought to submit their audited accounts to this House. I believe, by consensus, it is yes. Whether it is as a matter of right or it is a matter of course is under debate. I believe that it is accepted that those accounts should be submitted. I do recall receiving accounts in the Ninth Parliament for NCN. In fact, I have asked the Clerk and the Parliament Office is diligently searching. Whether it is as of a right or not, I think we can now establish in this Tenth Parliament that those accounts must be submitted in a timely manner and whether or not the necessary statutory instruments have to be complied with is something that can be worked out later on.

The Minister has indicated that he will need seven days within which to bring his departments in order, so far as submission of documents. That is where we are at this point in time.

**Mrs. Hughes:** Would the Hon. Minister say how much revenue NCN earned from commercial advertising in 2011 please?

**Bishop Edghill:** In general advertising NCN would have garnered \$250,616,865.

**Mrs. Hughes:** Would the Hon. Minister explain in a little more detail how NCN proposes to spend the \$81 million that is being requested.

**Bishop Edghill:** 30% of NCN's employment cost is subsidised by this allocation. NCN's operational cost is borne by the revenue that comes to NCN.

**Mrs. Backer:** A follow up question please - Hon. Minister, I just want to make sure that I heard you correctly saying that general advertising amassed the sum of \$250 million for 2011. Is that the figure you gave Hon. Member?

**Bishop Edghill:** Yes.

**Mrs. Backer:** Could I respectfully ask if you can indicate to the House and, by extension, to the people of Guyana how much money NCN garnered from PPP's advertisements during 2011.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, I did not hear a question under a line item. Secondly, I would like to say to this Hon. House that I do not think we would have here this afternoon to say how much money we had from the A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) campaign or the Alliance For Change (AFC) campaign...

**Mrs. Backer:** That was my second question.

**Bishop Edghill:** I do not think that is the way we account for business. It is customers that we deal with.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, I do not know that the Minister can answer that question this afternoon. Being as reasonable and liberal as I would want to be, I do not know that the Minister can come and answer precisely how many advertisements were placed and what the revenue was for any political party or any entity. He may wish to take time to do so, but to be able to answer that question now, I do not know. Are you in a position to answer it now?

**Bishop Edghill:** I am saying two things: no, I am not in a position to answer it and I do not know if it is really a question that should be answered in this manner. What we would really be doing is putting up every customer. If we want to know the revenue that is garnered through advertising from every customer is a different matter.

**Mrs. Backer:** Hon. Minister, you indicated that \$250 million was from general advertising. Is there any other income head that you can share with us?

**Bishop Edghill:** The answer is yes, there are other income heads: from movies we get \$1,418,756, from News \$21,747,516, from sports or programmes associated with sports \$31

million, from production \$159,693,021, from deaths and messages \$3,617,953, from other income \$3,772,605.

**Mrs. Backer:** Thank you very much Minister.

**Mr. Chairman:** Let me just say that the Parliament Office's Registry Department staff have just informed me that the audited accounts for NCN for the years 2004, 2005 and 2006 have been laid over so far as we can ascertain. These were delivered to this Assembly on the 28<sup>th</sup> April, 2011. So there are some records. We are currently ascertaining if other records are available, but certainly there are indeed of my recollection. There are some records of the 28<sup>th</sup> April, 2011, and we are still continuing the search.

**Dr. Singh:** Mr. Chairman, just to add that the confirmation that I have received from my office coincides exactly with the information that you have.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Thank you Mr. Chairman. I am referring to line item 6294 – Other: could the Hon. Minister explain to this Hon. House what the classifications under this head titled “Other” are?

**Bishop Edghill:** This would include stipend for work study students, the purchasing of distilled water, wreaths and sympathy cards, refreshments for administrative staff, for example, coffee, milk, tea, et cetera, contribution to special needs of the staff and honorariums that will be given to such as the maintenance department when they do extra hours and things of that sort.

**Ms. Ferguson:** In explaining to this Hon. House, the Hon. Minister referred to refreshments being as one of those classifications. At line item 6293, I noticed there are Refreshments and Meals being catered for here. So could the Hon. Minister explain? Thank you Sir.

**Bishop Edghill:** At Line Item 6293 we are dealing with Meals. At Line Item 6294 when we say “Other”, we are talking about supplies that will be given to a senior staff, things like juices and so on that he could have in his office and things of that nature, which is a practice across the public service.

**Mr. Sharma:** I would like to ask the Hon. Minister to please indicate if the local organisations listed on page 396, the 11 organisations, how many of them are housed in the Office of the President and how many of which do the Office of the President benefit directly from?

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, I will like to get guidance on what really the question is.

**Mr. Chairman:** Repeat the questions please and perhaps be a little more specific.

**Mr. Sharma:** The question is in relation to line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. There are eleven local organisations listed on page 396. I would like to know how many of these eleven organisations are housed in the Office of the President and how many are receiving the benefits of those services. It means that the Office of the President’s building is providing the maintenance of the building and cleaning and everything else. I would just like to know to that effect how many organisations are housed there.

**Bishop Edghill:** I am having extreme difficulty because I think it is quite explanatory here that the National Park cannot be housed in the Office of the President nor can Castellani House be housed in the Office of the President. The Integrity Commission is housed in a building at Carmichael Street. The only entity that will be here with some amount of space in the Office of the President is the Presidential Guard Service.

**Mr. Sharma:** Thank you Mr. Chairman. That is what I wanted. Is the Office of the President and Castellani House part of the inventory of the Office of the President building?

**Bishop Edghill:** The answer to that is yes. I think I read out a list of all of the buildings which will be coming under the heading “Maintenance” which includes Bedford House which is the Head Office of the Presidential Guard.

**Mr. Sharma:** Thank you Mr. Chairman. That is the answer I wanted, which indicates that two of the 11 local organisations stated here are a part of the Office of the President. My second question is: why were these organisations not encompassed in the agency outlined for the recoding programme? Why was it not part of the outline for the agency? Why did the Government not find a place to put them in the Agency Outline in the budget?

**Mr. Chairman:** Are you in a position to answer that Minister?

**Bishop Edghill:** I would like to refer the Hon. House to Volume 2, page 12, Sub Programme 01103, Subvention Agencies there are the Presidential Guard Service as well as the Castellani House listed and other subvention agencies.

**Mr. Sharma:** My question is: why give a subvention when these expenditures could be reflected under the appropriate line items in the budget?

**Mr. Chairman:** What informs the decision of why they were not made specific line items?

**Ms. Teixeira:** The Presidential Guard is under the Police. It is not an issue of where it is housed; it has a separate issue for a number of reasons. Therefore, it is treated separately by statute and by organisation and, of course, by purpose. The Hon. Member is asking about where it is housed. There obviously has to be some presence of presidential guarding wherever the President is, including the Office of the President, whether it includes guard huts or whatever or the station that is where it is. I do believe the Hon. Member is getting into rather ridiculous issues.

**Mr. Chairman:** With respect, Ms. Teixeira, the Hon. Member is here for the first time. He has the right to ask questions. It is our duty to give him guidance. It is our duty to guide him. I would not consider any person's question to be ridiculous. It is our duty to guide, and for some Members it takes time, several budgets, before they get the hang of it. Go ahead Hon. Member and ask your question.

**Mr. Sharma:** Thank you Mr. Chairman. I do not believe I need the guidance Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** You go ahead Mr. Sharma.

**Mr. Sharma:** The Hon. Member, Gail Teixeira, did mention that it is part of the cast of the Office of the President. It should then just be reflected under the appropriate line item. I would like to refer this Committee of Supply to the Auditor General's Report of 2010. The Auditor General did mention that Castellani House and the Office of the President should be incorporated in the agency outline. The accounting officer did indicate that action will be taken. So it is not I who need to be guided.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Sharma, thank you very much. You will make your father proud.

**Mr. Sharma:** I would like the Hon. Minister to indicate what the \$244,175,000 as subvention to the Presidential Guard relate to.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, I am prepared to answer a question provided that I hear it. If Hon. Members are having the noise then I cannot hear the question.

**Mr. Chairman:** Could you repeat the question Hon. Member?

**Mr. Sharma:** I would like to have the details of how the subvention of \$244 million will be spent.

**Mr. Chairman:** Is this the subvention to the Presidential Guard?

**Mr. Sharma:** Yes.

**Bishop Edghill:** This would mainly comprise paying salaries and the acquisition of supplies for the proper operation and functioning of the Presidential Guard Service. I would have a difficulty in disclosing to this House, in a public manner, what the items procured are. This is a security outfit. The majority of it deals with salaries.

**Mr. Sharma:** I would be happy if the Hon. Minister could have indicated that salaries was one of the items, fuel was one of the items, cleaning supplies was one of the items or office material supplies. Are these the costs which made up this amount?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, the Hon. Member is saying that he would have no difficulties with some idea as to the general heads.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, I would be guided by you. I will give general heads. These are salaries, uniforms which would include boots, meals, travelling and, of course, vehicles have to be operated and things of that nature.

**Mr. Sharma:** I am of the impression that the amount of money here that is under Fuel and Lubricants for Programme 011, and maintenance of vehicles and spares and services under line items 6264 and 6231 is not in relation to the 21 vehicles that the Presidential Guard Service is using. Is the Presidential Guard Service provided with utilising the subvention to carry out these costs or is the Office of the President using money under these line items to carry out this cost?



**Bishop Edghill:** I would like to assure this Hon. House that an institution like the Office of the President benefits from some of the best accounting practices. The vehicles that are assigned to the Presidential Guard Service are maintained in the vote that is outlined in the Office of the President.

**Mr. Sharma:** That is what I wanted from the inception, that Castellani House and the Presidential Guard Service's overheads are maintained from these line items. What was the difficulty in just reflecting the employment cost for the Presidential Guard Service and Castellani House under the respective line items?

**Mr. Allen:** A follow up question to line item 6293 – Refreshment and Meals - I heard the question was asked and the Minister said that under this line item applies to meals, but then here we are seeing that refreshments are being secured, and the Minister is saying just meals. Why would we have the Minister say to us otherwise than what is written here?

**Bishop Edghill:** I do not wish for us to get into all the technicalities. What we want to establish in this House are the facts and the truth. If the Office of the President sources meals for an activity, whether it is food and beverage or snacks it is accounted for under that line item. If the Finance Department procures coffee and tea and juices and so on for the refrigerators and the board rooms for the various segments, it is recorded for in the other line item. That is the fact.

**Mr. Trotman:** Thank you Mr. Chairman. I refer to line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships). I notice there is a considerable amount which has been requested for training and scholarships. I therefore would like to ask the Minister to say what the nature of the training that will be provided here is, who will be trained, whether the training will have overseas components to it and what number of persons will be identified for training, both local and overseas.

**Bishop Edghill:** I do not think it is a secret to any Member of this House that we have 775 students who are studying in Cuba and who receive a stipend monthly. It is no secret to the House. We have students who are in China. We have students who are in Russia and we have students who are in Mexico who receive stipends. That is the nature of this expenditure, Sir. These are Guyanese young people.

**Mr. Allen:** A follow up question to that same line item: can the Hon. Minister say to this House why there is such a large decline in the figures seeing that all of these students are there? Why has this money declined so much?

**Bishop Edghill:** The remaining eight months will be handled by the Public Service Ministry. So that has been transferred to the Public Service Ministry.

**Mrs. Backer:** A follow up question: the 775 students – and we are very happy to hear that. I would like to know what the stipend is, if it is not a security risk.

**Bishop Edghill:** The Government of Guyana assists these students with one hundred Canadian dollars as a stipend per month, each.

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Under the Programme Code 011 - Administrative Services - I want to ask the Hon. Minister to say...

**Bishop Edghill:** I cannot hear Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** I would like the Hon. Minister to say, whether under line item 6111 – Administrative - or any other of the items under this Programme, provisions have been made for the National Frequency Management Unit.

**Bishop Edghill:** The answer to that is no.

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** My follow up is whether the National Frequency Management Unit is a statutory body that falls under the purview of the Office of the President.

*3.45 p.m.*

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** I refer to Page 575, Appendix T; it is inside the Estimates carefully hidden somewhere.

**Bishop Edghill:** the National Frequency Management Unit is funded on its own by the fees it garners.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I need to ask a question at Appendix T a statutory body, the National Frequency Management Unit under the agency Office of the President. I take the answer, yes, the

Unit does not get a subvention, but it made \$446 million dollars and gave \$271 million to local authorities. Which local authorities did the Unit give the money to?

**Bishop Edghill:** The National Frequency Management Unit does not make a call on this budget that is under consideration in this House.

**Mr. Sharma:** Mr. Chairman, I sat here and overheard the Hon. Minister mentioning the description of the items to be procured at Line Items 6293 and 6294. It is entirely wrong; he is misleading the House. I do not know if he could correct it because beverages, small bottled water, tea milk, coffee, cocoa, Milo is 6293; five-gallon bottled water is 6294. He needs to correct that statement because he is misleading the Member of Parliament.

**Mr. Chairman:** Very well. Hon. Minister please take note. Thank you very much Mr. Sharma.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** In relation to the previous question I would ask the Minister this question: are the moneys collected by the National Frequency Management Unit (NFMU), \$446 million, going into the Consolidated Fund?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman, we are discussing Budget 2012 and we are discussing the items that are called under the budget. I am suggesting that the Hon. Member is free to submit questions to the Minister and all the questions he wants to ask about NFMU can be answered then because we are dealing with agencies called under the budget.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** This is an agency that is called Mr. Chairman. Agency 01 [Government Member: You know what call means?] Whatever it means it is on page 575, and it appears the Unit makes a lot of money.

**Ms. Teixeira:** It is zero.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member Mr. Ramjattan, we will have to ask specific questions on the National Frequency Management Unit on a later occasion.

**Mr. T. Williams:** Under Line Item 6272 – Electricity - can the Hon. Minister explain the increased charges?

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chair, I did not hear the question clearly.

**Mr. Chairman:** Can you repeat please Mr. Williams?

**Mr. T. Williams:** Line Item 6272 - an increased estimate of about \$8 million for electricity. Can the Hon Minister explain the breakdown?

**Bishop Edghill:** Is he asking about electricity charges?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes

**Bishop Edghill:** What is the specific information he wants, Sir?

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Williams, Members are asking if you could lift the volume a bit. We are not hearing too clearly.

**Mr. T. Williams:** Why the increase allocation requested?

**Mr. Chairman:** Why is there an increased allocation for electricity of \$8 million for 2012?

**Bishop Edghill:** This line item deals with general electricity charges which would include electricity charges for the operations of the Office of the President. Since the National Parks Commission was an agency that came under the Office of the President this line item includes electricity for the Botanical Gardens, it includes electricity charges for all the Judges, the Leader of the Opposition and Ministers of the Government.

*Question put*

*Division called*

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mr. Chairman I would like to refer you to Motion 52 and the amendment to the motion which stands in my name. May I put those two pieces?

**Mr. Chairman:** Could you have a seconder?

**Ms. Ally:** Mr. Chairman, I rise to second the motion.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members there is a motion which is on the floor that the estimates be amended to read that the sum of \$918,719,000 be reduced by \$707,149,000 to \$211,570,000. That is my understanding. Is that correct?

**Mr. Greenidge:** Yes, Mr. Chairman, may I explain. The proposed motion and the amendments are clear. The original motion sought to reduce the amount to be allocated to the agencies under this head in 2012 to \$244,175,000. The amendment to the motion seeks to in effect do this: it maintains the allocations as requested except for the Guyana Information Agency and the National Communications Network. The total amounts for the two agencies would be \$211,570,000 and the amounts in question would be as shown here. That is the amount allocated to National Communications Network would be reduced to \$1, and the allocation to the Guyana Information Agency would be also reduced to \$1 for this current year.

The logic or purpose behind this motion, as you would have gauged from the exchanges is that we are unhappy, first of all, with the reporting arrangement. But, more importantly, it seeks to deny these agencies funds because they have a national responsibility to service the country as a whole, all the communities, all the Members of this House, and all the parties of this House. As you will have seen even from the Media Monitoring Unit (MMU) report these two agencies have from time immemorial, since they have been established, refused to deliver professional services, and balanced news reporting. So the lack of professionalism and failure to adhere to internationally accepted standards of reporting do not merit taxpayer's moneys being used to subsidise them. In the case of these two agencies the idea is that they use the resources they garner from other sources, but as regards taxpayers money they are supposed to support all tax payers. In the light of their failure to do that the Leader of the Opposition has written to the President indicating his unhappiness with their pattern of coverage of news, treatment of the different entities in this House, the negative coverage restricted to some Members of this House, and the positive coverage exclusively for the Government and the PPP/C. That is the logic behind this motion, and we are seeking to reduce the allocation to these agencies to \$1 each.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

**Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs [Mr. Hinds]:** Mr. Chairman, Hon. Members allow me to express my regret at the step being taken by my colleague over there. Allow me to say that we do not hold the same view as he does. I think I have seen over the last weeks, and I was hoping to continue to see, like many Guyanese, cricket matches on NCN and various other programmes that the public in Guyana enjoy. So I think if it is, and I hope it will not be, the public in Guyana could no longer enjoy the cricket and the other programmes they

enjoy on Channel 11 and on the radio station, I hope the public will know who has ended the provision of these services to them.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman. [*Applause*]

**Mrs. Hughes:** Mr. Chairman, I would like to take the opportunity to remind the House that as far back as 1986 Vieira Communications Television (VCT) Network and Mr. Antony Vieira, and WRHM through Mr. Rex McKay, the owner, in fact, provided international cricket through Caribbean Media Corporation (CMC) out of Barbados to Guyanese. That continued for many years up until about seven or eight years ago when NCN deliberately went to CMC and bided higher. So Guyana ended up paying more for the cricket signal. Prior to that cricket was a joint venture when a series of television stations got together and provided the service to Guyanese at a cheaper cost. Most recently NCN has been providing that service. I am sure that the private sector of Guyana will facilitate cricket on the TV stations in a matter of days if necessary. [*Applause*]

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, while I agree that this is a very sensitive issue, I would like to bring to the notice of this Hon. House that citizens have a right to have access to information not only in a 50-mile radius but throughout the length and breadth of Guyana. NCN is a national asset; NCN is a service that is provided to the people of Guyana throughout. I would like the Hon. Members in this House to take note that a move against NCN in cutting the subvention and because we have already indicated that the subsidy only provides for 30% of employment cost. NCN provides services to the following organisations at reduced rates: GuySuCo Round Up, Feel the Beat, GRA in Focus, Law Enforcement and You, Excellence Dazzell Show, Gems Live, Pulse Beat, GWI Customer Alert, Interface Customer Alert, Your Health, the Nation's Wealth, Oral Traditions, The Sports Magazine, National Insurance Scheme (NIS) and You, Miner's World, Between the Sticks, Between the Line, and more. It means that if NCN does not get the subsidy as proposed it is either the programmes go or these entities, which are some government entities, including the Guyana Police Force and the NIS, will have to start paying more. I would like to remind this Hon. House that programmes which go to a 50-mile radius are not the same as programmes which cover the entire nation.

Secondly, an average of about four to five percent of broadcast time on radio and television is provided to the Government, through GINA and other government related agencies, to highlight Government issues for the broadcast of development, free of cost. So the Government's programmes and the Government's agenda - getting the information to the people of Guyana - take up between four and five percent of air time on television and on radio. It means that we will be robbing the people of Guyana of a right which is access to information.

Mr. Chairman, you would be fully aware that Guyana is a country which is rich in its cultural diversity. NCN undertakes the production and broadcast of live national, cultural and religious activity. For example, Mashramani activities, Phagwah celebrations, Christmas celebrations, Deepavali, Jam Zone, Main Street Big Lime, Guy Expo, Building Expo, the Berbice Expo, Good Friday activities, Easter activities, the Bartica Regatta, cultural concerts and shows, the May Day Rally, Amerindian Heritage Month, Emancipation Day. These are all activities undertaken to give the people of Guyana access to information so they can appreciate each other's cultural and religious diversity, unmatched by any other television station in Guyana. What I would agree the Members on the other side, as we have been referring to them in these matters as against the opposition - I agree with the Hon. Member Mr. Damon to refer to them as the other side, because understanding is needed - encouraging cultural, religious diversity and appreciation is important to the social cohesion of this country; people must appreciate each other and that is a service that NCN provides. In keeping with the public's expectation NCN undertakes the broadcast of international sporting events including cricket, football and the Olympics. And may I say, and I have been emphasizing it, NCN is not a 50-mile radius station; it is a station which gives coverage to the entire country. Other broadcasters have shown no interest in securing the rights, and to a large extent these are subsidised for the benefit of the people. Over the years Guyanese expect NCN as the Government station to provide these national sporting events free to all, and free for everybody to enjoy. While I would agree that Members on the other side may have problems with some of the political content, and the rest of it, that may be a discussion we should engage in. [*Loud Interruptions*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Let us allow the Minister to make his statement, please.

**Bishop Edghill:** NCN has demonstrated significant and sustained commitment in the support of local talent in sports and industry. These now include extensive, live coverage of our boxing, of

football, of motor racing, of cricket. No interest in these activities has been shown by the other broadcasters. This is an area where NCN carries it alone. Through its regular programmes such as Guyana Today, Homestretch Magazine, Youth Expressions, Sport Magazines, African Movies, Bollywood Hits and Features, NCN showcases the talent work and initiatives of the Guyanese people and places in the country. NCN showcases the beauty of Guyana and contributes to the creation of an international image of Guyana's identity. NCN is a national station. It maintains a 24-hour broadcast. I would like the Hon. Members of this House to understand the reason for a 24-hour broadcast. If there is a national disaster NCN would be used to transmit the alert and give information to guide the majority of the population in any recovery effort. While some stations enjoy the luxury of signing off at a certain time, NCN continues on a 24-hour basis to ensure that the Guyanese people have access to information. NCN is the entity that is providing support to our new fledgling learning channel. All the technical support for that channel is coming from NCN. I would ask the Hon. Members of this House, as I have answered every question asked of me in this House today, to view NCN as a national asset which must be used for the benefit of all the people. And I would believe we should rise above partisan political interest, advance recommendations for the development and bringing of NCN in line with what will probably be the expectations of the majority of the people if there are dissatisfactions. But, I believe, punishing NCN by not giving them the subsidy is not a nationalistic approach and it is something that should be avoided by the Hon. Members of this House.

I rest my case, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Greenidge, I want to ask some questions. Your amendments are in and the basis being that these two agencies do have a national function to perform but are not doing so in the national interest. Can you say then at what stage or what would you like to see for moneys to be voted for these agencies. While you ponder that, I did hear a statement *viva voce* that dialogue had ended. I just want to say that political dialogue should never end. Can you say what your expectations are? Having accepted that these are nationally required what would you like to see?

**Mr. Greenidge:** Thank you very much for showing such interest in this matter. What I would like to inform the House is that last evening and for the last three or four days we have been engaged in discussions, that is APNU and then APNU and AFC, with representatives of the Government and discussed extensively the matter of the appropriate behavior of these two



entities. We arrived at no conclusion satisfactory to us. In fact, there were no proposals for a change in their behavior. As regards what we plan I prefer we leave that for another time.

**Mr. Chairman:** I did not ask what you plan; I just want to know what you would like to see.

**Mr. Greenidge:** I would prefer that we devote a session to that in the future. For this moment I think I would like to leave it there.

**Mr. Scott:** Mr. Chairman there is something called freedom of information as well as competition. In our new democracy NCN has to understand that private enterprises must be free to equally compete with any service they would like to offer. Also, there is a letter that the Member told us about that was sent by Mr. Neaz Subhan. I would request that the letter be read to the House at this point in time. That letter clearly indicates the mindset, the determination, and agenda of NCN in respect of its functions to the Government as against the Opposition. That answers clearly what Bishop Edghill was trying to indicate. Whatever functions GINA and so on would have been doing it was quite available by every other station both before now and after now. So I am asking at this point that the letter be read so we can clearly see how they see us.

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Mr. Chairman, the eloquent reasons why there should be allocation of tax payers money to the propaganda units, NCN and GINA, have been made by the Government side when they came to this House and could not give, not the issue of reasonable answers, but answers to legitimate concerns as to whether this House should be giving an account of how the tax payers money has been and continues to be spent. We have always before us the consideration that when we deal with allocations of the people's money our primary concern should be can there be savings, and if there are savings, can some of that go to the working people, the nurses, the teachers, the policemen, the pensioners and to social assistance? I say this, that the exercise we embarked on here... [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Please allow the Hon. Member to complete.

4.15 p.m.

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** A motion for a cut is in the interest of the nation to save revenues that could be otherwise spent. I know, Mr. Chairman, that whenever I get up to speak the wolves' pack is on me... [*Interruption*] I understand that because it is their vulnerability. They are looking at the

truth, they are staring at the truth and the truth is speaking to them in the National Assembly, through you Mr. Chairman.

As Minister of Information I helped to found NCN via route of Guyana Television and took broadcast nationally. That enabled the Guyanese people to access information and entertainment via a national network. This network has grown and I agree with the Hon. Minister that it has now been standing on its own two feet... [*Interruption*] I quote from a letter written by Mohammed Sattuar, Chief Executive Officer of National Communications Network, date 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2012... [*Interruption*] They can bawl like hyenas, the scissors will work today in this Parliament... [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Nagamootoo one second please.

**Minister of Home Affairs [Mr. Rohee]:** Mr. Chairman, I rise to raise an objection with your permission to two descriptions which the Hon. Member raised about *wolves pack* and *hyenas* on this side of the House. I think they are in great sense of distaste and with due respect I will expect that the Hon. Member to withdraw those descriptions.

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Mr. Chairman, I withdraw those remarks, but I will remind the Hon. Member that he was on his feet when they referred to me as, “A snake in the *balisier*”... [*Interruption*] but I do not have to descend to his level, I will not be tempted Sir... [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** There has been no [Inaudible]...., but the Member has been good and gracious to withdraw the remarks.

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** I withdraw the remarks. Sir, the letter was addressed to Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan as chairman of the Alliance for Change. In this letter I quote the second paragraph:

“It is true that the National Communications Network Inc. is a recipient of funds from the treasury, but it is also true that over ninety percent of our revenues come from our commercial activities.”

This is, we are told, a Limited Liability Company. It does not have to give account here, but it is. For all the Hon. Minister has been telling this House, that the cricket will be cut, this will be cut, that will be cut, they manage their affairs, in their own words, “ninety per cent”, so they are

trying to pull a red herring or a wool over the eyes of the Guyanese people because they make money with which they can fund this operation. Our concern is that under the Broadcasting Act all television stations should have had access to funding because we are dealing with a company here performing a national necessity of informing and educating the people, they all should be provided for from the national treasury to keep our people informed, but it is done in a discriminatory way. It is done in a way that facilitates partisan use of a national medium for political purposes, propaganda purpose, and the *pro bellum* purpose of trying to mislead the people.

We know throughout these debates, I am not going back to the elections, that the coverage to even the debates in the House had been truncated and placed in a very unfair and unbalance way with the Government Ministers having access, every time we speak in this House, to go and propagandise and mislead the misinformed. I take back the word mislead. But, they have done their fair share of damage to the national psyche.

Consequently, we cannot use the people's money for a medium that does not serve the national interest and we say this as nationalist, as patriots, that we want better use of the people's money in this country. We want accountability, we want transparency – they must bring the reports here. This company also enjoys a prerogative that other companies do not enjoy. CNS has applied for many years to have the right to broadcast outside of its range, it has never been granted... **[Interruption]**... **[Mr. Needkumar: Moses you could lie boy.]**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, you will not use that word in this House. Thank you. Go ahead Mr. Nagamootoo.

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Sir, the people of Linden had enjoyed two television stations when I was Minister. A people's committee was formed and one of the two stations had been given to the people to satisfy their own cultural needs, their cultural preferences and their own need for entertainment. They denied the people access to their own television station that had been inherited from Green Construction Company after I left as a Minister. They only feed the people of Linden one radio station, one news channel, one view and one propagandistic aim, which is to bludgeon the people with things they do not necessarily want to hear.

Sir, no amount of sophistry and arguments here today will convince this side of the House that we should waste tax payers' money on this entity, unless there is fundamental reform starting from the board. The board must be comprised of professional persons; it must be balanced, even including nominees from political parties in this House and including professional practitioners. NCN must be freed from political dictate and control, particularly from the Office of the President. Coverage by NCN must be fair and balanced and it must have equitable balance in the distribution of programme time.

The Opposition has a right of reply; that is a part of a democracy that is akin to freedom of expression, freedom of speech and freedom of the press. This NCN denies the Opposition a right of access so their views can go over to the supporters who gave them the right to be in this House. Because of that this House cannot acquiesce to being sidelined in its roles.

As for GINA, that is a propaganda outfit, where money is being used to pay letter writers, phantom writers and I understand that NCN, when they come with their accounts, is also paying persons outside of NCN, to do propaganda work, just like GINA is doing, they will come with that figure when they bring their report.

In all the dossiers submitted by the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the majority pointed out release after release, where Members in the Opposition, in their contribution to the debate, were only cited to be maligned, *cussed down*, and defamed. The other side of it is the Government media thing called the *Chronicle*, also resorted to defamation and character assassination, even when in the House, the Speaker, would have censored Members in the way they approached certain subjects.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay Mr. Nagamootoo, wind it up.

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** In conclusion, we cannot support the allocation as requested for GINA and NCN, unless you have fundamental reform that makes these agencies national on outlook, patriotic in content and reflective of all the needs of the people of Guyana. [*Applause*]

**Ms. Kissoon:** Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. I also want to add my lot because in Region 10 NCN has been stifling the Opposition. Most recently, the Leader of the Opposition had to seek a request to go on NCN live. When we got at the station and said that we wanted to be... we

should not have to contact the Prime Minister and Mr. Sattuar and whoever else. When we got there we said to the manager that we would like to go on live, he said that he would have to seek permission before this is done... [*Interruption*]

I as a Member of Parliament or any other Member from the Opposition cannot make any comments or so at anytime, unless our pieces are sent to Georgetown to be edited. It has to come to central and be edited and then sent back. While they have a gentleman from the IMC (Interim Management Committee) who is a representative there for the PPP, who goes under the microscope, says what he feels like, about anyone he feels like unedited. I am saying as a representative of Region 10, we are being disenfranchised, and robbed by this channel. We also need other television stations, because NCN has not been giving us what we deserve. Every programme whether it is by the region or ... it has to come to central to be edited. So we are saying that they should be cut this afternoon. Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

**Mr. Hinds:** Mr. Chairman, I would like to respond particularly to the accusations made about Region 10 and I would like to remind this Hon. House that maybe a week ago, I read a statement here, which showed that we had come to some accommodation in that particular matter. So, I would like to have that put on record. [*Applause*]

**Mr. Chairman:** One second Minister, we have a point of order.

**Mrs. Backer:** On a point of order, the Standing Order... thank you Bishop, Hon. Member Juan Edghill.

**Mr. Chairman:** What is the point of order please?

**Mrs. Backer:** The point of order is that the Standing Orders does not permit someone to speak twice on the same motion, except the mover.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, a Member does have the right under Standing Order 40 to give clarification or to elucidate and I think the Prime Minister was within his right to do so. Hon. Minister proceed please.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, I assure you that I would not be long on this particular...

**Mrs. Backer:** Mr. Chairman, just to make myself very clear, I was not speaking about the Prime Minister.

**Mr. Chairman:** Oh I thought you were speaking about the Prime Minister.

**Mrs. Backer:** No, the Hon. Prime Minister got up for a point of clarification. I am saying that unless the Hon. Member, Bishop Edghill is getting up on a point of clarification, he has already spoken to the motion.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, it has been during the consideration of these estimates, that the responsible Minister answers, there is a back and forth, so the regular debating Standing Order would not apply because the Minister must answer. He would have a right to answer. That is what we have been doing all week.

**Bishop Edghill:** Thank you Mr. Chairman. Please allow me to make a few, very interesting statements. I would like to bring to the attention of this Hon. House that there are 38 persons who are employed at GINA and who will be without a job, should this motion be carried.

Secondly, the Government of Guyana like any other Government in any part of the world, there is always a mechanism, an agency or an outfit that is financed and equipped to promote and to ensure that the public is aware of Government's programmes and that is the job of GINA.

I would like to respond to a few things that were said. I have been in public life for a while and I would say to this Hon. House and the people of Guyana, the men and women that are working in many of the private television, they got their training at NCN. I have seen them on the beat with NCN and then you see them again with some private station, so NCN is the premier training institution for the electronic media in Guyana.

I would also like to bring to the attention of this Hon. House, that there are nineteen other television stations that exist in Guyana. I would also like to bring to the attention of this Hon. House that there are two channels available to the people of Linden. One that gives the direct feed of NCN in Linden and secondly, there is a channel that is devoted to community programming that is directed by persons from the community. As a matter of fact, I have stayed

in Linden over several times and there are programmes that you see in Linden that you do not see in Georgetown based upon the second channel.

I will like to also say... [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Kissoon, allow the Minister to complete his statement please.

**Bishop Edghill:** I will only pose... [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member one second, there is a frequent reference to who must shut up and not shut up, this is most unparliamentarily. Not in this Assembly please. It has been going on for too long. Go ahead Hon. Member.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, I do not wish to get involved in a contest of the ridiculous and I would hope that this Hon. House does not engage in such a contest. I think the people of Guyana, when they elected us, elected us to come to this Hon. House to take care of the people's business. I stand here this afternoon defending this issue as representing, not a party or a political line; I am here representing the people's interest.

NCN is a national asset that belongs to the people of Guyana and GINA is an outfit that every Government in any part of this world is entitled to have. An outfit that promotes Government programmes. I would like to ask this House the question, while I am hearing that NCN is under political control, I want to ask if there are not other television stations in Guyana that are under political control? Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. [Applause]

**Mr. Chairman:** The Standing Orders are clear on this that no Member may speak twice, unless we are in committee. So once we are in committee Members are allowed to speak more than once. As has been happening for the last five days. Thank you very much.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman, Standing Order 44 – Closure of Debate, I would like to put the motion that the question be now put. Whereas, Mr. Greenidge has made a motion to amend the budget and I calling that the question be now put. Thank you.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mr. Chairman, I believe I have the right to wind up under Standing Order 39. May I continue?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, my understanding of Standing Order 44, is that once the request is made for the question to be put, it must be put forthwith. It brings the debates to an instant end and the question must be put by me, so I now wish to put the question and the question is that the expenditures contained in the estimates in, Agency 01: Office of the President, Programme 011 – Administrative Services, as amended and those amendments being that in 6312 the Government Information Agency receives \$1000... [*Interruption*]

**Members of the Opposition:** \$1.

**Mr. Chairman:** ...\$1 and that the National Communications Network receive \$1. Those are the amendments, I now put that the estimates be part of...

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman, the motion before us as circulated is correct, in the sense it talks about the sub-head number and the reduction to \$700 million. It does not identify NCN or GINA. Now these explanatory issues, we are talking about, the amended motion, which is what we are treating with at this time Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, there is an amendment before us and I put that amendment and I specified it for the clarity of the House. I think that everyone should know that the amendments are not general amendments, but they are specific to these two agencies. So I think I am in order to put the specifics.

We are making history here and I think that we will be judged and examined forensically and other wise in the days and years to come. I again put the question that the estimates contained in Programme 011 – Administrative Services, as amended, stand part of these estimates...

**Ms. Shadick:** Mr. Chairman, I need clarification. I am trying to find out if whether you have to put the question for the amendment before you put the whole item? Because we have to vote on the amendment and then vote on the item as amended, if the amendment is passed. I think that is the procedure Sir.

*Question put.*

**Mr. Hinds:** Division.



**Ms. Teixeira:** Division

**Mr. Chairman:** A division is called, Mr. Clerk.

*Committee divided: Ayes 33, Noes 32, as follows:*

*Ayes*

*Noes*

Mr. T. Williams

Mr. Jaffarally

Ms. Marcello

Mr. Damon

Dr. Ramayya

Dr. V. Persaud

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe

Rev. Dr. Gilbert

Mrs. Hughes

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Ramjattan

Mr. Neendkumar

Ms. Ferguson

Mr. Lumumba

Mr. Morian

Ms. Shadick

Mr. Allen

Mr. Chand

Mr. Jones

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Adams

Mr. Nadir

Mrs. Baveghems

Ms. Teixeira

Mr. Sharma

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Bulkan

Mr. Whittaker

Mr. Bond

Mr. Baksh

Ms. Kissoon

Mrs. Sukhai

|                 |                        |
|-----------------|------------------------|
| Mr. Trotman     | Ms. Webster            |
| Ms. Selman      | Ms. Manickchand        |
| Mr. Allicock    | Mr. G. Persaud         |
| Ms. Wade        | Mr. Benn               |
| Mr. Felix       | Dr. Anthony            |
| Ms. Hastings    | Mr. Ali                |
| Mr. Scott       | Dr. Ramsaran           |
| Mr. Harmon      | Dr. Westford           |
| Mr. Greenidge   | Mr. R. Persaud         |
| Mrs. Backer     | Dr. Singh              |
| Dr. Norton      | Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett |
| Mrs. Lawrence   | Mr. Nandlall           |
| Mr. B. Williams | Dr. Ramsammy           |
| Ms. Ally        | Mr. Rohee              |
| Dr. Roopnarine  | Mr. Hinds              |

Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger

**Mrs. Backer:** Mr. Chairman, while the counted is being taken, for future, we would not make an issue of it, but there are two Ministers who are not in their correct seats and I think there is a Standing Order concerning that... [*Interruption*] You are not in your right seat.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Your Honor, I am... [*Interruption*] As usual Sir, I am extremely flattered by the attention Mrs. Backer pays to me. I am in my right seat. Mr. Ganga Persaud, the Hon. Member is in his right seat. The Clerk is aware of the changes and in fact I was informed by the

staff of the National Assembly that this is now my seat. So I will ask, that the Hon. Member inform herself properly the next time she rises to speak.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Hon. Member and Minister, I as Speaker was not aware, but I am grateful to know that...

**Ms. Manickchand:** That will be something that the staff of the National Assembly will have to take responsibility for.

*Amendment carried.*

*Programme: 011 – Administrative Services - \$707,149, as amended, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the estimates.*

*Assembly resumed*

*Sitting suspended at 4.44 p.m.*

*5.50 p.m.*

*Sitting resumed at 5.50 p.m.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the sitting is resumed, please be seated so we can go immediately into committee of supply.

*Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply*

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I note that we still have to go to one more Current Expenditure for the Office of the President.

**Mr. Chairman:** Do we?

**Mrs. Lawrence:** I would like to know whether we are going to take all of the Capital Expenditures.

**Mr. Chairman:** I think we better continue with the Current Expenditures and then go to the Capital Expenditures; my apologies.

**Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 012 – Presidential Advisory (Cabinet and Other Services) – \$544,442,000**

**Mr. B. Williams:** Mr. Chairman, if it pleases you, might I respectfully refer to line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: Could the Hon. Minister say, of the 121 contracted employees, how many are from the advisory staff?

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, we did have a question of a similar nature earlier but I am seeking clarity and the Hon. Member asked about Advisory Staff so I am putting together all of the persons...

**Mr. Chairman:** What we have before us is Programme 012, Presidential Advisory, Cabinet and other Services, Current Expenditure. I think that you have answered some of this already.

**Mr. B. Williams:** It is a new heading.

**Mr. Chairman:** The answers that he gave touched on this, giving some of the answers. That is the point I wanted to make.

**Bishop Edghill:** What I would say at this time is: All of the persons listed form part of that Advisory Staff.

**Mr. Chairman:** I think that you would have to give some... Mr. Williams, could you elicit the response that you desire?

**Mr. B. Williams:** Might I respectfully repeat my question? There are 121 contracted employees under this programme, 012. My respectful question is: How many of that 121 comprise the Advisory Staff – Advisors to the President?

**Bishop Edghill:** To answer the Hon. Member and to bring clarity to the House, the President benefits from the services – this is not a Presidential Advisory– of a Policy Advisor on Land and Environment; there is a Presidential Advisor on Governance; there is the Head of the Presidential Secretariat; there is a Presidential Advisor on Sport; there is a Special Assistant to the President; there is a Presidential Advisor on Sustainable Development.

**Mr. B. Williams:** Is that it? Could we have the emoluments of those persons you have just identified? The emoluments and not their salaries – the remunerative packages – of the persons you have just identified.

**Bishop Edghill:** The Policy Advisor on Land and Environment receives a salary of \$1,035,000 and receives a contract gratuity... [**Mrs. Backer:** What?]

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, please, restrain yourselves.

**Bishop Edghill:** The Presidential Advisor on Governance receives a salary of \$907,985 and receives a gratuity. The Head of the Presidential Secretariat receives a salary of \$891,826 and has a gratuity. The Presidential Advisor on Sports receives a non-taxable salary of \$721,000. The Special Assistant to the President receives a non-taxable salary of \$667,440.

**Mr. B. Williams:** A follow-up, you did not give the emoluments for the Presidential Advisor on Sustainable Development.

**Bishop Edghill:** My apologies. It is \$450,000.

**Mr. B. Williams:** If it pleases you, Mr. Chairman, for the same line item - 6116, last year there was 101 contracted employees, there are 121 this year – in other words you have added 20 more contracted employees. Last year the sum budgeted for the 101 persons was \$241,275,000. This year it has jumped to \$296,959,000. Could you confirm, Hon. Minister that the \$56 million increase is directly related to the employment of the 20 contracted employees this year? If that is so it would mean that the average...

**Bishop Edghill:** 10 of the 21... [**Mrs. Backer:** twenty] Sorry... Thank you Mdm. 10 of the 20 workers have been transferred from Programme 4 to programme 2– and that would be reflected in Programme 4 when we come to that – and 10 others are employed.

**Mr. B. Williams:** That is not my question. My question is: Would you confirm that the increase by \$56 million is directly related to the employment of the 20 new contracted employees?

**Bishop Edghill:** It would be a combination of the salary increase as well as the salaries of the 20 contracted employees.

**Mr. B. Williams:** Hon. Minister, could you confirm that it would mean that the 20 new contracted employees would be averaging \$2.5 million each?

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, if it pleases you, I will give you the salaries of the persons to satisfy the Hon. Member: An Information Technology (IT) Officer will get a salary of \$151,000 – and of course you know that that would carry the gratuity twice for the year; a Technical Officer at \$172,000; an Administrative Officer at \$102,000 – this would carry contract gratuity and vacation allowance and the rest of it; an Environmental Economist at \$105,416... These are the salaries that we are talking about.

**Mr. B. Williams:** It appears as though the Hon. Minister will not answer my question. He has not accounted for the \$56 million increase from last year to this year with the additional 20 employees on contract; he has not. Could the Hon. Minister, Mr. Chairman, furnish this Hon. House with the list of all of the 121 contracted employees, their designation and their emoluments?

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, I have the entire list in front of me and if you would like me to read it I will read it.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Minister is required to answer. He may choose to answer orally or he may submit it in written form. The choice is his. I cannot tell him to give it if he wishes to answer orally. What is your wish, Minister?

**Bishop Edghill:** I will give it orally.

**Mr. B. Williams:** Then give the names.

**Bishop Edghill:** I am prepared to give designations and the salaries. I have given the salaries for the Policy Advisor on Land and Environment, Presidential Advisor, Head of the Presidential Secretariat...

The Director of the Civil Defense Commission (CDC) – \$661,122

I have given the Presidential Advisor on Sports.

The Deputy HPS – \$535,564

Coordinator of Border Security – \$490,023

Consultant – \$480,816

An Attorney at Law – \$469,476

Presidential Advisor on Sustainable Development, I have given.

Coordinator NANCOM (The National Anti-Narcotic Commission) – \$438,000

Technical Officer – \$422,000

Technical Legal Director – \$410,196

Prime Executive – \$348,117

Project Manger – \$351,000

Manager, National Stadium – \$288,249

Communications Coordinator – \$311,850

Head Community Liaison – \$307,000

Special Assistant to the HPS – \$269,967

Protocol Advisor – \$227,986

Social Policy Officer – \$230,599

Technical Officer – \$216,000

Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet – \$172,677

Information Communication Technology (ICT) Engineer – \$170,000

Personal Assistant to the HPS – \$140,000

Systems Administrator – \$151,000

Cabinet Monitoring Officer – \$139,000

Confidential Secretary – \$143,704

Special Projects Officer – \$132,224

There are several technical officers. I will skip those because I have given the salaries.

Confidential Secretary – \$123,452

Photographer to His Excellency – \$90,153

Systems Coordinator – \$120,566

Administrative Assistant – \$102,133

Close Circuit Television Technologist – \$108,000

Manager (Events) – \$100,788

Senior Media Monitor – \$102,600

Research Administrative Sports Officer – \$102,600

Project Officer – \$100,000

Executive Secretary – \$97,200

Community Development Officer – \$90,153

Information Technology Officer – \$69,198

Presidential Camera Man – \$64,800

Driver – \$68,556

And there are several Drivers and Confidential Secretaries at the same salary

Household Service Worker – \$50,046

Word Processing Officer – \$65,905

Office Assistant – \$43,200



Media Monitor – \$54,432

Household Service Worker – \$54,046

Cabinet Attendant – \$52,577

Boat Captain – \$44,918

Security Guard at the CDC – \$47,468

Typist Clerk – \$39,127

Cleaner – \$40,933

Thank you, Sir.

**Ms. Selman:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6284. Could the Hon. Minister say what goods and services are purchased under this item, “Other”, and the cost involved for each category of the goods and services, more or less?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** The top 10 advisors there – apart from the salaries mentioned... Sorry.

**Bishop Edghill:** This would be for consultancies it would also include legal fees, the refurbishing of some office furniture, installation of carpets, some routine field materials and payment of facilitators at the Office of Climate Change.

**Ms. Selman:** Thank you. Could the Hon. Minister say what the nature of the consultancy is and the cost associated with it? Initially I had requested the cost for all of them but I am just going to restrict myself to the nature of the consultancy and the cost for that one.

**Bishop Edghill:** The cost of consultancies vary; it depends on who is the person and what the subject is under consideration as we all would appreciate in this Hon. House. I will name the four consultancies:

1. In the Office of Climate Change
2. In Public Communication and an Education Specialist
3. Consultancy in the ICT Project
4. Consultancy in Project Management as it deals with the ICT that is being implemented.

**Ms. Selman:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Minister. In 2011, \$15.814 million was spent. Could you outline the factors which led to the almost 700% increase in the allocation for 2012?

**Bishop Edghill:** This item, in terms of procuring services, was done in previous times under Programme 4. It is now being procured under Programme 2 and it would be so reflected.

**Mr. Sharma:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Hon. Member, Basil Williams did ask about the emoluments for the Advisor under 6116. I do not think that the Minister answered so I am asking what the emoluments are in terms of the benefits in the contract documents and non-salary benefits, such as light bills and phone bills being paid for, and if the individual is allowed, in the contract, a duty free vehicle or is assigned a vehicle from the Office of the President?

**Mr. Chairman:** Can you give us a general idea as it pertains to the persons – not each person.

**Bishop Edghill:** I have given the salaries...

**Mr. Chairman:** I am aware of that.

**Bishop Edghill:** ...and you would be aware, Sir, that every contract is specific and carries different terms and conditions.

**Mr. Chairman:** Really? If there are any general threads running through...

**Bishop Edghill:** Most of the contracts would include gratuity every six months which would be two gratuities per year that is based on performance, may I add; there is vacation allowance. I did say earlier when I answered under Programme 1 that vehicles are assigned to these individuals – some of them from the Office of the President – and...

**Mr. Sharma:** Okay. I hope there is not the situation where persons have duty free concessions awarded in the contract and a vehicle is also assigned. If the Hon. Minister is saying that that is not the situation I will accept that.

Line item 6284, consultancy services or consultants are spoken about. I would like to know the contract sum for these consultancies, if it is a current contract or if it is a multi-year contract. Thank you.

**Bishop Edghill:** Advisors to the President do not get duty free vehicles. Advisors who are Members of Parliament (MPs), by virtue of them being MPs, are entitled to a duty free concession.

As it relates to the consultancies, these are consultancies that are specific to various programmes that are being executed. This President, like any other President in any other part of the world, should not only benefit from political advice but should also benefit from expert advice. As in the case of climate change, some of these consultants are international experts who serve us in helping to ensure that we fulfil our mandate and responsibility in this regard.

**Mr. Sharma:** I am asking about the contract sum and what type of contract it is. Is it a current contract or a multi-year contract? What is the contract sum? These are public monies and I have a right to know.

**Bishop Edghill:** Consultants are paid when invoices are submitted based upon work...  
[**Mrs. Lawrence:** No, No, No. We cannot take that. You must tell us what the contract sum is.]  
I am going to answer the question. I have made a commitment and I will fulfil that commitment. As it relates to an average, the consultancy at the Office of Climate Change would be around £3,250 per month. As it relates to the Education Specialist it is about GD\$400,000 per month. The consultant that is dealing with the ICT would average on the submission of invoices probably around US\$15,000 per month.

**Mr. Sharma:** Mr. Chairman, he still did not answer specifically but I will accept that. Did these contracts go through the tendering procedures?

**Bishop Edghill:** I am not aware of that. These persons were hired based upon their expertise and merit.

**Mr. Sharma:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Hon. Minister did mention that the President requires the best and competent technical service. I want to know if it was advertised and if persons out there tendered their expertise so that our President could be...

**Mr. Chairman:** The Hon. Minister has answered by saying that he is not aware that these went to tender.

**Mr. Sharma:** Okay, thank you. Just a reference to a statement which the Hon. Minister made in relation to Members of Parliament who are advisors and would get a duty free concession because of the fact they are MPs. We have such a Member of Parliament here, so I want to know if that Member is enjoying a duty free vehicle also from the Office of the President.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman, with pleasure I would love to answer that question.

**Mr. Chairman:** Is that you?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Chairman, I would love to answer this question. Would you allow me?

**Mr. Chairman:** Please do not answer. Hon. Members, we are Members of this House and are all entitled to certain facilities; some call them privileges and one of them is having a concession for a vehicle for our use and that matter can be taken up with the Clerk's Office but I do not know if we need to be pointing out who has bought and who has not bought a vehicle. So, I would not ask Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira to respond. Thank you.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I want to pursue a question under line item 6116 with relation to what we are calling the "super salary". We have heard what some of the benefits are but I would like to know if in addition to that there are services for gardeners, housing allowances and security guards are provided for.

**Bishop Edghill:** With pleasure I will provide the information. The persons who enjoy benefits:

The Head of the Presidential Secretariat would have security, his cellular phone and land line paid for. His internet is paid for and his electricity is paid for; which are normal services that are offered to all other Ministers.

The Advisors get security at their residences, drivers and that is about it.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6117: I note in the staffing details on page 35 that in 2011 there were 51 temporary employees and in 2012 that number remain, yet I see an increased allocation here of \$4 million. Could the Hon. Minister kindly explain this increase?

6.20 p.m.

**Bishop Edghill:** This would reflect increases, but there was also an increase in what would be called “Maid Allowance” paid to Ministers. The maid allowance which is paid to Ministers is paid from this line item. They are temporary employees. They are specific to the Ministers and Ministers are entitled to up to two.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** A follow-up, Mr. Chairman. Could the Minister kindly tell us what are the heads of the expenditures which will be paid from this increase. He just told us about the maids, so I would like to know what other expenditure this \$4 million would capture.

**Bishop Edghill:** Members of Cabinet and the Leader of the Opposition are entitled to up to two maids. This allocation caters for the payment and the eight per cent increase for last year.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence: I note that there is a \$3 million plus increase. Could the Hon. Minister indicate what the reason for this increase is?

**Bishop Edghill:** This amount includes travelling for when vehicles are not available – hiring of taxis, subsistence and accommodation for when state’s facilities are not available in various parts of the country.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Line item 6281 – Security Services: Could the Hon. Minister kindly indicate to the House which security service is being provided for under this line item and why there is an \$8 million dollar increase?

**Bishop Edghill:** There are several security services - Strategic Action Security Service, MMC Security Force and GEB Security Services Inc.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** There is a second part to the question, Mr. Minister. You did not tell me why there is the \$8 million increase.

**Bishop Edghill:** There are new rates for some of these security services. I did leave out, not by design, Cops (Guyana) Limited which is included, John Fernandes Ltd. and Security Patrol Services. This amount would include monitoring fees for electronic surveillance as well as for static guards at residences of senior government functionaries.

**Ms. Selman:** Can I ask a follow-up question?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, Ms. Selman, you can ask a follow-up question as well as the question you intend to ask.

**Ms. Selman:** Thank you so much Mr. Chairman. I will ask the follow-up question first. At which locations are they attached?

**Bishop Edghill:** I would deal with this in the way I dealt with the question which was on the President's Adviser on Sport. I would assure this honourable House that these security companies are providing security services, whether it is for Members of Cabinet or senior government functionaries.

**Ms. Selman:** Line item 6294 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister say what the other operating expenses under this line item are?

**Bishop Edghill:** There are receptions hosted by His Excellency, whether it is for visiting delegations or special occasions, will be charged under this line item, state lunches and if His Excellency buys gifts for dignitaries. There is a Chinese volunteer who receives some support under this line item, and there is honorarium for some members of staff.

**Mr. Trevor Williams:** Given the fact, that there is a National Sports Commission (NSC) and a Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, could the Hon. Minister say what some of the functions of a Presidential Adviser on Sport are?

**Bishop Edghill:** May I be guided as to what I am being asked to respond to?

**Mr. Chairman:** In view of the fact that there is a Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport and a Director of Sports, what is the portfolio of an adviser on Sport to the President or to the Office of the President?

**Bishop Edghill:** It is no secret that the distinguished gentleman is an expert in his own right and sports is an important part of the Guyanese society. We have a history of some specific issues that need to be dealt with at this time and His Excellency has engaged the services of a distinguished Guyanese to advise him on this particular matter. I refer here, Sir, to the distinguished gentleman, Mr. Clive Lloyd.

**Mr. Trotman:** Can the Minister tell us who the distinguished Guyanese to whom he just referred to is? *[Laughter]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Your colleagues will tell you. Hon. Members, let us bear in mind that this is a country. It has a President; it has a Leader of the Opposition; it has a Parliament, and those departments and offices have to be staffed.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** It is just for the Hon. Members on the other side. Mr. Trotman's question was just to bring a little laughter to the proceedings. It was just to break the monotony. He was just checking to ensure that everyone was alert.

Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: I note here that in 2010 the actual amount spent was \$8.6 million and the same was budgeted for 2011. However, if we look at the revised column in the 2011 Estimates there is an increase to \$34 million. Yet, again, in 2012 we see the same old allocation of \$8.688 million. Could the Hon. Minister inform this House why there has been this decrease in the amount and whether there is any expenditure which at this time the Government is uncertain about but it is planned for? The Government planned for it, but it is not sure whether it is going to come up. So it is whether we are going to see an increase in this line item coming to the National Assembly?

**Bishop Edghill:** I think I addressed this matter when we dealt with Financial Papers Nos. 7 and 8. The increase of \$25 million in 2011 had to do with the national awards ceremony, the inauguration of the new President and the swearing in ceremony of the Cabinet. In answering the question from the Hon. Member, I am not aware that we have planned an investiture ceremony, the swearing in of a new President ceremony or the swearing in of a new Cabinet.

**Mr. Chairman:** Although it would be good to have national honours issued every year.

**Mr. Jones:** A follow-up question on line item 6116 – Contracted Employees. The Hon. Minister explained that there is Mr. Clive Lloyd as a presidential adviser on Sport. Would he agree with me that Mr. Clive Lloyd, in his own right, as a professional cricketer, should be dubbed an adviser on cricket and not on sport?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, I would not see that as a valid question. It is within the discretion of the President to engage the services of Mr. Lloyd in whatever capacity he wishes,

but I believe that it was said that he is paying particular emphasis on a matter, at this point in time. Is there any other question? I wish to put the question to the House.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I would like to prosecute my Notice Paper No. 53 on two cuts - Office of the President, line item 6116 – Contracted Employees - that which is provided for is \$297 million. We are seeking a reduction of \$150 million. For Office of the President, line item 6284 – Other - it is a reduction of \$80 million. Mr. Chairman, the explanations given...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, one minute please. Please be seated. The Standing Orders state that if there are two or more amendments the highest amendment has to be put first. It is either Mr. Greenidge will be withdrawing his amendment or I will have to put his first. The amendment with the highest number must be put to the House first. So Mr. Greenidge... because both of you have put amendments on this line item.

**Mr. Greenidge:** That is true, Mr. Chairman. Certainly, as regards to line item 6284 – Other - we are withdrawing the amendment.

**Mr. Chairman:** Well then I will have to proceed with line item 6116 – Contracted Employees.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I will proceed with Notice Paper No. 53 which has the cuts of \$150 million and \$80 million respectively under line items... [Mr. R. Persaud: You got set up by Mr. Greenidge.] “Set up” - what is the set up? ...6116 and 6284.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Ramjattan, again I need to point out to you that under line item 6116, Mr. Greenidge maintains his proposed amendment to cut \$296,959,000. In other words, your amendment pales in comparison to his and I cannot proceed with yours if Mr. Greenidge is proceeding with his. You can only speak to line item 6284 – Other. Mr. Greenidge has only withdrawn his amendment to line item 6284 – Other - but he has left standing 6116 – Contracted Employees - which is a figure of \$296 million. You proposed to reduce to \$150 million.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mr. Chairman, as regards line item 6116, Contracted Employees, we withdraw the amendment.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you Mr. Greenidge. Mr. Ramjattan, you are now free to proceed.



**Amendments to line item 6116 – Contracted Employees - \$296,959,000 and line item 6284 – Other - \$104,243,000.**

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I wish to indicate, page 34, line items 6116, Contracted Employees, be reduced by \$150 million and, on page 35, same agency head, line item 6284, Other, be reduced by \$80 million.

**Mr. Chairman:** Has the amendment been seconded?

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Mr. Chairman, I rise to second the amendment.

**Mr. Chairman:** You have a right to speak to the amendment, Mr. Minister.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Speaker, I think we will put it to a vote, but it is just to say that it is unfortunate. I think I would just like to commend the Hon. Member Mr. Carl Greenidge, having received the necessary explanations, having been a Minister of Government in the past and understanding how the President and his Secretariat should operate, who has responded with great understanding. I am sure that if the party that he represents had won the election it would have seen the need for the President to benefit from advisers, assistants and the rest of staff. I would like to commend the Hon. Member Mr. Carl Greenidge for that initiative.

I would like to say, however, to the Hon. Member Mr. Ramjattan, who is proposing these cuts, I would like to caution, that we should not use our positions in this honourable House to settle scores. I think that if this House ever comes to a place where we use our positions to settle scores it would be a sad day for Guyana. I think in all reasonableness, I stood here and I have given explanations to every single question that was put and at this time I will ask for the vote.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I just wish to respond to that. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the question may be put but, as Chairman, I still have discretion if I feel that there has not been sufficient ventilation. On the last occasion there was more than sufficient ventilation on the issue. Mr. Ramjattan, I will give you a brief moment to respond.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** The proposal is not to cut everything. The proposal is cutting at least...In relation to contracted employees, I want you to understand that we feel that the salaries are extraordinarily high. In relation to what we have...as we understand we cannot reduce the Value

Added Tax (VAT); we cannot reduce personal income tax. We do not want to take the streams of revenues from the National Industrial and Commercial Investment Limited (NICIL) funds...and they all come here to indicate that this is good enough salary. The highest salary, generally, on the establishment of number 14 is nothing compared to some of the salaries we are seeing here. We do not want... [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Allow Mr. Ramjattan to speak.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** On the lowest rung, it is over thirty times more than what these high peers are getting - £3,000, and all of that. So what we are indicating here is that we can put a cut to it, and that is what we are doing. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, allow Mr. Ramjattan to finish, please.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mr. Chairman, it is clear from the exchanges, both today and over the last few days, that these items have caused us considerable concern. There is a lack of transparency and there is a difficulty understanding the logic in terms of the employment policies behind these and, as a consequence, we would support the motion.

*Question put.*

**Hon. Members (Government):** Division.

**Mr. Chairman:** I thought that the noes have it but since you have called for a division...

*Committee divided: Ayes 33, Noes 32, as follows:*

*Ayes*

Mr. T. Williams

Ms. Marcello

Dr. Ramayya

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe

Mrs. Hughes

*Noes*

Mr. Jaffarally

Mr. Damon

Dr. Persaud

Rev. Dr. Gilbert

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Ramjattan

Ms. Ferguson

Mr. Morian

Mr. Allen

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 Harmon

Mr. Greenidge

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Neendkumar

Mr. Lumumba

Ms. Shadick

Mr. Chand

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Nadir

Ms. Teixeira

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Whittaker

Mr. Baksh

Mrs. Sukhai

Ms. Webster

Ms. Manickchand

Mr. G. Persaud

Mr. Benn

Dr. Anthony

Mr. Ali

Dr. Ramsaran

Dr. Westford

Mr. R. Persaud

Mrs. Backer

Dr. Singh

Dr. Norton

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett

Mrs. Lawrence

Mr. Nandlall

Mr. B. Williams

Dr. Ramsammy

Ms. Ally

Mr. Rohee

Dr. Roopnarine

Mr. Hinds

Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger

*Amendments carried.*

*Line item 6116, Contracted Employees, amended to \$146,959,000 and Line Item 6284, Other, amended to \$24,243,000.*

*Programme: 012 – Presidential Advisory (Cabinet and Other Services) - \$314,442,000, as amended, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates*

**Programme: 014 – Public Policy and Planning - \$27,466,000**

*Programme: 014 – Public Policy and Planning - \$27,466,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 011 – Head Office Administration - \$7,340,170,000**

**Mr. Greenidge:** Would the Minister be good enough to provide the House with some more information in connection with this project 1212000 – Information and Communication Technology – and exactly what it concerns?

**Bishop Edghill:** Project 1212000 contains provisions for local as well as specific. For the local, the proposal is \$170 million and the specific is \$6,750,000,000. This is as it relates to the e-Government project which is being funded by the Export-Import Bank of China (China Exim Bank). It is a concessional loan. This sum is to provide all of the equipment for the e-

Government project which will arrive in Guyana this year. The equipment include a container data centre, cooling and power equipment hardware for the construction of fifty-five wireless steel towers, fifty-four microwave equipment for redundancy, an initial back haul , fibre cables for the installation of fibre networks along the East Coast, fifty-five long-term evolution cellular 4G sites for wireless access network, data communication equipment for core network.

*6.50 p.m.*

This will amount to \$2,398,007,973. The balance of \$3,680,000,000 deals with funding through a Chinese grant for the One Laptop Per Family (OLPF) project. This is for the procurement of the remaining sixty-three thousand laptops and, as I said, it is a Chinese grant aid. The Government, in its initial instance, purchased twenty-seven thousand laptops. Now the Chinese Government is giving us a grant aid of the sixty-three thousand laptops. This cost includes warranties, spares and after sales services which include the establishment of support centres for hardware and software maintenance. The average cost for one of those laptops is US\$285.

As it relates to the \$170 million, under local, which is counterpart funds for the e-Government project, it has to do with the establishment of the office building for the e-Government Unit at a cost of \$10 million. This building will house the data centre and staff working on the e-Government and it will actually be the hosting facility of the entire operations.

Thirteen million dollars is for the acquiring of two all-terrain vehicles. As you will know, that this project is national and the vehicle are to be used to perform maintenance works on sites, site visits from Lethem to Georgetown, because the cables will be brought across from there, as well as the coastal projects, and to be used in the interior, particularly in the Rupununi locations where towers and sites will be put in. These vehicles, which will be purchased, are vehicles that will have the ability to carry loads of equipment, as up to several hundred pounds, as well the engineers to get to the sites.

Forty-one million dollars is to be spent on two long-term evolution based stations test kits with spectrum analysers and for training. The long-term evolution (LTE) test kits are to be used by engineering staff to provide wireless LTE sites being installed under this project. The test kits are necessary to perform field maintenance work on the fifty-five LTE sites being installed under this project.

Supervision is \$24 million. This supervisory consultation has not been offered because it is to be tendered and this is to verify the work being done by, I hope I get the correct pronunciation, Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd., and this will include supervision of the fibre works, LTE designs, construction and installation. So I have given the explanation for the \$170 million, under local, and the sums allocated under the grant aid for m the Chinese under specific.

**Amendments to Project 1212000 – Information Communication Technology - \$6,750,000, Project 3400700 – Government Information Agency - \$15,000,000, Project 4502100 – National Communications Network - \$65,000,000 and Project 1700100- Minor Works – \$95,000,000**

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mr. Chairman, I have heard the explanations and I would like to, if it pleases you, move the amendment to the motion.

**Mr. Chairman:** Would anyone else wish to ask any questions? Could we have a seconder for that? This will be the amendment on project 1212000 only or...

**Ms. Ally:** I beg to second the motion

**Mr. Greenidge:** I would like to put all four, if I may, Mr. Chairman - all four amendments pertaining to this particular item. May I just clarify that in relation to the estimated reductions, it means that for the first one, “Information Communications Technology, it is the sum of \$170 million. This is project 1212000; the reduction would be \$170 million. The second project 3400700, and the legend should properly reads “Government Information Agency”, rather than “Information Communications and Technology”, and the extent of the cut is \$50 million. For the third item, “National Communications Network”, which project reads 4502100, the amount of the reduction would be \$65 million and for “Minor Works”, which is project 1700100, the amount for the reduction would be \$95 million. So in all of the last three cases the proposal is that the amount allocated would be \$1. Thank you.

**Mr. Hinds:** I think I must rise and express my regret and question the logic, in particular for project 1212000, that here it is we are receiving a significant grant aid in the One Laptop Per Family, but to make effective a grant of some \$4 billion - I do not know the exact amount, but it is some big portion, if not all of the \$6.75 billion - we have to provide from our budget \$170

million. I cannot imagine the kind of person and the kind of spirit that person would have that would seek to take this money away and run the risk of just having those laptop, some sixty-three thousand per year, what number is here, just parked up somewhere maybe for next year or sometime. I do not know. I would like to take this opportunity to call on the Members of the Opposition, to give them an extra few minutes to reconsider the action that they are taking.

We know that they have made their position very clear on Government Information Agency (GINA) and National Communications Network (NCN). Maybe there is a certain amount of consistency in seeking to put a zero to the provisions for the capital expenditure for those two agencies. The “Minor Works”, these are the kind of programmes, when the President on trips abroad, or around this country, and where the people would come to his office in difficult circumstances, in hard-luck circumstances, and will seek to have, from the President, some assistance. This, Sir, is very much a tradition of all countries and people, that when you see someone like President and you have a problem you may appeal to him to provide you with some assistance. This is not actions being taken against the President. This is action being taken against, maybe, four or five hundred Guyanese who would be in need at some time and the President will not have any such assistance to give them. We may have read that the Queen of England, the sovereign in England, has a number of accounts. I think I used to read one called “Maundy Moneys and Various Moneys” to meet such needs of members who are in need and who need some assistance. I greatly regret and I would like us to give them a couple of minutes, I would even want to propose a break, so that they can reconsider their position.

Thank you very much.

**Ms Backer:** Mr. Chairman, I rise to ask that the question be put now.

**Mr. Chairman:** I was going to invite the Minister to speak of which I think is his entitlement. He did indicate before Prime Minister indicated and I was going to invite him.

**Ms. Teixeira:** May I ask for clarification please? The motion presented by Mr. Greenidge mentions three of the four areas, on the motion, to do with this head. Is he withdrawing the fourth area because I do not recall him saying that? I do not recall because there is so much noise sometimes. He did read some of them but he did not read all.

**Mrs. Backer:** It is for all four.

**Ms. Teixeira:** So it is for all four.

**Bishop Edghill:** I would say ditto to what the Prime Minister said. I would just want to indicate that the People's Republic of China, a friend of this nation, has seen the efforts being made by the people of Guyana in advancing this new and emerging sector of information and communications technology, that will be linking the ninety thousand laptops which will be distributed to ninety families who will not have otherwise being able to get a laptop and their children have access to that technology, would have provided the resources after Guyana from its meager and still seeking to expand the economy. We were able to secure twenty-seven thousand laptops. The Chinese Government, through grant aid, is providing to us an additional sixty-three thousand. The local moneys which we are asking for to provide the hubs is to manage and the technical expertise, in terms of the training, and to get the engineers to the site. I shudder to think that this can be a nationalistic approach. I think the people of Guyana are looking and listening, and while it is true that the nature of politics carries with it certain characters, manoeuvres and behaviours, I would hope that we do not put such an important sector on the line, because this is a project that will not just benefit persons who supported the administration. This is a project that will benefit everybody. I am certainly..., before we put this matter to the vote that the Members, on the other side of the House, are full well aware that they will be hurting Amerindian communities, poor rural families and the ordinary man. This is what we are doing. I make that appeal.

**Mr. Chairman:** The question has been put by Mrs. Backer. I only allowed the Minister because he has indicated before Prime Minister spoke.

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Mr. Chairman, I rise on a point of clarification. There is a misrepresentation of the facts by the honourable last Speaker... [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, we cannot continue if this is happening. We cannot. I think this is hurting every one. We are all hurting here. Mr. Nagamootoo, proceed please

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** This is a project in excess of \$13 billion. We of the AFC are in support of this project. The Government has already spent \$2,757,652,000, \$2.7 billion. This is in the



Estimates, on reference 2. This drama that the \$170 million that we seek to cut is not that it is jeopardising this programme. A total of \$4,147,200,000 has already been spent on this programme. There is no national procurement commission. We are asking for accountability. The Government Members have come now, after they have spent \$2.7 billion, to ask for \$170 million to build some shed. We think this is a waste of money. We are in favour of this programme, \$13 billion and in excess of \$6.5 billion will be spent this year for on this project, in addition they are beefing about \$170 million which... [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member Mr. Nagamootoo, you made a statement that they are thieving and I think it is an unfortunate and improper statement. I am asking you to withdraw it please.

**Hon. Members (Opposition):** It is beefing.

**Mr. Chairman:** Is it beefing?

**Hon. Members (Opposition):** Yes

**Mr. Chairman:** It is beefing. Very well, my apologies.

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** I did not say the other word with the “T”, Sir. I said it with a “B”.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members the question was asked to be put by Ms Backer. The Prime Minister, as well as the junior Minister of Finance, has spoken. It is a normative subject, as said. I think both sides of the House are hurting, as I said. I do have a discretion, if I feel that there is need for further ventilation. I would not shut out the Minister of Finance, because we need to know what the effect of \$170 million will have to this project. I will allow the last person to speak, and that is the Minister of Finance to speak, and then I will put the question.

**Dr. Singh:** This is a project, or the suite of projects, that comes under the rubric “Information and Communications Technology (ICT),” under the Office of the President, cannot be viewed in a fragmented or disaggregated fashion. There is an integrated and comprehensive approach to ICT, which includes access to bandwidth, and more affordable access to more reliable bandwidth, investment in infrastructure, including the fibre-optic cable from Lethem to the Georgetown and the fibre-optic backbone on the Coast, access in the home by the most vulnerable, that is to say specifically through our One Laptop Per Family programme, access to

training, not only through the One Laptop Per Family programme, but also through ICT labs which are being placed in every secondary school and our various other initiatives - establishment of ICT in Hinterland communities, distribution of solar panels to power those ICT centres, and the list goes on. It would be irresponsible to disaggregate the suite of projects and to view any part in isolation from the other.

As my colleague, Minister Edghill explained, the funds provided within the \$170 million allocation is local resources, funds being sourced from the domestic treasury, to meet the cost of certain parts of the project - supervision, completion of the fibre-optic cables from Lethem to Linden, Lethem to Georgetown. This is suite of projects that is very generously supported by an important bilateral partner of ours. The Government people of China are supporting the One Laptop Per Family programme by procuring and supplying for us, for delivery, tens of thousands of laptops under grant aid and they are supporting the construction of the coastal fibre- optic network under a concessional loan to be granted by the China Exim Bank. These are acts of friendship by the Government and the people of China in a year when we are celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. [Mr. Nagamootoo: \$6.5 billion is a loan.] It is not that \$6.5 billion is a loan. In fact, the overwhelming majority of those resources are actually grant aid provided by China. I will say this: there is a loan from the China Exim Bank and there is a grant from the Government of China.

I believe that it will send a dreadful signal were this House to say that we are willing to accept \$6 billion of grants or concessional loans financing from the Government and the people of China, but we are not prepared to spend the relatively small sum, in this scheme of things here, of \$170 million to see this ICT initiative to its completion. Imagine the Government and people of China are providing \$6 billion worth of resources through grant and concessional loans and the Government and people of Guyana are not, or the National Assembly of Guyana, being prepared to provide the very relatively modest sum of \$170 million. I would urge my colleagues, on that side of the Committee, for the time being, to abandon this...

**Mr. Seeraj and Mrs. Backer:** ...reckless

**Dr. Singh:** I hear some people say “reckless.” ... application of the tyrannical scissors just for the purposes of demonstration. Surely, the most powerful demonstration that we can offer today

is the demonstration that we are prepared to provide a small sum of money, as counterpart funds, in order to see the successful completion of this project. So I urge my colleagues, on that side of the Committee, to reconsider this matter.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge, you may respond to the entreaties for an adjournment for reconsideration...

**Mr. Greenidge:** Thank you Mr. Chairman. It was very kind of you. I would like first of all to say to you that we have considered, on this side, very carefully the entreaties of the Prime Minister and his distinguished colleagues, and we, having considered the entreaties, wish to proceed as we indicated to you before.

Secondly, I would like to indicate that we are not denying the importance of China as a bilateral partner. In fact, we are quite familiar with the origin of that partnership, neither are we unaware of the integrated suite of this project, as the Minister put it. It is to be regretted that the Minister finds it surprising that we... It is interesting, I think, to hear the Minister spoke about the amount of time that he and his colleagues in the Government would have been prepared, have been prepared, to devote to the bilateral negotiations and talks with the Chinese and how little time they could find to speak to the Opposition in relation to fashioning a budget. Between December 2011 and today we have not been able, until the last week, to find time to discuss these matters, and having discussed them there seems to be no patience for any reflections.

In the light of that, let me say \$150 million is not going to destroy the Government. It is not going to clearly destroy the One Laptop Per Family project, because even when the Government has not been given approval for capital projects it finds the wherewithal to spend, as it is evident in the case with the Marriott Hotel project, and elsewhere, which has not come before us. So do not let us hear crocodile tears. They have chosen their path; let them take the burden that goes with it. Thank you.

*Question put.*

**Mr. Hinds:** Division.

*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

Mr. Allen

Mr. Jones

Mr. Adams

Mrs. Baveghems

Mr. Sharma

Mr. Bulkan

Mr. Bond

Ms. Kissoon

Mr. Trotman

Ms. Selman

Mr. Allicock

*Noes*

Mr. Jaffarally

Mr. Damon

Dr. Persaud

Rev. Dr. Gilbert

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Neendkumar

Mr. Lumumba

Ms. Shadick

Mr. Chand

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Nadir

Ms. Teixeira

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Whittaker

Mr. Baksh

Mrs. Sukhai

Ms. Webster

Ms. Manickchand

Mr. G. Persaud

Ms. Wade

Mr. Benn

Mr. Felix

Dr. Anthony

Ms. Hastings

Mr. Ali

Mr. Scott

Dr. Ramsaran

Lt Col Harmon

Dr. Westford

Mr. Greenidge

Mr. R. Persaud

Mrs. Backer

Dr. Singh

Dr. Norton

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett

Mrs. Lawrence

Mr. Nandlall

Mr. B. Williams

Dr. Ramsammy

Ms. Ally

Mr. Rohee

Dr. Roopnarine

Mr. Hinds

Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger

*Amendments carried.*

*Project 1212000, Information Communications Technology, amended to \$6,580,000, Project 3400700, Government Information Agency, amended to \$0,001, Project 4502100, National Communications Network, amended to 0,0001 and Project 1700100,- Minor Works, amended to 0,0001.*

*Programme: 011 – Head Office Administration - \$6,995,170,003, as amended, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

7.20 p.m.

**Agency: 09 Public and Police Service Commission**

**Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 091 –Public and Police Service Commission - \$49,452,000**

**Mr. Felix:** I would like to enquire whether these are two separate Commissions or one Commission.

**Mr. Hinds:** Hon. Member, these are two separate Commissions but they have been merged at the secretariat level.

**Mr. Chairman:** Very well. Hon. Members, if it is that you have to be told to ask questions...

**Mr. Felix:** Nobody is being told to ask question.

**Mr. Chairman:** I do not know because I have been calling and calling. Do you have questions to ask? If you do, stand.

**Mr. Felix:** The Prime Minister has explained that they have been merged which you would say is a policy matter, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes. For example, several constitutional rights commissions share the same facilities.

**Mr. Felix:** That is why I reserved the other question, because I know that would have been the response.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you.

*Programme: 091 – Public and Police Service Commission - \$49,452,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 091 – Public and Police Service Commission \$4,000,000**

*Programme: 091 – Public and Police Service Commission - \$4,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Agency: 10 Teaching Service Commission**

**Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 101 – Teaching Service Commission - \$71, 818,000**

**Ms. Selman:** Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Could the Hon. Minister provide the designation and the emolument for the new contracted employees?

**Mr. Hinds:** I have a list here with the sixteen contracted employees. I cannot really vouch exactly for this because there is movement of people, but the six that are being proffered here are the Secretary - \$500,961, two Clerk II - \$53,161 each, another Clerk II - \$45,338, an Accounts Clerk II - \$53,162 and there is a Driver/Mechanic - \$45,614.

*Programme: 101 – Teaching Service Commission - \$71,818,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Capital Expenditure**

**Programme: 101 – Teaching Service Commission - \$3,600,000**

*Programme: 101 – Teaching Service Commission - \$3,600,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Agency: 11 Guyana Elections Commission**

**Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 111 – Elections Commission - \$1,632,765,000**

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Line item 6294 – Other: We notice that there were an election in the year 2011 and the “Other”, whatever, was its constituents, \$22 million was spent. We notice budgeted for this year, however, is double that. Why is that increase?

**Mr. Hinds:** The elections are run on the other programme, I think, Programme: 112 – Election Administration. This one is Programme: 111 - Elections Commission - and the reason why this number is higher is because more is being done in continuous registration on this programme.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** So this “Other” - what specifically is the \$42 million for?

**Mr. Hinds:** The increase or the figure is due to the proposal for the Commissioners, Chief Elections Officer (CEO) and senior staff travelling overseas to observe elections in other

countries and also the cost for extra hours of which staff will be required to work in the fields and at the head office to process the new registrants or transactions. Also over one hundred scrutineers will be paid for the continuous registration service. I think the Member knows that there is the practice of scrutineers scrutineering all the registration that is expected to take place. So this is a provision for those things.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Would it not be more proper for the travelling to overseas to come under line item 6262 – Overseas Conference and Official Visits?

**Mr. Hinds:** There was a reference to line item 6262 – Overseas Conference and Official Visits. It is seen there, “Overseas Conference and Official Visits” and there seems to have been a tradition that the charges are not made against that line item, but the tradition has been that the charges are put against this line item.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** In relation to line item 6284 – Other: Again, in an election year it was \$92 million and we notice \$110 million and there is a national and regional elections here, what is the cause for that increase here?

**Mr. Hinds:** Again, the charges for running of an election are carried in “Elections Administration”, not on this programme. But for this year it is intended to; along with the continuous registration, there will be public relations (PR) sensitisation campaigns and there would be cost involve in verifying the new applicants and the cost for distributing new identification cards (ID). There is also provision here for a number of cases pending in the courts.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** The contracted employees, line item 6116: I notice that there is sixty-eight and it comes up \$236 million budgeted for this year. Hon. Minister, what is that for? Is it for contracted employees generally during the course of an election year or a non-election year?

**Mr. Hinds:** These contracted employees, here, are in the Guyana Elections Commission. When there is an election additional people may be retained for the elections, but those are people in the Guyana Elections Commission itself.



**Mr. Ramjattan:** Well if, as was said, we are going to have Local Government Elections this year, where would we put a projected allocation for the other people, if not in the contracted employees here?

**Mr. Hinds:** It is in Programme 112. We will come to that next.

**Mr. Sharma:** I would like to ask the Hon. Minister if he could give me an indication of what is the amount paid for scrutineers, the various categories and when last it was adjusted - the stipend.

**Mr. Chairman:** Is it scrutineers?

**Mr. Sharma:** Yes. He said that scrutineers are paid under this line item 6294 - Other.

**Mr. Hinds:** Yes Mr. Chairman. Scrutineers are paid under line item 6294, but if you see that I am somewhat hesitant, it is because, for the last umpteen years, the Hon. Member guided me in these matters. So I am not too sure that I have faith yet in these new ones as I developed faith in the Hon. Member on the other side.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Prime Minister, is it that Mr. Sharma used to be sitting there guiding you on these matters?

**Mr. Hinds:** Yes Sir. It was up to last year.

**Mr. Chairman:** I see. You are a man of many parts, Mr. Sharma - very interesting.

**Ms. Ally:** Line item 6284 – Other: I know the Member has said that line item 6294 caters for the payments of scrutineers. Would line item 6284 also cater for the payments of scrutineers?

**Mr. Hinds:** No. As I said just now line item 6284 – Other - caters for PR sensitisation campaign for the continuous registration and the verification.

**Ms. Ally:** Thank you Hon. Prime Minister for that answer to line item 6294. Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Could the Hon. Prime Minister say what is meant by “Other Infrastructure” under this line item?

**Mr. Hinds:** Yes. It is works to be done at the Coldingen Mechanical Workshop where a number of the vehicles that the Guyana Elections Commission owns are kept and repaired. There is an office in Mahdia which is to be rewired and upgraded, and there is also to be some upgrading of the head office driveway.

**Ms. Ally:** A follow-up. How many vehicles are we talking about and probably that can come under line item 6264 – Vehicles Spares and Service?

**Mr. Hinds:** There are thirty-three vehicles, Hon. Member.

**Ms. Ally:** A follow-up. Could the Hon. Prime Minister say where those vehicles are attached?

**Mr. Hinds:** The Guyana Elections Commission is pretty widely spread across the country. There is the head office, which we know, and I think there are some other twenty-seven offices around the country. So the thirty-three vehicles are spread between those locations.

**Ms. Ally:** And are you saying, Hon. Member, that each of those sub-offices, twenty-seven plus, has a vehicle attached to them?

**Mr. Hinds:** In those places where there are roads there are vehicles assigned. I think there is also boats and engines, and so on.

**Ms. Ally:** Thank you Hon. Prime Minister. Could the Hon. Minister say the locations that do not enjoy that facility of having transportation attached to the offices?

**Mr. Hinds:** Mr. Chairman, Could I get that? The Hon. Member said “Transportation”. I said just now that the Guyana Elections Commission also has boats and engines. I do not know if she could clarify. It is not every location has, say, a road vehicle, but I think other locations would have boats and engines.

**Ms. Ally:** I am speaking, Sir, under line item 6264, which states “Vehicles” and if the Member wants to consider a boat a vehicle, I have no problem.

**Mr. Hinds:** Places without vehicles: Paramakatoi. Mahdia, Kamarang, Moruka, Port Kaituma and Mabaruma.

**Ms. Ally:** Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Could the Minister indicate what are the buildings that we are talking about?

**Mr. Hinds:** There will be the head office and several of the offices around the country.

**Mr. Allen:** Just a matter of clarification. Did I hear the Hon. Minister said that the Port Kaituma/Mabaruma district has a boat please?

**Mr. Hinds:** Yes. Mabaruma does have a boat and an engine.

**Mr. Sharma:** Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Could the Hon. Minister state the salary of the three most senior officers, the emolument and non-salary benefits, including designation?

**Mr. Hinds:** They are the Chief Elections Officer - \$763,961, Deputy Chief Elections Officer - \$665,644, Assistant Chief Elections Officer - \$570,206. These are the three most highly paid persons in the Guyana Elections Commission.

**Mr. Sharma:** What about the allowances attached, if any, and any non-salary benefits, such as security and vehicles, and so forth?

**Mr. Hinds:** Yes. I see a number of people here, not only those three, get travel allowances of \$17,000 per month, a few have entertainment allowances, \$30,000 and some have housing benefits. That is what is here.

**Mr. Sharma:** How many of them received security allowances?

**Mr. Hinds:** Those same three, all, received security allowances.

**Mr. Sharma:** Is it residential - at their residents?

**Mr. Hinds:** Yes Hon. Member.

**Mr. Sharma:** Could the Hon. Minister state the amount for security for each of the three officers per month or per year if he has that information?

**Mr. Hinds:** I am told that there is a contract with Neil and Massey (N&M) Security. There is also a contract with the Strategic Action Security Services and those provide security to the officers, and also I guess the buildings, and so on.

**Mr. Sharma:** Could the Hon. Minister state the breakdown for the figure at line item 6011 – Statutory Wages and Salary - of the sum of \$431,194,000?

**Mr. Hinds:** It is for the Chairman and the Commissioner, Sir.

**Mr. Sharma:** Could you give us a breakdown on what are the amounts paid?

**Mr. Hinds:** We do not have that. We do not normally enquire into statutory provisions.

**Mr. Sharma:** As I have mentioned before, statutory, or otherwise, are all public money and what is the distinction between a public servant and a statutory position is basically one is paid if a budget exists or no budget exists. By law money will be provided for that individual. So I do not know why the amount cannot be stated.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Prime Minister has stated the policy or the position rather.

**Mr. Hinds:** Mr. Chairman, I would definitely have to yield to people who are more expert in this matter, but for the twenty years that I have been here I have gone along with what I was told that we do not normally look beyond the veil when there is statutory provision made.

**Mr. Sharma:** The honourable President is one individual in his budget so it is very easy to state what is his salary, it is to just divide it by twelve, but in this case, I guess, there is the Chairman and a number of Commissioners, so the Hon. Prime Minister could just inform of what is the various amounts.

**Mr. Hinds:** I think that I am being advised that statutory information is available elsewhere, but it is not a subject matter for debate and discussion here.

**Mr. Chairman:** That is a policy position.

**Ms. Selman:** Line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence: Could the Hon. Prime Minister tell us who benefits from this allocation?

**Mr. Hinds:** I am advised that it is mainly the registration staff who come to head office. I think this is part of the functioning between the head office and the twenty plus field offices, officers move between them.

**Mr. Trotman:** Line item 6265 – Other Transport, Travel and Postage: Could the Hon. Minister state who benefit from this line item?

**Mr. Hinds:** I am advised that this covers additional transport that would be hired - boats, planes and sometimes, I guess, other vehicles to do verifications. It is mentioned here, going all the way down to Gunns Strip, as an example, and going to Eteringbang, and so on. Those would normally required, I presumed, chartered aircraft arrangements.

*Programme: 111 – Elections Commission - \$1,163,765,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Programme: 112 – Elections Administration - \$1,586,243,000**

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Through you, Mr. Chairman, the expenses for 2012, \$902 million, line item 6294, Other, has increased by almost \$300 million from a revised 2011 and there was an election in that year. What is the cause for the increase here?

**Mr. Hinds:** The Guyana Elections Commission has made provision in this year's budget for the long-awaited Local Government Elections and with the new system there is of Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs) being subdivided, and so on.

7.50 p.m.

It is likely that it will be even more demanding in terms of persons and so it has estimated what would be required in terms of temporary employees to be paid, trained and retained earlier and to be trained for that exercise. The Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) is looking to hire about 14,000 persons – temporary workers – during the time of the Elections.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Is it possible that we can have a breakdown as to that because we noticed \$830,800,000 was budgeted for and only \$692,568,000 was spent in an election year – national and general? Could we have that breakdown? This is a lot of money – approximately \$1 billion.

**Mr. Hinds:** There is a breakdown on a number of pages here. If I am to look at the largest item, some \$422 million has to do with payment to temporary staff. This is in preparation and during the election time of itself, another \$378 million, so most of this money is going to pay for staff

involved. There will be training first, I think, for four months and then in the run-up to the elections and after the elections...

**Mr. Ramjattan:** The elections, if it is going to be held this year, must be held under the new regime. Does the Hon. Minister see the new regime, with the three or five pieces of legislation, occurring before the end of the year?

**Mr. Hinds:** Mr. Chairman, I would very much hope so. I have a very personal involvement with these Local Government Elections but that is a story for another time.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** How soon do you feel that that could be done?

**Mr. Hinds:** The Chief Elections Officer says that he would be happy if this House could arrange all that is required so that the Elections could be held in October, 2012.

**Ms. Ally:** Only to make a statement before I ask my question: the Chief Elections Officer does not have to bring the reforms to this National Assembly. So I wonder what excuse the Prime Minister is making.

Line Item 6224 – Print and Non-Print Materials – I noted a steep increase from \$78.035 million in an election year to \$112.790 million. Could the Hon. Prime Minister say why there is an increase?

**Mr. Hinds:** Again, this is related to the much greater detail that would be present in the Local Government Elections. As presently envisaged, there would be many more different types of ballot papers that would be required. I think there are also issues of pictures and so forth. So GECOM has worked it out and has come up with this figure for the Local Government Elections.

**Ms. Ally:** Line Item 6222 – Field Materials and Supplies – could the Hon. Minister say what the field materials and supplies are?

**Mr. Hinds:** This heading caters for purchase of tents, long boots and ballot boxes with accessories. There is a note here that there is some stock on hand from the 2011 General and Regional Elections.

**Ms. Ally:** I note that the Hon. Minister has great plans but I am not hearing about the great plans for the reforms.

Line Item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants – could the Hon. Minister say how many vehicles are being catered for under this line item?

**Mr. Hinds:** There are 33 vehicles and a number of boats and engines.

**Ms. Ally:** A follow-up question: are these the same vehicles that would have occurred under Programme: 111 – Elections Commission?

**Mr. Hinds:** Yes.

**Ms. Ally:** I wonder, how the same vehicle is using the same fuel under two different Programmes. I am a little baffled. Maybe Mr. Sharma might be able to come in and help me to understand that.

Again, under this very line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants – 2011 revised gives a figure of \$25.186 million and 2012 gives a figure of \$45.957 million. What is responsible for this increase? Is it Local Government Elections again?

**Mr. Hinds:** Again, it is continuous registration and the Elections. I am told by the Chief Elections Officer that GECOM estimates that the volume of work out there for holding the Local Government Elections, with all the sub divisions that we have now introduced at the National Democratic Council (NDC) level, will be three times the volume of work of the General and Regional Elections. So that is the explanation.

**Ms. Ally:** My final question: Line Item 6294 – Other - \$902.764 million, an increase of over \$300 million – could the Hon. Minister supply the classification and purpose?

**Mr. Hinds:** It is mainly for temporary workers, including scrutineers. I think we answered this question before. The payment to the staff and maybe scrutineers for training maybe four months before the elections, then during the elections itself and some days or weeks after...those seem to take up about 80% to 90% of this allocation.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** It is noticeable here under line item 6293 – Refreshment and Meals – that there is a \$53.737 million allocation. Would that be, assuming that we are going to have elections this year, for the elections period or during the course of the year?

**Mr. Hinds:** It is for staff whilst they are being trained and on Elections Day.

**Ms. Ally:** Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Prime Minister, when we were doing Programme: 111 – Elections Commission – said that under line item 6284 – Other – that that is the line item under which we pay scrutineers. Under this Programme, the Prime Minister is also referring to the payment of scrutineers under line item 6294 – Other. Could he provide some explanation?

**Mr. Hinds:** One is for the continuous registration part and the other is related to the elections.

**Ms. Selman:** Line Item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships) – could the Hon. Prime Minister say whether it includes scholarships and if it does not, could the Hon. Minister tell us what the nature of the training programmes entails?

**Mr. Hinds:** This is to do, mainly, with the training of the nearly 14,000 people who we estimate would be involved in Local Government Elections.

**Mr. Sharma:** Line Item 6222 – Field Materials and Supplies – the Hon. Minister indicated that this money would be there for ballot boxes. How many ballot boxes would that be?

**Mr. Hinds:** The Guyana Elections Commission is budgeting for 500 additional ballot boxes and assuming that many ballot boxes that it has in stock would be available and used.

**Mr. Sharma:** Can the Hon. Minister state what the amount of polling stations projected for Local Government Elections is?

**Mr. Chairman:** I am very interested in that too. How many polling stations do you anticipate above that of the General and Regional Elections for Local Government Elections?

**Mr. Hinds:** GECOM is expecting something in the order of 2000 to 2300/2400. But, I think, that would be determined exactly towards the end.

**Mr. Sharma:** For the last Elections, there were over 2000 polling stations; that is 2011. In 2006, there were also ballot boxes purchased. What happened to those ballot boxes?



**Mr. Hinds:** Most are available. Some, I am told, are in litigation in the court. And I am thinking that because of the divisions in some of the NDCs, there may have to be some additional splits.

**Mr. Sharma:** I do not know about any challenges in the court for the 2006 elections that are still continuing. Those ballot boxes are available, I suppose, and since the Government is going to procure additional ballot boxes, what is the cost for these ballot boxes?

**Mr. Hinds:** The estimated cost for the ballot boxes with the appropriate accessories is about \$30,000 each.

**Mr. Sharma:** Would these boxes for the Local Government Elections be procured internationally?

**Mr. Hinds:** I think that the expectation is that they may be supplied from overseas.

**Mr. Sharma:** Line item 6224 – Print and Non-Print Materials – the amount of \$112,790,000 is catered under this line item. The Hon. Minister indicated that this is for printing of ballot papers. I would like to have a breakdown of the ballot boxes in terms of ballot papers, statements of polls, tally sheets, et cetera. And, would these materials be printed locally or overseas?

**Mr. Hinds:** I think there are general estimates but details are not available at this time. They will become available as the list of electors and so on become clear.

**Mr. Sharma:** It is a budget and there must be a quantity attached to the estimated cost to arrive at the total. I want to know those quantities.

**Mr. Hinds:** I did say that I was feeling somewhat apprehensive having on the other side there before me the gentleman who used to advise me up to the last time. I do not know if Mr. Gocool Boodoo will invite him back and have him review it with him. But certainly the kind of details that he is asking for, we were in no way expecting those to be asked for.

**Mr. Sharma:** Will these materials be printed locally or overseas?

**Mr. Hinds:** I do not think I can give an answer to that. I think that the Guyana Elections Commission, as the time comes along, will make some of those determinations.

**Mr. Sharma:** Again, Mr. Chairman, it is very strange; it is a budget and to arrive at a cost, one needs to know how to calculate. One needs to know if things will be done locally and what is the cost and if internationally and the cost. One cannot just put a block figure because one would have to come for a supplementary.

**Mr. Scott:** I noticed that line items 6111 to 6117 - Administrative, Senior Technical, Other Technical and Craft Skilled, Clerical and Office Support and Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled, Contacted Employees, Temporary Employees - under this Programme: 112 - Elections Administration - there is nobody working there. How is round one or round two proposed to be administered?

**Mr. Hinds:** I am told that this is a project, essentially, and, therefore, those things are filled in when it is about to happen.

**Mr. Scott:** Therefore, line item 6281 - Security Services - that awaits a filling in and also, how did you arrive at \$65.020 million dollars when for the past three years you were spending an average of \$13 million?

**Mr. Hinds:** This is the Guyana Elections Commissions' estimate of what it would need for the various offices in the period before Elections, during Elections and maybe a week or two after Elections.

**Mr. Scott:** If that is an estimate then it has to be an average and if in an election year only \$13.627 million in 2011, then what criteria are being used to know that in 2012, it will be four times the amount?

**Mr. Hinds:** If you notice, there was a budget estimate of \$143.168 million. But the way things played out, GECOM ended up charging only \$13.627 million under this line item.

**Mr. Scott:** Then, Mr. Prime Minister, it stands for reason that if in an election year - which you have been stressing all the time - you ended up spending \$13.627 million, it is impossible for you to arrive at \$65.020 million in 2012.

**Amendments to line item 6293 - Refreshment and Meals - \$53,737,000 and line item 6294 - Other - \$902,764,000.**

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I have certain proposed amendments on Notice Paper No. 53 in relation to line item 6293 – Refreshment and Meals, and line item 6294 – Other, a \$500 million cut and a \$27 million cut and I am not withdrawing. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman, if I may be allowed to speak to that amendment...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member Mr. Ramjattan, is that line item 6293 – Refreshment and Meals?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** That is right. For Refreshment and Meals there is a \$27 million cut there and in line item 6294 – Other – which is an estimate for the preparations for the Elections, there is a cut of \$500 million proposed.

**Mr. Chairman:** Is there a seconder?

*[Mrs. Hughes seconded the proposal]*

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Over the years, we have had the scenario whereby the legislation to ensure the new regime that we are going to have the Local Government Elections under. It is not being happening for a number of years. We, in the Alliance For Change, are not fearful of any Local Government Elections. What we have here, however, is preparations for that which may very well not occur in this year. We feel that at the appropriate time when all the legislation that will constitute the regime under which the Elections will be held... [**Members:** Which elections?] The Local Government Elections. Is that not what you have it here for? Or are you going to slip it into another election? At the appropriate time, when the regime, the legislation, the demarcation and all of that would have been done, the Alliance For Change would have absolutely no problem in relation to a supplementary appropriation for \$500 million or whatever is then sought. At this stage, the allocation will be reduced. Thank you.

**Mr. Hinds:** Mr. Chairman, I must, once again, express regret and incomprehension about this step being taken. It is an unusual step that we go this way and it raises, in my mind, the question about how earnest the Alliance For Change is - and A Partnership for National Unity, if it supports the AFC – in its statement that it wants to go to Local Government Elections. This side, this Government, wants and has wanted to hold Local Government Elections.

Mr. Chairman and Hon. Members, if we think about how our usual, cordial atmosphere and relationships become strained as Elections come near, you could imagine the Government bringing a supplementary at the time Elections are approaching, in that sort of atmosphere. I think that it is a recipe for not having an election. And, therefore, once again, I would like both parties on the other side, the AFC which has proposed it and APNU if it goes along with it, to reconsider. APNU will be tarnished with the same brush. I am not holding out that APNU is, in any way, reluctant to go to the Local Government Elections. But if it votes with the AFC, I will have to form the same opinion of them also.

**Mr. B. Williams:** Mr. Chairman, just to say that APNU's position has always been consistent. We have recognised a long time that one cannot "put new wine in old wineskins". We would be tantamount to doing that if we were to go ahead with another Local Government Elections without implementing the Local Government reforms. That has always been our position and we have not heard a word from this Government, today, about those reforms. The Government has the motions that we brought, in the Ninth Parliament, languishing. We have to restart that process and we have not seen anything happening. And so if the Prime Minister or anyone on the other side commits, within a reasonable time, to have those bills in this Parliament and we move forward together on it, then we will have Local Government Elections and we can pass any supplementary provisions, as we did last year, to hold Elections. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** I am in full support of the proposed amendment, the reduction and the vote for the reasons set out eloquently by my colleagues, the Hon. Mr. Ramjattan and Mr. B. Williams.

What we have heard here, by way of our very detailed questions to get answers, was, at most, speculations, guesstimates, which we are asked to respond to in considering the Estimates. There is no establishment under this Programme. We heard about training. That is alright.

*8.20 p.m.*

We here from the Alliance For Change are not afraid. We are not afraid of having Local Government Elections this year. We are saying that we have not had Local Government Elections in Guyana since 1994. The Hon. Prime Minister seems to be kicking the ball over this side as if we are the ones here who are holding up Local Government Elections. They had the

last seventeen years within which to hold these elections; they should say that in the record. If we are going to have elections, these elections must be based on credible planning. Credible planning has to deal with the legal infrastructure. The legal regime by which you can have credible elections after seventeen years of not having them would be to bring the reform in the Parliament. When those reforms appear, we are prepared on the AFC side to give an undertaking that we will vote for supplementary to bring up to steam the money required for the elections.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you Mr. Nagamootoo.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira did you want to point out something to me?

**Ms. Teixeira:** I just want to ask your guidance on something. I have noticed a Member of Parliament who is constantly taking photographs. In the last few seconds he was taking photographs. I do not know what he is doing with them; it is his business, but I do not believe Members of Parliament should be doing that in this House. We have reporters and cameramen here. This has been going on all the time by a particular Member of Parliament who you yourself say flashed the camera three times while Mr. Nagamootoo was speaking.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members I would say that indeed I have seen an occasion of Hon. Members using their phones to take photographs in frequent bases. I have noticed some flashes. Taking of photographs and so forth are not allowed, so I would ask that we put our cameras away. We are not reporters; we are here to represent the people's business and not take photographs of each other. That is the function of the press and that is why they have been invited into the Hallow Chamber.

*Question put*

*Division called*

*Committee divided: Ayes 33, Noes 32, as follows:*

*Ayes*

Mr. T. Williams

Ms. Marcello

*Noes*

Mr. Jaffarally

Mr. Damon

Dr. Ramayya

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe

Mrs. Hughes

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Ramjattan

Ms. Ferguson

Mr. Morian

Mr. Allen

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

Dr. Persaud

Rev. Dr. Gilbert

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Neendkumar

Mr. Lumumba

Ms. Shadick

Mr. Chand

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Nadir

Ms. Teixeira

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Whittaker

Mr. Baksh

Mrs. Sukhai

Ms. Webster

Ms. Manickchand

Mr. G. Persaud

Mr. Benn

Dr. Anthony

Mr. Ali

|                           |                        |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Mr. Scott                 | Dr. Ramsaran           |
| Lt Col Harmon             | Dr. Westford           |
| Mr. Greenidge             | Mr. R. Persaud         |
| Mrs. Backer               | Dr. Singh              |
| Dr. Norton                | Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett |
| Mrs. Lawrence             | Mr. Nandlall           |
| Mr. B. Williams           | Dr. Ramsammy           |
| Ms. Ally                  | Mr. Rohee              |
| Dr. Roopnarine            | Mr. Hinds              |
| Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger |                        |

*Amendments carried.*

*Line item 6293, Refreshment and Meals, amended to \$26,737,000 and line item 6294, Other, amended to \$402,764,000.*

*Programme: 112 – Elections Administration - \$1,059,243,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 111 – Elections Commission – 35,000,000**

*Programme: 111 – Elections Commission – 35,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

#### **Programme: 112 – National, Regional & Local Government Elections – 0**

*Programme: 112 – National, Regional & Local Government Elections – 0 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

*Assembly resumed*

*Sitting suspended at 8.26 p.m.*

*Sitting resumed at 9.04 p.m.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members the session is resumed. Please be seated. We will go immediately into Committee of Supply.

*Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply*

**Agency: 53 Guyana Defence Force**

**Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 531 – Defence Headquarters - \$6,323,710**

**Mr. Felix:** Mr. Chairman, I want to observe that training is the life of organisations like GDF. I note that under line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships) – not much emphasis is placed on training in terms of the allocation. My question to the Hon. Minister is, what areas of training are expected? Let me rephrase it. Is this allocation intended to prepare the GDF for its role?

**Bishop Edghill:** What line item?

**Mr. Felix:** I said line item 6302.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members would it be better for one of the Ministers to allow Commander Flores to come forward rather than Bishop Edghill having to lean back, so as to get this done tidier.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, it is clear that the allocation made under line item 6302 is consistent with the programme of last year. The Guyana Defence Force continues to enjoy opportunities for training based upon bilateral arrangements as well.

**Mr. Felix:** My follow up question is: how many exercises would this allocation allow the GDF to commit to during 2012?



**Bishop Edghill:** I am advised that there is one field exercise, but as it relates to training, I can give the Hon. Member some more information. There is training that is available in accountancy and project management. At the University of Guyana there are several courses that are being offered to ranks such as a Degree in mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, civil engineering, architecture, computer science, surveying, geology and mechanical engineering. At the Guyana School of Agriculture and at the Guyana School of Nursing also ranks are being offered positions for training. There are also training opportunities in garment construction, household management, catering and hospitality at the Carnegie School of Home Economics. There is the Zoning Consultancy Quality Skills Training that deals with substance abuse. There is training available in the Art Williams and Harry Vent Engineering School in Aeronautical Engineering.

**Mr. Felix:** I thank the Hon. Minister but I thought I was listening to training for human services and not the Guyana Defence Force, which is to be prepared to defend this country against external aggression. Could you please advise on the development of military skills, their field training.

**Bishop Edghill:** Ranks from the Guyana Defence Force benefit from training at military schools in Brazil as well as in China.

**Mr. Felix:** That was the basis of my question, whether the allocation would be sufficient. We have an office Cadet Programme running every year. It is inconceivable to think that this allocation will be adequate.

**Bishop Edghill:** I would offer to this Hon. House that an important institution such as the Guyana Defence Force may never be able to have all of the monies that they deserve, but we are dealing with the reality of the size of our economy and what could be afforded. We seek to benefit from our bilateral relationships as well.

**Mr. Benn:** Mr. Chairman, I seek clarification. Has this not gone far enough; should this not be discussed somewhere else?

**Mr. Chairman:** I do not think so. Proceed Mr. Felix.

**Mr. Felix:** My position is to point out to this Hon. House that the allocation in my estimation is to degrade the GDF and not to build it. We should make a special effort to ensure the military skills required by those who must put their lives on the line must by necessity be adequate for the task ahead. That is all I am asking for.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members the Minister of Home Affairs is on his feet.

**Mr. Rohee:** Mr. Chairman, I rise as a member of the Defence Board to add to what my colleague has said in respect of the training programmes of the Guyana Defence Force. First of all, what the Force has submitted is what has been approved by the Defence Board. In addition to that, only recently this year, a few months ago that is, there have been extensive training programmes together with the United States Army here in Guyana. There are many other training programmes that have taken place to sharpen the military skills of the Guyana Defence Force. I simply wish to conclude by saying that what has been allocated to the GDF in this Budget aimed at degrading the Guyana Defence Force is nothing of the sort. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Benn:** I believe that this subject in respect of the national army should not be going into questions of debate and discussion again here on the floor. I have objections to it.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members the Member Mr. Felix has stated his opinion. The Government side through two Ministers have stated or justified and defended these figures. We cannot and will not go beyond that.

**Mr. Harmon:** Line Item 6282 – Equipment Maintenance – could the Hon. Minister say whether the maintenance of coast guards' vessels are catered for in this figure of \$320 million.

**Bishop Edghill:** The answer to that is yes. It is maintenance of both the Coast Guard and the Air Corp.

**Mr. Harmon:** A follow up question please; could the Hon. Minister say how many of the Coast Guard vessels are catered for under this particular line item?

**Bishop Edghill:** I would answer that question by saying all, and I would refrain from discussing how many because I believe that is a matter of national security.

**Mr. Felix:** Line Item 6281- my question is whether the Guyana Defence Force has privatised security.

**Bishop Edghill:** The answer to that is no. The security referred to here is security being provided at the request of a former Brigadier of the Guyana Defence Force; he prefers to have a private security service as against military security.

**Mr. Jones:** Comrade Chairman, line item 6294 – Maintenance of Sea and River Defences – we see a request for \$450.3 million dollars. Could the Hon. Minister explain what falls under this caption “Other”?

**Bishop Edghill:** Security, medical and agriculture are the three broad headings that I am comfortable in giving under this line item.

**Mr. Jones:** A follow up question: you would note under line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies – there is a provision there for drugs and medical supplies. Is the Hon. Minister confirming that under line item 6294 is for the same request?

**Bishop Edghill:** The line item that refers to drugs speaks particularly to drugs and pharmaceuticals and the rest of it. When I say medical we are talking here about surgeries, spectacles and things of that nature.

**Mr. Scott:** Under line item 6282 – Security Services – if you had a problem before on answering anything about security I do not mind if we ask, Mr. Chairman, to clear the room under the Standing Orders so Parliamentarians can get personal information. I do not know how, and I do not believe that security has a line to be drawn when it is...

**Mr. Chairman:** Can I advise Hon. Members, those of you who are here for the first time, I would like to say that the issue of security has always been sensitive and has always been respected in so far as us not divulging information that could expose or compromise the national security of Guyana. In the Ninth Parliament we did establish a standing committee for the security sector. It was also attached to that committee that all members of the Committee sign the Official Secrets Declaration. So, that remains a standing feature. So, only members of the Security Sector Committee will be allowed access to certain levels of security clearance so to

speak. It has always been the accepted practice in the House that we do not go into things like material and purchasing of equipment or weaponry or things of that nature.

**Mr. Scott:** I am just trying to protect against the abuse of the word “security” when people do not want to answer certain questions as I have seen over the years being here. For example, they may have a decision to purchase a certain type of gun, maybe an AK47 as against an M16. We have to be concerned with the money that we are spending. We have to be able to be in a position, even if it is by a small committee, to determine that our money is spent in the right direction. You would be surprised to know that that way a lot of the taxpayers’ money can be misused and misspent. However, the question on security services is whether I heard the Minister say that the security costing \$7 million dollars is provided for an ex officer of the GDF? Is that what it is for?

**Bishop Edghill:** I would be very consistent when I give my budget speech. I asked to the House to be very consistent and constructive as we deliberate. I would consistent in the way I have answered questions before. I can name the security firm. I will not name where the residence is or who the individual is. The firm is Calibre Security and it is for former retired brigadier of the Guyana Defence Force who opted to have private security as against maintaining the tradition of the army where the army provides the security to him.

**Mr. Scott:** A follow up question: you are in position where the army is subsidising a private company to the tune of \$7 million when the army has a duty regardless of the request of the ex officer to provide that security and see that that money remains inside.

**Minister of Education [Ms. Manickchand]:** Sir, I just find this a little embarrassing to whoever the retired Brigadier is, whoever Bishop Edghill is not naming and I prefer that it stays that way. I find this embarrassing to that person who is not here and cannot defend himself. The Hon. Member really should know better.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, thank you. I do not find that the former Brigadier is bringing himself or has been brought into disrepute. I think we are at the stage where the Hon. Minister has answer to extent he said he will go. I respect that; that is that he has named the security service. He said that that Brigadier has opted to have private security. I think we should respect that and move on.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, just to correct something, because I would not like information to leave the House, that a security firm is being paid \$7 million. The private security is one aspect. The Guyana Defence Force has acquired cameras for security of very sensitive locations and some of that is in this allocation.

*Programme: 531 – Defence Headquarters - \$6,323,710 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 531 – Defence Headquarters – \$452,000,000**

**Mr. Felix:** Project Code 2404600 – Air, Land and Water Transport – in view of the persistent attack by pirates against our fishermen, my question to the Hon. Minister is whether consideration has been given to providing the Guyana Defence Force with adequate and well equipped vessels to perform this role.

**Bishop Edghill:** The Guyana Defence Force is building capacity, and that is not an event, it is a process.

**Mr. Chairman:** We have been hearing that for the past 15 years, Sir. Go ahead. My only concern is whether the issue with the piracy was as a result of vessels, or intelligence and other things having to come together to counter that. So, your answer is that you are building capacity to be able to counter. Thank you.

**Bishop Edghill:** The Guyana Defence Force is building capacity to counter any threat.

*Programme: 531 – Defence Headquarters – \$452,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** We thank you Mr. Minister and we thank you Commander for your time. Thank you very much.

#### **Agency: 57 Office of the Ombudsman**

### **Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 571 – Ombudsman – \$12,266,000**

**Mrs. Backer:** Mr. Chairman, this is a very important office that has been vacant for several years now. Could the relevant Minister share with the Hon. House what efforts have been made during this year to seek to have the office filled?

**Mr. Hinds:** I am glad that that question has been raised, because my advice has been that the President has written to the Hon. Leader of the Opposition requesting that they meet to consider this matter.

*Programme: 571 – Ombudsman – \$12,266,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Could we then move to Agency 58, pages 252 and 253. Thank you.

9.27p.m.

**Agency: 58 - Public Service Appellate Tribunal**

**Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 581 – Public Service Appellate Tribunal – \$16,258,000**

**Mr. B. Williams:** If it pleases you, Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister, whoever that is, indicate to us the two staff members for whom over five million is budgeted? What are the designations of the two staff identified?

**Mr. Hinds:** Just to be sure I heard him say something about \$5 million. Could he say what the line item is? I see something else.

**Mr. B. Williams:** We see there is a Budget for \$5,824,000 in terms of Current Expenditure, and at Staffing Details, line item 6114, there are two staff members.

**Mr. Hinds:** But that \$5 million is for everything. It is for the emoluments and everything else that is there, utility charges etcetera.

**Mr. B. Williams:** A follow-up question: Hon. Prime Minister this has been the situation for the last seven years. This is taxpayer's money. Could you tell us what is the rationale in spending \$5 million a year when there is no Public Service Appellate Tribunal in place.

**Mr. Hinds:** I can recall there were members of this tribunal. I think one may have unfortunately passed away. I am advised that this agency was one of the agencies listed in a letter from the President to the Hon. Leader of the Opposition pointing out areas for consultation.

**Mr. B. Williams:** A follow-up question, please: could the Hon. Prime Minister say to the Guyanese people when the government intends to constitute the public service appellate tribunal for Guyana?

**Mr. Hinds:** My advice is that if not required by law, we certainly desire that it comes out of a consultation between the President and the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. B. Williams:** A follow up question: I am asking the Hon. Prime Minister when his Government – could he give us a time line – proposes to constitute the public service tribunal.

**Mr. Hinds:** I think it is clear that it should come out of a consultation between the President and the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. B. Williams:** I also asked for the designations and emoluments of the two staff members shown in the Staffing Details but have no answer.

**Mr. Hinds:** I am told an Accountant, \$60,000 per month, and a Confidential Secretary, \$57,600 per month.

**Mr. B. Williams:** Who supervises these people?

**Mr. Hinds:** I have been quite comfortable that they are carrying on earnestly with what they have to do.

**Mr. B. Williams:** A follow up question: could the Hon. Prime Minister say who is supervising these two employees?

**Mr. Hinds:** The Public Service Ministry (PSM) extends a supervisory look over them.

**Mr. Williams:** The Public Service Ministry. Where is the Minister?

*Programme: 581 – Public Service Appellate Tribunal - \$16,258,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

#### **Programme: 581 – Public Service Appellate Tribunal – \$2,500,000**

**Mr. B. Williams:** If it pleases you Mr. Chairman, line item 2500900 - Construction of revetment and rehabilitation of fence - \$2.5 million - could the Hon. Prime Minister explain what is the purpose of all of this?

**Mr. Hinds:** The fence to the western side of the building and the revetment at the back - I think there is an alleyway. They are taking good care of the building.

**Mr. B. Williams:** So Hon. Prime Minister are you saying that this Government has no problem spending \$7 million dollars for a building for a tribunal that does not work or does not exist?

**Mr. Hinds:** This building hosts, I think, some four or five agencies including, I am told a Bar Association. Are you a member in good standing with the Bar Association Hon. Member?

**Mr. B. Williams:** Yes, but you would not be in good standing. You have not answered my question.

*Programme: 581 – Public Service Appellate Tribunal – \$2,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

### **Agency 02: Office of the Prime Minister**

#### **Current Expenditure**

#### **Programme 021 – Prime Minister’s Secretariat - \$6,200,605**

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mr. Chairman, I refer to the motion on this item in my name. This is Item 6321. I wish to withdraw the motion.

**Mr. Chairman:** Withdraw?



**Mr. Greenidge:** Yes

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I have a motion in relation to this item 6321- Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - could the Minister please indicate...

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Ramjattan, one second, you said you have a motion with respect to the Prime Minister's Secretariat.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Office of the Prime Minister, Notice Paper No. 53.

**Mr. Chairman:** It is not for current expenditure.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** It is for Current Expenditure under Subsidies, and it is on Notice Paper No. 53, Guyana Power and Light (GPL), item 6321.

**Mr. Chairman:** Very well, go on.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** The question is in relation to the amount of \$6.13 billion? Does this subsidy include the emoluments for the CEO of GPL?

**Mr. Hinds:** I have learnt a word since I have been in this National Assembly, that money is fungible. I can say no, I can say yes. The subsidy is part of the moneys which would be available to GPL and I do not think there is much sense in saying which one is which one.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Mr. Prime Minister, please, we have that line item 6321 which refers to page 396. There are four agencies: Guyana Power and Light Company, Lethem Power Company, Mahdia and Port Kaituma. For Guyana Power and Light Company Limited \$6 billion is going somewhere. I am asking, first of all, what is the money going towards?

**Mr. Hinds:** We think of it as going to pay part of a fuel bill that is estimated at \$25.53 billion this year.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** In the \$6 billion for GPL do we have the CEO's emoluments included in that? Do we have the CEO's emoluments included in the \$6 billion for GPL?

**Mr. Hinds:** GPL has a fuel bill this year of \$25.53 billion dollars and it is a matter of grave concern to us. This bill has been rising rapidly and the \$6 billion we think of it, I think of it, as cushioning the fuel bill.

**Mr. Greenidge:** I appreciate very much the willingness of the Prime Minister to show his experiences with a widening of vocabulary. But it is precisely because of the problem of fungibility that questions are being asked on this item by my colleague. May I ask Cde. Prime Minister, through you Mr. Chairman, whether in agreeing to allocate \$6 billion to GPL there are any conditions assigned to it, that it be used for anything specific? Is the instruction that it be used only for fuel? We understand that you said there is a fuel bill of \$25 billion and that you are proposing that \$6 billion be transferred to them but are you requiring that it be only spent on fuel?

**Mr. Hinds:** That is normally the situation.

**Mr. Greenidge:** But is it the situation on this occasion?

**Mr. Hinds:** Yes.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** I rise on line item 6265. I note that the allocation for 2011 was just \$3.4 million but a supplemental was brought to the House for approximately \$4 million. In the 2012 allocation I note that we are back to \$4.4 million for the Hon. Prime Minister's Secretariat. My question to the Prime Minister is whether all of the programmes were taken into consideration in arriving at this amount allocated for 2012 or are we going to see another supplemental coming during the year?

**Mr. Hinds:** Mr. Chairman, yes, we took an estimate of what I would like to do during this year but in the event that the need arises, for example, I remember one year when there was extensive flooding in Lethem it required some additional flights into the Lethem area, in Region 9. So, yes, this is our estimate, but if circumstances develop, yes, I would be coming back and hope I will earn your approval.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mr. Chairman, may I crave your indulgence by asking that the Hon. Prime Minister look again that at line item 6321. I would like to ask him, bearing in mind that we discussed this matter in another place, whether he still intends to ensure or require the agency to

lay before this House, as soon as they would have completed updated reports on the reform proposals of the entity, so we can see how they propose to deal with the various challenges that face the company, and will be able to live within the amounts made available to them.

**Mr. Hinds:** There has been a whole host of studies, reports and presentations on GPL, and in particular the problem of technical and commercial losses at various times. I have spoken in this Hon. House too about that matter. We have those reports at hand and, yes, we can make them available.

**Mr. Greendige:** I thank you very much Mr. Prime Minister for your accommodation and would urge that you signal to us how soon that might be made available.

**Mr. Hinds:** I expect that both the AFC and the APNU would have at their offices a set of documents which should have been delivered to them sometime after this House began to meet. I do have a listing of the documents we have submitted. I think many of those documents are on various websites, both the Office of the Prime Minister and the GPL website. I think some of our partners, the International Development Bank (IDB), has reports on their website. And, maybe more importantly, the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) holds an annual review of performance and the development and expansion plan of the Guyana Power and Light Company (GPL). I think the last study was held within the last two weeks. So there is a lot of information being made available. With 24 hours notice or less, GPL did put together four sets of documents, two for each of the two parties.

**Amendment to Line Item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – Guyana Power and Light Company - \$6,000,000**

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Ramjattan would you speak to your proposed motion for amendment? Are you proceeding with it?

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Yes, I am proceeding with it.

**Mr. Chairman:** Could you get a seconder, please?

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** I rise to second the motion.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** The proposal here is to reduce the subsidy from \$6 to \$5 billion. The reason is that we are all aware that the Company requires a subsidy in view of a number of challenges it faces. We have not at this stage been acquainted with the plan which will ensure that there is proper performance, and ensure that there is less need for this heavy subsidy. Also, we feel that unless we are assured that in approving this appropriation of \$5 billion, we will see some improvement we would like to see a reduction of it. Once we see some improvement we can come here and ensure that the other \$1 billion that is required, otherwise we can very well see a situation where GPL is satisfied we are approving subsidy after subsidy, like years and years gone by, and there is no improvement. We feel that this is about the best approach to what is called “fire them up” to getting their act to standard.

**Mr. Hinds:** I think the position and presentation of my Hon. Colleague on the other side is unfortunate. As I have said on a number of occasions, and as GPL has said also, the subsidies to them are subsidies to the consumers. It is to cushion the price increases required particularly with changes in fuel. Let me just demonstrate this.

In the system of regulation of the GPL came into place when we had a partner come in, I think in 1999, and we had been utilising the best practices at the time for a return on investment formulation, on income for a utility, in particular the electricity utility. There was a way of calculating the income that GPL should receive and subsequently the rate tariff, the average price per kilowatt hour. With that in place and with an annual process with independent accountants to carry through that procedure ever since our partner left, the Government has been suppressing the tariff that has been calculated.

In 2003 there was the suppression of about \$10.51 dollars per kilowatt hour. It should have been \$59.38 to an average. It was put at an average of \$48.88 and for the year and, I think that was the year when some \$679 million was foregone. Similarly in 2004 some \$1.787 billion was foregone – foregone revenue. In 2005 some \$1.335 billion dollars was foregone. In 2006 some \$1.589 billion was foregone. In 2007, Mr. Chairman, you may remember when oil prices were screaming up to hit about \$150 a barrel we kept the average rate charge at \$57.3 whilst the calculation for the proper return on equity would have given a figure of \$71.63. So there was suppression in the rate of \$14.33 per kilowatt hour and for that year the foregone revenue was \$4.966 billion. Similarly in 2008 it was \$4.239 billion, and in 2009 it was \$5.186 billion.

In 2010 and 2011 when oil prices came down there was no foregone revenue; the tariffs remained constant but towards the end of 2011 and as we entered this year of 2012, when the calculation was made, the tariff was \$64.18. By those calculations the tariff should go to \$82.16, an increase of some \$17.97.

So we see from 2003 to the end of 2011 there has been a suppression of \$19.782 billion. There is really a gap of some \$11 billion at this time, thus \$6 billion is what we are allocating so the pressure will be kept on GPL to ensure they be as efficient as they could.

But I may point out the other thing too when money is short what is offered forces one to make decisions that may be more costly than when money is available, and maybe even more so when the money is assured. Certainly, GPL is walking a tight rope primarily because of the suppression of tariffs so that the customers out there are cushioned from the full force of what the tariff ought to be. So we find this proposal to cut the tariff ill advised and think it runs the risk of making for a more costly operation for GPL during this year.

I would like to urge my Hon. Colleague Mr. Ramjattan to rethink this motion of his. I would like to urge all the members on the other side, individually, because I do not think any one of us want to take a position which essentially says there should be increases in the electricity tariffs.

I rest my case and hope there would be some reconsideration of this action.

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Mr. Chairman, you must appreciate that every time I stand up the space is too small. The Hon. Prime Minister has certainly articulated the travail of the Guyana Power and Light. We are not oblivious of the problems as well as the challenges facing GPL. We also appreciate the fact that GPL had difficult circumstances, the time when we could not even find buyers, we could not “fatten it” - I hope you will appreciate the term I would use – “fatten it” enough to be slaughtered. GPL did move from 32 megawatts to 156 megawatts of electricity. We are looking at a growing GPL and the type of supplies which have been expanding every year; a small population with a very vast territory.

*9.57 p.m.*

We are in total sympathy here with GPL and have taken a position of national interest. Looking at the ominous picture painted by the Hon. Prime Minister, actually the asking amount of GPL

could have been in the vicinity of \$11 billion. We are not out of the woods, GPL may still pursue its quest of a tariff increase whether or not you give it the entire \$6 billion now there is no guarantee or certainty that GPL will not return for an additional bail out and or impose tariff increases on the consumer. That is from the information released to us by the Hon. Prime Minister a few minutes ago.

Also, what we are saying here and I do not want to make a long speech because I have... [Mr. Seeraj: Well sit down.] Sometimes it amazes me Sir; it amazes me very much, I do not want to really take on some of these elements, but they are Hon. Elements in this House and can sit in their seats and when we are trying to work for this nation with rationality and seriousness, they make a laughing stock; Members of the PPP benches, of course. We are saying that for the larger good of this Nation, GPL ought to become a guarantor. As a guarantor for the Amaila Falls Project, whenever that comes on board, it becomes a reliable flagship of electricity supply in case there should have unforeseen circumstances in the delivery of the Amaila's Falls Project electricity flows.

We have seen and the Government knows this...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member one second please. Hon. Prime Minister I will need you to move that motion, it is 10 o'clock.

*Assembly resumed*

**Mr. Hinds:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to propose that we suspend Standing Order No. 11 so that we can continue to the end of this budget process.

**Ms. Ally:** Mr. Speaker I would like to move an amendment to the Prime Minister's motion. Because of the very important negotiations as you would know, Office of the President and Office of the Prime Minister had to be shifted to today. We have three ministries apart from the Office of the Prime Minister to consider and I think they are very important ministries – Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Legal Affairs and the Ministry of Finance.

I want to also make the point that our purpose is to scrutinise this budget and we would like to move that there be an extension of an additional day so that the other three ministries can be

considered tomorrow. We can finish off the Office of the Prime Minister this evening, but that we continue tomorrow with the other three ministries. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members there is a motion on the floor and an amendment to that motion. Is there a seconder to your amendment Ms. Ally?

**Mrs. Backer:** I second it.

**Dr. Singh:** Mr. Speaker, it would be recalled that, on the first day that these Estimates were to have been considered a request was made of the Government whether we were willing to meet with Members of the Opposition to discuss certain concerns they had in relation to the Estimates. That question was asked by the Hon. Member Mrs. Lawrence and accommodated, quite appropriately so Sir, by your good self. I responded immediately on behalf of the Government and said that we would be pleased to meet and discuss the matter before us, provided that the concerns referred to were documented in advance and the schedule for consideration of the National Estimates be adhered to in its entirety.

On the basis of that question asked and response offered, you convened, Mr. Speaker, a meeting later that evening. His Excellency, the President very kindly accommodated us in his office the next morning at which lengthy discussions ensued between the delegations led by the His Excellency the President and the distinguished Leader of the Opposition. And I believe we met every day since then, if I am not mistaken with, I suspect, the sole exception of this morning, today and Saturday. In fact, we met from 8 in the morning to 4 in the afternoon on Sunday and last night from 7 in the evening until one (1a.m) in the morning.

You indicated Sir your availability to work through the night to honour the condition that we agreed to when we commenced consideration of these Estimates and I wish to make it pellucidly clear that we on the Government benches are available to work through the night and into the morning so that the business of the people of Guyana is not detained.

I will say that even if it were to be purely for symbolic reasons, I would have thought that the Opposition would have at least made some pretence at honouring the understandings we had at the beginning and that is to say we would adhere with the schedule we agreed to unanimously. This was not a schedule concocted by the Government or by the Government and your good self.

This was a schedule considered by the Business Sub-Committee of the Committee of Supply. A schedule that accommodated recommendations and changes suggested by the Opposition and a report that was proposed and seconded by me, I had the privilege of proposing the approval of the report and the Hon. Member, Mr. Carl Greenidge, seconded the adoption of that report.

I would have thought that even if this were to be regarded as a small symbolic gesture of good faith, the Opposition would have given us at least that small symbolic offering that they are sincere about the things that they say they will do.

But here we have before us tonight in the Hon. Member, Ms. Amna Ally's motion to amend the Prime Minister's motion, confirmation to the people of Guyana that even in the simplest of undertakings the Opposition is incapable of good faith and incapable of honouring Guyana.

This is the most trivial of undertakings and the whole country heard that we were meeting on the condition that the schedule would be adhere to and if they cannot be trusted to adhere to a simple condition like that, I ask you Mr. Speaker, through you and through the cameras, I ask the people of this country, what can the Opposition be trusted with? *[Interruption]*

I wish to register our strong disappointment with the Opposition's abandonment I would not refer to how the discussions have gone and what decisions have been taken and reversed and so on. I am not going to get into that because we are committed to good faith discussions and will continue talking because that is the way we work and that is a commitment we hold dear to our hearts. But I will say that what we have on display here tonight is the true nature of the Opposition in this country I urge them, notwithstanding that the motion was moved by the Hon. Member, Ms. Ally and I appeal to the Opposition Leader that it might be a small gesture, but it would demonstrate some willingness to be true to the appendage to our name, we are all called Hon. Members, I would appeal to the Hon. Leader of the Opposition to urge the colleagues on his side of the House to at least make this small gesture to be true and to demonstrate faithfulness to the appendage before our names and that is to say that we are honourable people.

We are available to work through the night and I urge Ms. Ally to reconsider ... *[Inaudible]*

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I am a member of Business Sub-Committee that negotiated the days, the ministries and the time periods of each day. What the Hon. Minister is seeking to do is to make



us dishonourable notwithstanding all of the circumstances that have occurred over the last days, since last week Wednesday. We have had what is called a *force majeure*, in the sense that on that very first Wednesday we started late. Yesterday, because of the arrangement to go and speak to His Excellency, we cut so many hours. We also at the Sub-Committee level indicated that we are going to put aside Thursday in case of any adjournments and loss of hours. We did that and he was there.

We have been having stressful nights, when we are finished here we go to the Office of the President and other places to get our act together. Why is it? We are not being dishonourable here Mr. Minister. We are asking for this extension because indeed we had worked it out, that Thursday will be available for hours lost as a result of ... [*Inaudible*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members there are a lot of statements being bandied around about honour and dishonour. Let me just say for the record that a second meeting of the Business of the Sub-Committee was called yesterday and at that meeting it was decided that if the need arose for us to go beyond the schedule, we would work beyond 10 p.m. for six days until finished. As a result arrangements were put in place for us to have a second break at 8 o'clock, snacks to be provided on the basis that we would complete our work in day 6. That is the understanding, but it is not to say this Assembly in its wisdom cannot alter that, but certainly the record should reflect we did take that decision last evening.

The second option put was that we could extend, but we decided that we would work to the six days, even if it meant going late into the night to finish.

**Ms. Ally:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. I do not think that the Hon. Minister of Finance was genuine in making remarks with regards to being trusted and these things. Mr. Speaker, you made reference to the Business Sub-Committee meeting yesterday and I have in my hands the minutes of yesterday's meeting and permit me Sir, I wish to read,

“Purpose of Meeting

The Purpose of the Meeting was to enable the Business Sub-Committee of Committee of Supply, to review the allocation of time for the consideration of the Estimates of Expenditure for the year 2012 by the Committee of Supply and the Report to be made to that Committee upon –

- (i) That, if necessary, the six (6) days allotted to the consideration of the Estimates be extended to seven (7) days; or
- (ii) That sittings continue beyond 10.00 p.m. to enable the Committee to conclude consideration of the remaining Agencies within the days allotted; and
- (iii) That an additional suspension be taken at 8.00 p.m. for half (1/2) an hour.”

Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, we have both options on the table, one that we extend for the seven days, which we are proposing or two to go beyond 10.00 p.m. The Hon. Prime Minister asked for it to be done tonight, we are asking for the extension to seven days and would like to have it for seven days because we believe that we need that kind of time to scrutinise this budget.

We had a lot of lapse time and are not disgusted over it because we thought that it was very important for us to have the negotiations. My colleague, Mr. Ramjattan explained about the time losses that we have had on Day 1. Last night the Hon. Prime Minister urged that we have the talks, so when we talk about good faith Hon. Minister of Finance, those are the things that we must consider.

I therefore move that we be extended for an additional day, tomorrow, to conclude the business of examining the Estimates for 2012.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am minded to put the question.

**Dr. Singh:** Mr. Speaker, may I point out that notwithstanding that this second meeting of the Business Sub-Committee of the Committee of Supply took place and notwithstanding that the Committee was technically quorate, may I point out that from each of the parties, senior membership of the representation was absent from the meeting... *[Interruption]*

In the case of the People’s Progress Party, I was absent; in the case of APNU, Mr. Greenidge was absent; and in the case of the AFC, Mr. Ramjattan was absent... *[Interruption]*

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Mr. Speaker on a point of order.

**Mr. Speaker:** Allow the Minister to speak. What is the point of order Mrs. Lawrence? There is no point of order. He is stating a fact that senior members were not present.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Mr. Speaker could you hear me out?

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes please. Have a seat Mr. Minister.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** You, yourself Sir and the Hon. Finance Minister cannot decide for A Partnership of National Unity who is senior. That is a matter for A Partnership for National Unity to decide.

**Mr. Speaker:** But Hon. Member, Mrs. Lawrence, there is nothing out of order for a Minister to name Mr. Greenidge as a senior member of APNU... [*Interruption*] Is he or is he not? The most important thing is that the meeting was quorate and could have proceeded.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** You cannot decide that for us.

**Dr. Singh:** I do not know if Mrs. Lawrence is suggesting that Mr. Greenidge is not to be described as a senior member of APNU. [*Interruption*] I did not say more senior, I said notwithstanding that senior membership from the respective representation... [*Interruption*] Well Mr. Speaker front bench representation was absent. That notwithstanding, my absence, Mr. Greenidge's absence and Mr. Ramjattan's absence were all on account of the fact that we were continuing the discussions with which we were engaged. My point is a very simple one, in the eyes of the public of this country, a prerequisite to these discussions, in fact, certain prerequisites to these discussions, were agreed. One of those prerequisites was that we will adhere to the schedule. Mr. Speaker, my submission to you... I have no doubt will put the matter to the vote and I have no doubt that one again the tyranny of one shall prevail.

The point that I am making is that we all understood that we were having these discussions, provided that the scheduled agreed to will be adhered to. Frankly speaking, it probably will come as no surprise to the people of this country that the APNU and the AFC will once again renege on their commitment.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members I wish to put the question. The Business Sub-Committee met, it had a quorum and decisions were made. I wish to put the amendment first, that is, we proceed to the end of the Prime Minister's Office and Secretariat tonight and resume tomorrow Thursday the 26<sup>th</sup> for the consideration of the three remaining ministries.

*Amendment put.*

**Mr. Hinds:** Division!

**[Interruption]**

**The Clerk [Mr. Isaacs]:** Mr. Speaker I cannot hear.

**Mr. Speaker:** We will need order to take the count please; quiet and order.

*Committee divided: Ayes 33, Noes 32, as follows:*

*Ayes*

*Noes*

Mr. T. Williams

Mr. Jaffarally

Ms. Marcello

Mr. Damon

Dr. Ramayya

Dr. V. Persaud

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe

Rev. Dr. Gilbert

Mrs. Hughes

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Ramjattan

Mr. Neendkumar

Ms. Ferguson

Mr. Lumumba

Mr. Morian

Ms. Shadick

Mr. Allen

Mr. Chand

Mr. Jones

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Adams

Mr. Nadir

Mrs. Baveghems

Ms. Teixeira

Mr. Sharma

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Bulkan

Mr. Whittaker

Mr. Bond

Mr. Baksh

Ms. Kissoon

Mrs. Sukhai

Mr. Trotman

Ms. Webster

Ms. Selman

Ms. Manickchand

Mr. Allicock

Mr. G. Persaud

Ms. Wade

Mr. Benn

Mr. Felix

Dr. Anthony

Ms. Hastings

Mr. Ali

Mr. Scott

Dr. Ramsaran

Mr. Harmon

Dr. Westford

Mr. Greenidge

Mr. R. Persaud

Mrs. Backer

Dr. Singh

Dr. Norton

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett

Mrs. Lawrence

Mr. Nandlall

Mr. B. Williams

Dr. Ramsammy

Ms. Ally

Mr. Rohee

Dr. Roopnarine

Mr. Hinds

Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger

*Amendment put and agreed to.*

*Standing Order suspended.*

**Ms. Teixeira:** Can I ask for clarification. The Prime Minister's sector includes Parliament Office, will we be doing that tonight?

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Right.

*Assembly in Committee of Supply*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, Mr. Nagamootoo was on his feet when I interrupted him to invite the Prime Minister to...

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Thank you Mr. Chairman. One more day I suppose is a song, "One day at a time sweet Jesus". One more day I have to stare in the face of tyranny. But as I was saying when the intervention took place, if we are to hold up the Guyana Power and Light as the flagship of electricity, we have to be very mindful that we hold out a genuine assurance to potential investors in the Amaila Falls Project, which we all welcome.

It is in the interest of the nation therefore any subvention to GPL should be tied to stringent conditionality. That is, they cut their deficiencies, particularly the line loss which is about 30% and commercial losses. Therefore, when we on this side proposed that we will cut the allocation by \$1 billion and will support the GPL having \$5 billion we believed that incrementally depending on the results we see as responsible legislators, guardians of the public funds, that we are doing our jobs.

We also have been talking about the fuel bill of GPL. That this money is needed for the fuel bill and there may be an uncertainty as to whether fuel prices will increase further. We do not feel that good business practice requires that we commit all \$6 billion right now to fuel rather than judiciously looking at the requirements of GPL. Therefore, we are prepared to make a commitment that once we have accountability and once there is prudent management and use of this scarce resource and better performance by GPL, we give an assurance that we will come back here, if the Government so require, to vote for a supplementary appropriation.

We do not believe in the consumers being asked to pay more for electricity. We agree that we will support helping GPL to avoid the electricity hike and we believe that the rational way to do

so is not by pouring down money like water on duck's back, but to do so tonight, to vote for \$5 billion with a guarantee that if we see results, they get the other billion dollar.

**Mr. Hinds:** Mr. Speaker, I will like to make some short responses to what the Hon. Gentleman said. He said a number of contradictory things. Indeed when he spoke about the larger good of this Nation and when he talked about GPL establishing credit worthiness, sufficient to attract the support of equity and loan investors for the Amaila Falls Project, which he seems to explicitly accept that we need and I am going to hold him to that.

*10.27 p.m.*

Then he goes on to speak about the travails and GPL (Guyana Power and Light Company) and he seems to imply inefficiencies and so on. I would never hold, Mr. Chairman, Hon. Members, that we cannot do better. I believe in the saying that we get better every day with each day's experience. We learn from each day and I have been holding GPL to that position but when he speaks about being sensitive to the credit worthiness, the picture that is established for GPL – either he does not know and appreciate the management of such a large cooperation... For example GPL, at this time, is taking three shipments of fuel per month, each one of which is, at this time at least \$0.7 billion. To cut off \$1 billion at this time when, as I have revealed, as much as I was reluctant to do, the total gap at this time at GPL is \$11 billion... When one looks to the foregone revenue one would see a picture of up to \$19 billion. One has to see the \$11 billion in that context. Having forced me to make such revelation certainly does not add to the picture of credit worthiness of the GPL but let me say that the issue is not the credit worthiness of GPL, but the readiness of the people of Guyana – us here – to maintain the kind of flows of revenue that is required to sustain the kind of electricity that we all want and need and are worthy of.

I think that to cut this \$1 billion at this time, when three shipments each month require \$0.7 billion or more on each shipment, I think, is putting GPL into a very hazardous situation. When one runs risks, there is often the situation where one side is flat, it goes up and then one comes to the tipping point. GPL is running quite close to a tipping point and there is no elbow room. If things run a day late one is over the hill. I think that this cutting of \$1 billion is extremely ill advised. I would have hoped that the Members on the other side might, instead, have encouraged us on the Government Side to even increase this allocation so that we could be more

comfortable, particularly when the Hon. Member, Mr. Nagamootoo, has been so sensitive to the requirement for a good credit image for the GPL. I will be telling no tales out of school that this is an issue at the moment. He spoke about losses and I have mentioned in my address during the debate period that this is an area which is a big blot on the nation.

On the line-loss side, we have now a programme with a soft loan to greatly improve and upgrade our transmission. Ever since the end of the 1980s there were reports suggesting that there should be at least three substations. That was not done. We wanted generation; now we have come and we are now putting in seven substations around the country and approximately USD\$42 million and we need some more.

I think that the Hon. Member should reconsider his proposal to cut this budget and he should join us in expressing appreciation to the CEO and management of GPL and to certainly join us when we take action against those people... For example, someone was telling me that they know of individuals in GPL who do “fix up” with people with bills – people in the computer systems and so on. They do various things that experts know how to do so that it appears that the bills are paid or at least there is doubt for some time. I would hope that they would join with us, bring this information to us, and when we take action they will support us and be with us when we take action on such things.

I think that we are misguided. It is unfortunate that there has been a feeling in our country, and not our country alone, as such that when we first went out to look for persons to be partners with us to improve our electric utility service – I do not need to recall the state it was in during 1992 – when we went out there was a very good group that stayed with us all the way for over a year, spent a lot of money, then at the very end they said “You know, we have committed a lot of time. We have invested a lot of money but we are going to hold and not take the final step because our experience around the world has been that countries where the GDP is less than \$3,000 per person there is usually social and political difficulties for people to accept that they have to pay for electricity.” I would have hoped that we Guyanese would have demonstrated that we are a cut above the rest. I would have hoped that the Members on the other side would have wanted to join with us and show that we are responsible people. We may not have as much as others but when it comes to honour and when it comes to respectability we would have shown that we are a cut



above the rest. That is what I would have hoped and I hope that the Members on the other side would reconsider their position. I rest my case, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** I think that we have exhausted the debate.

**Mrs. Backer:** I have been trying, Sir, for the longest while to ask a question on another Line Item.

**Mr. Chairman:** But I need to put the Amendment.

**Mrs. Backer:** Okay. Then we will go to the other questions. This is on the same page, Sir. I just do not want to miss it. Line Item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Hon. Prime Minister, just to shift your focus a bit, there are 11 contracted employees, last year there were 14. Last year the figure spent was \$16.6 million, when there were 14 employees. This year, with a target of 11 employees, your secretariat proposes to spend \$17.922 million. Could you share with the honourable House the three most senior of the 11 contracted employees, firstly.

**Mr. Hinds:** The three most senior, Mdm., one Personal Assistant and the salary is \$170,000, PAS - \$158,000 and another special assistant to the Prime Minister - \$120,000.

**Mrs. Backer:** Could you explain, Hon. Prime Minister, what is responsible for that increase? While you are decreasing by three you are increasing by \$1.3 million. Could you share with us the circumstances?

**Mr. Hinds:** My understanding is that there were some transitions – people leaving and people coming on.

**Mrs. Backer:** Hon. Prime Minister, would you be... There is a net decline in the number by three. Could you explain how...?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, it is running late.

**Mrs. Backer:** Hon. Prime Minister, are there people now, of the 11, who are getting more money than any of the 14 used to get? I am just trying to figure out how we have a decrease of three people... The figures you have called are not extravagant figures, so what accounts for that increase of \$1.3 million?

**Mr. Hinds:** I said that I think on our side, in our submissions to the Ministry of Finance, because of these transitions which happened – people leaving and people some coming on – that we actually have on staff now 13 such contracted persons.

*Question put.*

**Mr. Hinds:** Division.

*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

Mr. Allen

Mr. Jones

Mr. Adams

Mrs. Baveghems

Mr. Sharma

Mr. Bulkan

*Noes*

Mr. Jaffarally

Mr. Damon

Dr. V. Persaud

Rev. Dr. Gilbert

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Neendkumar

Mr. Lumumba

Ms. Shadick

Mr. Chand

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Nadir

Ms. Teixeira

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Whittaker

|                           |                        |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Mr. Bond                  | Mr. Baksh              |
| Ms. Kissoon               | Mrs. Sukhai            |
| Mr. Trotman               | Ms. Webster            |
| Ms. Selman                | Ms. Manickchand        |
| Mr. Allicock              | Mr. G. Persaud         |
| Ms. Wade                  | Mr. Benn               |
| Mr. Felix                 | Dr. Anthony            |
| Ms. Hastings              | Mr. Ali                |
| Mr. Scott                 | Dr. Ramsaran           |
| Mr. Harmon                | Dr. Westford           |
| Mr. Greenidge             | Mr. R. Persaud         |
| Mrs. Backer               | Dr. Singh              |
| Dr. Norton                | Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett |
| Mrs. Lawrence             | Mr. Nandlall           |
| Mr. B. Williams           | Dr. Ramsammy           |
| Ms. Ally                  | Mr. Rohee              |
| Dr. Roopnarine            | Mr. Hinds              |
| Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger |                        |

*Amendment carried.*

*Line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, amended to \$5,000,000.*

*Programme: 021 – Prime Minister’s Secretariat – \$5,200,605,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

## **Capital Expenditure**

### **Agency: 02 – Office of the Prime Minister**

#### **Programme: 021 – Prime Minister Secretariat – \$2,024,900,000**

**Ms. Selman:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Project 2404000 – Land Transport: Could the Hon. Prime Minister tell us the type of vehicle that is to be purchased?

**Mr. Hinds:** I am advised that the provision is being made here for the replacement of my VIP vehicle. I think the number is PHH 6929.

**Mr. Trotman:** Project 1701000 – Minor Works: I wonder if the Prime Minister can tell this House what the nature of the project is, where the works will take place and the cost of each.

**Mr. Hinds:** These minor works meet small requests that come along, and I can give some examples from last year, with Mr. Lyndon Stewart of Kingdom Apiaries. We have been trying to take apiculture – beekeeping and honey production – into the Upper Mazaruni and we have been trying to get it to a commercial stage. Approximately \$356,000 was spent from time to time; Mr. Desmond Alli, for the restoration of National Unity Monument spent approximately \$40,000. There was some work done in consideration of various approaches towards relations of the Mahaica Market, approximately \$390,600; there was printing of some safari books with the Pakaraima road that we are putting in – maybe even in anticipation of the call by the Hon. Leader of the Opposition during the Budget Debate for connection of all the villages in Guyana and, particularly, connecting our coastland and our hinterland – so popularising that Pakaraima Road and the safaris, at approximately \$922,000; University of Guyana, energy saving demonstrations, putting approximately 50 energy saving lamps in the library, \$226,000; a book venture on the history of civil engineering in Guyana - \$100,000; lamps for the children’s play park in Linden during the Linden Town Day of last year. Do you know why I grieved that I was not made welcome and that my good colleague, the Hon. Member, the Leader of the Opposition, did not take me along and share a bit of his umbrella, some coverage. Provision was made for Small Business Development Finance Office renovation, approximately \$1 million. I see here,

and I do not know if the Members on my side are even aware, that I received a request for the 26<sup>th</sup> Death Anniversary Observance of Mr. Linden Forbes Samson Burnham and \$100,000 was made available on that occasion. I hope that I have answered the question put as to the kinds of things that this “Minor Work” budgeted amount meets.

**Mr. Trotman:** Mr. Chairman, this is not a follow-up but another question. I am referring here to project 2601100 – Electrification Programme: This is an ongoing project and because of the amount that is requested I wonder if the Hon. Prime Minister can indicate to this House what has been done so far in relation to this project and what is proposed to be done this year.

**Mr. Hinds:** This project is the upgrade of the transmission and distribution system that we spoke about. It is now put at approximately USD\$42 million, most of it coming on a soft loan from one of the agencies in China and they are making good progress. They are expected to complete by about the middle of next year with about seven substations around and, I think, with improvement and extension of substations at Sophia and the various generating stations we have now. There is a submarine cable across the river to take power across the river and so on.

**Mr. Bulkan:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Project 2605400 – Micro-Hydropower Project: I would like to ask the Prime Minister if he would be agreeable to share the project document with this Hon. House. Perhaps I should explain why I am posing this question; this question was posed by a member of the RDC of Region 8 to the REO, Mr. Ronald Harsaywack, and the answer that he was given, regrettably, was that this could be accessed online. In view of that unwillingness on the part of the REO, I am kindly asking the Prime Minister if he would make that project document available to Members of this House.

**Mr. Hinds:** I presume that he is asking for a hard copy of documents available. This is a project that we have been working with the EU (European Union) on maybe for nearly two years and it has come to a point where they have made the commitment of money and we have made a commitment here. I think that it might still be 18 months before construction on the ground starts. I can provide to you some documents as of this moment.

*Programme: 021 – Prime Minister’s Secretariat – \$2,024,900,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Agency: 07 – Parliament Office**

**Current Expenditure**

**Programme: 071 – National Assembly – \$1,191,651,000**

*Programme: 071 – National Assembly – \$1,191,651,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

**Capital Expenditure**

**Agency: 07 – Parliament Office**

**Programme: 071 – National Assembly – \$56,000,000**

*Programme: 071 – National Assembly – \$56,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.*

*Assembly resumed at 10.55 p.m.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I would just like to say that today has been a very long difficult day, I know, for all. It could be described as the day of the long knives and I am buoyed at this late hour by the fact that there is resilience in the Government benches and even some sense of humour which is a sign that we as a people can do what is necessary, apply the rudder to steer the ship properly. We will return tomorrow. The motion has already been moved, amended and passed that we return tomorrow so I will move straight into adjourning the House. Hopefully by tomorrow we will have the air conditioners working properly as well. Thank you. We are adjourned until tomorrow.

*Adjourned accordingly at 10.56 p.m.*