

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
OF THE 67th SITTING OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST
SESSION
(2006-2008) OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA HELD
AT 2.00 P.M.
ON THURSDAY, 11TH DECEMBER, 2008
IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (68)

Speaker (1)

The Hon. Hari N. Ramkarran, S.C., M.P., Speaker of the National Assembly

MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT (40)

(i) **People's Progressive Party/Civic (39)**

(ii) **The United Force (1)**

The Hon. Samuel A.A. Hinds, M.P., (Region No. 10 – Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice), Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications (Absent – Performing the functions of the Office of the President)

The Hon. Clement J. Rohee, M.P., Minister of Home Affairs

The Hon. Shaik K.Z Baksh, M.P., Minister of Education (Absent)

The Hon. Dr. Henry B. Jeffrey, M.P., Minister of Foreign Trade and International Co-operation

The Hon. Dr. Leslie S. Ramsammy, M.P., (Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne) Minister of Health

The Hon. Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, M.P., (Region No. 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo), Minister of Foreign Affairs

*The Hon. Dr. Ashni K. Singh, M.P., Minister of Finance

The Hon. Robert M. Persaud, M.P., (Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne), Minister of Agriculture (Absent - on Leave)

***Non-elected Minister**

The Hon. Dr. Jennifer R.A. Westford, M.P., (Region No. 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni),
Minister of Public Service (Absent-on leave)

The Hon. Kellawan Lall, M.P., Minister of Local Government and Regional
Development

*The Hon. Doodnauth Singh, S.C., M.P., Attorney General and Minister of
Legal Affairs (Absent - on Leave)

The Hon. Dr. Frank C.S. Anthony, M.P., Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

The Hon. B. H. Robeson Benn, M.P., Minister of Transport and Hydraulics

**The Hon. Manzoor Nadir, M.P., Minister of Labour

The Hon. Priya D. Manickchand, M.P., (Region No. 5 – Mahaica/Berbice)
Minister of Human Services and Social Security

The Hon. Dr. Desrey Fox, M.P., Minister in the Ministry of Education

The Hon. Dr. Bheri S. Ramsaran, M.D., M.P., Minister in the Ministry of Health

The Hon. Jennifer I. Webster, M.P., Minister in the Ministry of Finance
(Absent-on leave)

The Hon. Manniram Prashad, M.P., Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce

*The Hon. Pauline Sukhai, M.P., Minister of Amerindian Affairs

Mr. Donald R. Ramotar, M.P.

Ms Gail Teixeira, M.P.

Mr. Harripersaud Nokta, M.P.

Mrs. Indranie Chandarpal, M.P., Chief Whip

Ms Bibi S. Shadick, M.P., (Region No. 3 – Essequibo Island/West Demerara)

Mr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, M.P.

Mr. Albert A. Atkinson, J.P., M.P., (Region No. 8 – Potaro/Siparuni) (Absent)

***Non-Elected Minister**

****Elected Member from the United Force**

Mr. Komal Chand, C.C.H., J.P., M.P., (Region No. 3 – Essequibo Island/West Demerara)

Mr. Bernard C. DeSantos, S.C., M.P., (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

Mrs. Shirley V. Edwards, J.P., M.P., (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. Mohamed F. Khan, J.P., M.P., (Region No. 2 – Pomeroon/Supernaam)

Mr. Odinga N. Lumumba, M.P. (Absent-on leave)

Mr. Moses V. Nagamootoo, J.P., M.P. (Absent-on leave)

Mr. Mohabir A. Nandlall, M.P.

Mr. Neendkumar, J.P., M.P., (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

***Mr. Steve P. Ninvalle, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport

Mr. Parmanand P. Persaud, J.P., M.P., (Region No. 2 – Pomeroon/Supernaam)

Mrs. Philomena Sahoye-Shury, C.C.H., J.P., M.P., Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Water (Absent – on Leave)

Mr. Dharamkumar Seeraj, M.P.

Mr. Norman A. Whittaker, M.P., (Region No. 1 – Barima/Waini)

Members of the Opposition (27)

(i) Members of People's National Congress Reform-One Guyana (21)

Mr. Robert Corbin, M.P., Leader of the Opposition

Mr. Winston Murray, C.C.H., M.P.

Mrs. Clarissa S. Riehl, M.P., Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly

Mr. E. Lance Carberry, M.P., Chief Whip (Absent)

Mrs. Deborah J. Backer, M.P.

Mr. Anthony Vieira, M.P. (Absent)

*****Non-elected Parliamentary Secretary**

Mr. Basil Williams, M.P.

Dr. George A. Norton, M.P.

Mrs. Volda A. Lawrence, M.P.

Mr. Keith Scott, M.P. (Absent)

Ms Amna Ally, M.P.

Mr. Dave Danny, M.P., (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. Aubrey C. Norton, M.P., (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. Ernest Barnabas Elliot, M.P., (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

Mrs. Judith David-Blair, M.P., (Region No. 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni)

Mr. Mervyn Williams, M.P., (Region No. 3 – Essequibo Island/West Demerara)

Ms Africo Selman, M.P.

Dr. John Austin, M.P., (Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne)

Ms Jennifer Wade, M.P., (Region No. 5 – Mahaica/Berbice)

Ms. Vanessa Kissoon, M.P., (Region No. 10 – Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice)

Mr. Desmond Fernandes, M.P., (Region No. 1 – Barima/Waini)

(ii) **Alliance for Change (5)**

Mr. Raphael G.C. Trotman, M.P. (Absent-on leave)

Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P.

Mrs. Sheila Holder, M.P.

Mrs. Latchmin Punalall, M.P., (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. David Patterson, M.P. (Absent-on leave)

(iii) **Guyana Action Party/Rise Organize and Rebuild (1)**

Mr. Everall N. Franklin, M.P.

OFFICERS (2)

Mr. Sherlock E. Isaacs, Clerk of the National Assembly

Mrs. Lilawtie Coonjah, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

COMMENCEMENT OF SITTING

The sitting commenced at 2:08 p.m.

PRAYERS

The Clerk read Prayers.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE-

For Written Replies

1. **NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTORS CLASSIFIED AS EMPLOYED UNDER
THE NATIONAL INSURANCE SCHEME**

Member Asking: Mr. Mervyn Williams

Minister Answering: The Minister of Finance

- (i) Could the Honourable Minister of Finance share with this National Assembly the number of contributors classified as employed under the National Insurance Scheme for the years 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007?

- (ii) Could the Honourable Minister of Finance share with the National Assembly the number of contributors classified as **self-employed** under the National Insurance Scheme for the years 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007?

(Notice Paper No. 273 (Q 192 Opp187) published on 2008-10-16)

Answer:

I am advised of the following:-

- (i) The number of contributors classified as employed as at the end of the years 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007 was 115,064, 114,723, 117,230, 117,425 and 118,232, respectively.
- (ii) The number of contributors classified as self employed as at the end of the years 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007 was 8,843; 9,129; 7,365; 7,335 and 7,459, respectively.

2. NUMBER OF PERSONS DETAINED FOR 48 HOURS OR MORE

Member Asking: Mrs. Deborah Backer

Minister Answering: Minister of Home Affairs

Could the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs provide this National Assembly with a list of the number of persons detained for the year 2007, at each Police Station listed below, for 48 hours or more, who were subsequently released without any charges being preferred against them:-

- (i) Sparendam Police Station
(ii) Beterverwagting Police Station
(iii) Vigilance Police Station

- (iv) Cove and John Police Station
- (v) Brickdam Police Station
- (vi) Providence Police Station

(Notice Paper No. 310 (Q226 Opp 221) published on 2008-11-05)

The Minister of Home Affairs did not pass copies of the answer to the above question to the Clerk of the Assembly for circulation to Members at that sitting as required by Standing Order No. 22(4).

3. ENTITLEMENTS OF FORMER PRESIDENTS

Member Asking: Mr. Raphael G.C. Trotman

Minister Answering: The Hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications

What benefits are former Presidents of the Republic of Guyana entitled to?

(Notice Paper No. 311 (Q227 Opp222) published on 2008-11-20)

The Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications did not pass copies of the answer to the above question to the Clerk of the Assembly for circulation to Members at that sitting as required by Standing Order No. 22(4).

4. **COST OF KEROSENE OIL**

Member Asking:

Mrs. Volda Lawrence

Minister Answering:

The Hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications

Would the Honourable Prime Minister inform this National Assembly whether his Government is prepared to subsidise the cost of kerosene oil which now sells at an average cost of GY\$ 1,020.00 per gallon?

Notice Paper No. 306 (Q222 Opp217) published on 2008-10-31)

Answer:

The Government has been ever aware that kerosene oil is an important item for families of lower income, being a common fuel for cooking and for lighting in rural areas away from the electricity grid. Hence, whilst not subsidizing the cost directly the Government has freed kerosene oil and cooking gas (propane) of all taxes, whilst maintaining the ability to levy taxes of up to 50% on gasoline and diesel (but often levying in the range of 10% to 25%). Thus, while not subsidized, kerosene oil is treated preferentially.

This Government is not averse to Subsidies but is aware that Subsidies are not free – they come directly or indirectly from taxes taken elsewhere or from services foregone. Thus, subsidies are not to be established lightly.

At the peak of petroleum prices, Government was concerned about the impact of the high price of kerosene oil on lower income families. The Government is aware that on October 27, the retail prices for kerosene oil were G\$898 per UK gallon at Guyoil, \$972 at Chevron and \$1172 at Sol and Government kept these prices under review. Government was relieved that soon thereafter prices for kerosene oil started falling and at the time of writing is G\$623 per UK gallon at Guyoil.

For Oral Replies

5. GOVERNMENT'S FOREIGN POLICY ON SURINAME

Mr. Aubrey Norton, M.P., asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs the following question:

*Could the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs inform this National Assembly what is her Government's foreign policy on Suriname?

(Notice Paper No. 296 (Q212 Opp207) published on 2008-10-27)

Thereafter, the Minister of Foreign Affairs replied.

Mr. Aubrey Norton asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs supplementary questions.

Thereafter, the Minister of Foreign Affairs replied.

6. CARICOM CHARTER ON CIVIL SOCIETY

Mr. Aubrey Norton, M.P., asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs the following questions:

- (i) *Could the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs state whether her Government's promise to this National Assembly to establish a specific mechanism to implement the CARICOM Charter on Civil Society has been implemented?

- (ii) *If it has been implemented as promised, could the Honourable Minister state what mechanism has been implemented and what are the effects of this mechanism on the Guyanese society to date?
- (iii) *If it has not been implemented as promised could the Honourable Minister say why not?

(Notice Paper No. 297 (Q213 Opp208) published on 2008-10-27)

Thereafter, the Minister of Foreign Affairs replied.

Mr. Aubrey Norton asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs supplementary questions.

Thereafter, the Minister of Foreign Affairs replied.

7. HEADS OF MISSION CONFERENCE

Mr. Aubrey Norton, M.P., asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs the following questions:

- (i) *Could the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs tell this National Assembly why her Government's promise to this Assembly to convene a Heads of Mission Conference in 2007 was not honoured?
- (ii) *Could the Honourable Minister inform this National Assembly when the next Heads of Mission Conference will be convened?

(Notice Paper No. 298 (Q214 Opp209) published on 2008-10-27)

Thereafter, the Minister of Foreign Affairs replied.

Mr. Aubrey Norton asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs supplementary questions.

Thereafter, the Minister of Foreign Affairs replied.

8. **EXEMPTIONS OF PENSIONERS FROM THE PAYMENT OF WATER RATES**

Ms Volda Lawrence, M.P., asked the Minister of Human Services and Social Security the following question:

*Would the Honourable Minister of Human Services and Social Security share with this National Assembly the procedure for pensioners to access exemptions from the payment of water rates to the Guyana Water Inc?

Notice Paper No. 305 (Q221 Opp216) published on 2008-10-31)

Thereafter, the Minister of Human Services and Social Security replied.

Ms Volda Lawrence asked the Minister of Human Services and Social Security a supplementary question.

Thereafter, the Minister of Human Services and Social Security replied.

PUBLIC BUSINESS-

(i) GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTION

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN OBSERVANCE OF NOVEMBER 25TH
**INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST
WOMEN****

The Minister of Human Services and Social Security moved the following motion:

WHEREAS violence against women and children has been perpetuated for centuries, the twentieth century was marked by a strong and vibrant voice at international levels which lead to its international condemnation;

AND WHEREAS as a result, at the end of the UN Decade for Women, the United Nations Convention against the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was born;

AND WHEREAS the United Nations on December 17, 1999 proclaimed November 25th as the International Day dedicated to raising awareness and renewing condemnation of Violence against Women;

AND WHEREAS Guyana signed and ratified the UN Convention against the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on July 17, 1980 and the Belem do Para convention in 1994, and has been annually observing November 25th for many years;

AND WHEREAS despite global condemnation against violence against women and children and greater public recognition and strengthening of constitutional and legislative frameworks to condemn such violence whether during conflict situations, at

social, community, familial and individual levels, the horrific violence being meted out to women and children in our societies continues;

AND WHEREAS the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act is now in its 12th year of implementation and under review for further strengthening and new legislation on Sexual Offences is drafted;

AND WHEREAS the government's policy paper on sexual violence known as "Stamp it Out", has been placed before the nation through country wide consultations with the objective of raising awareness about sexual violence and introducing new legislative provisions addressing sexual violence;

AND WHEREAS new laws recently passed in this 9th Parliament such as the Prevention of Crimes (Amendment) Act 2008, Act No. 11 of 2008, in relation to mandatory supervision for certain acts of violence including domestic violence and paedophilia, and the recently passed Evidence (Amendment) Bill, No. 22 of 2008, will enhance the prosecution of perpetrators of such crimes and give greater protection and support to the victims of violence, especially children;

AND WHEREAS our society is still baffled by the senseless violent murders of women by predominantly male partners, whether past or present;

AND WHEREAS much has been written and researched globally and regionally about this growing level of violence in peace time and in times of civil strife, this social phenomenon demonstrates that there appears to be many complex and profound variables and factors which contribute to its continued presence in modern day societies in this the 21st century.

BE IT RESOLVED that the members of this National Assembly, comprised of men and women parliamentarians of both sides of the House, condemn in no uncertain terms this continued wave of violence against women and children, and, commit

themselves in observance of the International Day for the elimination of Violence against Women, to use their influence within their political parties, within their constituencies and at all fora;

- to condemn such behaviour as socially and culturally unacceptable in our society;
- to assist victims to seek help and to use the laws and support systems available to victims in order to protect the victims and prevent further abuse and murders;
- to consciously develop programmes, for and with men, and more particularly young males, to have greater respect for themselves and women as equals and to learn to address conflict situations in a non-violent manner;

BE IT RESOLVED that this National Assembly, calls on civil society, not only Women's groups but the private sector, the labour movement and the religious communities, to lend their voices in openly condemning acts of domestic and sexual violence and to develop awareness programmes and support systems to prevent violence as well as assist victims of violence.

(Notice Paper No. 333 (M83 Govt48) published on 2008-11-28)

The following Members spoke to the motion:

Ms Volda Lawerence
The Minister of Health
Mrs. Latchmin Punalall

While the Minister in the Ministry of Education was speaking to the motion the time for the suspension of the sitting was reached.

SUSEPNSION OF SITTING

At 4:12 p.m. the sitting was suspended for refreshments.

RESUMPTION OF SITTING

At 5:17 p.m. the sitting was resumed.

The Minister in the Ministry of Education continued and concluded her speech.

The following Members also spoke to the motion:

Dr. George Norton
Mrs. Indranie Chandarpal
Mr. Everall N. Franklin
The Minister of Amerindian Affairs
Mrs. Judith David-Blair
Mr. Norman A. Whittaker
Mrs. Sheila Holder
Mr. Dharamkumar Seeraj

SUSEPNSION OF SITTING

At 7:50 p.m. the sitting was suspended for refreshments.

RESUMPTION OF SITTING

At 8:15 p.m. the sitting was resumed.

The following Members also spoke to the motion:

Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan
The Minister of Home Affairs
Mrs. Deborah Backer

Thereafter the Minister of Human Services and Social Security replied.

The motion was put and carried.

(ii) **PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

MOTION

**LIVE AND UNEDITED BROADCAST OF THE SITTINGS OF THE
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

At the request of Mr. Aubrey Norton, M.P., and by leave of the Assembly, consideration of the following motion was deferred:

WHEREAS the Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana enshrines the protection of Freedom of Expression in Article 146 (1) and guarantees the Guyanese citizen the "freedom to receive ideas and information without interference, freedom to communicate ideas and information without interference";

AND WHEREAS the people of Guyana are entitled to hear and/or see the presentations and representations made on their behalf in the National Assembly and be able to assess the contributions of all and make their own judgment;

AND WHEREAS the National Communication Network (NCN) is owned by the People of Guyana and has the widest coverage and is in a position to broadcast live and uninterrupted the proceedings of the National Assembly;

AND WHEREAS the Opposition Members of Parliament are entitled to have their views heard in an unedited way by the people of Guyana;

BE IT RESOLVED that this National Assembly agrees that the sittings of the National Assembly be broadcast live and unedited to the people of Guyana by the National Communication Network and that the cost of the broadcast be borne by the State;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this National Assembly calls on the Government to allocate a broadcast frequency for a parliamentary channel as happens in most democratic countries;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this National Assembly calls on the Government to begin the live and unedited broadcast of the sittings of the National Assembly no later than one month after the adoption of this Motion.

(Notice Paper No. 320 (M82 Opp23) published on 2008-11-27)

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:42 p.m., on a motion by the Minister of Home Affairs, the Assembly was adjourned to a date to be fixed.


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HON. HARI N. RAMKARRAN, S.C., M.P.,
Speaker of the National Assembly

**PARLIAMENT OFFICE,
PUBLIC BUILDINGS,
BRICKDAM,
GEORGETOWN.**

11th December, 2008