

.NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
OF THE 7TH SITTING OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST
SESSION (2012) OF THE TENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA HELD
AT 2.00 P.M.
ON TUESDAY, 10th APRIL, 2012
IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS,
BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (68)

Speaker (1)

The Hon Raphael G.C. Trotman, M.P., Speaker of the National Assembly

MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT (34)

(i) People's Progressive Party/Civic (34)

Hon. Samuel A.A. Hinds, O.E., M.P., Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs

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

Hon. Dr. Leslie S. Ramsammy, M.P., Minister of Agriculture

Hon. Mohabir A. Nandlall, M.P. (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica),
Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs

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

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

Hon. Robert M. Persaud, M.P. (Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne),
Minister of Natural Resources and Environment

Hon. Dr. Jennifer Westford, M.P. (Region No. 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni),
Minister of the Public Service

2.

Hon. Dr. Bheri S. Ramsarran, M.P., Minister of Health

Hon. Mohamed I. Alli, M.P., Minister of Housing and Water

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

Hon. Brindley H.R. Benn, M.P., Minister of Public Works

Hon. Ganga Persaud, M.P., Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

Hon. Priya D. Manickchand, M.P. (Region No. 5 – Mahaica/Berbice),
Minister of Education

Hon. Jennifer I.M. Webster, M.P., Minister of Human Services and Social Security

Hon. Pauline Campbell-Sukhai, M.P., Minister of Amerindian Affairs

*Hon. Dr. Nanda K. Gopaul, M.P., Minister of Labour

Hon. Alli Baksh, M.P. (Region No. 2 – Pomeroon/Supernaam),
Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture

Hon. Norman A. Whittaker, J.P., M.P. (Region No. 1 – Barima/Waini),
Minister in the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development

Hon. Bishop Juan A. Edghill, M.S., J.P., M.P., Minister in the
Ministry of Finance

Ms Gail Teixeira, M.P., Chief Whip

Mr. Manzoor Nadir, M.P.

Mrs. Indranie Chandarpal, M.P. (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

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

***Non-Elected Minister**

3.

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

Mr. Odinga Lumumba, M.P.

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

Mr. Dharamkumar Seeraj, M.P.

Dr. Vishwa D.B. Mahadeo, M.P.

Rev. Dr. Kwame A. Gilbert, M.P.

**Mr. Joseph Hamilton, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Health

Dr. Vindhya Vasini Persaud, M.S., M.P.

Mr. Cornel Damon, M.P. (Region No. 2 – Pomeroon/Supernaam)

Mr. Faizal M. Jafarally, M.P. (Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne)

Members of the Opposition (33)

(ii) Members of A Partnership for National Unity(26)

Brigadier (Ret'd) David A. Granger, M.S.S., M.P.

Dr. Rupert Roopnarine, M.P.

Ms Amna Ally, M.P.

Mr. Basil Williams, M.P. (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

Mrs. Volda Lawrence, M.P. (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

Dr. George Norton, M.P.

Mrs. Deborah Backer, M.P. Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly

****Non-Elected Member**

4.

Mr. Carl B. Greenidge, M.P.

Mr. Joseph F. Harmon, M.S.M., M.P.

Mr. Keith Scott, M.P.

Ms Dawn Hastings, M.P. (Region No. 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni)

Mr. Winston Felix, D.S.M., M.P.

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

Mr. Sydney Allicock, M.S., M.P.

Ms Africo Selman, M.P. (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. Desmond Trotman, M.P.

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

Mr. James A. Bond, M.P.

Mr. Ronald A. Bulkhan, M.P.

Mr. Jaipaul Sharma, M.P. (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

Mrs. Mabel Baveghems, M.P.

Mr. John Adams, M.P. (Region No. 3 – Essequibo Islands/West Demerara)

Mr. Christopher A. Jones, M.P.

Mr. Richard Allen, M.P. (Region No. 1 – Barima/Waini)

Mr. Renis Morian, M.P. (Region No. 10 – Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice)

Miss Annette N. Ferguson M.P.

5.

(iii)Members of The Alliance For Change (7)

Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P.

Mr. Moses Nagamootoo, J.P., M.P.

Mrs. Catherine Hughes, M.P.

Mrs. Valerie Garrido-Lowe, M.P.

Dr. Veersammy Ramayya, M.P. (Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne)

Ms June Eula Marcello, M.P. (Region No. 8 – Potaro/Siparuni)

Mr. Trevor Williams, M.P.

OFFICERS

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 1.05 p.m.

PRAYERS

The Clerk read the prayers.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER-

(i) **Mrs. Deborah Backer, M.P., Presiding as Speaker of the National Assembly**

The Speaker informed Members that Mrs. Deborah Backer, M.P., Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly will be presiding at tomorrow's sitting during his absence from the National Assembly.

6.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE-

For Written Replies

1. STUDENTS PRESENTLY ENROLLED AT LEVEL SEVEN IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

Member Asking: Mrs. Catherine Hughes, M.P.

Minister Answering: The Minister of Education

Can the Hon. Minister say how many students are presently enrolled at Level Seven in the public school system?

(Notice Paper No. 16 (Q 13 Opp 13) published on 2012-03-05)

Answer:

There are nine thousand, seven hundred and twenty six (9,726) male students and eight thousand, five hundred and twenty five (8,525) female students making a total of eighteen thousand, two hundred and fifty one (18,251) students presently enrolled in the Grade 7 (Form 1) in the public school system. These figures represent years 2010 – 2011.

2. LEVEL SEVEN STUDENTS PROVIDED WITH TEXTBOOKS IN THE FOUR 'CORE' SUBJECTS

At the request of the Minister of Education the following question was deferred:

Can the Hon. Minister say how many Level Seven students have been provided by the government with individual textbooks in the four 'core' subject areas?

(Notice Paper No. 17 (Q 14 Opp 14) published on 2012-03-05)

7.

3. **ACQUIRING LEVEL SEVEN TEXTBOOKS IN THE FOUR 'CORE' SUBJECTS**

At the request of the Minister of Education the following question was deferred:

Can the Hon. Minister say how much money was spent during the period January 1, 2007 – December 31, 2011 on acquiring Level Seven textbooks in the four 'core' subject areas?

(Notice Paper No. 18 (Q 15 Opp 15) published on 2012-03-05)

4. **ANNUAL REPORTS OF MINISTRIES AND DEPARTMENTS FOR THE YEAR 2007**

Member Asking: Mrs. Catherine Hughes, M.P.

Minister Answering: The Minister of the Public Service

- (i) Can the Hon. Minister say how many government ministries and other departments are yet to table in the National Assembly their Annual Reports for the year 2007?
- (ii) Can the Hon. Minister provide a list of any defaulting ministry or departments?

(Notice Paper No. 19 (Q 16 Opp 16) published on 2012-03-05)

Answers

- (i) As of 2003 the submission of Annual Reports to Cabinet and Parliament by Government Ministries and Departments was discontinued.
- (ii) It must however be noted that Constitutional Bodies, as well as Government and Public Companies and Corporations, are still required to submit annual reports to Cabinet and Parliament.

8.

5. **ASSESSMENT OF PROPERTIES FOR THE PAYMENT OF RATES AND TAXES**

Member Asking: Mrs. Catherine Hughes, M.P.

Minister Answering: The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

- (i) Can the Hon. Minister say what measures are in place to effect the valuation of properties constructed in and after 2007 for assessment for the payment of Rates and Taxes to the Georgetown municipality?

- (ii) Can the Hon. Minister say what measures are in place to effect the valuation of properties constructed in and after 2007 for assessment for the payment of Rates and Taxes to the other municipalities and Neighbourhood District Councils?

(Notice Paper No. 20 (Q 17 Opp 17) published on 2012-03-05)

Answers:

- (i) The Valuation for Rating Purposes Act, Chapter 28:04, makes provision for the valuation of properties all over the country at all times and also at specific times fixed by the Minister. This provision is found at Part II, Section 4 of the Act.

Section 4(1) states:

“The Minister may by Order, direct the Chief Valuation Officer to prepare a valuation list in any area of Guyana administered by a local authority and he may in such order appoint a day when the preparation of a valuation list shall commence; and he may by a further order, appoint a day on which the valuation list shall come into force.

Section 4(7) states:

Every valuation list shall remain in force until it is suspended by a new list.

9.

Notwithstanding, each municipality is authorized by the law, to apply to the Minister for approval to proceed to value any individual property whether new or old, renovated or extended. A municipality is not compelled to await an Order from the Minister to the Chief Valuation Officer, for a valuation list to be made of the properties in the entire rating District.

This opinion from the Ministry of Local Government was communicated to the Georgetown Municipality on several occasions, at meetings held at the Ministry, between the Municipality and the Minister. Nothing prevents the Mayor and City Council from moving in this direction.

- (ii) In relation to the Neighbourhood Democratic Councils, the same provisions in the Valuation for Rating Purposes Act, Chapter 28:04 apply. Each NDC applies to the Minister for approval to value any property, whether old, new, renovated or extended. The Minister thereupon issues an Order to the Chief Valuation Officer, to proceed with the request. If it is for a list the entire Rating District, the Order to the Chief Valuation Officer will so indicate.

It must be noted that nothing prevents Town Councils and Neighbourhood Councils from proceeding to have each property valued or “appraised” for rates and taxes purposes.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS-

Presentation and First Reading

INCOME TAX (AMENDMENT) BILL 2012 – Bill No. 4/2012

The Minister of Finance, on behalf of the Government, presented the following Bill which was read the first time:

A BILL intituled AN ACT to amend the Income Tax Act.

/...10

Statement made at the Commencement of the Debates for Budget 2012

The Speaker made the following statement:

“The nation is watching and waiting and over the next weeks and days, will expect to see unprecedented levels of respect, decorum and tolerance, commensurate with the title of Honourable that Members of this august House are privileged to carry. There are great expectations, and apprehensions, about this process on either side of the House and amongst the populace. In this Assembly, there is the largest concentration of representative leadership and urge us all to remember this.

The 2012 budget should not be seen as written in stone to be passed or defeated in a zero-sum winner-take all competition, but rather as “estimates” to be debated, adjusted, and finally, and hopefully, adopted. Each of you has a stake in the outcome, and on this occasion, unlike any other, each of you has an option, and opportunity, to exercise the right to plant that stake. The government should not therefore approach the defense of this budget as do or die, but see it as its best opening position, and likewise, the opposition should not see these estimates as being there to be destroyed, but rather as the framework on which much more can be added.

Against this backdrop I encourage everyone to deliver to the people the best budget Guyana as ever had. See this process as a necessary and refining one. I will do my utmost best to ensure that we have a lively, and fiery, but not destructive, debate and wish to state that my doors are open to assist with bridge-building, facilitating and mediating if I am needed at any moment of crisis or gridlock. I take the opportunity to remind veterans and newcomers alike of the time-honoured tradition that spares first-time presenters from heckling and remember “do unto others” what you would want done and said unto you.

Whether we all recognize it or not, this exercise of presenting, debating and distilling the budgetary estimates, is power-sharing and inclusive governance in its purest form and it is meant to be embraced and utilized for the national benefit, and the good of all, Article 13 of the Constitution states that citizens, and their organizations, have a right to participate in decision-making “with particular emphasis on these areas of decision-making that directly affect their well-being.” This is one such area.”

PUBLIC BUSINESS -

(i) GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTION

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

Assembly resumed the debate on the motion for the approval of the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2012.

(Moved by the Minister of Finance on 2012-03-30)

The following Members spoke to the motion:

Mr. Carl Greenidge

The Minister of Housing and Water

Mr. Moses Nagamootoo

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

At 4.30 p.m., the sitting was suspended for refreshments.

RESUMPTION OF SITTING

At 5.26 p.m., the sitting was resumed.

12.

The following Members also spoke to the motion:

Mr. Manzoor Nadir

Ms Vanessa Kissoon

The Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture

Dr. George Norton

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

At 7.35 p.m., the sitting was suspended for refreshments.

RESUMPTION OF SITTING

At 8.05 p.m., the sitting was resumed.

The following Members also spoke to the motion:

Dr. Vishwa Mahadeo

Mr. Desmond Trotman

Rev. Dr. Kwame Gilbert

Mr. Keith Scott

ADJOURNMENT

At 9.43 p.m., on a motion by the Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, the Assembly was adjourned to 1.00 p.m., on Wednesday, 11th April, 2012.

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HON. RAPHAEL G.C. TROTMAN, M.P.,

Speaker of the National Assembly

PARLIAMENT OFFICE,

Public Buildings,

Brickdam,

Georgetown.

10th April, 2012.

