

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2015-2018) OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

109TH Sitting

Thursday, 13TH December, 2018

Assembly convened at 10.15 a.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS

MOTION

MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2019

WHEREAS the Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana requires that Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic 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 the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the financial year 2019 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2018-11-26

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2019, of a total sum of two hundred and seventy-seven billion, four hundred and thirty-one million, nine hundred and sixty-eight thousand dollars (\$277,431,968,000), excluding twenty-three billion, two hundred and eighty-seven million, and forty-three thousand dollars (\$23,287,043,000) 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 further provision in respect of finance.
[Minister of Finance]

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: You would recall that there were some amendments made to the treatment of agencies; so we are looking at Wednesday, even though it is Day Four.

Agency 74: Region 4: Demerara/Mahaica

Current Expenditure

Programme: 741 - Regional Administration and Finance - \$227,612,000

Ms. Chandarpal: Line item 6111 - Administrative: I noted that, in 2018, the sum was \$21,703,000 and, in 2019, it is now \$23,696,000. When I looked at the staffing details I noted that, in 2018, there were 14 staff and, in 2019, there are 12 staff. Could the Minister please explain?

Minister of Communities [Mr. Bulkan]: The observation is indeed correct. As obtains in the previous instances that were addressed yesterday, these increases - this one happens to be modest - are as a result of the annualisation of those remaining on the payroll. In actual fact, the 2019 proposal is more or less similar to the 2018 budgeted sum, but it is as a result of the annualisation, the salary increases.

Ms. Chandarpal: Under line item 6114, Clerical and Office Support, there is an increase and I would like if the Minister could please provide the details of this. What we are seeing here is an increase of 20 persons. Could we be provided with the details of this increase, please?

Mr. Bulkan: This is as a result of the transition from contract employment to the fixed establishment. The positions relate to two Confidential Secretaries, two Clerks, four Accounts Clerks, one Store Clerk, three Accounts Clerk II, one Data Entry Clerk, five Typist Clerks, two Office Assistants; some are transitions and some are new appointments. The increase in the Budget 2019 will be as a result, not only the increased levels of employment but also the annualized salary increases.

Ms. Chandarpal: Line item 6115 - Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled: Could the Minister please provide an explanation to this increase, please?

Mr. Bulkan: The staffing levels have gone up by six; it is from nine staff to 15. It involves the employment of two Drivers early in 2018, namely February and April; two Cleaners, employed in April and two Labourers in the same month. That is responsible for the increased budgetary sum in 2019, and those are the positions that they relate to.

Ms. Chandarpal: I have looked at the Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of Guyana and the Accounts of Ministries, Departments and Regions for the Fiscal year ended 31st December 2017, on page 341, under Paragraph 789 and it was stated by the Auditor General that:

“An analysis of the employment details revealed that the Regional Administration had a total of fifty-eight vacancies as advertised in the Public Service Commission Staff Vacancy Circular No. 2/2017.

I would like to know whether the advice of the Auditor General was heeded with respect to those vacancies that existed.

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that there is a bottleneck at the level of the Public Service Commission (PSC); there is a backlog rather. A number of these vacancies are at the Public Service Commission and they are awaiting approval.

Ms. Chandarpal: Could we have an idea of when you think this bottleneck will be resolved, please?

Mr. Bulkan: Unfortunately, I am unable to provide an answer to that question.

Ms. Chandarpal: Line item 6133 - Benefits & Allowances: Could I have an explanation of the increase, please?

Mr. Bulkan: Once there is a transition from contract employment to the fixed establishment, the provisions under that line item 6133, Benefits & Allowances, will increase. The principal reason for the increases here is as a result of the transition of two Confidential Secretaries to the fixed establishment.

Ms. Chandarpal: Line item 6281 - Security Services: I would like to know what categories of security services we are referring to, because generally there are those armed with batons or guns and those who have nothing. Firstly, I need to know what are the categories and, secondly, who are the beneficiaries of these security services? Are they persons or offices? What are the names of the security firms, please?

Mr. Bulkan: All these guards are armed with a baton with a single exception. There is one armed security at the main office at Triumph. The locations that this line item refers to are: the main office in Triumph; the sub-offices in Timehri, Cane Grove and Enmore; the Grove Craft Production Centre; the Triumph stores; and the offices of the Regional Chairman, the Regional Vice-Chairman and the Regional Executive Officer. The name of the provider is the Kalibur Security Services.

Ms. Chandarpal: Line item 6264 – Other: What constitutes Other?

Mr. Bulkan: The activities and expenses under this line item include: the purchase of drinking water for staff members; the washing of vehicles; payments for police escort duties; stipends for the Regional Tender Board members and evaluators; purchases of tokens for officers who are retiring; printing and binding of documents, including Budget documents from the Ministry of Finance; stipends for university students on attachment, these would be work-studies; for public relation, the dissemination of information; and in 2019, the production of Insight magazine for

Region 4, Demerara/Mahaica. It caters for the publication of this magazine in 2019, to keep the general public informed of the progress of projects in the region.

Mr. Seeraj: Line item 6255 - Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Could the Hon. Minister inform us as to what are these other infrastructures he is talking about here?

10.30 a.m.

Mr. Bulkan: The budgeted sum of \$5 million is to cater for repairs to a section of the fence at the regional store at the Triumph office, and repairs to a section of fence at the Timehri sub-office, at an estimated cost of \$2.5 million each.

Ms. Chandarpal: Line item 6273 - Water Charges: What is responsible for the steep increase in the water charges, please?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, it was as a result of arrears owed to the Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI), and I am advised that these arrears were actually owed for about a decade. So, it is to liquidate this amount and it does not represent the current charges.

Ms. Veerasammy: Mr. Chairman, I would like the Minister to explain under line item 6291, National and Other Events, what does the increase in national and other events constitute?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, one of the major additions in 2019, which was not part of the previous allocations, is to cater for disaster relief interventions by the region in needy cases. It is to support residents affected by various forms of disasters. So, apart from that, there are the other usual activities like the Republic Anniversary, Arrival Day, Independence, Emancipation Day, Amerindian Heritage Day, Phagwah, the annual Staff Retreat, Diwali celebrations and Easter. Those are the many activities.

Programme: 741 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$227,612,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 741 - Regional Administration and Finance - \$7,925,000

Ms. Chandarpal: Mr. Chairman, project code 2506800 - Furniture and Equipment: I have noted that there is \$7,925,000 for the purchase of furniture and equipment. Who will be benefitting from these facilities?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, it is for the staff of the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) as well as the RDC councillors and members of the public.

Programme: 741 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$7,925,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 742 - Agriculture - \$366,632,000

Mr. Seeraj: Line item 6253 – Maintenance and Irrigation Works: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough as to inform this House about these works, and if it is extensive we would appreciate if he could lay it over.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the provision is to cater for the maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation (D&I) infrastructure in the region. The increase would allow for the regular maintenance to the drainage trenches and canals in both residential and farming communities along the East Coast as well as the East Bank corridor. It will also facilitate maintenance of two electrical pumps, sluice doors, kokers and culverts. These interventions will allow for relief to be given to in excess of 100,000 residents and 300 farmers across the region. The areas that these interventions and activities refers to will be, among others, Unity/Vereeniging, Grove/Haslington, Enmore/Hope, Buxton/Foulis, Beterverwagting (BV)/Triumph, Better Hope/La Bonne Intention (LBI), Plaisance/Industry, Eccles/Ramsburg, Little Diamond/Herstelling, Golden Grove/Diamond, Soesdyke/Coverden, Mahaica/Grove, Golden Grove and other areas along the East Bank. I note the request to lay over this information and I will be happy to accommodate it.

Mr. Seeraj: Line item 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants: There is a significant increase in the cost of fuel and lubricants. Is the Minister envisaging raising the price for fuel or is there additional equipment or vehicles being catered for here?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I am advised again, as was the situation yesterday, that where the numbers are reflected here as the revised sum, that it does not necessarily cater for total expenditure in 2018. That figure will be recorded in the reconciliation report that will be made available in the first quarter of next year. I am further advised that the actual expenditure will be in line with the 2018 budget. It means that the increase in 2019 will be the sum of \$1 million, from \$13 million to \$14 million, which is not a huge increase.

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Minister, line item 6253, Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works: Could you advise us if the sum of \$176 million for the special project, indicated by the Minister of Finance, to rehabilitate back lands in BV/Triumph, Buxton and Ann's Grove is included in the sum allocated here?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I believe that the project that the Hon. Member is referring to is one being conducted under the Ministry of Agriculture called RAID, the Rural Agricultural and Infrastructural Development. That is catered for under the Ministry of Agriculture and not the RDC.

Ms. Chandarpal: Line item 6272 - Electricity Charges: There is an increase of more than \$13 million. Could we be provided with the details with respect to this increase? Who are the beneficiaries? There is a community on the East Bank, I think it is in Timehri, GAC old road, that is usually the beneficiary of power from Region 4. Does the community continue to receive power freely from Region 4?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the 2019 allocation caters for electricity principally for three electrical pump stations namely at Golden Grove, Victoria and Joyce Phillips. I am advised that the issue that the Hon. Member refers to ostensibly about free electricity no longer obtains.

Programme: 742 - Agriculture - \$366,632,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 742 - Agriculture - \$48,340,000

Mr. Seeraj: There is only one project code, 1701200, Agricultural Development. Could the Hon. Minister give us the sums for revetment works at Victoria, Diamond, Soesdyke and Friendship?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the respective sums are \$13.52 million, \$10.12 million, \$13.5 million and finally the revetment at Soesdyke, that is the outfall at Meertins sluice \$11.2 million.

Programme: 742 – Agriculture - \$48,340,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 743 - Public Infrastructure - \$155,536,000

10.45 a.m.

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6251 - Maintenance of Roads: The first point is that there is an increase of \$13.6 million over the current projection expenditure. Could the Hon. Minister indicate the reason why and could he advise us about the areas where these roads are to be maintained?

Mr. Bulkan: As to the reason why, I think that is fairly self-evident. It is to provide for increased maintenance. There are more areas to be maintained by the Regional Democratic Council (RDC). This would be facilitated via Budget 2019, part of the \$300.7 billion. The areas in question are: Bladen Hall, East Coast Demerara, Beterverwagting, Bagotstown, Diamond and Grove on the East Bank Demerara, Enmore. I think I need to be more specific. They are Bladen Hall School Street in Bladen Hall at an estimated cost of \$6.5 million; Simpson Street, Beterverwagting at an estimated cost of \$8.2 million; Joan Street, Bagotstown at an estimated cost of \$6.3 million; repairs to the last Cross Street, Second Avenue, Diamond Housing Scheme at an estimated cost of \$5.5 million; last Cross Street, New Grove, East Bank Demerara at an estimated cost of \$4.5 million; the last street in Enmore at an estimated cost of \$5.5 million; Supply Old School Street at an estimated cost of \$6.5 million; western section of Josiah Street, Haslington at an estimated cost of \$5.8 million; repairs to the Ogle Nursery School Road at an estimated cost of \$4.8 million. This gives a total of \$53.6 million.

Programme: 743 - Public Infrastructure - \$155,536,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 743 – Public Infrastructure - \$103,128,000

Mr. Seeraj: Construction of bridges at Ann’s Grove and Buxton and a culvert at Haslington, could the Hon. Minister give us the breakdown in terms of the amount and what are the types of material to be used? Are they timber bridges or reinforced concrete (RC) bridges?

Mr. Bulkan: The bridge at Ann’s Grove will be a heavy-duty RC at an estimated cost of \$11.25 million. The other is a wooden bridge at Foot Path in Buxton at an estimated cost of \$6 million. The culvert at Haslington would be RC and would be at an estimated cost of \$4.8 million.

Mr. Seeraj: The bridge at Ann’s Grove would be a heavy-duty RC bridge for \$11.2 million and the timber foot bridge at Buxton for \$6 million, these figures do not seem to add up to me. Could the Hon. Minister provide us with the specifications as to length, width and all of that, to justify the discrepancy in the prices, as I see it?

Mr. Bulkan: In the absence of details which the Hon. Member is confessing to, he has arrived at a judgement. He is saying that there is a discrepancy. We cannot jump to conclusions. There is no discrepancy here. If the Hon. Member is seeking additional details, these would be provided. It is not fair for us to make pronouncements in the absence of the fact.

Mr. Seeraj: I was very clear. The Hon. Minister mentioned a heavy-duty reinforced concrete bridge. “Heavy-duty” to my mind means that machinery and equipment could cross that bridge. That bridge is for \$11.2 million and it is reinforced concrete, which includes steel works and the driving of piles. He said a foot path timber bridge would be constructed for \$6 million. Obviously, in my mind, and I said that clearly, there seems to be some discrepancy in terms of the value for reinforced concrete versus heavy-duty for machinery and equipment as against a foot path timber bridge, hence my question. Could the Minister provide the details, the specification, of these bridges? The foot path bridge might very well be one mile long and the heavy-duty bridge could be over a four-foot canal.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is there information that you could provide?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I did commit to providing the additional information. If the Hon. Member is repeating the conclusions that he is ... He continues to assert that there is a discrepancy and there is none. The information for the specifications for the two projects will be provided.

Ms. Chandarpal: I am very happy to hear that road repairs will be taking place in Haslington. I want to say that there is a Haslington South. I am looking at Capital. The Member has already repeated the line item.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we have not dealt with that. Have we?

Ms. Chandarpal: I am looking at Programme: 743 - Infrastructure. The point was made about all those roads, so it was just a follow-up to that question.

Mr. Chairman: Please proceed.

Ms. Chandarpal: It is under project code 1400700 – Roads. We heard about the road repairs in Haslington but there is a Haslington South that has probably been in existence for more than 150 years now and nothing has been happening there. Now, that the Regional officials are here, I would like to know if they have any intention of fixing the roads in Haslington South?

Mr. Bulkan: Project code 1400700 – Roads: This caters for construction and upgrading of roads in the sum of \$81.078 million. The programme does not cater for the area referenced by the Hon. Member.

Mr. Bharrat: Project code 1400700 – Roads: There is an allocation of \$81million, could you say how much of that is allocated to Grove/Diamond and which road or roads will be dealt with in Gove/Diamond?

Mr. Bulkan: Approximately \$36 million of the \$81 million is allocated to the two areas that was asked by the Hon. Member. These are namely: upgrading of the first Cross Street, First Avenue, Diamond at an estimated cost of \$15 million and upgrading of the Back Road, Old Grove Street at an estimated cost of \$21 million.

Programme: 743 – Public Infrastructure - \$103,128,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 744 – Education Delivery - \$4,563,343,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: First of all, there was an allocation of \$15 million in *Budget 2018*. You would have spent another \$5 million. Could you indicate for what were the additional expenses? Could you outline for what is this \$20 million which is being budgeted for in 2019 intended?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the addition expenses were as a result of participation of over 250 children at the National Athletics Championships. The expenses were met by way of virement.

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6284 – Other: The budgeted sum for 2018 was \$110 million and I note the revised figure is \$189,540,000. Could you indicate whether this additional \$89 million that was expended was catered for via a Supplementary Financial Paper brought to the National Assembly?

Could you advise us why there was an increase of \$89 million, what was it for and why did you under budget of nearly 100%? Could you indicate why there would be an increase of over \$11 million in 2019?

Mr. Bulkan: It was not as a result of under-budgeting at the time of the preparation of Budget 2018. It was a change of policy by the Central Government that increased their remuneration for our Sweepers/Cleaners, a matter that has come before this House on several prior occasions.

11.00 a.m.

The increase expenditure in 2018 was to cater for the increases given to the Sweeper/Cleaners. Those expenses were met by way of a Supplementary Provision (SP) that was approved by this honourable House, recently, and I am sure that the Hon. Member would recall it. It was also to cater for payment of increase salaries for the caregivers at the two institutions in the region; the Early Childhood Centre from \$50,000 to \$60,000 per month. Given that explanation, the increase in 2019, from approximately \$190 million by \$10 million, to \$200 million, I think, the Hon. Member, having been given that explanation, would understand why there is this modest increase in 2019.

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Minister, could you, firstly, indicate to us how much of the increase of \$90 million went to Sweeper/Cleaners?

Secondly, how much went to the caregivers and thirdly, could he say if there was any other category of employees paid from the additional sum or any other activities paid for?

The final issue is, the fact that 2018 is a \$189, million and in 2019 it is \$200 million, it is suggesting one of two things and you could clarify for me. It is either you have additional Sweeper/Cleaners or caregivers or there is likely to be another increase in 2019?

Mr. Bulkan: Regarding the first question post by the Hon. Member, he is seeking to take us back to 2018. The exercise we are engaging in here is the consideration of the 2019 estimates. What we are looking at is the \$200 million which is being proposed for 2019. And yes, Hon. Member, it does cater for some additional Sweeper/Cleaners for some of the facilities, not all throughout the region, and that is the principle reason for the \$10 million increase in 2019 over 2018.

Mr. Hamilton: Before I ask the Hon. Minister a question...

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Hamilton, I would give you the floor, you have it.

Mr. Hamilton: I am attempting to have you clarify for me before I ask the Hon. Minister a question. The Hon. Minister continues to suggest that we cannot query and question 2018 expenditure and that needs to be clarified once and for all. The Hon. Minister cannot come here and increase a budgetary allocation by nearly 100% and suggest to us that I should not ask questions. Mr. Chairman, I would be grateful if you could clarify, so I could continue my question on the same issue.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member is suggesting an increase in this line item of a 100%. The 2018 expenditure was \$189 million. There was increase over the budgeted sum in 2018. That difference was catered for by way of a supplementary that was approved by this National Assembly. That information is already before this House, so the increases that we are speaking about in 2019 are from approximately \$190 million to \$200 million, a sum of \$10 million. I do not believe that represent 100%. I think we need to get that clarity. As I said, the sum being proposed for 2019 does cater for some additional Sweeper/Cleaners at some of the locations in the Demerara/Mahaica Region.

Mr. Hamilton: The budgeted sum at 2018, when they Appropriation Act was passed, was \$110 million. Subsequently, a supplementary came to the National Assembly for 2018. I am asking the

Hon. Minister, firstly, he give an explanation, and I have subsequently asked a question that he is yet to answer, could you advise us, of the increase of the \$79 million on the \$110 million, could you advise us how much went to Sweeper/Cleaners, secondly, how much went to the caregivers and thirdly, if there were any other category of employees that receive sums from this additional money requested by supplementary and fourthly, whether any other activities was catered for?

Mr. Bulkan: If the Hon. Member was not present in the House when the increase expenditure of the \$79 million was address extensively in this National Assembly...

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]

The Hon. Member also have access to the Hansard, which would reveal this information, but, in the absence of that, this information could be provided subsequently to the Hon. Member.

Ms. Teixeira: A follow-up on the same question that my Colleague was asking, the supplementary financial paper that was brought here was not exclusive to Region 4. It dealt with Sweeper/Cleaners in different regions. Could the Hon. Minister say, as this was a policy direction of the Government approved by this House, why is it that there is no increases in the other education sectors in the other 10 regions of such a magnitude as we are seeing here? Why is it that the other regions... and if we go to Region 5 which is the next one, there is no such increase for Sweeper/Cleaners. Are you saying that there are no Sweeper/Cleaners except in Region 4? That is why my Colleague is questioning and wants the evidence from you? We are aware what the supplementary financial paper said, and it is not exclusive to Region 4.

Mr. Bulkan: The increases under this line item is from a \$189,540,000 to \$200 million and the principal reason for that increase of approximately \$10 million, as I said before and I would repeat it, is to cater for some additional Sweeper/Cleaners in a number of locations; the day-care centre at Ann's Grove, the new building for the nursery schools at Strathspey, Craig and Vryheid's Lust North as well as the new wing of the Diamond/Grove Primary school.

Mr. Hamilton: Again, I have asked a question of the Hon. Minister that I need for him to answer. I have asked the Hon. Minister if he could indicate to us, of the \$79 million that was added to the \$110 million budgeted for at the time of the Appropriation Act, how much of that money went to

pay Sweeper/Cleaners, how much went to pay caregivers as he indicated and, finally, how much, if any, went to deal with other activities that he did not mention in his answer? I need the answer.

Mr. Bulkan: Again, I would rely on what my Colleague, the Hon. Minister of Finance said that we are not here in an audit exercise, but we are here to consider the estimates for the financial year 2019, so I think the Hon. Member could very well bring a question, as other Colleagues of his have indicated, for other queries and concerns that they have about historical information and that is one means that is opened to the Hon. Member to obtain the information if he is unable to get it by other means.

Ms. Teixeira: The Hon. Member I wish to remind that Standing Orders 71 (1) states that:

“The Estimates of Revenues and Expenditure for a financial year shall be laid before the Assembly by a Minister...”

And shall be debated, so the Hon. Minister is quibbling and is trying to avoid expenditure scrutiny.

Line item 6281 – Security Services: Mr. Chairman, the budget had \$399 million, a supplementary financial paper was brought about a month ago in this House that increased all the security services in all of the regions based on new hourly rates *et cetera*, so that they then spent \$555,448,000. For 2019, it is now \$651,077,000, \$106 million more than what is supposed to be expended according to this in 2018 revise and, in fact, almost \$300 million more of what was budgeted in 2018. Could the Hon. Minister explain why would there be a \$106 million increase in security over what they added in supplementary one month ago?

Mr. Bulkan: The 2019 allocation is approximately \$95 million greater than the 2018 expenditure. I am advised that some additional facilities are being catered for and for the primary schools, there are additional hours of security that is being provided. The specific details could be provided to the Hon. Member, but the answer is that it is for both additional guards and increased hours for some of the locations.

Mr. Hamilton: I go back to line item 6284, Other, and I am asking the Hon. Minister, if he could layover to this National Assembly the details of the expenditure of \$189 million under this line item for the 2018 and, secondly, could the Hon. Minister indicate to the National Assembly when we are likely to receive that information?

Mr. Bulkan: Any information that we would provide to the Hon. Member, would I guess, could be treated as preliminary information. The authoritative source is the Auditor General's Report, but we do have... [*Interruption*]

[*Mr. Chairman hit the gavel*]

Mr. Bulkan: Sir, the 2018 expenditure... [*Interruption*]

[*Mr. Chairman hit the gavel*]

Mr. Bulkan: ... approximately \$160 million was to pay for 210 Sweeper/Cleaners for 12 months for 134 schools and two day-care centres, approximately \$13 million to pay for invigilators and supervisors... [*Interruption*]

[*Mr. Chairman hit the gavel*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, let us try to ask the questions and let us try to answer the questions as we have done in the past. The Hon. Member, Mr. Hamilton did ask whether something to be laid over and when it would be laid over. I think that is a question that the Hon. Minister is well within his ability to answer and so if there is another question or if there is another comment to be made then they can both be joined. But certainly, if a question is asked, we should try to answer.

11.15 a.m.

Hon. Members, if an Hon. Member is speaking when I am speaking, then I will cede the floor to the Hon. Member, but, certainly, when I am speaking I would like to hear my own voice. What I am asking the Hon. Minister to do is to respond to the request made by the Hon. Mr. Hamilton. That is the request.

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, Sir, within three days.

Ms. Veerasammy: Line item 6222 – Field Materials and Supplies: Could the Minister layover to the House ...?

Mr. Chairman: What is the line item, Hon. Member?

Ms. Veerasammy: Line item 6222 – Field Materials and Supplies. There has been an increase from \$32 million to \$41 million, could the Hon. Minister give reasons for this increase, and probably lay it over if it is too much to mention here?

Mr. Bulkan: It would not take long to relay the information. The principal reason for the increases in 2019 is to cater for the two new early childhood centres. The provision is for procurement of field materials and supplies for those in addition to the 135 schools, as well as a Special Education Needs Centre, literacy clinic, two education officers, chemicals and micro-science kits for the secondary schools to boost the science programmes, as well as grants for the secondary schools.

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Could the Minister indicate what is responsible for the increase of \$25 million over \$74 million?

Secondly, could he indicate what are the other infrastructure, and, thirdly, the amounts to be spent on each of the works to be done?

Mr. Bulkan: The allocation of \$100 million is to cater for the maintenance of other infrastructure in 2019. The list of interventions and activities is quite long. I think, in the interest of efficiency, that it would be better to layover this information.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the information will be laid over.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6222 – Field Materials and Supplies: Hon. Minister, there is an increase of \$9 million in the allocation here, what is this intended for?

Mr. Bulkan: I believe this was the very question asked by the Hon. Member a moment ago, for which an explanation was provided. But, additionally, I can layover these details.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6224 – Print and Non-Print Materials: There is another \$8 million.

Mr. Bulkan: There is an increase of approximately \$5.6 million. This is to cater for acquisition of educational materials. The allocation of \$24.6 million is to acquire items such as journals, lesson plans, pupils' and teachers' registers, dictionaries, certificates, stationery, admission registers and supplemental books.

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6224 – Print and Non-Print Materials: The sum appropriated was \$18 million. The revised sum indicated is \$18.9 million, nearly \$19 million. Could the Minister, firstly, advise us on what was responsible for that increase?

Secondly, this \$1 million that was utilised, was there authorisation *via* a supplementary financial paper? If not, where did the additional \$1 million come from that was expended over the \$18 million?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that, as a result of having much of this stationery and printed material acquired from Guyana National Printers Limited (GNPL), which is a public corporation, a state-owned corporation, the cost may have been slightly higher which resulted in the increased acquisition cost. In addition to that, it was also to cater for the two new early childhood centres that came into operation during 2018. The additional sums were met by way of virement at approximately just under \$1 million.

Programme: 744 – Education Delivery – \$4,563,343,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 744 – Education Delivery - \$287,045,000

Mr. Hamilton: Project code 1203300 – Buildings – Education: For the sum of \$257 million, could the Minister, firstly, indicate whether he has, with him, the details of the works to be done under this project code using the expenditure of \$257 million? If he has it, I am asking if he would be so kind to turn it over to the National Assembly or, if not, if he can indicate to us when the documents would be made available.

Mr. Bulkan: The answers to the first two questions are yes. To the third one, within three working days.

Programme: 744 – Education Delivery – \$287,045,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 745 – Health Services - \$1,304,214,000

Dr. Persaud: Good morning everyone. Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Could the Hon. Minister say why, when there was a commitment to reduce contracted employees by moving them to the pensionable scheme, there was an increase to 25? Could the Hon. Minister also say why and what were the posts, placements and emoluments of the five new contracted employees?

Mr. Bulkan: Usually, it is the case that if these services are required and are of a critical nature, the employment is made on the basis of contract employment pending appointment by the Public Service Commission (PSC). These five positions refer to the appointment of an Administrator at the Diamond Diagnostic Centre, an appointment which took effect in January 2018. The four additional persons are on the payroll awaiting their contract renewals, and I am advised that these are four drivers.

Dr. Persaud: Could the Hon. Minister say if that should not have been reflected on the 2018 payroll, and could the Hon. Minister also say if the drivers were so critical?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that two of the four drivers are ambulance drivers, so I believe that speaks for itself. And no, the appointment took effect during 2018. It would have been after the approval of the 2018 Budget; that is why the expenditure would not have been reflected in the 2018 Estimates.

Dr. Persaud: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: There has been a revised figure of \$623,726,000. Of this figure, according to the Auditor General’s Report, \$617 million was vired to the Ministry of Public Health and there was no reconciliation between the medications received and those which were sent to the Ministry of Public Health. Could the Hon. Minister say whether that has been dealt with, and whether the sums spent were shown in the medications received by the region, even though there is severe shortage across the region in medication, and if this practice, which failed in 2017 and 2018 will continue in 2019?

Mr. Bulkan: The reconciliation exercise to which the Hon. Member referred is a work in progress.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Dr. Persaud. Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, I suspect you do not have a microphone. I did not give you floor. Please proceed.

11.30 a.m.

Dr. Persaud: I understand that there may be some work in progress, but could the Minister say what percentage of medications were received by the region? Secondly, would this practice continue, because clearly it has not been working?

Mr. Bulkan: Regarding the percentages that were received *vis-à-vis* the sums that were provided, that is information that has been requested. That is what the reconciliation exercise will reveal. As I said that is a work in progress as we speak. With regard to what is expected to be obtained in 2019, I will say this, and I will refer to what the Minister of Finance said in his closing arguments during the debates on the Estimates in this Budget, and he said that it is the quality of the spending that...

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]

...will make all of the difference. That signals that the Central Government is very concerned about the integrity of the process or in the Minister's words, 'the quality of the spending'. I think that principle reverberates across all of the agencies that are the recipients and beneficiaries of funding under this Budget.

Dr. Persaud: The questions have not been answered. If it is a work in progress, at least there must be something during the work in progress to say where you are at this point. Could the Hon. Minister say when is this work in progress envisaged to be completed?

Mr. Bulkan: Unfortunately, I cannot provide a definitive answer or timeframe at this point in time.

Ms. Teixeira: Hon. Minister, the Government changed the policy of how drugs were to be purchased in 2016. The Report of the Auditor General for 2016 pointed out that there was a problem with being able to identify what were delivered to the regions. The Report of the Auditor General for 2016 and 2017 pointed out the same thing. You are now telling this House that it is a matter in progress.

Do you admit and accept that the delivery of drugs and medical supplies is of critical importance to the safety and wellbeing of our citizens? Therefore, the issue of accountability of over \$620

million being spent last year, the year before and for which it cannot be accounted for and whether that was the same amount that was requested. It is a simple reconciliation that the Ministry of Public Health and the regions could have done in a matter of hours. It has to do with the Combined Received and Issued Vouchers (CRIVs). The CRIVs put in the request, the list goes to the region, the warrant is made from the region to the Ministry, the drugs are delivered, and then there is a checkoff.

Mr. Minister, this issue of a work in progress is unacceptable. There are people in this country who cannot get essential drugs. Do you accept that the Report of the Auditor General which you are referring to all of the time is your reason for not answering certain questions? The Report of the Auditor General of 2016 and 2017 pointed out this problem. It is now the end of 2018. What are you going to do about this as the Ministry of Communities to ensure that the moneys expended on drugs for our citizens are delivered as requested by these regions? What are you going to do about it?

Mr. Bulkan: I heard reference to the Report of the Auditor General. I would appreciate if the Hon. Member can provide the specific reference, the sections, or pages in the Report. The Hon. Member, also referred to a figure of \$620 million and said that it cannot be accounted for. Again, we are jumping to conclusions.

I have noted the comments made by the Hon. Member.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: Could the Hon. Minister tell this House the dates of the interdepartmental warrant from his region to the Ministry for the procurement of drugs totalling \$623,726,000 even if it was one or more than one. Could we get that now?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that it was a single warrant and that it was done in the first quarter of 2018.

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Minister, the fact that the warrant as you indicated was done in the first quarter of 2018 and we are now in the fourth quarter of 2018. Could you advise us has any reconciliation commenced?

The second issue is, the budgeted sum for 2018 was \$620 million. The revised sum is \$623,726,000. The first question is where you got the other \$3 million and more from? The other issue is, the fact that in 2018 you had to seek added resources, why did you put back \$620 million in the 2019 Budget?

Mr. Bulkan: The additional \$3,900,000 that was utilised in 2018 came by way of a virement. With regard to the provision in 2019 being identical to 2018, I think why we put that here is not the case. This is what is allocated by the Ministry of Finance as part of this Budget. That is the sum that we have before us which is \$620 million.

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Minister, you did not answer the most important part of the questions. Has the reconciliation commenced?

Mr. Bulkan: The year is not yet at a close. As I said before that exercise has commenced and it is a work in progress.

Ms. Teixeira: The Hon. Minister asked for the references in the Report of the Auditor General. I would like to provide those. If we go to the summary Procurement of Drugs and Medical Supplies, paragraph 7:

“Fourteen Inter-Departmental Warrants totalling \$1.789 billion were received by the Ministry of Public Health from ten Administrative Regions for the procurement of drugs and medical supplies. Financial returns from the Ministry indicated the amounts totalling...

Hon. Member: *[Inaudible]*.

Ms. Teixeira: I was asked to provide this. How many speakers are there, Sir? Could I seek your protection?

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]

There seem to be about five speakers in this House. I am asking for your protection. I was challenged to present the Report of the Auditor General and I am doing so.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we have to help one another here. When Members intervene and if we do not like what they are saying, it is no reason to prevent them from saying it. If a Member

ask a question and the question maybe an unpopular question, it is no reason not to answer the question nor indeed not to allow it to be asked. That has to be elementary.

Ms. Teixeira, please proceed.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Sir. Paragraph 7 on page V points out that there was \$1.789 billion spent and that the regions received it. It goes on to state:

“Although drugs and medical supplies were received by the Regional Administrations, the costs were not stated on the documentation that accompanied the deliveries. As a result, the value of drugs and medical supplies received by the ten Administrative Regions could not be ascertained.”

It goes on to specifically to state about the RDC of Region 4 at paragraphs 791 and 792...

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Teixeira, we are...

Ms. Teixeira: No. I am just pointing out that, the Minister appears that I was making up stories. I am referring him to the paragraph, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Teixeira?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: You must ask a question. You cannot make statements, at least not in the way that you are doing it there. Please, ask the question.

Ms. Teixeira: I am reading from the Report of the Auditor General. I was asked. The Minister asked me for the references in the Report of the Auditor General and I am giving it to him. However, if you want me to put a question, I will. Could the Minister say, has he read paragraphs 791 and 792 of the Report of the Auditor General which points out that both in 2016...

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]

...and in 2017 the amount of... **[Hon. Members: What is the line item?]** ...I am dealing with the same line item 6221 - Drugs and Medical Supplies.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, you do know that you have just asked a question and you, then must, allow the Minister to answer the question.

Ms. Teixeira: I have not finished the question. The question is, has the Minister read paragraphs 791 and 792 of the Report of the Auditor General which points out that both in 2016 and 2017, all the drugs were received, the Ministry could not advise on the cost and what was the validation of the choice? Has the Minister read the Report of the Auditor General? **[Ms. Charles-**

Broomes: You read it.] I tried to and then I stopped. **[Ms. Lawrence:** You all never reconciled anything.] Oh, be quiet.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]

...Your turn is coming. Wait for your turn, my dear.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I might have to seek your protection and from you too.

Ms. Teixeira: I will always protect you, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I am seeking to get your attention and for some reason you are not hearing me.

Ms. Teixeira: My apologies, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: What I am saying is that we are dealing with line items and questions relating to those. That is what we must try to do. The speeches are for later. They cannot be for here if we are going to proceed the way we are proceeding.

Hon. Minister, do you have an answer to the question?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, Sir. I believe the Report that the Hon. Member just quoted from is the Report of the Auditor General 2017. **[Mr. Rohee:** Dated.] I did say dated. Thank you. I did

say that the 2018 reconciliation exercise is in progress. The issue flagged by the Auditor General there has to do with prices. It does not refer to the supplier of drugs to the region. This

reconciliation exercise as just related by the Hon. Member there in that Report... [Ms.

Teixeira: You are being facetious.] No, Hon. Member. If you read it, it speaks to prices.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members I do not know if this House should be part of this. We are trying to proceed with the Estimates. We have to stay with what we should be doing and not let our feelings take us elsewhere. Hon. Member Dr. Persaud, you have a question, please proceed?

Dr. Persaud: Could the Minister layover to this House where the reconciliation processes is, at present, since it has been started?

11.45 a.m.

Secondly, could the Hon. Minister say what percentage of the money vired was used for emergency purchases of medications since it was done so early?

Thirdly, in 2019, \$620 million would have been budgeted again, is there provision, since an additional sum had to be used for out breaks and other things that could be on the horizon in 2019?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, we have before us the budgeted sum for 2019. If an emergency such as alluded to by the, Hon. Member arises during the year, that would be addressed accordingly by the public administration.

Dr. Persaud: I asked two questions previously. Could the, Hon. Minister commit to layover where this reconciliation process is to the House? The second question I asked in terms of how much of the money was utilised for emergency purchase of medication.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that the emergency purchases during 2018 was equivalent to the sum of the \$4 million that was vired. With regard to where in this process of the reconciliation, it is not usually the case that this information is provided during the exercise, but rather at the end of the exercise the report will have all the information.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6221 - Drugs and Medical Supplies: Could the Minister specifically state the value or the sum of the inter-departmental warrant that went to the Ministry of Health in the first quarter of 2018? Was it the whole \$620 million or was it \$617 million?

Secondly, the Minister just told the House that there were emergency purchases of \$4 million. Could the Minister tell this House was the need for the emergency purchases a result of the non-delivery of drugs that should have been there based upon the warrant that went to the Ministry of Public Health?

Mr. Bulkan: The first question is \$618 million. To the second question, it was as a result of unavailability. I cannot speak about non-delivery.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: Could the hon Minister give us the percentage of requested drugs that were delivered to the region during this year of 2018?

Mr. Bulkan: Those details on that information would have to await the Reconciliation Report.

Ms. Teixeira: What were the percentage of drugs that was requested in 2017 and was delivered to the region based on the Reconciliation Report? I assume it must have been finished by now.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, we seem to be receding more and more into the past. We are now onto 2017. I would like to respectfully ask that we stick within the parameter, which is the 2019 Estimates. I seek your guidance, Sir.

Dr. Persaud: Line item 6281 – Security Services: I noticed from 2017 to 2018 there was a \$22 million increase in security services. From 2018 to the revised figure there was a further addition of another \$20 million, and now Budget 2019 has \$137 million which is an additional \$12 million increase on security. Could the Minister explain and state what security service provides the security? Has there been any change that warrants this increase?

Mr. Bulkan: The 2018 increases were a result of the increase rates of pay that were paid to guards under the service. The increase in 2019 is to cater for additional locations under this heading, such as, Eccles Health Centre which would be one new facility in 2019.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6292 – Dietary: What was budgeted in 2018 was \$8,200,000, it declined to \$1,300,000, and it has increase to \$8,200,000. Could the Hon. Minister explain what was the reason for the under spending in 2018? What has, now, lead to the figure returning to the original 2018 figure? What are the factors influencing this line item?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that at two locations which is, the Diamond Diagnostic Centre and the Dr. C. C. Nicholson Hospital, at the time of the preparation of the Budget the expectation was to provide for 24-hours service to these two facilities or locations. The Maternity Department of the two locations, this feature did not take effect in 2018, but the provision in 2019 caters for this 24-hour service at the Maternity Department at the two locations.

Dr. Persaud: Line item 6281 – Security Services: Could the Minister say if there has been a change in the security service from 2017, to 2018, and to 2019? How many more buildings than 2017 did you provide security to in 2018, and similarly will be in 2019?

Mr. Bulkan: There was a change in the service provider at the end of the December 2017. There was a new provider in 2018, namely, Calibre Security Ltd. All of the locations that are receiving security under this line item, this information could be laid over for the benefit of the Hon. Member.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6292 – Dietary: Could I return to that? Minister, you stated that the plan was for the two hospitals to offer maternity care for 24 hours and it did not happen. Could you explain why it did not happen in 2018? What were the factors that lead to a 24-hour service not being offered to maternity patients?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the facility is a new construction and it has just been completed which is the Diamond Diagnostic Centre. The maternity ward would become operational in the first quarter of January 2019. Dr. C. C. Nicholson Hospital this was as a result of a grant from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Minister, I think you may be aware that the Dr. C. C. Nicholson Hospital was opened by President Hoyte and when I was the Minister of Health it was a maternity hospital. It was specifically developed, designed with sections that were there equipped for maternity patients. We are talking from 1991 to 2018 now. You are telling me now that there is grant. What does that have to do with the provision of 24-hour service to maternal patients who require care? It is not just about delivery. It is for those who are high pressured patients and who are at risk mothers to be put into Dr. C. C. Nicholson Hospital for care. That hospital has a history as to why it was created. It is not to be a shell on an empty shelf.

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that it was an upgrade from maternity clinic to a proper maternity ward in 2018.

Ms. Teixeira: Unfortunately, the Minister has not understood what I said. It was designed as a maternity hospital. There were beds and doctors in there and that is what it was doing. I am asking, what happened? Why did it change? It cannot be that it was just a grant that caused it not to function in 2018.

Mr. Bulkan: As I have outlined, it is an upgrade.

Mr. Chairman: There would be two questions after Dr. Mahadeo then I will put the question.

Dr. Mahadeo: I would like to direct the Minister's attention to the grand total Budget 2018 - \$1,200,000,000 and the revised \$1,100,000. Actually, we would not be spending over \$20 million. Could the Minister please advise on whether this money would be returned to the Consolidated Fund?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that there is no expectation that any of the 2018 allocations will be returned to the Consolidated Fund. The actual expenditure at the end of 2018 is likely to be in accordance with the budgeted sum - \$1.26 billion.

Dr. Mahadeo: Follow-up: Hon. Minister, are you saying that this revised projection is wrong?

Mr. Bulkan: It is not wrong, but, it is incomplete.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Croal, you will have the last question.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, line item 6255 - Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: First of all, could we get an explanation as to why this allocation has not been spent probably by 50%? I will have one follow-up, because I know you want to close this programme.

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the sums have been spent. The payments were being processed at the time of the preparation of these documents. Apparently, the payments are not being reflected here. These sums have been spent, Sir.

12.00 p.m.

Programme: 745 – Health Services - \$1,304,214,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 745 – Health Services - \$155,140,000

Dr. Persaud: Project code 1203500- Buildings- Health: Could the Hon. Minister layover what has been planned when \$34 million is budgeted to be spent? Project code: 2404700- Land and Water Transport: \$25 million will be spent towards a vehicle and ambulance. Could the Minister say how much would be spent towards the ambulance, how much would be spent toward the vehicle, where will this vehicle be used and what type of vehicle is it?

Mr. Bulkan: I believe that the Hon. Member might be looking at a different Agency.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are on Capital Expenditure, Programme 745.

Dr. Persaud: Project code 1203500- Buildings- Health: the figure is \$115,140,000. Could the Minister layover an itemised list for the House on what is to be spent on construction, rehabilitation and extension of health facilities?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, this will be provided.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 2503700 Furniture and Equipment- Health: Could the Hon. Minister say where is the anaesthetic machine and how many ultra sound machines, electrocardiography (ECG) machines, and Cardiography machines are being purchased? Where are they being allocated in Region 4?

Mr. Bulkan: The provision is to cater for one anaesthetic machine and it is to be placed at Diamond Diagnostic Centre, four electrocardiography machines. Hon. Member, could I ask you what was the other equipment?

Ms. Teixeira: It is the ultrasound.

Mr. Bulkan: There are three portable ultrasound machines. These are to be used at the facilities, namely, St. Cuthbert, Plaisance and Grove, those facilities.

Programme: 745 – Health Services - \$155,140,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, this is a good time for us to take the suspension.

Assembly resumed

Sitting suspended at 12.08 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 1.18 p.m.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply

In Committee of Supply.

Agency 75: Region 5: Mahaica/ Berbice [1.18 p.m.]

Current Expenditure

Programme: 751 –Regional Administration and Finance- \$193,889,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6211- Expenses Specific to the Agency: There are a number of questions under this line item but firstly let me start. In 2018, there was an expenditure of the full budgetary allocation for 2018; could the Hon. Minister indicate what was this expense for in light of the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) not being able to meet?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised this was for the activities that were budgeted for.

Mr. Croal: May I ask the Hon. Minister, what are the actives budgeted for?

Mr. Bulkan: In relation to the meetings of the RDC, I am advised that 10 meetings were convened, but these meetings were not completed to their conclusion.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6211- Expenses Specific to the Agency: Could the Hon. Minister firstly indicate who is the Clerk of the council?

Mr. Bulkan: At line item 6211- Expenses Specific to the Agency: There are activities relating to the proposed expenditure. I think that the proposed activities is what we should be addressing ourselves to.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6211- Expenses Specific to the Agency: Could you confirm that line item 6211 is mainly for the holding of the RDCs meetings?

Mr. Bulkan: No, Mr. Chairman. There are many activities such as, pay for the councillors, Toshaos, Deputy Toshaos, the stipend for those officers travelling for the Toshaos and Deputy Toshaos from Maraikobai to attend those RDC meetings, the Sub-Committee Meetings of the RDC, fuel and utility bills for Regional Chairman and regional Vice Chairman, training for the RDC Councillors, disaster preparedness, and numerous community consultations across the region to learn about the region's needs, to cater for the region's developmental activities, and execution of its plan.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6211- Expenses Specific to the Agency: Could you confirm that the holding of RDC meetings is the expense incurred from line item 6211?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Croal: Could you therefore confirm that with their being 10 disrupted RDC meetings, just being called and not proceeding obviously would not be able to incur as much expense as budgeted. Could you therefore confirm that you have spent the full budgetary allocation despite there being an allocation for the holding of RDC meeting but, yet we had brief sessions?

Mr. Bulkan: We are once again venturing into the realm of conclusions and it is erroneous. It has never happened to me, but I believe that if a wedding is planned and either the bride or the groom does not show up at the altar, the expenses are fixed, they are there. Except for the honeymoon, which would not be an expense relating to the wedding. All of the expenses for these meetings which was convened would have been incurred. Probably save and except if one member of the council was not present or unless he was coming with public transportation for which there would have been a separate cost, then it is reasonable to conclude that once the meeting has been convened the cost would have been incurred to bring all of the councillors including the Toshao from Maraikobai and to provide for his return. The imputation and the conclusion is that it cannot be supported.

1.27 p.m.

Mr. Mustapha: Follow-up question and this relates to line item 6211, Expenses Specific to the Agency. The Minister just mentioned in his remarks that there were 10 meetings, which were called, and it was not concluded. May I ask the Minister, what were the reasons that these meetings fell through?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, if I am obliged to provide an answer, I think the best answer I can give is that it is an absence of leadership, or even poor leadership.

Mr. Mustapha: If I can continue, a follow-up. Is the Minister saying that it is an absence of leadership from the administration, the Regional Executive Officer (REO)?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer is no.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, same line item 6211: You can plan the wedding, you can plan the honeymoon, but if the honeymoon does not happen, therefore, you did not incur the full expense.

Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Could you indicate who are the two remaining contracted employees here? The allocation would have decreased by half, but only one contracted employee was removed. Could you indicate the designation of that person that came off?

Mr. Bulkan: Did you say came on or off?

Mr. Croal: Off.

Mr. Bulkan: I thought I heard you say ‘on’ because it is ‘off’. The one staff that came off was a store attendant, whose contract ended with effect from the 4th March, 2018.

Mr. Gill: Could the Hon. Minister advise who is in charge of Region 5? Is it the REO or the Regional Chairman? It is line item 6111, Administrative.

Mr. Bulkan: Line item 6111 provides for the regional administration.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, the line item was corrected. It was stated as line item 6111.

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, Sir. So, that is the regional administration.

Mr. Gill: I will ask the same question under line item 6211, Expenses Specific to the Agency. Could the Hon. Minister advise who is in charge of Region 5, that is administration?

Mr. Bulkan: The management of the region has many components. The management of our country, of course, it has an Executive President, it has a Central Government and it has regional administration. The regional administration has two components: There is an elected council and there is an appointed element.

The financial resources provided for the management and development of the region come from the Central Government and that is disbursed and administered by a regional administration which is headed by an accounting officer.

Mr. Chairman: Two more questions after Mr. Mustapha. Please go ahead.

Mr. Mustapha: I want to refer the Minister back to line item 6211. He just mentioned that there were no meetings held. I want to ask him how the five programmes were executed in the region. Who supervises the programmes? Who approves the programmes? Who passes payments for works within the region?

Mr. Bulkan: These documents that are circulated to all Members for each of the regions, I think, has the information that the Hon. Member is seeking. It is in Volume 2. If we were to go to that region, it would be Agency 75, which is on page 281. You can see that there are two officers listed there, one followed by the other. That is the hierarchy and the leadership of this agency. I think in the absence of either of these two persons, it is not expected that the work of the region will come to a standstill. That is not what we are here for, to bring things to a standstill. We are here to ensure that progress and development continues.

Mr. Mustapha: In other words, is the Minister saying that there is no need to hold meetings to look at and execute these programmes?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, if I may provide a little more clarity, no, I did not say that. Once again, we are coming to conclusions. But the committees of this council are functioning. I am advised that, despite the fact RDC meetings have experienced challenges in 2018, the work of the council continues, and the committees are functioning.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Mustapha, one more question.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, the Minister is saying that the committees are functioning. But the committees do not make decisions; they make recommendations. The recommendation goes to the RDC for approval and as long as it is approved there, then it becomes a decision of the RDC.

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that authorisation for payments are duly approved in accordance with the procedures that governs the RDC.

Mr. Gill: Staffing details, line item 6111 – Administrative: I noticed that there is a reduction in the administrative staff of one person. Could the Hon. Minister indicate the designation of that person who is missing from the 2018 staffing detail?

Mr. Bulkan: The vacancy is for a Deputy Regional Executive Officer (DREO) who was appointed to the Region but who has been absent from that post from February, 2018.

Mr. Chairman: This is the last question, Mr. Croal.

Mr. Croal: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, could you layover for us the breakdown under line item 6211 – the \$17.286 million?

Mr. Bulkan: Noted, Mr. Chairman.

Programme: 751 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$193,889,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 751 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$15,378,000

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, project code 1208900 – Buildings – Administration: With respect to the extension of the office, could you indicate which section or probably some of the personnel intended to be placed within the extended area?

Mr. Bulkan: The extension would accommodate a new procurement planning unit, agriculture office, and to provide more comfortable accommodation for the accounts, registry and the personnel sections.

Programme: 751 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$15,378,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 752 – Agriculture – \$241,449,000

Mr. Seeraj: Line item 6115 – Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled: In 2017, under this department here, there was five, in 2018 five, and there is an increase to 15. Could the Hon. Minister state how he arrived at 15?

Mr. Bulkan: It is the employment of 10 farmhands who were employed from the middle to the end of 2018.

Mr. Seeraj: Could the Hon. Minister inform us on how these vacancies were arrived at? What created these vacancies? Were these vacancies advertised and received the RDC's approval? What kinds of activities are these farmhands engaged in?

1.42 p.m.

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised there were internal advertisements; applications were received following which interviews were conducted and there were subsequent employments.

Mr. Seeraj: If there was an internal process, could the Hon. Minister inform us of where these 10 people came from, which department? Was the depletion of 10 persons from another department reflected anywhere under the staffing structure?

Mr. Bulkan: It is the interpretation; the notices were communicated internally, it was not that the employment was internal. Persons from within the RDC would have taken the information out to the communities from where the applications were submitted.

Mr. Gill: The same line item 6115, Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled, in a region that is heavily populated by Indo-Guyanese...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Gill...?

Mr. Gill: You have to listen to the question, Mr. Chairman. How could you pre-empt what I am about to say?

Mr. Chairman: I would prefer that you do not introduce the question...

Mr. Gill: In a region that is populated by a predominant ethnic group, is the Hon. Minister aware of the ethnic imbalance employed by the discriminatory policies or practices of the Regional Executive Officer?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Gill, do not...

Mr. Bulkan: I think it is best to offer a direct response to that question. The 10 new employees that line item 6115, Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled, refers to, I will give their surnames and not the full names.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, it is a policy which I have advised and sought the assistance of Hon. Members, not to mention names of people in this room, that remains so.

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised, but the evidence does not substantiate the contention that is being made and I wish to deny that.

Mr. Mustapha: I want to refer the Minister back to line item 6115, Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled. He said an internal mechanism was used to distribute or collect these applications. Could I ask the Hon. Minister, what were the criteria used to identify these persons to submit applications?

Mr. Bulkan: The requirements for the position are that these persons need to be able-bodied, as they would say; seafaring. These are labourers and farmhands, so they must be able-bodied people who are capable of manual labour.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Minister. There will be two more questions after Mr. Seeraj.

Mr. Seeraj: I do not think this one will count because it is a question that I asked before but it was not answered. I wish to repeat it. I asked the Minister, I said in 2017...

Mr. Chairman: Is there a line item?

Mr. Seeraj: Line item 6115 - Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled: That is the only line item that I asked a question on.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Seeraj: The question was not answered. I said in 2017 and 2018 there were five persons, and, in 2019, we are budgeting for 15 persons. I asked if this project was approved by the Regional Democratic Council as the policy making body. This is an area to my mind, given the nature of the trend, and that it is a new department, has the RDC approved the establishment of this new department? The only part of the question that the Minister answered was about some internal mechanism used to employ these people. I wish to repeat, did this project receive the approval of the Regional Democratic Council, which is the policy making body of the RDC?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the answer to the question is, yes. It was approved at a statutory meeting of the RDC in 2017. There was a special meeting of the RDC held on 17th August, 2017, that approved the capital expenditure, in particular the one under Agricultural Development, which is an estimated total of \$69,800,000. The funding was not available in 2017, so the programme started in 2018 following the approval by the Regional Democratic Council in 2017.

Mr. Gill: Line item 6291 - National and Other Events: There is a total of \$16.5 million budgeted under this line item for the entire region. There is \$4 million allocated under Programme 752, which was not requested by the region, could the Hon. Minister advise why this was so important when other vital infrastructural projects, such as bridges, have been cut under this budget?

Mr. Bulkan: Could I respectfully ask the Hon. Member to repeat the line item, please?

Mr. Gill: It is line item 6291, National and Other Events.

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, I thought I heard that. I am hearing some figures that do not correspond to the document that I have before of me.

Mr. Gill: Could I repeat? I said a total of \$16.5 million was budgeted under this line item for the entire region, of which \$4 million was allocated for under this Programme 752, and it was not requested.

Mr. Bulkan: I would like to request that the Hon. Member provide some clarification as to where this figure of \$16.5 million came from.

Mr. Gill: Under Regional Administration and Finance there is \$4.5 million; Agriculture, \$4 million which was never requested and Education Delivery, \$8 million, and that is \$16.5 million for the entire region. I am questioning why the \$4 million was added to this when it was not requested by the region. Last year's figure was zero. It is line item 6291, National and Other Events.

Mr. Bulkan: I once again seek the co-operation of the Hon. Member as to where I can find this \$16.5 million that is being referred to, because reference is being made to it and I cannot seem to locate it.

Mr. Chairman: This is the final question.

Mr. Gill: It is a follow-up; it is the same thing. In this region, for the same line item 6291, National and Other Events, if the Hon. Minister adds the \$4.5 million from Regional Administration and Finance, the \$4 million from Agriculture and the \$8 million from Education Delivery, he will get \$16.5 million for the entire region. There is \$4 million dollars which was not requested by the region, under this line item for Agriculture.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Gill, that was a follow-up question.

Mr. Bulkan: The budgetary allocation of \$4 million is to cater for the Regional Agriculture and Commercial Exhibitions (RACE); exhibitions that will be held by each region annually. This provision is to cater for the expenses associated with hosting the Regional Agriculture and Commercial Exhibitions in 2019.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Mustapha. I will allow you the last question.

Mr. Mustapha: Before I go to my substantive question, line item 6251, Maintenance of Roads, I want to ask the Minister if he would be kind enough to lay it over to us, so that we could see the number of roads that will be maintained.

I want to refer to line item 6115, Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled, and the Minister said they have employed 10 new farmhands. Could the Minister tell us where these people are

stationed? Are they stationed at the farms in front of the REO's office which were bulldozed and taken away from the farmers? Are those people stationed there to look after the farms?

Mr. Bulkan: These farmhands are employed at a farm that is north of the public road. I believe it is in the vicinity of the RDC's office. It is on the northern side of the public road.

Programme: 752 - Agriculture - \$241,449,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 752 - Agriculture - \$59,000,000

Mr. Seeraj: Project code 1903800 - Agricultural Development: It is stated here, "Provision for crops and land utilisation project." I checked the profile document and I am not more enlightened. Could the Hon. Minister provide more information on this expenditure?

Mr. Bulkan: It is to fund a poultry rearing activity. The allocation is for the construction of a poultry pen, a plucking area and...

Mr. Seeraj: What size and how many birds will be inside?

1.57 p.m.

Mr. Bulkan: It is approximately 800 birds. **[Mr. Dharamlall: So little bit?]** Yes. It starts with 800 birds... and the completion of the perimeter fence for a total sum of \$15 million.

Mr. Seeraj: Sir, could the Hon. Minister inform this House whether this project received the approval of the RDC?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the very project that I referred to earlier, these are all activities that would be captured under the rubric of that project.

Mr. Seeraj: Sir, could the Hon. Minister disaggregate the amounts in terms of how much of the \$15 million is for the fence and the big pen to accommodate 800 birds?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the pen itself is estimated at a budgeted sum of \$6 million, the construction of the slaughter and plucking area \$6.4 million and the perimeter fence \$2.6 million.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I repeat what I said before, all Members can ask questions. If Members sit in their seats and shout across they do two things: one, they disregard the rules of the House by which we are allowed to sit here, and secondly, there is no point to asking the question from your seat because you do not get an answer.

Mr. Gill: Project code 1903800 - Agricultural Development: \$52 million was spent on this project in 2017, \$35 million was budgeted for in 2018, which I am sure is already exhausted, and now an additional \$15 million is allocated in the 2019 budget. Could the Hon. Minister explain how the region is expected to benefit financially from this project? What percentage of the Region 5 population is expected to benefit from this investment of \$102 million of taxpayers' money?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I believe the Hon. Member is attempting to amalgamate the regional development programme when we have before us, under Programme 752, capital activities, and the one for which details are being sought has to do with a project for which I have provided the details. But we are being referenced with prior-year estimates which refers to the entire programme and not this particular project for which the sum of \$15 million was disaggregated in components for which I give the respective sums. That is the best answer I can offer the Hon. Member.

Mr. Gill: Is the Minister denying that \$35 million was budgeted for this very project this year and another \$15 million for next year?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, perhaps, the Hon. Member was either not listening or paying attention to what I just said. The allocations were for the programme not this project. This is a different project under the programme. It is one component and this one is \$15 million, and I have already provided the details.

Mr. Seeraj: Project code 1903800 – Agricultural Development: Sir, could the Minister provide us with the specifications in terms of the size of this \$6 million pen to rear 800 birds and the plucking area of \$6.4 million? What is the size of the buildings?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, for the pen it is 7.6 meters by 14.24 meters. I do not have the height, but this information could be provided subsequently. For the slaughter and plucking area it is 6.1 meters by 12.2 meters and the other details can be provided subsequently, but that is the size.

Mr. Seeraj: Sir, I appreciate the laying over of the details for this particular project.

Mr. Gill: Same project code, could the Hon. Minister explain the rationale of providing an additional \$15 million for this project of the REO while at the same time cutting \$12.7 million for the construction of two bridges in this region which was not approved by the...?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I would try to speak slowly. It is not an additional expenditure. This is a new activity and so it is a fresh allocation. I have said before that this programme has many components and this is a new component. So, it is \$15 million for this activity; it is not an additional sum, but it is a new allocation for a new activity.

Mr. Gill: It is the same project Minister.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we have three more questions. Mr. Mustapha, you have the first question.

Mr. Mustapha: Thank you Mr. Chairman. The same project code 1903800: Could the Hon. Minister say where is the location of this poultry farm? And if it is in the northern side as he mentioned, who made the decision to take away the farm lands from the farmers that were farming there before?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I believe that the question that is being posed is a matter that is before the court and I am subject to be corrected. But I believe one of the Hon. Members here is involved in that litigation. I believe that we are precluded, prevented from discussing matters that are before the Court.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, again the Government is involved in business. I thought we were out of Communism – government in business. Could you please state whether there is a management committee to oversee this project and, if so, lay over the names of the members of the Management Committee to the Parliament? Also, how were the members chosen to be on the Management Committee?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, this activity is one that is being conducted by the Regional Democratic Council, an agency and a council that continues to function despite considerable

challenges that are present and seems to persist within this council, as a result of a phenomenon that I mentioned earlier, which is a lack of proper leadership and guidance.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Mustapha, you have the last question.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, it is not a question. The Minister did not answer my question. I ask the location of this poultry farm. I do not know if there is a poultry farm matter in the court.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the location is North and slightly East of the RDC administrative building.

Mr. Chairman: This is the last question Mr. Mustapha.

Mr. Mustapha: This is a follow-up question. Is this the same area that the farmers were removed from?

Mr. Bulkan: Sir, it is the area where there were farmers. We are hearing about farmers being removed and again we are straying in to matters that are before the Court, and I would not want to go there.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I think if I say this is the last question, we are testing the Chairman's decision if we get up and, as we say in common parlance, *try a thing*.

Programme: 752 – Agriculture - \$59,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 753 - Public Infrastructure - \$213,649,000

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister line item 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants: The region was not able to spend its allocation in 2018 but is asking for an increase of just above \$200,000 on the 2019 budget. First of all, could you state what it is intended to be spent on under fuel and lubricants? Secondly, what is accounting for the increase?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the allocation is to cater for increased monitoring of projects and works being done under road maintenance. It includes new equipment acquired by the region and it is also to purchase fuel and lubricants for four 4x4 pickups, one bobcat, tractor, generator, roller

and bitumen distributor which were purchased in 2018. So, the activities and the scope of works will be increased in 2019.

Mr. Croal: Line items 6242 - Maintenance of Buildings, 6251 - Maintenance of Roads, 6252 - Maintenance of Bridges, 6253 - Maintenance of Sea and River Defences and 6255 - Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Could you lay over the information the House, please?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, for the record the request is to lay over the maintenance programme for the Region. This is noted and will be provided.

Mr. Gill: Line item 6251 - Maintenance of Roads: \$219.6 million was requested for the maintenance of roads from the region of which only \$91.3 million is approved in this budget. Does the Minister believe that this amount is adequate?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, if the information that was just presented is accurate, it would suggest that the budgetary allocation is insufficient to fund that comprehensive scope of works and activities that is being referred to. With that said, I think it equally needs to be noted that the 2019 provision is considerably more by a sum of close to \$20 million - \$91 million as opposed to \$73 million.

2.12 p.m.

Once again, we are trending in the right direction. More resources, and in this case financial resources, are being provided by Central Government to cater for more road works and maintenance in the region. I think that there is validity in both points that have been made.

Mr. Gill: Would the Hon. Minister indicate what criteria was used to repair the roads that are budgeted for in this allocation and why not the others?

Mr. Bulkan: It was based on submissions to the Ministry of Finance that list the activities in order of priority. Basically, what happens is that, once an allocation is determined by the Ministry of Finance, there is the cut off line so those above, in common parlance, make the cut, those below do not make the cut. They would not be considered for the fiscal year ahead but would receive attention later.

Mr. Chairman: There are two questions remaining.

Mr. Gill: Could the Hon. Minister give this honourable House the assurance that the selection of roads budgeted for here has nothing to do with the results of the recently concluded Local Government Elections (LGE)?

Mr. Chairman: I do not think that I need to, but I will remind Members that a line item or reference to a line item is a good place to start when you are posing questions. Hon. Minister...

Mr. Bulkan: Am I invited to offer an answer, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: I am giving the Hon. Minister the option to do so.

Mr. Bulkan: There is no correlation between these activities and the event to which the Hon. Member referred.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Mustapha, you have the last question.

Mr. Mustapha: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: Could the Hon. Minister explain why this line item has increased?

Mr. Bulkan: I just provided an answer. I provided a detailed answer for the very line item 6231.

Programme: 753 – Public Infrastructure - \$213,649,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 753 – Public Infrastructure - \$168,782,000

Mr. Croal: Project code 1400800 – Roads – Construction, rehabilitation and upgrading of roads: Hon. Minister, could you layover the scope of works for these Capital items?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, I could do more than that as well. In addition to the scope of works, we could give the locations and the estimated costs.

Programme: 753 – Public Infrastructure - \$168,782,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 754 – Education Delivery - \$1,840,746,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Hon. Minister, could you say the designation and the emoluments of the additional contracted employee?

Mr. Bulkan: The new addition is a Bus Warden paid at the salary of approximately \$75,000 per month.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6284 – Other: There is a \$9 million increase on the budgetary allocation from 2018. Could you indicate for what was the increase?

Mr. Bulkan: The increase is mainly for the increased rates that are being paid to the Sweeper/Cleaners.

Mr. Gill: Line item 6133 – Benefits and Allowances: There is an increase of over \$70 million in this line item, could the Hon. Minister specify what are the types of benefits and allowances and who would be benefitting from this amount?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that it is to cater for the benefits and allowances for all of the personnel captured from Line item 6111 to Line item 6115. The bulk of it, of course, are Teachers and other Senior Technical personnel which amounts to 415. It is mainly the Whitley Council allowance as well as uniform allowance for the Teachers and other Senior Technical personnel.

Mr. Chairman: There are two more questions, Hon. Members.

Mr. Gill: Follow-up, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: That is a question, Hon. Member. I am just reminding Members that it is a question that you are following up or following down. Please proceed.

Mr. Gill: Is the Minister saying that uniforms and other expenditure were not budgeted for in Budget 2018 and that this is a new allocation? This is a continuous...

Mr. Bulkan: It is mainly the Whitley Council allowance in 2019.

Programme: 754 – Education Delivery - \$1,840,746,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 754 – Education Delivery - \$145,200,000

Programme: 754 – Education Delivery - \$145,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 755 – Health Services - \$796,801,000

Dr. Mahadeo: I would like to draw the Minister's attention to line item 6111, and to ask what is the designation of the one staff that is there?

Mr. Bulkan: It is an Assistant Hospital Administrator.

Dr. Mahadeo: Line items 6111 and 6112: I would like to ask the Minister who manages health in Region 5, whether the person is in a Senior Technical position and if the person is being paid from out of the region's budget?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes. The personnel in this category is a Senior Technical and is appointed by the Regional Health Officer (RHO). The RHO is in charge of the health programme in the region.

Dr. Mahadeo: Line items 6112 and 6113: Could the Hon. Minister advise how many Voluntary Counselling and Testers (VCT), Directly Observed Treatment, Short course (DOTS) and Microscopists are working in the region?

Mr. Bulkan: These details would be provided to the Hon. Member in writing subsequently.

Dr. Mahadeo: I would like to draw the Minister's attention to line item 6116. In 2018, we had 33 Contracted employees. In 2019, we would have four less, yet the allocated sum went up from \$39.4 million to \$43.2 million. Could the Minister please explain? Could the Minister provide the top five positions and their emoluments?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister?

2.27 p.m.

Mr. Bulkan: The top five designations, by virtue of salary, would be a Dental Surgeon, monthly salary of \$259,000 approximately; an Assistant Hospital Administrator – \$195,000; the Environmental Health Officer – \$170,000 approximately; midwives, approximately \$89,000, and there are a number of those; and Nursing Assistant, a salary of \$81,000. Those are the top positions.

Dr. Mahadeo: And, what about the difference between 2018 and 2019?

Mr. Bulkan: The reason for the increase would be that the Dental Surgeon is new to the region and that is the principle reason for the increase in 2019.

Mr. Gill: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: There is an increase of \$4 million in next year’s budget when compared the 2018 allocations, but there is \$85.3 million that was cut from the budget requested by the region, could the Hon. Minister explain how he hopes to stop the chronic shortages of basic drugs and medical supplies in the region by cutting \$85.5 million out of the budget that was requested by the region?

Mr. Bulkan: I ask to disagree with the contention that is being made that there is a chronic shortage of drugs in the region, but the Hon. Member has acknowledged that the 2019 provisions is greater in the sum of \$4 million than 2018.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we have three questions remaining.

Dr. Mahadeo: Could the Hon. Minister advise us on line item 6221, Drugs and Medical Supplies, out of the \$190 million proposed for *Budget 2019*, what sum would be allocated to the region for emergency supplies, and out of the \$186 million in 2018, how much did the region spend and what was the procedure for purchasing these drugs?

Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: From the Auditor General’s Report there is a concern that was mentioned with fuel and lubricants. There was a concern that was mention here about logbooks not being properly kept and some of them not being there at all... *[Interruption]*

Dr. Mahadeo: I said logbooks, some people are mishearing.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]

I would like to ask what systems have been put in place, so that we could have proper accounting for the \$13 million, an increase from 2018, where fuel and lubricants are concern. Also, how many vehicles are we catering for here and to whom are the vehicles allocated?

Mr. Bulkan: The proposal is that, of the \$190 million that is being proposed for drugs and medical supplies for 2019, the sum of \$40 million would be retained by the region, if the need arises, to acquire emergency supplies during the year.

The list of the vehicles under this programme are five ambulances, there are generators, there is a bus, outboard engines, a scooter and a canter. One of the Ambulances would be based at Rosignol Polly clinic. I am advised that the logbooks are being maintained in accordance with the requirement and storage regulations.

Mr. Chairman: Two questions remaining.

Dr. Mahadeo: Could the Hon. Minister lay over for us the details for line item 6242, Maintenance of Buildings, and line item 6255, Maintenance of Other Infrastructure?

For equipment maintenance, there has been an increase of \$2 million, I would like to know whether the region has the capacity, whether it is outsourcing it and who did the maintenance of equipment in 2018?

The question of line item 6292, Dietary, if I may ask, there has been an increase in dietary, could I get from the Hon. Minister the average inpatient load that this dietary is going to cater for?

Mr. Bulkan: The allocation for 2019 is \$7,000 less than the 2018 provision even though these documents suggest that the 2018 expenditure would be less than the budgeted sum in 2018. As was the case of other items under consideration, it may not be that the total 2018 expenditure is what is reflected here, but the recommendations, at the time of the budget submission, was that a sum equal to the 2018 provision would be required in 2019. That is what is responsible for an almost similar figure that is being recommended in 2019 as was approved in 2018.

The approximate sums for the patients with regard to dietary, there is an approximate number of 120 in the case of Forth Wellington and 150 at Mahaicony.

Programme: 755 – Health Services – \$ 796,801,000 agreed to and ordered to stand of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 755 – Health Services – \$47,800,000

Mr. Gill: Project code 2401900 – Land and Water Transport: The legend says, purchase of a boat and engine for the amount of \$3.8 million. I have a copy of the original budget that was sent to the Ministry and the estimate for that boat and engine is \$1.5 million...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Gill, you are asking a question, would you ask the question, please.

Mr. Gill: I am about to ask that question if you allow me.

Mr. Chairman: Well, would you ask the question. I have been allowing you all of the time Hon. Member and every Hon. Member in here, now, would you ask your question.

Mr. Gill: Yes, considering the original estimate from the region for this boat and engine is \$1.5 million...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Gill you are out of order, I would not allow you to continue your question. Let us have the next Hon. Member who wants to speak. Hon. Members, we do not have to experience unpleasantness in here. If the Chairman tells a Hon. Member a certain course of action, I believe that Hon. Member would be willing and ready to comply with that course of action. We cannot have it both ways.

Dr. Mahadeo: Project code 1203700 – Buildings- Health: The project entails construction of health centres, extension of health centres and maternity waiting home for a sum total of a \$115 million, could the Hon. Minister give us a breakdown of these figures?

Mr. Bulkan: I think we are getting ahead of ourselves. I think it is a different region probably Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Dr. Mahadeo, the page is 502.

Dr. Mahadeo: Okay, sorry.

Mr. Chairman: The programme is 755 – Health Services, Capital expenditure.

Dr. Mahadeo: Yes, if I may please, project code, 1203700, Buildings-Health, provision for incinerators, could the Hon. Minister tell us where these incinerators would be placed?

Mr. Bulkan: One would be at Forth Wellington and the other at Farm, Mahaicony.

Dr. Mahadeo: Project code 2504000 – Furniture and Equipment- Health: Could the Hon. Minister please lay over the furniture and equipment that would be bought and state where they would be place?

Mr. Bulkan: This would be provided.

Mr. Anamayah: Project code 2401900 – Land and Water Transport: Could the Hon. Minister confirm if this boat and engine was the one requested by the region for the Mora Point Health Centre?

2.42 p.m.

Mr. Bulkan: This provision is to cater for a boat and engine for use at the Mora Point Health Centre.

Mr. Anamayah: Minister, could you also confirm that the estimate of the cost submitted by the Regional Administration for the very boat and engine was \$1.5 million?

Mr. Bulkan: I would like to respectfully redirect that question to the Hon. Member and ask him if he can confirm the veracity of the information he has presented.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, the question is directed at the Minister. It is for the Minister to treat with it.

Mr. Bulkan: No, Sir. I am unable to respond to that question.

Mr. Anamayah: In answering the question, yes, I can confirm it. But if that is the position, that there is this big variation, you would agree that this is a cause for concern because it is a big anomaly, and appropriate action will be taken.

Mr. Bulkan: We are very concerned about the expenditure of public money. I did, earlier this morning, refer and repeat what the Hon. Minister of Finance said in his closing argument for the Budget, which is that it is the quality of spending that will determine the effectiveness of these huge sums of money that have been provided for in this *Budget 2019*. No item is too small or too large to escape this general principle. I would like to repeat that it is the quality of the spending will determine the success of these programmes.

Programme: 755 – Health Services - \$47,800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates. (2.44 p.m.)

Agency 76 Region 6: East Berbice/Corentyne [2.45 p.m.]

Current Expenditure

Programme: 761 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$162,583,000

Mr. Mustapha: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: We have seen a reduction in the number of staff but we have seen an increase in the budgetary allocation, could the Minister explain?

Mr. Bulkan: There was, indeed, an increase of \$786,000. It is the annualisation of the salary increases for the four remaining members under this programme that is responsible for this modest increase.

Mr. Mustapha: Could the Hon. Minister provide the designation and salaries of the four contracted employees for 2019?

Mr. Bulkan: It would be the Deputy Regional Officer (DREO), Confidential Secretary, House Mother, and an Assistant Caretaker. It is \$260,000 for the DREO, \$89,000 for the Confidential Secretary, approximately \$85,000 for the House Mother, and for the Assistant Caretaker, \$60,000 monthly.

Mr. Mustapha: Line item 6133 – Benefits and Allowances: We have seen an increase in the number of employees in the region, but we have seen a decrease in the budgetary allocation. Could the Minister please explain?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the proposed sum for 2019 would be adequate to meet the needs under this line item.

Mr. Mustapha: Just a follow-up: Is the Minister saying that, although the region will be employing another five additional persons, this budgetary allocation will be adequate when there is a reduction in almost \$2 million?

Mr. Bulkan: I concede that there appears to be an anomaly here, but I am advised that the sum of \$4,877,000 is adequate to cover the activity for 2019.

Mr. Mustapha: In 2018, there was an issue with that figure. Is that what you were saying just now?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, that is what I said. There appears to be an anomaly.

Mr. Mustapha: Can I ask what was the exact revised figure for 2018?

Mr. Bulkan: As I said, there appears to be an anomaly in relation to the actual expenditure in 2018. What I would like to repeat, again, is that I am advised that the budgeted sum for 2019 would be sufficient to meet these payments for 2019. In the event that there is any shortfall during the year, that could be addressed later on.

Mr. Mustapha: Is the Minister saying that the region budgeted \$6,049,000 for this programme, and the revised figure was \$6,049,000, and when they budgeted for 2019 then they recognised that this was an anomaly?

Mr. Bulkan: No Sir, the anomaly might actually be in the 2018 expenditure.

Mr. Mustapha: Can we get the exact figure for 2019?

Mr. Bulkan: The figure for 2019 is as reflected here; \$4.8 million.

Mr. Mustapha: I asked for the 2018 figure and the Hon. Minister said that this was the figure, and that there was an issue with the 2019 figure. I am now asking for the 2018 figure and the Hon. Minister is saying that the 2018 figure is also correct. Which one of the two figures has the issue?

Mr. Bulkan: No, Hon. Member. I started out by saying that there appears to be an anomaly. I did not identify where that anomaly resided. I am now saying that it appears to be in 2018.

Dr. Anamayah: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: Could you say if the sum provided for here covers the fuel and lubricants provided to the David ‘G’ School buses?

Mr. Bulkan: No, Sir. It is not under this line item.

Mr. Mustapha: Under the same line item, 6231, we have seen an increase of about \$50,000, could the Hon. Minister say if this figure is realistic, seeing that the cost of fuel has increased over the years? Even cooking gas has increased.

Mr. Bulkan: As outlined previously, it is impossible to predict, definitively, if these allocations... One can always make do with a great allocation, but it so happens that this is the allocation that is being provided for this activity for 2019, and it is a modest increase. I cannot, definitively, say if a greater sum was requested, but I think, in principle, we have recognised, for all of the activities, greater sums were requested, but this is what is being provided.

Programme: 761 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$162,583,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 761 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$15,940,000

Programme: 761 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$15,940,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 762 – Agriculture - \$750,296,000

2.57 p.m.

Mr. Mustapha: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: We are seeing a decrease in the number of employees for 2019 and an increase in the budgetary allocation. Could the Hon. Minister explain?

Mr. Bulkan: It is the annualisation of the increases in 2018 for the remaining 11 persons under the programme.

Mr. Mustapha: Line item 6253 – Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works: I am seeing here that the region intends to spend \$370 million for 2019. Could the Hon. Minister explain how many kilometres of canal will be maintained for 2019?

Mr. Bulkan: The approximate length of canals to be maintained is 951,000 metres which would be 951 kilometres.

Mr. Mustapha: Under the same line item: Could the Minister tell this House would the region be executing the maintenance and manage the whole aspect of this programme?

Mr. Bulkan: The Minister of Agriculture had outlined under the consideration of his Ministry's Budget, that new arrangements will be put into effect to allow for the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) to have responsibility for a greater percentage of the drainage and irrigation (D&I) infrastructure across the coastal regions, and the primary canals would be the NDIA's responsibility, whilst the internal canals would be the responsibility of the Regional Democratic Organ (RDC). Those arrangements are now being arrived at in greater details between these two agencies.

Mr. Mustapha: Is the Minister saying, I understood from the Minister of Agriculture, he rightly said it, which is that all secondary canals would be maintained by the Administration at the local level. These canals are secondary canals in the system. I am asking the Minister; would the regional administration continue to maintain these canals for the year 2019?

Mr. Bulkan: The budgetary allocations being made here are for the locations and the activities. It is the desire for the NDIA to have a greater role and responsibility for the execution of these works and it is these arrangements that are being further reviewed at this stage.

Mr. Mustapha: Follow-up: I just want to inform the Minister, because it seems that I am not getting it from him. The Minister is saying that the NDIA wants to play a greater role, but I am asking a simple question and it is either yes or no. Would the RDC be responsible for the 2019 to maintain these canals, because the NDIA has been maintaining machines and other things in the region, and out of eight machines, six are down for the last three years. I am asking the Minister,

would the Regional Administration have the responsibility to execute and supervise these contracts for the year 2019?

Mr Bulkan: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Mustapha: Thank you, Hon. Minister.

Mr. Chairman: There are two questions remaining.

Mr. Bharrat: Line item 6231 – Fuel and Lubricants: Mr. Minister, in 2018 we had a budgetary allocation approved of \$275 million. However, \$184,225,000 was used in 2018. Could you say why there was a shortfall even though there was a budgetary allocation of \$275 million? It was only last week we learned that there was shortfall of fuel in Black Bush Polder?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised the works that were actually required were not in the full scope of the projections and for which the provisions were made in 2018. There was not a requirement to pump as much for drainage in 2018.

Mr. Anamayah: Under line item 6253 – Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works: Are you aware that the NDIA is requesting that the entire sum budgeted here be warranted to the authority?

Mr. Bulkan: It is not the entire sum. There are two components. There will be one maintained by the region and the other by the NDIA.

Mr. Mustapha: If you would allow me, just for clarification. I just asked the Minister under the same line item that if the Regional Administration will be executing this sum and the Minister is said, yes. Regarding Mr. Anamayah's question he said that part of it will be done by the region and part of it by the NDIA. Could the Minister make up his mind and tell this honourable House which part would the NDIA be executing and which part would the Regional Administration be executing? Something is not adding up.

Mr. Bulkan: I did say that these discussions are taking place between the region and the NDIA as to who can more effectively execute these works for which the budgetary sums are being proposed here.

Programme: 762 - Agriculture - \$750,296,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 762 - Agriculture - \$221,288,000

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Seeraj, do you have a question?

Mr. Seeraj: That is correct, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Please proceed.

Mr. Seeraj: Project code 1301000 – Drainage and Irrigation: There is an allocation of \$114,300,000 for this provision. Could the Hon. Minister tell us would the execution of these projects identified be done through the RDC or would it be done through any other agency?

Mr. Bulkan: The allocation here is for activities to be executed by the RDC.

Mr. Mustapha: Project code 2402000 – Land and Water Transport: In 2017 \$14,880,000 was budgeted to purchase a bulldozer. In 2018 \$8 million was budgeted and the revised figure remained the same. Then in 2019, I am seeing \$106,988,000 budgeted to expend on the bulldozer. I knew the region already procured a bulldozer. Could the Minister explain what is the position with that bulldozer?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the region did provide an advance for a machine to be supplied, but the delivery was never accepted by the region. The sums were refunded to the Consolidated Fund and the provision now is for the acquisition in the sum stated here for a D6 angle blade bulldozer following approval of these Estimates.

Mr. Anamayah: Under the same line item: Hon. Minister, the specifications of this bulldozer that is budgeted for in 2019, is it different from what was budgeted for in 2018?

Mr. Bulkan: The specifications are different.

Mr. Mustapha: Follow-up to Mr. Anamayah's question. Could the Hon. Minister tell us, does the region have a quotation for this amount of \$106,988,000?

Mr. Bulkan: The region is in receipt of a quotation.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, there will be two more questions.

Mr. Anamayah: The sum budgeted in 2018 of \$8 million, was that to acquire a complete bulldozer? You made reference to an advance payment, so I am just clearing that up.

Mr. Bulkan: We have already established that. There was a question to that effect. The specifications are different.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Anamayah this is the last question.

Mr. Anamayah: What was the amount advanced for the bulldozer?

Mr. Bulkan: The amount was \$14,880,000.

Programme: 762 - Agriculture - \$221,288,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 763 - Public Infrastructure - \$320,120,000

Mr. Mustapha: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: We have seen a decrease in the number of employees for 2019. Yet we are seeing an increase in budgetary allocation. Could the Minister explain?

3.12 p.m.

Mr. Bulkan: It was due to the annualisation of the increases for the remaining four employees.

Programme: 763 – Public Infrastructure - \$320,120,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 763 – Public Infrastructure - \$226,212,000

Mr. Mustapha: Project code 1100700 – Bridges: Could the Minister layover to us the number of bridges to be constructed, the area, and the cost for each project?

Mr. Bulkan: I will undertake to do so.

Mr. Anamayah: Project code 1401000 – Roads: Could the Minister similarly layover a schedule of the roads to be rehabilitated and the cost for each one?

Mr. Bulkan: It is a total of 13 activities totalling that sum. As requested this information will be provided in writing.

Programme: 763 – Public Infrastructure - \$226,212,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 764 – Education Delivery - \$3,738,141,000

Mr. Bharrat: Line item 6281 - Security Services: The Revised 2018 sum is \$294,149,000, Budget 2019 sum is \$425,866,000. Could you say, Mr. Minister, what the increase caters for? Is it for 24-hours security at the schools or is it for the increase of payment to the guards?

Mr. Bulkan: The reasons for the increase in 2019 mainly has risen from the increase in the number of guards from 253 currently to 365 guards, as well as an increase in the rates.

Mr. Bharrat: Follow up: Could you say are there security supervisors or checkers, as we commonly call them, employed by the RDC to check on these guards? If so, how many?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Bharrat, did you complete?

Mr. Bharrat: I was saying, Mr. Chairman, if there are security checkers employed by the RDC, and how many are they?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, Sir. The number is two.

Mr. Anamayah: Line item 6224 – Print and Non-Print Materials: Could the Hon. Minister say if under this heading, provision is made for tech books to the various schools?

Mr. Bulkan: No, Sir.

Mr. Mustapha: Line item 6241 – Rentals of Buildings: Could the Minister inform us on the number of buildings that the region is renting presently and the cost?

Mr. Bulkan: There is rental of one at the cost of \$840,000 annually.

Mr. Mustapha: Where is that?

Mr. Bulkan: It is at Trinity Street Nursey in New Amsterdam.

Mr. Bharrat: Line item 6281 - Security Services: Could you say if the two checkers are provided with transportation by the RDC? If so, do they currently have transportation to execute their duties?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised yes, Sir. The mode of transportation is motor cycle.

Mr. Anamayah: Line item 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants: Is provision made under this heading for the David Granger buses?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Anamayah: Follow up: Could the Minister provide a disaggregation of the amount? If the amount is \$9 million for 2019, as to how much exactly go towards the David Granger buses.

Further, Mr. Minister, there has been a request from the Regional Administration for two additional buses to service the Canje and the East Bank areas where many of the dismissed sugar workers and their children have difficulty going to school. I noticed there is an increase from \$6 million to \$9 million. Is it now budgeted for to provide for those increases?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the provisions under this line item are for recurrent expenses. The question posed by the, Hon. Member, or the request rather is for an item that is capital in nature. A new bus to supplement the existing fleet. These provisions are to provide for fuel and lubricants to take children to school and take them back home.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I was just waiting on your permission before I started.

Mr. Chairman: I know you were, Hon. Member. I was in some slight consternation, because I heard another voice coming across the hall. It takes some effort to get the voice to me. That applies for everyone. Hon. Mr. Mustapha, you have the floor.

Mr. Mustapha: Thanks. Mr. Chairman, I want to refer to line item 6241. The Minister mentioned, just now, the region is paying the sum of almost \$850,000, if I heard him correctly. Is it \$850,000 monthly?

Mr. Bulkan: It is annually.

Programme: 764 – Education Delivery - \$3,738,141,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 764 – Education Delivery - \$116,600,000

Mr. Mustapha: Project code 2504100 - Furniture and Equipment – Education: I am seeing that the region would be expended \$30 million for 2019. Would this amount and with the number of furniture that would be built, satisfy the needs of the region?

Mr. Bulkan: The best answer I could give is that the provision and the supply of furniture to this value would make a considerable impact to the current needs. It might not fill 100% of the needs. Again, I suggest that we are trending in the right direction and we have also gone a far way.

Mr. Bharrat: Project code 1203900 - Buildings – Education: Could you say how much of the allocation is for retention and for which project?

Mr. Bulkan: There are two retention payments, Hon. Member. The first payment of \$548,000 was for the construction of sanitary block at the Rose Hall Primary School. The second payment of \$553,000 was for a similar activity but at the Leeds Primary School.

Programme: 764 – Education Delivery - \$116,600,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 765 – Health Services - \$1,950,146,000

Dr. Mahadeo: Mr. Chairman, first I would like to say that there are four indicators for health services. We do not have any targets unlike education delivery which seems to be the only section that has targets. If the, Hon. Minister, could so kind enough as to provide, what are the targets for the four indicators of health for 2019?

In addition to that, I would like to draw the Ministers attention to line item 6116 – Contracted Employees, we see 14 less employees in 2019, and yet we see an increase of over \$20 million budgetary allocation for 2009.

3.27 p.m.

Could the Minister please explain this?

In addition, the same line item, there was an increase from the budgeted amount to the revised amount from \$76 million to \$96 million. Where did this money come from? Could the Minister give us the positions of the top five and their emoluments for the 57 contracted employees?

Mr. Bulkan: I would like to thank the Hon. Member for the first observation that he made about the absence of indicators in the programme. I think that this is something that will be corrected going forward.

The reason for the increases for the contracted employees in the budgetary sum for 2019 is as a result of the annualisation of the increases. The five top positions under line item 6116 - Contracted Employees are Psychiatrist - \$447,000, the sums are monthly, a Dental Surgeon - approximately \$384,000, Medical Registrar - \$360,000, Government Medical Officer - \$342,000 and the Director of Health Services, approximately \$243,000.

Dr. Mahadeo: Follow up: Could the Hon. Minister provide this House with a Job Description (JD) for the Director of Regional Health Services?

Line item 6292 - Dietary: Thee sum of \$97 million was budgeted in 2018 and we see an increase of approximately \$8 million for 2019. Yet, in the Report of the Auditor General in 2016 and 2017, he pointed to the same issue of moneys not being accounted for in the spending where Dietary is concerned. We are now going to spend more moneys. I would like to ask the Minister, what

systems have been put in place to ensure that the \$105 million that will now be spent in 2019, that the patients will benefit and only the patients from dietary. Thank you.

Mr. Bulkan: In response to the first question posed, I am not in a position to provide that information of the JD. I think that there is another Government Agency that has responsibility for that, Sir.

With regard to the systems that are in place to ensure that these provisions benefit the intended persons, I am advised that the recommendations contained, that just related by the Hon. Member, those systems are currently in place to address those concerns.

Mr. Chairman: After Dr. Mahadeo, I will allow two more questions.

Dr. Mahadeo: Line item 6221- Drugs and Medical Supplies: There is an increase of over \$56 million. First of all, could the Hon. Minister say how much of the \$400 million in 2018 was spent by the region? As it relates to the purchases of emergency supplies, how was the purchasing done? Was it by three quotations or selective tendering? If it was selective tendering, who chose how the persons will be identified after prequalification?

In addition to that, again, I would like to draw the Minister's attention to the Report of the Auditor General 2016 and 2017 and to say that some of the moneys that were spent really could not have been accounted for following the bin cards, *et cetera*. What period of time are we buying emergency supplies for? I would really like to recommend that the Ministry of Public Health decides or advises as to how long we are going to cover for, be it one week or one month? The Report of the Auditor General identified 15,000 Ciprofloxacin tablets which would last a minimum of three to four months. We wasted over \$5,500,000. What systems Mr. Minister have been putting in place for this occurrence not to reoccur?

Mr. Bulkan: I am in the middle of amazed. For the 2018 allocations, the answer is the sum of \$315 million of the 400 million was warranted to the central Ministry. The remainder was retained by the region. The method of procurement would have been by the National and Regional Tender Board.

Dr. Mahadeo: To remind the Minister, what systems have been put in place so that we do not have a reoccurrence of the single sourcing and the problems that were identified by the Auditor General?

Mr. Bulkan: I am advised that the procurement rules are currently being adhered to.

Mr. Chairman: Dr. Mahadeo, this is the final question.

Dr. Mahadeo: Line item 6272 - Electricity Charges: Budgeted amount \$145,420,000, revised \$123,420,000, and we are budgeting for \$165,420,000 for 2019. Could the Hon. Minister explain?

Mr. Bulkan: The increase in the 2019 allocation, the proposed sum of \$42 million, is to cater for improved services within the region with additional services. It also caters for the computerised tomography (CT) scan services, improvement maternity unit, the dental department, the doctors' on-called facility, and the delinking of the Skeldon Hospital which previously received electricity from Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) will now have to be catered for under the Regional allocation.

Programme: 765 – Health Services - \$1,950,146,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 765 - Health Services - \$164,951,000

Dr. Mahadeo: Project code: 1204000 – Buildings - Health: I see \$129,951,000 for the payment of retention, completion of maternity ward of the New Amsterdam Hospital, and construction of operating theatre at Skeldon Hospital. Same project code in last year's Budget read \$132,500,000, payment of retention, construction of theatre at Skeldon Hospital, provision of outpatient buildings, doctor's quarter, and maternity ward at the New Amsterdam Hospital. I am asking for a clarification, because we budgeted \$132,500,000 for the same thing and we are budgeting \$129,951,000 now for the same thing.

Mr. Bulkan: These are roll over projects. The construction would have started in 2018 and the retention payment is being catered for in 2019. The retention payments are for the doctor's quarters

at New Amsterdam, the CT scan room, the doctors' rest house at New Amsterdam Hospital, and the rehabilitation of the New Amsterdam Hospital kitchen.

The new project will be the construction of the operating theatre at Skeldon Hospital for the sum of approximately \$74 million is budgeted for.

Dr. Mahadeo: Mr. Minister, that was very informative. Are you saying from the 2018 Budget, we spent money on projects that were not identified for in that budget?

Mr. Bulkan: There was a change of Programme to accommodate the CT scan building in 2018.

Dr. Mahadeo: Follow up: Did the Regional Democratic Council approve that change of programme? Could the Minister tell us how far is the maternity ward since it is roll over programme? How far has the operating theatre at Skeldon Hospital?

Mr. Bulkan: The maternity ward at New Amsterdam Hospital building is approximately 35% completed. The operating theatre at Skeldon hospital has not been tendered for as yet. This is an entirely new project.

Dr. Mahadeo: Could the Hon. Minister advise this House as to what was the cost for the building that will be or is housing the CT scan? Is the building completed?

Mr. Bulkan: Subject to correction, I am advised that it is approximately the sum of \$12,100,000.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, after this question two more questions will be allowed.

Dr. Mahadeo: The sum of \$12,500,000 would leave us with \$120 million from the 2018 Budget. We only have 35% of the maternity ward completed and the Skeldon theatre has not begun. Am I to understand that the \$120 million is what partially 35% maternity ward cost?

3.42 p.m.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the sum of \$129,951,000 is budgeted for these projects and activities that I have outline: four retention payments, completion of the maternity ward at New Amsterdam Public Hospital and construction of an operating theatre at the Skeldon Hospital.

The contract sum for the maternity ward at the New Amsterdam Public Hospital is \$191.5 million; approximately 35% of that building has been completed and the remainder is budgeted for in the 2019 Budget.

Dr. Mahadeo: Mr. Chairman, this is my final question. The \$120 million was paid for the maternity ward that is now 35% completed and the total cost is \$191 million, if I understood the Minister correctly. Could the Minister please provide us with a list of equipment and furniture that will be bought in 2019 and where they will be placed?

Mr. Bulkan: The request is to lay over the items to be purchased. For the furniture and equipment, it is a total of 30 sets of items and this information will be provided. And, I am advised that, the sum of \$85.5 million was paid towards the construction of the maternity ward.

Programme: 765 – Health Services – \$164,951,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates. [3.44 p.m.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, we will wait a few minutes.

Mr. Bulkan: No, Mr. Chairman, this agency will be addressed by Minister Dawn Hastings-Williams and the final agency will be done by Minister Valarie Patterson-Yearwood.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Minister Hastings-Williams, please let me know when you are ready.

Agency 77: Region 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni [3.46 p.m.]

Current Expenditure

Programme: 771 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$312,499,000

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, line item 6291 – National and Other Events: There is another \$2.2 million increase on this allocation. Could you indicate what is the intended expense for the increase, and generally, what is the \$6 million for?

Minister of Public Affairs [Ms. Hastings-Williams]: Through you, Sir, the increase caters for greater involvement in the Annual Bartica Regatta, Republic celebrations, Independence celebrations, Remembrance Day and other national holidays.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, that is the increase. Is that correct or is that the overall \$6 million?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: That is the overall budgeted.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6211 – Expenses Specific to the Agency: There is an increased allocation here of another \$3.2 million. Could you indicate what is the intended expense for the increase?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: The increase caters for the Regional Agricultural and Commercial Exhibition which will amount to \$3 million; Plan of Action for Regional Development (PARD) consultations and that is \$1.9 million; stakeholder forums, an increase in the number of statutory meetings, and transportation for regional councillors from the various locations to Bartica or wherever the Regional Democratic Council is slated to be held; \$7 million is also provided for their meals, accommodations and transportation. It also caters for the regional councillors' stipend, \$1.2 million, and \$1.6 million for the payment of utility bills. I have many more, I do not know if you want me to list them.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, I will request that you lay the entire information over.

I have a follow-up question, but I think that it would be unfair to the Minister. This probably should have gone to Minister Bulkan. I noticed under line item 6211, there are some regions that have been asking for increased allocations for their RDCs. And in this case, Region 7, I heard the mention of an increase. I will use an example of Region 1, where they do not have the necessary allocation. May I ask, at a Ministry level, if there could probably be a review, an examination of the allocations for RDCs across the board, to see if it is sufficient for all the regions and to see, for the next budget cycle, if there could be a consideration of increases?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Through you, Mr. Chairman, your question is noted. But presently, I am speaking to Region 7's Budget. Thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6211: Could the Minister advise how many Toshaos receive stipends under this head? How many Chairpersons of the Civil Defence Commission (CDC) or community councils are included in this heading to receive stipends?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: It caters for all the Amerindian Toshaos in the Upper/Middle Mazaruni. I am going to lay over that information to you.

Ms. Teixeira: And the chairman and vice-chairman of the community councils, as well.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Will do Hon. Member.

Ms. Teixeira: Could I do another question, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Proceed, Ms. Teixeira.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6311 – Rates and Taxes: I am a little bit surprised to see rates and taxes provided for in Region 7's Budget, as in a number of the interior regions, even though new townships have been created. Have the regions not been paying rates and taxes or have not been asked to? Is this amount allocated for 2019, and I am assuming 2018, moneys in the regional budget to pay the Bartica Town Council's rates and taxes? Are you anticipating an increase? You only paid \$10.622 million last year, but the same \$11 million is put back that was put in 2018.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: I am advised that, yes, this is to pay the rates and taxes for the Bartica Town Council. It caters for the payment of debts that we had from the previous years that were not paid.

Ms. Teixeira: How bad are the debts? Could you give us an idea if you are rescheduling your debts or what was the magnitude of the debts? Do you have a schedule of how you are going to pay off the debts of the Bartica Town Council?

Is this an annual feature or will this be the last payment? Could you advise us?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: I am being advised that 2019 will be the last payment.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Could you advise what this \$13 million will be spent on? It was \$23 million in 2018, and it is \$30 million for 2019.

I noticed that there is no provision of roads under the regional administration. So, I will look for that under infrastructure. What will the \$30 million be spent on in 2019, under line item 6255?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: This allocation caters for clearing of all Government compounds; replacing wooden fences at the regional Engineer's quarters in Bartica; maintenance of solar systems and administration buildings in the Lower, Middle and Upper Mazaruni. It also caters for landscaping of compound, a duplex living quarters at Mon Grippa Hill, Bartica; maintenance of fence at regional administration, Kamarang; maintenance of fence at regional administration office in Bartica; maintenance of existing lighting systems at Paruima Village, Upper Mazaruni, and maintenance of lighting systems at Kamarang.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, the increased allocation on fuel, could you indicate which exercise this is for? It is line item 6264, Vehicle Spares and Service.

3.57 p.m.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: I think you have the wrong item.

Mr. Croal: My correction, it is line item 6264, in terms of the increased allocation for Vehicle Spares and Service, could you indicate where this increase is intended to be expended?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: The increase caters for the maintenance of two aged vehicles which are costly to maintain, as well as a new pickup requested for in the Budget 2019 Capital Estimates.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: Could you indicate who are your top three contracted employees, their designations and emoluments?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: The top three contracted employees are the Assistant Regional Executive Officer (AREO) with a salary of \$152,960; the Expenditure Planning and Management Analyst (EPMA), \$125,612; and the Boat Captain/Engineer, \$81,093.

Programme: 771 - Regional Administration and Finance - \$312,499,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 771 - Regional Administration and Finance - \$38,778,000

Mr. Croal: Project code 2402100 - Land and Water Transport: Could you indicate where the vehicle will be assigned and the type of vehicle that will be purchased?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: The vehicle that is to be bought will be located in Bartica to help execute duties of the REO and other regional officers.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 1204300 - Buildings - Administration: It is allocated \$25.5 million. I noticed in the description it states, "payment of retention," could you say which project this is the retention payment for? Secondly, it states "rehabilitation and extension of living quarters - Bartica." Could you say whose living quarters and what is the budgeted allocation for that?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Under this project code 1204300, Buildings - Administration, there is the rehabilitation and extension at one duplex quarters at Mon Grippa Hill in Bartica, which is in a very bad state. It will be rehabilitated to accommodate staff members who live outside of the Region.

Ms. Teixeira: You mean those who live in the region and are from outside the region.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Yes, who travel from the sub-regions, sorry and thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: What contract is that and how much is it for? What was the contract originally?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: It is retention payment for the Regional Administration Office at Kamarang which had a total cost of \$11.1 million. The retention payment will be \$2.2 million.

Ms. Teixeira: Could you say if the building at Kamarang is completed?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: It is 90% completed at present.

Programme: 771 - Regional Administration and Finance - \$38,778,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 772 - Public Infrastructure - \$184,190,000

Mr. Croal: Line items 6251 - Maintenance of Roads, 6252 - Maintenance of Bridges, 6253 - Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation Works, 6254 - Maintenance of Sea and River Defences:

Could I ask you to lay over the information for these maintenances, the costs, locations and brief descriptions on each of the project?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: That is noted and it will be done.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6251 - Maintenance of Roads: Outside of my Colleague's request for the total breakdown of the four line items, could I specifically ask you if the \$65 million, catered for in 2019, would include some of the roads in Bartica? The roads are really in a bad condition and I hope some of them have been identified. I am looking directly at the Regional Chairman.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: The answer is, yes.

Ms. Teixeira: Could you give us an idea. I am sure the people in Bartica would love to hear which roads have been identified. *[Interruption]* Why do you not want them to hear?

Mr. Chairman: What is going on? Hon. Member, I will keep a note as to whether, after a certain amount of minutes have passed, there must be an explosion, however slight. *[Interruption]* Is it called easing the pressure?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, thank you, Sir. I will repeat. Could you identify which roads are planned to be maintained or rehabilitated in 2019 in the township of Bartica, please? Give us an appetizer.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: I have been advised there is the Agatash and Dogg Point main roads, the Kalakun, Caribisi Hill and other asphalts roads that are in the precinct of Bartica.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6254 - Maintenance of Sea and River Defences: Could you also state which areas have been identified for river and sea defences?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: It caters for the Bidrabu revetment in Bartica.

Programme: 772 - Public Infrastructure - \$184,190,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 772 - Public Infrastructure - \$92,100,000

Mr. Croal: Project code 1500900 - Sea and River Defence: Could you indicate the length of revetment work to be done at Bidrabu?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: I am advised that the length is 200 feet.

Mr. Croal: Project code 1401100 - Roads: Could the Hon. Minister lay over to us the nature of the road work to be done at Kako to Waramadong, Kamarang to Waramadong and Bartica?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: That is noted and will be provided.

Programme: 772 - Public Infrastructure - \$92,100,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 773 - Education Delivery - \$1,433,917,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6242 - Maintenance of Buildings: Could you lay over to us the maintenance of the buildings, the information of the works to be done on the education buildings?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Thank you Hon. Member, I will do that.

Mr. Teixeira: Line item 6292 - Dietary: The figures for 2018 and 2019 are basically the same. Could you say Minister, how many children will benefit from the dietary that is budgeted for? Is this for all the children who are in dormitories or is this part of the School Feeding Programme?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: This budgetary allocation caters for the 395 children at the Waramadong Secondary School, 90 students at Bartica Secondary School dormitory and 85 students at the Three Miles Secondary School.

4.12 p.m.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6242 - Other: There has been a slight increase of \$1 million. Could the Minister say what is the cause for the increase in the allocation? Is there any special programme?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: That allocation caters for the number of times to transport school and examination supplies. That number has been increased and, therefore, will cater for that and also to pay supervisors and invigilators for these national examinations.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, line item 6321 - Fuel and Lubricant: A similar explanation on the increased allocation.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Through the Chairman, that caters for the increase in fuel for the aged vehicles, and we intend to acquire a new boat and engine and a new vehicle.

Ms. Teixeira: Going back to line item 6284 - Other: In an earlier region there was a discussion on additional sums of money for sweepers /cleaners based on a supplementary. Does the region have sweeper/cleaners in the education sector and are they benefitting from the increase that was agreed to about two months ago? I think it would be under the line item 6284.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Through the Chairman, I am advised that, yes, we do have sweeper/cleaners at the schools. However, we have not catered for them under this line item.

Ms. Teixeira: My main question is, and you may wish to advise me if that is so, will the sweeper/cleaners in Region 7, who are catered for in the budget, get the same benefits and increases that were agreed to and reflected in the Supplementary Financial Paper that was passed in this House on the 31st of October, 2018 for all sweeper/cleaners? My concern is if the increase is budgeted in the region's budget under Education?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Through the Chairman, I am being advised, yes, they are catered for in the 2019 budget.

Programme: 773 - Education Delivery \$1,433,917 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 773 - Education Delivery - \$207,700,000

Mr. Croal: Project code 2402100 - Land and Water Transport: Could the Minister indicate the allocation for the vehicle and the type of vehicle as well as the boat and engines?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Through the Chairman, this line item caters for the purchase of a new 4x4 pickup to replace the existing vehicle which is more than eight years old. For the boats and engines, we intend to purchase one 200 horsepower engine and a boat with a shed to accommodate

20 passengers. This boat will transport more than 50 students from the Mazaruni river area such as Itaballi, Kartabu, Batavia and Karau.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 1204100 - Buildings - Education: \$160 million has been budgeted for 2019. I noticed in the description it states the “construction of a special needs buildings at Bartica.” Could the Minister say where that is going to be in Bartica and would this be a one-year or multiyear project to complete the construction of this building?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Through the Chairman, I am advised that the special needs building will be built in the 7th Avenue and it is a one-year project.

Ms. Teixeira: On the same project code, the description states “payment of retention.” Could you advise us which project is being referred to in the legend? On the “completion of the primary school at Kamarang and the dormitory at Waramadong” could you say how much funds are put aside for those two and how soon do you think they will be completed in 2019?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Through you Chairman, this caters for the 10% retention to the cost of \$3.5 million for the Kamarang Primary School, \$3.6 million for the dormitory at Waramadong and \$1.2 million for the sanitary block at Kamarang Primary School.

Ms. Teixeira: Just to repeat for the Hon. Member. Does she have any idea when these projects will be completed in 2019 and become operable for the children?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: The buildings are completed, so it is just the 10% retention.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you.

Programme: 773 - Education Delivery - \$207,700,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 774- Health Services - \$654,608,000

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6221- Drugs and Medical Supplies: Could the Hon. Member advise this House on whether the \$80 million that is budgeted for in 2018 will suffice, considering that there

have been constant complaints about the shortage of drugs and medical supplies at the Bartica Hospital?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: I am so advised, yes, that allocation is sufficient.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6242 - Maintenance of Buildings: Could the Hon. Member advise whether this amount would cater for repairing the roof of the theatre at the Bartica Hospital, so that the theatre could function more effectively and efficiently? Because it appears that due to the leakage coming from the roof the lights are damaged many times, making the theatre difficult to operate.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: I am advised that, yes, it is catered for, but the leakage does not come from the roof, it comes from the condensation of the air service unit.

Ms. Teixeira: That is an architectural design fault and I hope that the region will find an expert to fix it, because theatres that are leaking are very dangerous for the patients.

Mdm. Minister, in this House we had approved the cost for installing a computerised tomography (CT) scanner in the Bartica hospital; I think it was about \$12 million a few months ago. Could you say under line item 6242, Maintenance of Buildings, whether the installation of the CT scanner is catered for?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: I am so advised that the item will come under the capital programme.

Ms. Teixeira: I will check for it there. However, I will say that the House approved it under a supplementary financial paper, \$12 million for the installation of the CT scan. I am just looking to see where it is reflected as it has to be spent before the end of 2018.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: I will repeat that it will fall under the capital budget.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, line item 6265, Other Transport, Travel and Postage. There is the expected increased expenditure of \$5 million in 2019. Could you indicate what is the \$5 million going to do?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Through the Chairman, the increase for that line item will be \$4.014 million which is approximately a 7% increase, and that is because of increased outreaches by Malaria workers monitoring borders and the re-migrants that we are having experiences with.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6272 - Electricity Charges: \$24 million was budgeted for and \$21 million was spent but now you are asking \$26 million in 2019. Could you indicate why you are asking for increased electricity charges?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: I am advised that the electricity charges caters for increase in charges for an additional building.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, as a follow-up, will these increased buildings be in Bartica or elsewhere? I asked that for a reason; because I have seen many statements by the Government in terms of the green strategy in speaking about solar and Bartica *et cetera*. So, I am just trying to get the correlation of you asking for the increased electricity charges.

4.27 p.m.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Yes, we will get there with our Green Energy when it comes on board. It caters for when the Computed Tomography (CT) Scanner is installed and in operation. This will increase the number of electricity charges.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6282 – Maintenance of Equipment: Equipment maintenance has gone up from \$6 million to \$10 million. Could you advise, in the health sector, what would be the equipment that you anticipate either needs fixing, which may not be functioning, or the ones that have to be regularly calibrated, *et cetera*? Could you give the reason for \$4 million increase?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: It will be to maintain the equipment that are already there and to maintain the CT scanner when it comes into operation.

Ms. Teixeira: You twice referred to the CT scanner other when I questioned. Do you have the technical person to manage the CT scanner? You could have a Scanner but if nobody knows how to read it then... I am asking under line items 6112 and 6116, who is the technical person that you have at the Bartica Hospital who will be running the CT scanner and interpreting it?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: I am advised that we do have. We have a Radiographer and a Medical Internist to interpret the readings.

Ms. Teixeira: Senior Technical and Other Technical: We understand that there is a shortage of trained Pharmacists at the Bartica Hospital and at different parts of the region. We also understand that there are persons from Bartica and Region 7 who have been trained as Pharmacists and who have applied and want to return home. Could you explain why they are not able to come home to work? **[Mr. Adams:** Why did you not...?] Could you be quiet, Mr. Adams?

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, let us try not to give vent to our feelings. We can say things that we ought not to say.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: I am advised that we have a Pharmacist and two Pharmacy Assistants who are adequate for now. If there are any other Pharmacists that are willing to return, we are willing to accept them, but they will have to go through the Public Service Ministry (PSM) or the Public Service Commission (PSC).

Ms. Teixeira: I appreciate your answer. However, Region 7 is not Bartica and, therefore, there is need for Pharmacist Assistants and Pharmacists in other parts of the region. I do know in the case of one person who has applied to the PSC and the region to come back home. That person has not been employed. Put aside that issue, are you satisfied that you have a Pharmacist Assistant or a Pharmacist in the rest of the region to cater for the needs of the people in the region?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Yes. We have the Kamarang Hospital which is the second largest hospital in the region and there are two Pharmacy Assistants there.

Programme: 774 – Health Services - \$654,608,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 774 – Health Services - \$108,830,000

Mr. Croal: Project code 2402100 – Land and Water Transport: Could the Hon. Minister indicate where the vehicle would be assigned, the type of vehicle to be purchased and the budgetary allocation for the vehicle, boats and engines?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: This allocation caters for the purchase of one all-terrain vehicle (ATV) which is needed to transport patients as well as drugs and medical supplies in Kako Village; purchase of boats and engines; two 40 horsepower engines, two wooden boats which would be used to transport patients as well drugs and medical supplies for Issano and Phillipai; to purchase a vehicle for use by the Vector Control Department, Maternal and Child Health Department for Mass Blood Smearing and Immunisation purposes at Bartica.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 1204200 – Buildings – Health: I had raised before, the installation of a CT scanner, that \$12 million was approved in the Supplementary Financial Paper in October. I cannot find where it is reflected in the Current or the Capital Estimates to say if it was expended or if it is reflected as an addition. Could you please explain where the \$12 million could be found, for the CT's scanner installation? I looked under Buildings - Health, Land and Water Transport, Furniture and Equipment as well as in the Current Estimates and I cannot find it. It needs to be spent in 2018.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: I am advised that the Supplemental was \$2 million and it was for the purchase of a transformer for the CT scanner.

Ms. Teixeira: The Supplementary states the installation of the CT scanner. I am therefore asking, whether it is a transformer or whatever, could you say where the over \$2 million is reflected in 2018, I would assume it is under Capital budget, because it is not reflected here?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: If it was a Supplementary and it was passed through the House then the information should be in the House.

Ms. Teixeira: To make myself clear, Madam, if you look at your budget documents, project code 1204200 – Health – Buildings, you would find that the allocation for 2018 was \$48 million and the latest estimate for 2018 was \$41 million. In other words, what was budgeted for in 2018 has been used in 2018 at the latest estimate. An additionality of \$2.05 million, for the installation of a CT scanner, would have brought the amount for 2018 to about \$43 million? There is no reflection

of that in the documents in front of us. I am asking where the \$2 million is. I accept that I may be wrong that it is not \$12 million but \$2 million for the installation of a CT scanner in Bartica Hospital.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: I am advised that the question would be addressed under project code 2601800 – Furniture and Equipment – Health and not under project code 1204200. If you look there you will see that \$15 million was budgeted in 2018 and the Revised or the latest figure was \$17 million. The \$2 million was to purchase the transformer for the CT scanner.

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Teixeira, do you have another question?

Ms. Teixeira: I just want a clarification.

Mr. Chairman: Please.

Ms. Teixeira: According to the books that we have here, and the Minister must appreciate that we could only go by the books that are given to us and what are reflected therein, there is no reflection in the Legend in Volume III of a \$2 million. Project code 2601800 has a number of health equipment but it does not have anything to do with the installation of the CT scanner nor could I find that there was a budgetary allocation in 2018 for that. The previous number which is close; \$2 million, which is under another project code, 2507600 is for beds and wardrobes. That cannot be for the installation of the CT scanner. You have pointed me to the \$17 million and I cannot find it. Could you help us?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: It could be found on page 506 under project code 2601800 – Furniture and Equipment – Health. It was not budgeted for under this project code but the Supplemental was sought to the tune of \$2 million and it was approved.

Ms. Teixeira: I think that we are talking about the same thing. I gave that exact number just now, to say it is not there. When you look at Volume III which gives the profile of the project, it has \$17 million for 2019. That is understood, I am not disputing that at all. When you go to 2018, it is \$0 and 2017, it is \$0. The point I am making is that the over \$2 million, which is the Supplemental, should be reflected in the adjusted numbers here to show it was part of 2018 but it is not. Again, I will ask where is the \$2 million? You cannot use it in 2019 because it is not in Budget 2019. It is in the 2018 allocation. I am concerned that you have started 2019 and you have no money for the

installation of the CT scanner. I want to find where the money is located. It is not here. All I see are zeros here.

Ms. Hastig-Williams: I am advised that because it was not a multi-year project, it would not be listed under the 2019 project profile.

Ms. Teixeira: I appreciate that. I know that you are holding the forth. I do not want to put you under extreme pressure. I think that you are doing extraordinary well and you are a fresh face from the Minister who was doing it before.

4.42 p.m.

However, \$2 million was approved in this House for the installation of the Computerised Tomography (CT) scanner in Bartica Hospital. It was for the year 2018, so in the profile design by the Ministry of Finance it should have, in the year 2018, the \$2 million, even though it came in October. I see the Permanent Secretary (PS) nodding his head; otherwise, \$2 million could therefore be unaccounted for, if it is not reflected somewhere under the current and capital estimates then it evaporated. Therefore, I am asking where it is and if it is, as madam Minister said, for the purchase of a transformer, then it is a capital item. Therefore, it has to be listed as \$2 million that come in as a supplementary, but is now part of 2018 budget and so I am asking where is the \$2 million?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: I am going to repeat that the \$2 million is reflected in project code 2601800, Furniture and Equipment-Health, thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: It is not here.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item, just for the purpose of helping the House, could the Hon. Minister say if they had applied for a change of programme to facilitate this \$2 million works?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Thank you Hon. Member, for your question, it would not had been necessary to apply for a change in programme since it would have been a supplementary programme, I am so advised.

Ms. Teixeira: So, Hon. Minister, I, therefore, suggest strongly to the Regional Chairman and the Regional Executive Officer (REO) that you find where the \$2 million is otherwise, you would be

telling the people of Bartica that you have a scanner but that you have no money to install it. I am very serious that, in terms of accountability and transparency, the \$2 million has to be reflected in 2018 Budget as a supplementary. It is not under the capital or the current and I am asking where it is. When you say that it is under this item, let me just read what is in this item: solar refrigerators, scales, measuring boards, incubators, lamps, fetal monitors, screens, filing cabinets, computers, printers, examination and delivery beds. There is transformer in here. I think I could read madam and, just for the sake of the region, if it is not reflected somewhere then you do not have access to it.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: I hope this would bring a solution, the transformer was bought in 2018, so it would not be reflected in the 2019 allocation, thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: The Hon. Minister is trying to help but it is not because it actually made it worse. The supplemental budget came in October, 2018 and the 2018 Budget has no reflection, whatsoever, that it was bought. Therefore, you have now have a problem; was it bought with money that you did not have and was not budgeted for and allocated for you, which causes other problems with the accountability, or are you saying that when the supplemental was passed in the House in October, you have acquired it in the last six weeks and if that is so, could you please tell me the date the transformer was acquired?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Maybe this answer would come in handy, the transformer is already installed on the post. It is already bought, and it is already installed since the first week in November.

Ms. Teixeira: So, the \$2 million has not been reflected in the accounts of Region 7. It is not in the current expenditure, you do not see an additionality of \$2 million anywhere under the current expenditure, nor do you see an additionality anywhere in 2018. You are talking about an additional \$2 million above what was budgeted. Now, that you are saying that the transformer was purchased sometime in November and it is installed, is the CT scanner working?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: That is another question, but before I go there, I would, again, repeat to this House that if you look at budget 2018, there was \$15 million allocated, and if you the latest estimate in 2018, you would see a \$17 million and that is where the \$2 million is located, which was the supplemental.

Ms. Teixeira: The \$17 million is for the 2019 not for 2018.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: No, if you look at the latest estimate for 2018 it is \$17 million and then you look at 2019, it is also \$17 million, so \$17 million is repeated twice on that paper. The second question, yes, the CT scan is being installed. At the moment the technicians are there.

Ms. Teixeira: I had asked if it is working, so it is not working. Thank you.

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Well, obviously, if the technicians are there it would not be in operation until that is completed.

Programme: 774 – Health Services – \$108,830,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 775 – Agriculture – \$1,200,000

Mr. Teixeira: Project code 1301200- Agricultural Development: Construction of shade house – \$1.2 million, could the Hon. Minister advise where in Region 7 would the shade house be constructed and who would be managing it as there is no current budget for agriculture in Region 7?

Ms. Hastings-Williams: This is the very first time that we have been given a capital budget under this head and it is to build a green shade at the Three Miles Secondary School.

*Programme: 775 – Agriculture – \$1,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.
(4.52 p.m.)*

Agency 80: Region 10: Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice (4.52 p.m.)

Current Expenditure

Programme: 801 – Regional Administration and Finance – \$ 229,622,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6281 – Security Services: There is an increase in allocation here, could you state if there is an increase the number of locations for which security services are being provided?

Secondly, could you state the company that is currently providing services as well as the contract duration?

Minister within the Ministry of Communities [Ms. Patterson-Yearwood]: The company Kalibur Security Company and the differences in the amount budgeted and revised was a supplementary that was received of \$6,537,416.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: This \$5.1 million, could you state what is intended for this expenditure?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Thank you Hon. Member, line item 6255 is for the maintenance of landscaping of the Government compounds, the cenotaphs at the Independence Square, Kwakwani, Ituni and Kwakwani sub-office compounds, Christiansburg Community Centre Ground, Block 22 Multipurpose Centre Ground and the main thoroughfare. These are mainly weeding and cleaning works.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: I would ask you to lay over the information for the expenditure that is intended.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: It is only three buildings, \$2 million for the REO building, \$1 million for the office building and \$1 for the annex, but if you want it to be laid over, no problem.

4.57 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister tell us the designations and emoluments of the seven contracted employees?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I cannot recall hearing a line item.

Mr. Chairman: What is the line item, Hon. Member?

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6116, Contracted Employees.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Two vehicle drivers, one Systems Development Officer (SDO), one Checker, a Confidential Secretary, one cleaner and one Handyman.

Bishop Edghill: I asked for the designation and emoluments.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I have here the highest paid and the lowest paid, but I can give you the detailed list. The highest paid is \$141,035,000 and the lowest paid ...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the question was somewhat different from that.

Bishop Edghill: The designations and the emoluments that accompany those designations for the seven persons listed.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I gave the designations before, so what I am giving are the emoluments. I am going to lay it over.

Programme: 801 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$229,622,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 801 – Regional Administration and Finance - \$112,000,000

Bishop Edghill: Project code 1205100 – Buildings – Administration: Could the Hon. Minister tell this House how much of this \$102.5 million is designated for the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) building and how much is designated for the monument?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: The RDC building, \$94 million; and two monuments totaling \$8.5 million.

Bishop Edghill: Same project code, I would like to ask the Hon. Minister if she read paragraphs 958 through 959 of the Auditor General's Report as it relates to the Regional Administration building, where a contract has been signed? What is the status of the works, even though a significant amount has already been paid out as an advance? Could she give us an update as to where the works are, what percentage of the work has been completed and how much money has been paid out?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Responding to the first question, yes, I did read the Auditor General's Report, but I cannot say that I recall all of it. The new Administration building was given 21% budgetary allocation.

Bishop Edghill: Are you saying 1%?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I am responding to your question. And, may I say that this is not a one-line answer or two lines, I have to give an account so as to answer all of the question. The new Administration building was due to commence in 2017. Allocations were given in 2017 and 2018, but there was a serious problem with the building, which I am going to give an account here so that everyone can understand. I think it was in the media and all of that. So, 21% budgetary allocation was given in 2017 to commence construction and an additional \$94 million was given in 2018.

However, since the collection of mobilisation by the contractor on 30th December, 2017, no major works started on the site. Discussions ensued with the contractor in March 2018 and there were plans which the contractor raised concerns about. The officials from the Ministry of Communities, the Ministry of Finance and the RDC were engaged in meetings. It was discovered that there were some serious problems with the site and design plans. A decision was taken to advertise for design and supervision consultancy, which was publicly tendered, evaluated and awarded to SRKN' gineering and Associates Limited. Concept architecture and draft plans were produced. The final design and foundation plans are expected in a few days. The possibility of pile usage is actively considered after bore-hole tests were done.

As a consequence, after seeing that the large part of the \$94 million allocated would return to the coffers, some works that would have been projected for 2019 were brought forward into 2018. I have 10 projects here and I can pass them to the Hon. Member. So, of the \$94 million, \$78,004,000 were utilised in projects; \$3.5 million was paid to SRKN' gineering and Associates Limited, as the consultant, and a further \$3 million ...

Bishop Edghill: The Minister is going on to ...

Mr. Chairman: Will you retain your seat, Hon. Member?

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I rise on a point of order. The Minister is pursuing details that I did not request. Since we have only one hour for the consideration of this region, I would, respectfully, request, that, since the Minister is so willing to share that information, she lays it over. I have a number of other questions.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: The Hon. Member asked what was the position with the project. Should I not do this, the Hon. Member would believe that the \$94 million would return, and I know that a question would pursue.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister confirm to this House that \$39 million was paid on 31st December, 2017 to the contractor and that it was not until July 2018 that the RDC wrote, requesting permission to go to tender for supervisory consultancy? A major project of \$249 million was entered into and signed with a contractor without a supervisory firm in place. Can the Minister confirm that?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: There is nothing to hide about this project. The sum of \$39 million was indeed paid on 31st December. I said 21% from the beginning. It was paid as mobilisation to the contractor, and nothing else has been paid to the contractor since.

Bishop Edghill: I think the Minister missed my question. I am repeating the question: could the Minister confirm that \$249 million contract was entered into and \$39 million was paid to a contractor without a supervisory firm in place. It was only until July 2018, seven months after a contract was signed, that permission was requested to advertise for a supervisory firm. Could she confirm that?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Yes, indeed the contract was signed, the Hon. Member is correct. That is why the project was put on a pause, less we ended up with a “Kato scenario”.

Bishop Edghill: Could I ask the Hon. Minister if the RDC is in compliance with Section 3, Part 8 of the Guyana Legal and Policy Framework for Public Procurement, which clearly states that every RDC must nominate and have evaluators who are approved by the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB). Could she confirm that the RDC is in compliance with Section 3, Part 8 of this regulation?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: This project was not awarded by the Regional Tender Board but by the NPTAB.

Bishop Edghill: Same project code, 1205100, the sum of \$8.5 million is allocated for two monuments, could the Hon. Minister confirm if one of those monuments is the Linden Martyrs?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Confirmed.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister tell this House what is the estimated cost for the monument for the Linden Martyrs?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: The Linden Martyrs monument is estimated at \$5 million. For the other one, do you need that information? The other one is the Son Chapman Martyrs for \$3.5 million.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister tell this House if, out of the \$5 million that will be spent for the Linden Martyrs, the sums that were collected from the public, local and overseas, will be deducted for the cost of that monument? A number of Guyanese, overseas and local, since this announcement, have contacted me to find that out specifically. The sum of \$5 million is allocated for the monument, how much was collected from donations from overseas and in Guyana, and if it will be deducted from the \$5 million cost?

5.12 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, is this the same project code?

Bishop Edghill: Yes, Sir.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I am thankful for that information because, as a Lindener, I do not know who collected what, but what I know is that the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) has never collected any money from anybody. This money that we are talking about here is coming from the National Treasury.

Bishop Edghill: Just to make it clear, is the Minister saying to this House that she is unaware that the RDC, through its previous Chairman collected moneys overseas and in Guyana for the building of a monument for the Linden Martyrs of 12th July?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I am saying that I am not aware that the RDC collected any money for any project of this nature. If the Chairman, a member, or a councillor of the RDC collected any money in their own capacity that is not my interest.

Bishop Edghill: My final question on this project code. Is the Hon. Minister, as a policy maker and herself a previous member of the RDC of Region 10, aware or unaware that there was a fund launched and moneys collected overseas and in Guyana for the monument for the Linden Martyrs?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Whether I am aware or unaware, my awareness has nothing to do with this National Assembly. I am saying that I am not aware of a project to collect money from any person by the RDC. I left the RDC since 2011 but I live in Linden all my years.

Bishop Edghill: Project code 2406200 – Land and Water Transport: Could the Hon. Minister tell this House what vehicle is being purchased and to which office would it be designated to?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: This sum of \$8 million would be used to procure a 4x4 pickup vehicle to be used by the Planning and Monetary Unit of the RDC and the Procurement Department.

Programme: 801 - Regional Administration and Finance - \$112,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 802 - Public Infrastructure - \$231,917,000

Mr. Croal: Line items 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings and 6251 to 6255 – Maintenance of Infrastructure: Could the Hon. Minister layover the information for the maintenance to be done?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I will so do.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Could you give the designation of those persons?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: A Mechanical Engineer and one Handyman.

Programme: 802 – Public Infrastructure - \$231,917,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 802 – Public Infrastructure - \$116,200,000

Bishop Edghill: Project code 2404800 – Land and Water Transport: Could the Hon. Minister tell us what is the vehicle that is being purchased and for what purpose? Where would it be utilised?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: That amount would be expended on two all-terrain vehicles (ATVs).

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister tell us, how does two ATVs fit into a public infrastructure project? Would this be used by staff and which staff? This is not a roller or bulldozer to get work done.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Region 10 has many areas that require the use of ATVs. In Linden itself has a lot of off-road locations such as the mines and so on, and the two ATVs would be used by the Works Department by the engineers to do monitoring and the various checks.

Programme: 802 – Public Infrastructure - \$116,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 803 – Education Delivery – \$2,222,065,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: Hon. Minister, there is a \$5 million increase here. Could you indicate what is this intended for?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: What was the question? Sorry, I missed it.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: You have approximately \$5 million increase in allocations.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: There are a number of activities under this line item and such as the Regional Children’s Mashramani Competition and I have the budgeted amounts. Would you like me to go through that?

Mr. Croal: I was just asking about the increase because I know you will have a number of activities.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: It is additional activities.

Mr. Croal: Yes, additional activities. That is all.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Alright, let me just read the activities.

Mr. Croal: Okay.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: The Children's Mashramani Regional Competition, the National Costume Competition and Road Parade, the National Youth Week Rally, physical display, the festival of choirs, boys in focus, the impromptu speech, the office fair, the nursery quiz, the singing bee competition, nursery fun day, the jingle and rock fest, the literacy competition and the spelling bee competition jeopardy. We will participate in the nationals, the special needs sports, the signing bee competition and the regional and national championship which carries the greater portion.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings and 6255 – Maintenance of Infrastructure: Could the Hon. Minister layover that information regarding the maintenance works?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: That will be done.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6292 – Dietary: Could the Hon. Minister advise us regarding the allocation, how many children are beneficiaries of our institutions and which are the institutions such as schools or dormitories where the children are benefiting?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: At the Amelia's Ward Student Hostel 85 students benefitted from having breakfast, lunch and dinner prepared and at the Kwakwani Student Hostel 69 students benefitted from three meals and a total of 154 students benefit.

5.27 p.m.

Mr. Croal: This is my last question under this programme. Line item 6117 - Temporary Employees: There is an increase by seven employees. Hon. Minister, could you indicate the designations of those seven temporary employees? There is another five who were under the previous year; could you indicate what measures are being taken to move the persons off from the temporary employee to get them on the fixed pensionable establishment?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: The numbers moved from five employees to 12 employees. The five are primary and seven are secondary. The increase is the seven secondary schools.

Programme: 803 – Education Delivery - \$2,222,065,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 803 – Education Delivery - \$215,330,000

Bishop Edghill: Project code 1205200 - Buildings – Education: Could the Hon. Minister tell us which facilities would be constructed in this programme?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Construction of the C-Grade Nursery School at Bamia/Amelia’s Ward and the Primary School at Bamia also.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate is it only these two schools or are there other facilities?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: May I ask the, Hon. Member, if the question you asked just now had to do with Schools or all the buildings?

Bishop Edghill: The project code is 1205200 – Buildings – Education: The Legend states:

“provision of schools and other facilities.”

I asked the Minister about which buildings would be constructed and the Minister named two schools. Then I requested if there are other facilities that would be constructed.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Added to the two schools that were mentioned is the construction of outdoor playing area at three Schools namely, Kwakwani Waterfront Nursery School, Kwakwani Park Nursery School, and Wiruni Nursey School in the Berbice River. There would be construction of water troughs at LICHAS, Watooka Day Primary School, and construction of incinerators at Kwakwani and Amelia’s ward student hostels.

Bishop Edghill: Could I ask the Hon. Minister to confirm that most of these contracts will be done through the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) tendering process?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: All the projects that are to be done in the region, those that fall within the RDC limits, will be done at the level of the RDC. Those above will go to the National Procurement Tender Administration Board (NPTAB).

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister tell this House is the RDC in compliance with Section III Part (a) of the Guyana Legal and Policy Framework for public procurement as it relates to evaluators? Since as of 31st October 2018 they were only two evaluators in the region and the region indicated that it was unable to get evaluators because of the meagre sums that are paid for such hard work. Could the Hon. Minister tell us about the compliance?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I do agree with the Hon. Member and the meagre sums that he mentioned is determined by NPTAB and not the RDC.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister tell this House, that in the absence of an evaluation panel, how are contracts being awarded by the RDC if there are no evaluations done in the region?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: It says that our evaluators are hard at work because they have to attend to all the projects. We are looking at making all the recommendations necessary for 2019, since our 2019 projects are numerous, and we know that there is need for more evaluators.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Member confirm to this House, were contracts awarded in 2018 without a full evaluation panel in place to properly evaluate those contracts?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I am advised, and I am thankful that I have the Chairman of the Tender Board right here in the presence of the REO, that all projects were evaluated.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister confirm that the Regulations of the National Procurement Act states that there should be three evaluators per project? If there are only two evaluators in Region 10, could she tell this House how did that comply with the regulation and the law?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Could I ask which project code is that?

Bishop Edghill: We do not need to be bothered, it is the same project code – 1205200 - Buildings – Education.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I think I said before that I am aware that we have three evaluators. I am not aware of any project that is being done and was not evaluated by the full complement. That is a matter for the Auditor General.

Bishop Edghill: At page 951 of the Report of the Auditor General, we were told that there are only two evaluators in Region 10, namely, a retired Engineer and a Mechanical Supervisor. Could the Hon. Minister tell us who is the third evaluator who participated in this evaluation of contracts that were awarded in 2018?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are in the presence of an evaluator. Someone is giving a running commentary – ‘very good’, ‘excellent’, ‘wonderful’, and ‘good question’. In case the Minister wants a third or a fourth, we have that.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I am not aware that the Report of the Auditor General 2018 is out. If that is so, may I have a copy please?

Bishop Edghill: I asked the Hon. Minister if the absence of approved evaluators by NPTAB led to the award of 14 contracts totalling \$18,331,000 for the execution of works of a current nature and these works were awarded by way of waiver of tender board procedures to use selective contractors with no reason for this type of award neither was the engineers estimates stated...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you must ask a question.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I am asking the question. Was the absence of the Evaluation Panel led to this state of affairs in Region 10 where contracts are being awarded without proper Tender Board processes following the Procurement Act? What assurance would we have that this \$197 million will not be subjected to the same treatment of contracts being awarded without, first of all, proper evaluation and following Tender Board processes.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I know the Hon. Member sits on the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). I would like to ask the, Hon. Member, which report is he referring to? As far as I know, we are looking at 2019 Estimates and I am not aware of any Audit Report to the effect that the Hon. Member just read.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, for the purpose of clarification, I am reading from the Report of the Auditor General 2017 and it stated that at the time of reporting which is 30th October 2018, there was no proper Evaluation Panel in place in Region 10. “At the time of reporting”.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 1205200 - Buildings – Education: Hon. Minister, in 2018 \$133 million was allotted, but only \$103 million was spent. Could you explain why is there a shortfall or under performance by the region by \$30 million?

5.42 p.m.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: The underperformers have to do with the same explanation that I gave just now, that are preferred with the Regional Democratic Council Building. It was the RDC building and the two schools.

Ms. Teixeira: I do not know that the RDC building is under education, but anyway. In the list of places that have been identified for the \$197, 337,000 under this project code, could you say are there any moneys, small, for some of the other riverine areas namely, Kalkuni, DeVeldt, Riverview *et cetera*. I see a lot of concentration, when I read the Capital for Region 10, that it seems to be a lot of concentration in Kwakwani and Linden, but what about areas like Kalkuni, Sandhills, DeVeldt, Riverview, and Rockstone for example.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: What was listed is what will be done in 2019. We are aware that everything cannot be done in one year and whatever moneys are appropriated is what we have to spend.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 2505600 - Furniture and Equipment - Health: Minister, I should have asked this under other Buildings - Education for other regions and I missed it out. I will ask you, Madame, before we close the regions.

Furniture and Equipment – Health, \$15 million, are all the regions report on school furniture and equipment including equipment for Smart classrooms? Forgive me, I am not sure what are the specific equipment or furniture that is required for Smart classroom versus a regular classroom. Could you enlighten me?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I was advised that no Smart classroom was budgeted programme for 2019 for Region 10.

Ms. Teixeira: However, I am reading from Volume 3, page 413, the project number as I gave it: 2505600, the legend states:

“The project entails purchase of school furniture and equipment including for Smart classrooms, desks, benches, nursery sets, chairs, tables, latches, filing cabinets, refrigerators, air conditioning units, musical and sports equipment.”

This phrase “Smart classrooms” appears in every education allocation for every single region. My error is that I should have asked it earlier, but I am asking it as I remember it now. What is the specific furniture equipment that goes along with the Smart classroom versus what a regular classroom would have?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Hon. Member, that information would be laid over.

Programme: 803 – Education Delivery - \$215,330,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 804 - Health Services - \$629,402,000

Mr. Croal: Line items 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings and 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Could you kindly layover the information on the allocations with respect to nature of works the budgeted allocation?

Line item 6221 - Drugs and Medical Supplies: Could you indicate of this amount how much is expected to be warranted to the Ministry of Public Health? I expect the other balance is to be retained for emergencies by the region. Kindly, indicate.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: The sum of \$130 million will be sent to the Ministry of Public Health and \$12 million will be retained for emergency supply.

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, same line item, could you confirm the expenditure the full expenditure of \$141,535,000 came back to the region in worth of the Drugs and Medical Supplies?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: The sum of \$130 million was sent. I am advised that the full complement of drugs was received.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Croal, this is the last question.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6281 - Security Services: I recall that you had the supplementary, but that will take care with 2018 amount. There is an increase allocation by another \$9 million for 2019. Could you indicate are these increase of locations that you are expecting or increase in the hours? The justification of the increase on the 2019 provision.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I was advised that there were no increase locations but the cost increase cost by the service provider.

Programme: 804 –Health Services- \$629,402,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme 804 - Health Services - \$101,150,000

Bishop Edghill: Project code 1205300 – Buildings - Health: Could the Hon. Minister specifically tell this House what sum out of the budgeted sum of \$53,650,000 would be used for the completion of the Wiruni Health Centre and living quarters?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: The sum of \$13 million will be used.

Bishop Edghill: Same line item, could the Hon. Minister tell this House, how much has been spent of the Wiruni Health Centre and Living quarters to date?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I am advised the sum of \$9 million.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister tell this House, what was the initial contract sum and why the variants now?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I am advised that \$20 million was the initial contract sum.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is that the complete answer to the question?

Bishop Edghill: It is not the complete answer.

Mr. Chairman: Maybe, you would want to remind the Minister.

Bishop Edghill: I asked, what was the original contract sum? Why the variants? The initial contract sum, may I suggest was \$19,600,000 million and not \$20 million.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: That information would be laid over.

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 1205300 – Buildings - Health: Minister, could you advise the House on what moneys have been allocated in 2019 for the rehabilitation for the Upper Demerara Regional Hospital? The Volume 3 only have the list of places, but not the allocation. Could you also advise what is the nature of the rehabilitation works that will be done at the Upper Demerara Regional Hospital?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: The Upper Demerara Regional Hospital has the sum of \$14 million. Most of the work that are to be done is roof and electrical works.

Bishop Edghill: Project code 2403500 - Land and Water Transport - Health: Could the Hon. Minister tell this House; how much would be spent for the purchase of the River Ambulance and where would it be located?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: There is one River Ambulance for the Demerara River and one refrigerated truck to be used by the Health Department at the sum of \$12 million.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I asked for the cost of the River Ambulance and I did not get that.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: The cost for the River Ambulance would be \$20 million and \$12 million for the truck.

5.57 p.m.

Ms. Teixeira: The River Ambulance that costs \$20 million, is it just for the boat itself or an equipped River Ambulance, with equipment on board? Is it going to be purchased overseas or is it going to be made here by our boat industry?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: It will be fully equipped with the engine. And I am advised that it would be bought locally from Meditron Inc.

Bishop Edghill: The same project code 2403500 – Land and Water Transport - Health: Could the Hon. Minister confirm if a river ambulance was purchased last year for the Berbice River and at what cost?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I was advised that one was bought this year at a cost of \$16 million from Meditron Inc. for the Berbice River.

Bishop Edghill: The same project code, Sir. Could the Hon. Minister indicate, since it is the same supplier, why does one cost \$16 million and another \$20 million?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: This was estimated because when it goes to the Tender Board, we do not know if it will be the same supplier. And let me just say this, I was advised that it is a bigger sized boat.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, we were told that we are buying from the same supplier – Meditron Inc. I am sure I heard that we are buying from the same supplier, Meditron Inc.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: What I wanted to say was that the one that we bought for the Berbice River was from Meditron Inc. The question is: Are we are going to buy locally? We started in that way. We have no problem continuing once that person qualifies through the tender process.

Programme: 804 – Health Services – \$101,150,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 805 – Agriculture – \$28,992,000

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, an observation and then a question. You have capital allocations for this Agriculture programme, and there are some routine expenditures here – current expenses. But I do not see any allocation for staffing for Agriculture. Could the Hon. Minister provide some clarity as to who will be managing the agriculture programme? And then I will follow-up.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I was advised that there is approval to hire a regional agriculture officer and an assistant, but that process has not yet commenced.

Mr. Croal: Thank you, Hon. Minister. But as a follow-up, would that be done through the fixed establishment with a public advertisement? I am just seeking information on the recruitment process.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I am advised that everything will be done through the Public Service Commission (PSC).

Mr. Croal: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Could you indicate where is being repaired or maintained?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: There is an existing agriculture building that used to be under the Ministry of Agriculture that will now come under the RDC; maintenance works have to be done to accommodate the staff.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6264 – Vehicles Spares and Service: There is an allocation here which should indicate that there is a vehicle under this programme. So, can you confirm what... *[Pause]*

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Croal.

Mr. Croal: I am waiting on the Minister.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Croal, please repeat your question.

Mr. Croal: Yes, sure. Line item 6264 – Vehicles Spares and Service: There is a \$2 million allocation here, which indicates that a vehicle is already assigned in this programme. Could you state what vehicle is under this programme and who is currently utilising that vehicle?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: There is no particular vehicle for this programme. But this money will be used for a vehicle from the RDC which will be assigned to do this work until a new vehicle is acquired.

Mr. Seeraj: Line item 6222 – Field Materials and Supplies: Could the Hon. Minister inform us of what kind of materials we are talking about here for \$3.5 million?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Baby chicks, bags of feed, seedling, permanent crops, shaving, medication and other equipment that is necessary for the successful field trips.

Mr. Seeraj: Baby chicks and feed. Could the Minister inform us if the RDC is now going into poultry production?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: This programme will be done in collaboration with the Department of Education.

Mr. Seeraj: Line item 6281 – Security Services: What are we spending \$3.772 million to secure?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I think I did say that there is an existing building in Christianburg that we are rehabilitating. This security is for that building.

Mr. Chairman: There will be two other questions. Mr. Seeraj, you have the first.

Mr. Seeraj: Line item 6282 – Equipment Maintenance: There is \$3.2 million, as was previously noted. There are no staff under this head, although the region had plans to employ. But I suspect that it is an oversight, because we could have budgetary allocations but make no provisions for staff. Again, what are spending \$3.2 million to maintain?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: There is an existing barge that needs repairs and maintenance. So, the RDC will be doing that and purchasing computers, printers and servicing air conditioning (AC) units.

Mr. Chairman: The last question. Ms. Teixeira you have it.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you. Mr. Chairman. Project code 1902200, \$22.770 million...Sorry, I thought we were at Capital Expenditure.

Mr. Chairman: This is the last question, Mr. Seeraj.

Mr. Seeraj: That is correct, Sir. I did not want your offer to go to waste.

Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: In asking this question I would appreciate if the Minister could state the relevance of the barge to agriculture. National and Other Events has \$4.5

million. Could the Hon. Minister tell us what sort of national events will this department, with no staff, be taking part in?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I am trying to understand if two questions were asked. It is because I heard about a barge and national events. He just said the barge.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, will it assist if the Hon. Member repeats the question?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Seeraj: Sir, the Minister said that there is reference to a barge under equipment and maintenance. So the question is twofold, one is clarification on the answer that was provided before as to the relevance of a barge to this programme.

My other question is under line item 6291; \$4.5 million is allocated here for national and other events. I was trying to get clarity from the Minister since this department does not have any staff. What is the nature of the national and other events?

6.12 p.m.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I am responding to line item 6291, National and Other Events. The activities to be held are for World Food Day, Linden Town Week, RACE, National Tree Planting Day and Agriculture Month.

Relating to the barge, it is used to desilt. There are some creeks that would flood during certain weather and destroy farmers' crops. We have to maintain those creeks to give access to those farmers.

Programme: 805 - Agriculture - \$28,992,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 805 - Agriculture - \$22,770,000

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 1902200 - Agricultural Development: The description states it is \$22.770 million. For 2018, I see from the descriptions that this programme was originally under Public Infrastructure. Fifteen million dollars was budgeted for in 2018 and spent. It is now \$22.770

million. My concern that I would like to ask the Minister about is: Who was managing the \$15 million expenditure, in 2018, when there was no staff? Who will be managing the capital works for this area, in 2019, while you are awaiting staff? It is for the provision of shade houses and the upgrading of fair-weather trail at Millie's Hideout and the purchase of furniture and equipment.

I am very happy there is allocation for agriculture in Region 10. My concern is who will be managing it? Who is going to be running the Agriculture department? Who handled the expenditure in 2018 for \$15 million and what was it for? Who will be managing this expenditure in 2019?

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I am advised that mainly the engineers at the region were running this Programme.

Ms. Teixeira: It is regrettable that it was the engineers. I would think that veterinary assistants and persons with agricultural backgrounds, including those graduating from the Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA), are quite available in Guyana. These are not necessarily engineering projects; these are projects to further agricultural development in the region. I am very disturbed; I am afraid that this would just become another show, instead of really helping the region to develop agriculturally. Is there any attempt and how fast would you be able to get staff? Who is going to account for this? Why was this not left under Public Infrastructure so that, at least, it would have been monitored there? Now there are engineers from Public Infrastructure monitoring, but it is really not an agricultural development programme.

I am very concerned about the expenditure of \$15 million last year and \$22,770 million for 2019. There is also \$28.992 million in 2019 for Current Expenditure. I think that you would be disturbed too, Minister.

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood: I am happy for the observation made by the Hon. Member. I was a Councillor of the RDC from 2001 and, as far as I can remember, we have always asked for an Agriculture Department in the region, but we were denied every year. The region continued to ask for such a programme and this is the first year that the region will be manning its own affairs.

Programme: 805 - Agriculture - \$22,770,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I thank you. We have completed consideration of Region 10. We will now take the suspension and return in 40 minutes, which will be 7.00 p.m., to continue consideration.

Sitting suspended at 6.19 p.m.

Sitting Resumed at 7.10 p.m.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply

Agency: 43 - Ministry of Public Health

Current Expenditure

Programme: 431 - Policy Development and Administration - \$1,734,791,000

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: I see there is a decline in contracted employees from 83 to 75, yet there is an increase in the amount of money budgeted, \$196,725,000. Could the Minister explain why this increase?

Minister of Public Health [Ms. Lawrence]: Mr. Chairman, if you would allow me, before I respond to the Hon. Member's question, I wish to extend condolences to the family of Dr. Benji Singh, a General Practitioner, who has served in this country for many years. Many of us would have benefitted from his service. Thank you, Sir.

To the question of the Hon. Member, the amount catered for here is for the increase in salaries.

Dr. Anthony: Could the Minister tell us by how much the salaries would be increased?

Ms. Lawrence: As outlined by the Minister of Finance, it is from zero to seven percent.

Dr. Anthony: The same line item 6116, Contracted Employees, could the Minister tell us if in this section we have hired the people in the Mental Health Unit (MHU)?

Ms. Lawrence: No, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6221 - Drugs and Medical Supplies: Could the Minister tell us what this would be used for?

Ms. Lawrence: This allocation is for the Government Analyst Food and Drug Department (GA-FDD); most of it goes to re-agents.

Dr. Anthony: Could I ask the Minister to lay over what items would be procured and the quantities? Last year when we had this discussion on the Estimates, I had asked the Minister a similar question, but to date we have not received those documents. Perhaps the Minister can tell me within what reasonable timeframe she can lay it over.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member. Perhaps this is the time for me to observe that when commitments are made and a Member, for whatever reason, has been unable to maintain that commitment, then the Member of Parliament (MP) who is waiting should bring to the attention of the Chairman, through the Clerk of the National Assembly, that the particular item of information has not yet been forthcoming. It would be helpful if that is done, because then we would not wait until a year later to say that. Thank you.

Ms. Lawrence: If I may, I received a letter from the Parliament Office and all the items listed therein were supplied to the Parliament Office. We did honour our obligations based on the list that was presented. And to answer the Hon. Member's question, we will do so again.

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6241 - Rental of Buildings: Could the Minister say whether the Sussex Street Bond is still being paid under this line item?

Ms. Lawrence: It is public knowledge, and I am sorry that the Hon. Member is not aware, that the Ministry of Public Health is no longer in a rental agreement for the Sussex Street Bond.

Dr. Anthony: The same line item 6241, Rental of Buildings, could the Minister say if the Princess Street Bond or warehouse is under this line item?

7.18 p.m.

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, I have absolutely no knowledge about this Princess Street matter. This is the second time I have heard the Hon. Member refer to it. So, perhaps, he has some details that I nor the staff in the Ministry has.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, the Minister said she does not have any knowledge of this facility. But the Auditor General's Report clearly states that there is a facility at Princess Street which the Ministry has been renting. At the Ocean View International Hotel seven rooms were also acquired. We would like to know whether the Ministry has been paying for those rooms at Ocean View International Hotel and the property in Princess Street. How much has the Ministry been paying and what is the duration of the contract? I cannot imagine that the Auditor General would put something like this in the Audit report... *[Interruption]* It is here, Mr. Chairman, at paragraph 544 in the Auditor General's Report. It is clearly stated there.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I think you want to ask a question.

Dr. Anthony: Yes. Mr. Chairman. I would like to know whether the Princess Street warehouse, which is an off-site storage for the Ministry is being paid for from this heading, if there is a contract and how much it is costing the Ministry to rent this facility. Similarly, for the Ocean View International Hotel, where is the moneys allocated for the payment to Ocean View International Hotel for those rooms?

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, my answer to the Princess Street building, as claimed by the Member, and as written here by the Auditor General, the information will have to come to the Ministry because we do not have any building in Princess Street that we are using. So that is it. With regards to the Ocean View International Hotel, I am happy to acknowledge that this company has extended its social responsibility by offering us space to keep some of our supply items since we have broken down the bond at Kingston, where a new bond is being built. So, we are very grateful and thankful to them and there is no cost. It is their social responsibility being exercised here.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, I am very happy that there are corporate citizens who are extending corporate social responsibility. But what is worrying is whether these facilities meet warehouse standards, because in paragraph 548 of the Auditor General's Report it clearly states that the condition under which the items were being stored were in rooms that were infested by termites and because of that it prevented them from doing a proper audit of what was stored. Could the Minister say why we are storing in such a facility that does not meet the basic standards for the storage of drugs and medical supplies?

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, just to set the record straight, we do not have any damages from the items that were stored at the Ocean View International Hotel. What the Member did not read to this honourable House is the following paragraph which states:

“The proprietors have treated the room against termites and rodents to avoid damage to the items.”

He did not read that. But could we please get back to the 2019 budget and the Member could put those questions to me in the House.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, since we are setting the records straight, from paragraph 548 I want to read the statement of the Auditor General.

“In addition, there was evidence of termite infestation in the rooms and damages to the boxes and items stored, as shown below.”

And there are the photographs.

“The extent of the damage could not be determined at the time of physical count”.

So that is the record. Perhaps, then, the Minister could tell us, for line item 6241, Rental of Buildings, what are the buildings that are being rented from this sum and could she disaggregate the sums for us?

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, we are renting three two-storey buildings at 114 Duke Street Kingston, this is where we house personnel from the Cuban Medical Brigade at a cost of \$260,000 per month. We are renting 217 Lamaha Street Cummingsburg, a three-storey building for \$1.5 million. Also, in Fourth Street Kingston, another two-storey building at \$25,000; we are renting 53 Somerset Court, Herstelling, to house another set of the Cuban Brigade for \$90,000; we are renting 21 Craig Street, Campbellville, for \$600,000, again for another set of the Cuban Medical Brigade and a five-storey building at 126 Barrack Street, Kingston... this is from National Industrial and Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL); we are renting the old Citizens Bank building at \$4.7 million a month; a one-storey building in New Amsterdam for the housing of our nurses during training at \$190,000; also at Atlantic Gardens for the Co-ordinator and four Cuban doctors at \$570,000; Silverballi Street, Mackenzie, to accommodate the nursing students from the

interior at \$240,000; and at St. Magdalene Street, New Amsterdam, a three-storey building to accommodate nursing students at \$360,000 a month.

Dr. Anthony: Could I ask the Minister to lay over that particular document with the details?

Line item 6284 - Other: Could the Minister tell us what the \$111 million would be spent on?

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, this money would be used for paying the licence fees for our Management Accounting Computerised Software (MACS) system, \$6.2 million. We are also paying for the Logistic Management Information System's consultancy and implementation, \$12.3 million. We are going to hire a consultant to assist with implementation of the B4R and M4R at \$2 million. Another consultant to work with planning staff to review National Health Authority (NHA) at \$2.5 million; a 75 megabit per second committed information rate (MBPS CIR) internet bandwidth service for \$4.2 million; websites hosting fees, \$100,000; infrastructural application database licensing, \$3 million; digital subscribers lines (DSL), \$180,000; for the e-governance customer premises equipment we are going to use \$720,000; for the installation of local area networks (LAN) for our Government Health Information System (GHIS) pilot, we are going to use \$7.2 million; for printers and copiers we are going to use \$3 million; for the staff retreat, \$1.4 million; inter-ministerial co-ordination meetings, \$459,000; for tendering for the airtime and for advertising we are looking at another \$14 million; for other services that would be \$8,000; health advisory advertisement would be another \$8 million. Those are the items that we have listed.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, under the same line item, last year we were told that the Ministry was buying a similar health information system. Is there are recurrent cost? Is the Minister saying that every year we have to pay for the same thing? Because she told us that last year and in this year's budget we hear that the Ministry is again budgeting for it.

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, not only is it for the renewal of the license but it is also for the upgrading, and we are seeking to use more fields. So, as we do that and bring on more users the fees go up.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, line item 6294 - Other: Could the Minister tell us how many patients benefitted from this allocation in 2018 and how many is intended to benefit from this allocation in 2019?

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, we are so happy to report that 396 patients have benefitted so far, and we are trying to aim for 500 next year.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, under the same line item, could the Minister tell us how patients are evaluated and what is the waiting time for them to get assistance from the Ministry?

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, I know that all of Guyana is watching, when someone comes with a recommendation from our tertiary institution indicating that they need to seek overseas treatment then they are given a list of requirements.

7.33 p.m.

While they are asked to bring those documents, in the interim, the staff will then write to the National Insurance Scheme (NIS), if the person is of workable age, to ascertain whether that person is registered with the NIS and what will be the contribution from the NIS. It is based on that and the interview that it is decided how much money will be recommended for that person. If that amount is above \$1 million then we prepare a Cabinet document and take it to Cabinet for its no-objection.

Dr. Anthony: Under the same line item, could the Hon. Minister tell us whether Ministers benefit from this item?

Ms. Lawrence: This line item caters for all Guyanese. During this period that we have been in office, yes, two Ministers did benefit from minimal amounts from this line item. I do not have it here.

Dr. Anthony: I am sure that the Minister would be able to lay that over at a later point.

Line item 6321 – Subsidies to Local Organisations: Could the Minister tell us how much money would be expended on the Presidential Commission on Non-Communicable Diseases? Could the Minister tell us who are the Members of this Commission and terms of references (TORs) for this Commission?

Ms. Lawrence: May I point the Hon. Member page 433 under Policy Development and Administration. It states clearly “Presidential Commission on Non-Communicable Diseases, a

budget of \$8.222 million is allocated”. With regards to the names of the Commissioners, I could lay that over, just in case I missed out anyone, and the TORs.

Dr. Anthony: Last year, I asked that exact question. The Minister promised to layover the names of the persons. One year has gone and we cannot get the names. Perhaps, the Minister could say to us who is the Chairperson of the Commission and, maybe, who is the Deputy Chairperson. We still do not know who are the Members of the Presidential Commission on Non-Communicable Diseases. Could the Minister say how often they are meeting?

Ms. Lawrence: I will lay that over again. That was among the list of documents which was asked by letter to me to present to this House. There is no harm, we could lay that over again.

Dr. Anthony: Tell us the name. Who is the Chairman?

Ms. Lawrence: With regards to the Chairperson of the Commission, that would be yours truly. In my absence, it would be the Minister within the Ministry of Public Health. The person who is the technical officer that leads that Commission is the Chief Medical Officer (CMO).

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6322 – Subsidies and Contributions to International Organisations: Could the Minister say what benefit Guyana would derive from subscribing or paying fees to the International Atomic Energy Agency?

Ms. Lawrence: Under this agency, the Government and people of Guyana will benefit from various workshops and would have at our disposal, technical persons in any instance that we will need to use their services. For example, two weeks ago, we had a team after requesting them to come and evaluate the Cancer Institute and all of the other machines at the tertiary institutions; the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC), where there is radiation and so on. We are awaiting that report.

Prior to now, when the Ministry of Natural Resources in the department of the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission had its issue, we also wrote this body asking for technical assistance. That agency also provides scholarships and I trust that we will be able to take up some of those scholarships and training for our personnel.

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6321: Some moneys there are voted for the Advisory Board on the Termination of Pregnancy. Could the Minister say, over the last year, by how much the incidents of medical termination were reduced; whether this Committee has produced a report to tell us how many incidents of septic abortions were reduced, and she could tell us about the improvement of standards in maternal health?

Ms. Lawrence: That information will be laid over.

Dr. Anthony: We are allocating monies for this body. Last year when we asked a similar question...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, what is line item?

Dr. Anthony: The line item is 6321.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Dr. Anthony: Last year we asked a similar question. We asked who the Members of the Board were, and we still have not received the names of those Members. The terms of reference, according to the law, were those three things that I stated. They were supposed to do a report. We, in this Assembly, were supposed to receive copies of that report but, to date, no such report has been laid in this National Assembly. Yet in 2019, we have allocated similar sums of monies, but the Minister cannot tell us what is going on with this particular body. Could the Minister say to us, at least, who is the Chairperson of this Committee and, maybe, the Deputy Chairperson of the Committee?

Ms. Lawrence: The Chairman is the Chief Medical Officer. As I said earlier, I will layover this information, again, in the National Assembly.

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6321: Recently, we passed the Tobacco Control Bill. Could the Hon. Minister say whether the Tobacco Council, which is supposed to be established under that legislation, has been established and who are the 10 Members of that Council?

Ms. Lawrence: The answer is no.

Dr. Anthony: Under the same line item, could the Hon. Minister explain why is it, that after passing this legislation we still have not put in place this Council so that we could regulate the smoking of tobacco in this country? Could the Minister tell us whether anyone has been charged under this legislation for selling loose cigarettes?

Ms. Lawrence: I thought the Hon. Member was one not for incarcerating people. We did say, over and over again, that we are going to start an educational programme so that we could educate persons about the legislation. We will then set a timeframe when we will begin to institute the penalties under the legislation and so on. Let me inform the Hon. Member that the TORs for the Council is presently being worked on. I could assure him that before the end of this year, it will go to Cabinet for its approval so that, in January, we could have that Council in place. It is a work-in-progress.

Dr. Mahadeo: A follow-up to the question that the Hon. Member asked at line item 6321: Hon. Minister, could you advise where funding would come from, if any at all, for that Council because it is not listed here?

Ms. Lawrence: That funding would come under the Presidential Commission.

Dr. Mahadeo: Hon. Minister, Volume II lists six indicators but there are no targets. Could you advise us about the targets that were set for the indicators under Policy Development and Administration?

Ms. Lawrence: We do not have that information with us here, but it could be given to the Clerk of the National Assembly.

Dr. Mahadeo: Hon. Minister, I would like to direct your attention to line item 6117 where we are going to have an additional 33 temporary employees in 2019. Could you advise us as to where these temporary employees will be used and for how long could we expect them to be temporary employees?

Ms. Lawrence: Firstly, let me say that for most of the 33 persons, for most we are waiting on the Public Service Commission to give its approval. We are talking about a Quality Manager, a Deputy Quality Manager, Health Promotion Officers, Analytical Technical Assistant, Pharmacy Leger Costing Clerks, Accounts Clerk II, Typist Clerk, Stores Attendant Office Assistant, vehicle

Drivers, Administrative Support Officer, Clerical Assistants, Health Promotion Assistants, Handymen and Internal Security.

7.48 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: I will allow two questions after this and I would put the question.

Dr. Mahadeo: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: I see that \$78 million was budgeted for, we expected to use for the year \$53 million and now, we have proposed \$86.5 million for 2019...

[**Mr. Williams:** What line item?] ...please pay attention, I said it, line item 6272, Electricity Charges.

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, just some clarifications from the Hon. Member, with regards to 2018, what was the question?

Dr. Mahadeo: I am saying that we budgeted \$78.147 million, we would spend \$53.147 million, which is much less than what was budgeted. For 2019, we are increasing it \$86.5 million. Why did we spend less and why are we increasing it in 2019?

Ms. Lawrence: We have not concluded on 2018 and you know that you get the bill one month after. We are certainly going to spend more than that \$53 million by the end of the year. In terms of the increase for 2019, we are catering for the new bond at Kingston which is much larger, more persons and also for the extension at the Diamond bond.

Programme: 431 – Policy Development and Administration – \$1,734,791,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 431 – Policy Development and Administration – \$ 495,302,000

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Dr. Anthony I see you are standing.

Dr. Anthony: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: May I enquire for what it is that you are standing?

Dr. Anthony: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Dr. Anthony, if you wish the floor it is yours.

Dr. Anthony: Project code 1216200 – Ministry of Health-Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister say to us how much money would be expended in totality for the Ministry's headquarters?

Ms. Lawrence: To the Hon. Member, it is a total of \$150 million of the \$400 plus million allocated.

Dr. Anthony: I understand from what was presented in the budget that this is a multiyear project. What I am trying to get from the Hon. Minister is how much this project, overall, is going to cost because last year we had a budgetary provision, this year we had another sum, and I do not know much more in the future we would continue to budget for this particular expenditure. I want to get an idea of how much the Ministry's head office is going to cost.

Ms. Lawrence: We are doing the Ministry's head office in phases. Right now, we are at phase one and the anticipated cost is some \$365,487,000.

Dr. Anthony: Could the Hon. Minister tell us how many phases there are going to be and how much each phase is going to cost?

Ms. Lawrence: At this time, we do not have costings for the other two phases.

Dr. Anthony: Is there not a design for this building and an engineer's estimate of how much this overall project is going to cost? I would imagine that a Ministry steep in planning would be able to do this and more so that it has phase the construction. Could the Hon. Minister please explain to us about the design and the overall cost, if there is not an engineer's estimate, what are doing in phase one?

Ms. Lawrence: I think you are indicating to me that I have the floor, but if I could hear the question, I certainly would attempt to answer it.

Dr. Anthony: We are engaged in building the head office of the Ministry of Public Health. The Hon. Minister has just indicated to us that the building is going to be built in phases. It is obvious that for you to build something in phases, we have to have the overall...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Dr. Anthony, I do not want to interrupt you, but I do recalled that you did say this before and somehow the question got lost on the hearer, so it is possible that what may be most beneficial, I am only suggesting, is to let the Hon. Minister, hear the question, the rest of the matter are frills, if I may so.

Dr. Anthony: Thank you very much. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us what is the cost estimates for each phase of the design?

Ms. Lawrence: And the Hon. Minister repeats that we do not have the costings for the other two phases. What we have is for phase one. We are going to be moving, in 2019, to the design of the second phase.

Dr. Anthony: On the same line item, one of the other buildings that has been going on for one year to another year, is the laboratory at the Food and Drug Agency, could the Hon. Minister say to us how many phases this project has, whether there is a design, what is the overall cost of the design and for the current phase that we are engaged in, how much that is going to cost us?

Ms. Lawrence: Just let me inform this House that this is the very first time that we, the citizens of Guyana, would be building a state-of-art laboratory. As a result, we sought to engage persons with the technical knowledge and persons with the experience that would have built such a facility. In 2019, we are going out for tender and, according to our plan, by the end of the first half of 2019, we should be breaking ground to start to put up that building. We are talking about \$210 million allocated out of this lot.

Dr. Anthony: It should be noted that this Parliament would have provided moneys for this same project this year in 2018. We continue into 2019 and we still apparently do not have the design, but I see in the same heading here, that an allocation was provided for consultancy services. Could I enquire of the Hon. Minister, how much of this money was spent on consultancy to design the Ministry of Public Health's building and how much was spent on the design of the state-of-art Food and Drug laboratory?

Ms. Lawrence: During 2018, the following was done; site preparation works were completed, a temporary bridge, land clearing and grubbing of building footprint and construction of retaining walls on the eastern end of the compound for \$69.4 million. There was the construction of a

temporary perimeter fence around the construction site for \$8 million and the geotechnical investigation was completed for \$2.9 million. The other part of the question as how much was paid for the consultancy, I am told \$20 million.

Dr. Anthony: As the Hon. Minister volunteered extra information than what I asked her... The Hon. Minister told us what was happening in 2018 at the Ministry's head office site. The Auditor General's Report at paragraph 574 states:

“At the time of the physical verification on 13 August 2018, nine months after...”

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, a Point of Order.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Dr. Anthony, there is a Point of Order, kindly give way.

Ms. Lawrence: The information that I just provided is for the Food and Drugs building, not for the head office, that is what you were speaking about Hon. Member, so you could now put your question for the head office.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman for clarity, let me repeat both of my questions. The first one was that in this provision that we are now discussing, there is allocation for consultancy services.

8.03 p.m.

I would assume that is to design both buildings. My question to the Minister was how much money was expended on consultancy services for the design of the Ministry of Public Health's Head Office, which is the first question, and whether those designs have been completed, estimates made, and so forth?

Secondly, how much moneys were used for the design of the state-of-art Food and Drug Laboratory, and whether those designs have been completed and the estimates made so that we can know how many phases, and so forth, have to be constructed.

Ms. Lawrence: To add to the information that I have given, in terms of the Head office for design and supervision, consultancy fees in the amount of \$20 million is budgeted.

Dr. Anthony: Am I to understand that \$20 million was expended on the design for the Ministry of Public Health's building? Were those designs completed and do we have the cost estimates? I

would like to know that because we have budgeted \$20 million in 2018, and when we discussed this Budget in 2017 there was a similar allocation for consultancy services. The question is how much of that was utilised for this year and what work was done by this consultancy firm? Perhaps, the Minister can tell us the name of the consultancy firm. The same question applies to the state-of-art Food and Drug Laboratory.

Ms. Lawrence: With regard to the Head Office, this design started in-house and then we sought the services of an external consultant VIKAB Engineering Consultants Limited, for which \$5 million was paid. In terms of the Food and Drug Laboratory, the consultancy firm is William Harris TTSL, out of Jamaica, and it was paid \$12.552 million to date.

Dr. Anthony: Have the designs been completed, and are there cost estimates?

Mr. Chairman: I will allow three questions more.

Ms. Lawrence: I was informed that the one for the Food and Drug Laboratory is completed, and the one for the Head office, some corrections are now doing.

Bishop Edghill: The same project code, 1216200. Could the Hon. Minister tell this House if, at the time of the signing of the contract for phase 1, the contractor received a design that he should be following?

Ms. Lawrence: The answer to that is yes.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same project code, could I ask the Minister to tell us if, accompanying that design, there was a Bill of Quantities that was used in the evaluation of determining who was the most responsive evaluated bidder?

Ms. Lawrence: The answer is yes, it was a public tender.

Programme: 431 – Policy Development and Administration - \$495,302,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 432 – Disease Control - \$1,967,123,000

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, let me know when you are quite ready.

Ms. Lawrence: We are ready now, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Dr. Anthony, please proceed.

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: Could the Minister indicate to us what programmes are covered under this heading?

Ms. Lawrence: There are two programmes. Those will be the National AIDS Programme and the National Public Health Reference Laboratory.

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6221: Could the Minister tell us, first of all, how much money has been budgeted for the National AIDS Programme and how much money will be spent on the National Public Health Reference Laboratory?

Ms. Lawrence: Of the \$1.1 billion, \$341,361,000 will be spent on drugs for the National AIDS Programme and the difference will be spent on the National Public Health Reference Laboratory.

Dr. Anthony: The Government has announced that it would be moving towards the “Treat all” programme, meaning that every person who has been diagnosed with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) would receive treatment. Could the Minister say whether this \$330 million would be adequate to cover every HIV patient in Guyana?

Ms. Lawrence: This amount allocated from the Government of Guyana, along with that which we receive through the Global Fund, will be adequate to cover the programme.

Dr. Anthony: I am adequately informed that there are about 2,500 patients who are not receiving antiretrovirals (ARV). So, regarding this gap that we have, would we be able, with this amount of money – because it is not substantially different from 2018 – to cover that gap of 2,500 more patients? I have looked at what we are getting from Global Fund and I have looked at what we have in 2018, could the Minister tell us that, by 2019, we will close that gap?

Ms. Lawrence: I also note that the Member was also reliably informed that, as we work to close that gap, we do have the opportunity to come back to this House to seek further funding, should the need arise. And I am quite certain that the Hon. Member will vote in favour.

Dr. Anthony: Is the Minister admitting that we do not have enough moneys for the ARVs and other medication necessary for us to scale up treatment so that we can treat every single HIV patient in Guyana? If we are going to come back to supplementary, it means that we do not have enough in this provision. Could the Minister confirm that?

Ms. Lawrence: As I said earlier, the amounts that the Government of Guyana has allocated in the 2019 Budget added to the amounts which we will receive through the Global Fund, it is our estimation that it will be adequate, but, should the need arise for us to have more funding, we do have the opportunity to come back to this honourable House through a supplemental.

Dr. Anthony: One of the requirements of the 90-90-90 programme is viral suppression. Could the Minister tell us whether or not we are able to monitor for viral loads of HIV patients at the National Public Health Reference Laboratory?

Ms. Lawrence: Hon. Member, I am informed that we are at 80% suppression.

Dr. Anthony: The United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) statistics do not reflect that so, I am very happy to note that we are going in that direction.

But moving on, line item 6284 – Other: Could the Minister tell us what is covered under this line item?

Ms. Lawrence: Certainly, but before I respond, let me just add what the Hon. Member did not add, that the UNAID statistics speak to 2017.

To answer the question as to what pertains to line item 6284, let me just give you a breakdown of the activities. One will be a mass media awareness and stigma discrimination campaign on suicide. This is to increase public knowledge through, again, mass media awareness and anti-stigma campaigns *via* television, newspaper, radio, health fairs, *et cetera*, on mental health awareness. We are going to have some advocacy to address awareness on trans fats, salts and sugar content along with developing policies to increase tax on foods high in trans fats and salt, advertisements, campaigns, *et cetera*. We will be printing sexually transmitted infections (STI) posters, genital ulcer disease (GUD), Group D Streptococcus (GDS) and Hepatitis B.

8.18 p.m.

We are going to revise and update the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) guidelines and we will also have training sessions for administrators, managers, and persons from private healthcare facilities on stigma and discrimination, procure 10 anti-stigma and discrimination policy plaques for health facilities, printing of national policy documents on stigma and discrimination which has to do with HIV, hold a two day stigma and discrimination reduction training sensitization workshop, with healthcare workers from Regions 3,7 and 10 and also to speak to them about human rights and gender. There will be outreach sessions to new and emerging places of meeting for SWs, MSMs, miners and loggers in Regions 1, 2, 4, 7, 8 and 9. We will also have a semi-annual cycle social and offloading sessions with key population (KP) social workers and peer educators on HIV.

Dr. Anthony: Could I ask the Minister to layover what she just read?

Ms. Lawrence: Sure. You could have asked for that from the beginning.

Dr. Anthony: Could I ask the Minister whether mental health is covered under this disease control section?

Ms. Lawrence: Yes, Sir.

Dr. Anthony: I understand that mental health is covered under this programme, so I have a question for the Minister. Could the Minister say to us how many staff she has in the Mental Health Unit?

Ms. Lawrence: There is approximately 15 staff.

Dr. Anthony: Could the Minister tell us if the 15 staff receive telephone allowances?

Ms. Lawrence: No, Sir. However, they have access to the phones in the office which also give them access to cellular phones.

Dr. Anthony: The reason why I am asking is because these workers who have to be in contact with persons who are mentally ill or need help, have written in their end of year report to the Ministry of Public Health, saying that they need moneys because they have been utilising their cell phones and they are not being reimbursed. If they are going to stay in touch with suicidal patients,

they need assistance from the Ministry. They have since stopped using their personal money and they have asked the Ministry to give them some subsidy, but this has not been so.

Under line item 6133, could the Minister give these staff telephone allowances?

Ms. Lawrence: I am a little taken back that the Hon. Member who was previewed to a report that I was not previewed to, saw this great need, and has been in this House with me for almost nine days and have not even said “Minister we have an issue”.

Notwithstanding the speech by the Hon. Member and his cause - I am quite certain that the officer in charge of the Ministry will certainly be writing to the Department of Public Service for the approval so that we can be able to facilitate access on a 24-hrs basis to phone calls by the staff.

Dr. Anthony: Notwithstanding the Minister’s theatrics, the Minister...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I do not think it is a word you should use. I think no one here indulges in theatrics. No Hon. Member in the House indulges in that. Let us not introduce that word.

Dr. Anthony: Okay, Mr. Chairman, I withdraw.

Mr. Chairman: No one here.

Dr. Anthony: Yes, I agree. Despite the Minister’s...

Mr. Chairman: You would discard that word.

Dr. Anthony: Yes, I will. Despite the Minister’s passionate response, the Minister must know because the Head of that Unit would have submitted that report to the reporting officer above her and that was written in there. If the Minister cannot get the report from one of her officers, that is not my problem. The Minister must be able to run a better shop.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we have breakdowns and build ups. Right now, we are breaking down, so let us try to see if we can build back up. It is not helpful to a Member who is on the floor

to be able to express his or her views on a particular matter if all we do is interrupt. We cannot do that.

Dr. Anthony, please proceed.

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contribution to Local Organisations: Could the Minister say what benefits does the Ministry get from the Cancer Board and the Cancer Society?

Ms. Lawrence: The Hon. Member is aware that the Cancer Society is not functioning, but the Cancer Board which is functioning do provide data to the Ministry so that we can be able to plan and forecast.

Mr. Chairman: I will permit three other questions before we move to another consideration.

Dr. Mahadeo: Based on the indicators, could the Minister say whether indeed we are expecting a higher mortality due to tuberculosis (TB) in 2019?

Ms. Lawrence: No, Sir.

Dr. Mahadeo: Follow-up: It means therefore, Mdm. Minister, that the information here is incorrect.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Dr. Mahadeo, you need to speak closer to the microphone.

Dr. Mahadeo: I am asking whether the information in Volume 2 is not correct.

Ms. Lawrence: What page is it?

Dr. Mahadeo: It is page 156.

Ms. Lawrence: No, Sir. As of right now it is nine per 100,000 and we expect that once we put them under HIV treatment the risk will go down.

Dr. Mahadeo: Follow-up: I would like to ask the Minister will the Direct Observed Treatment Short Course (DOTS) programme be re-implemented or resuscitated and how soon would that happen?

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, if you would allow me I also heard the member ask this question from several other Ministers on this side, so just let me inform him that the programme never stopped. We have the following DOTS workers across the regions: in Region 1 there are five workers, in Region 2 there are two workers, in Region 3 there are three workers, in Region 4 there are 17 workers, in Region 5 there are three workers, in Region 6 there are three workers, in Region 7 there is one worker, in Region 8 and 9 the community health workers were trained, and in Region 10 there are four workers.

Bishop Edghill: Under line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: My colleague asked the Hon. Minister about the benefits that we get from the Cancer Society and the Cancer Board and she indicated that the Cancer Society is non-functional. Could I ask the Hon. Minister why would be giving \$3,150,000 to a society that is non-functional?

Ms. Lawrence: Thanks to the Hon. Member and his concern. As you know we are focusing on NCDs and cancer is one of our NCDs. We want to work to ensure that we can get this organisation up and running. We have made that allocation in anticipation that we will be successful in 2019.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6284 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister say would the Ministry be restoring the subsidy that was given to dialysis patients prior to 2015, so that dialysis patients will be able to get their dialysis? It is done privately.

Every single week we receive request that they are really having a terrible time going and affording the dialysis treatment at the various private clinics. Could the Minister advise whether she has any money in line item 6284 to help these patients? Is she willing to take to Cabinet for a policy change that will allow these persons to restore and get the allowances that they were getting prior to 2015?

Ms. Lawrence: Once again, let me thank the Hon. Member for her concern and just to inform her that this allowance was never stopped. As a matter of fact, Cabinet did give approval, since 2016, to increase the amount of allocation for these persons. The prices keep going up for these patients and most of them can ill afford it. I would like to inform the Hon. Member that we are looking at this matter to see how in 2019 we can be able to expand the services for those persons. It is not only to have them come to Georgetown but see how we can put those services in the other regions so that they do not have to come.

8.33 p.m.

Even if we have to go into Public-Private partnerships so that we could assist those persons.

Ms. Teixeira: The subsidy that they used to get was \$400,000 and as their treatment ended they would get another \$400,000. It was paid to the clinics so that the clinics could afford to offer a cheaper price. It may be in line with what you said, Hon. Minister, you may want to consider removing the Value Added Tax (VAT) on the medical services that relate to insulin and diabetic patients to reduce the cost that the clinics are charging.

Ms. Lawrence: I will concede the Floor to the next question, but, I heard the Member. It is not a question. The member made a recommendation.

Programme: 432 – Disease Control - \$1,967,123,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 432 – Disease Control - \$295,910,000

Dr. Anthony: Project code 4402700 - HIV/TB/Malaria Programmes: Could the Minister say what amount of this money would be allocated for the purchase of drugs and what amount would be going to other services?

Ms. Lawrence: The amount would be \$27,928,000.

Dr. Anthony: Is that only for HIV drugs or is it for HIV, then we would have another set for TB, and another set for Malaria? Could the Minister clarify?

Ms. Lawrence: We do not have this amount broken down as per the various illnesses here, namely, HIV, Tuberculosis and the Malaria. This certainly could be laid over or before the evening we could inform you.

Bishop Edghill: Under this same project code 4402700 – HIV/TB/Malaria Programmes: provision from the global fund. The Minister just said \$27 million out of the \$250 million would be used for the purchase of drugs. Could the Minister list the other activities that would be funded from this \$250 million?

Ms. Lawrence: The other activities would be training and the associated cost monitoring an evaluation, external and professional services, HR programme and fiduciary staff, non-pharmaceutical products, equipment and for procurement and supply for the chain management incidental cost.

Dr. Anthony: Could I ask the Minister is the Ministry considering implementing prevention exposure prophylaxis for high risk groups?

Ms. Lawrence: We are looking at the pre-exposure prophylaxis. We are looking at the data that we have received from the research and we are working on a document so that we could be able to decide from what we are going to do. It is a work in progress.

Programme: 432 – Disease Control - \$295,910,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 433 – Family Health Care Services - \$1,247,965,000

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6221 - Drugs and Medical Supplies: Could the Minister tell us how much moneys would be spent here on drugs? How much on medical supplies? Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us what types of disease would be covered by these drugs?

Ms. Lawrence: The amount allocated here \$290 million will be spent on vaccines, contraceptives, and for the Dr. Cheddi Jagan Dental Centre.

Dr. Anthony: Could the Minister please layover the disaggregation of the drugs, how much would be for dental supplies, and the other items that she mentioned?

Line item 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Could the Minister say how much money would be going to the local organisations?

Ms. Lawrence: Phoenix Recovery Project will receive \$6,500,000; the Salvation Army will receive \$10 million - and the Georgetown Public Hospital Cooperation.

Dr. Anthony: Same line item: What I was trying to get from the Minister is that on page 195 it states that we will be spending \$16,500,000, but, when we go to page 433 at line item 6321 –

Subsidies to Local Organisations, I see a sum of \$10 million. I am confused. Which one is the right number? That is why I asked the question. Could the Minister confirm how much money would the ministry be giving to the Salvation Army?

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, a correction please. The line item 6321 Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: allocation of \$16,500,000 - \$10 million will be going to the Salvation Army and \$6,500,000 to Phoenix Recovery Project. If you look at page 433, there is an error, Phoenix Recovery Project is under programme 4. It needs to go under programme 3; just a typo error.

Programme: 433 – Family Health Care Services - \$1,247,965,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 433 – Family Health Care Services - \$420,660,000

Dr. Anthony: Project code 4403200 - Maternal and Child Health Improvement: there are a number of items here listed – rehabilitation of Dr. C. C. Nicholson Hospital, Lethem waiting room and so forth, could the Minister give us a disaggregation of how much money would be spent on each of the items listed here?

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, certainly. Of the \$380 million for the rehabilitation of Dr. C. C. Nicholson Hospital and Lethem waiting room - \$103,900,000. For equipping of the maternity waiting room at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation, it would \$18,300,000 and institutional strengthening including the implementation of the Health Benefit Plan would be \$257,600,000.

Dr. Anthony: Project code 4504300 - Technical Assistance: could the Minister tell us what technical studies have been budgeted for? How much moneys have been expended so far on the Administration of this project? How many staff do we have in this project? What are their salaries?

8.48 p.m.

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, we will layover that.

Programme: 433 – Family Health Care Services - \$420,660,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme 434- Regional and Clinical Services: \$15,088,252,000

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6241- Rental of Buildings: Could the Minister say to us which buildings are being rented under this heading?

Ms. Lawrence: We are renting at Linden houses for the Doctors. We are renting at Austin's Residence at the cost of \$900,000 for the Year, Robertson Residence - \$960,000, Parise Residence - \$780,000, Mohammed's \$780,000, we are renting two buildings from Mohamed, Jordan's Residence - \$900,000, Allicock - \$900,000, Dutching - \$900,000, Fraser - \$780,000 and Ramsay \$1,500,000, and 104 Duke Street, Kingston, we are renting two buildings for the Cuban Medical Brigade.

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6284- Other: Could the Minister give us a broad outline of how this money will be spent?

Ms. Lawrence: One would be to cover travel cost for the Guyana Cuban Brigade, this is a return ticket and we have allocated \$59,900,000. The single air ticket for doctors arriving on assignment from Cuba or doctors departing, \$25 million. In terms of replacement of staff who left in 2016 and will be leaving in 2019, we are looking again at replacements again to spend another \$25 million there. Registration fees for our Cuban Health Professionals of \$4,200,000, we have put \$10,200,000 for emergency air travel, routine visitations or by weekly meeting for institutions where our Cubans are placed for \$6,900,000, annual workshops at the sum of \$1,600,000, provision for tools for Bio Medical Engineers at the sum of \$8,100,000, utility charges, water, electricity and so forth for the Cuban Medical Brigade at the sum of \$3,600,000, office material and stationeries at the sum of \$900,000, cooking gas and that sort of thing.

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6321- Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: This huge sum here goes to the Georgetown Public Hospital Cooperation. Could the Minister say can we get the audited reports from the Georgetown Public Hospital cooperation to be laid over to the National Assembly?

Ms. Lawrence: Yes, Mr. Chairman. The Hon. Member will be seeing them soon in 2019. It is a work in progress.

Programme: 434 – Regional and Clinical Services: \$15,088,252,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme 434- Regional and Clinical Services: \$1,794,934,000

Dr. Anthony: Project Code 4402800- Modernisation of Primary Health Care System: Could the Minister say to us, there are three institutions here, namely, West Demerara, Bartica and Suddie Hospital, have the designs been completed for what we are going to be doing at these hospitals? If so, how much does it cost? Have there been a tender for companies to do the construction?

Ms. Lawrence: No, Sir. We are now seeing some movement on this, which is why we have this allocation. We had a little back and forth with our partner. With regard to the consultant, this has now been addressed, so we expect that we will go full ahead with that consultant.

Programme: 434 – Regional and Clinical Services: \$1,794,934,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme 435- Health Sciences Education: \$653,461,000

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6302- Training (including Scholarships): Could the Minister layover what training and scholarships would be offered to persons in the Ministry of Public Health?

Ms. Lawrence: It is only training. Certainly, we could lay it over.

Dr. Anthony: Line item 624- Rental of Buildings: Could the Minister tell us which buildings would be rented?

Ms. Lawrence: We are renting at Magdalen Street, I have given all in the beginning for the nursing students, this is New Amsterdam for \$360,000.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I do not wish to interrupt your presentation, but it seems to me that you did undertake to layover this and you read it all here. Is Hon. Dr. Anthony insisting that he hears it again?

Ms. Lawrence: No, no, no. Actually...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I am asking Dr. Anthony.

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, let me explain to Dr. Anthony. When Dr. Anthony asked the first question under programme one, I gave him all of the rental buildings for all of the programmes. Now that we are at the programmes he is asking specifically for those programmes. I have indicated to him, so I think that we had an agreement that would be laid over.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you Hon. Member. There is something about work expanding to fill the time of the first completion.

Programme: 435 – Health Sciences Education: \$653,461,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme 435 - Health Sciences Education: \$67,000,000

Programme: 435 – Health Sciences Education: \$67,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme 436- Health Sciences Education: \$951,355,000

Ms. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister, Dr. Karen Cummings will take the next two programmes; programme six and seven. Could you allow the staff to go over?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Minister.

Ms. Lawrence: Thank you.

9.03 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, are you in position now?

Minister within the Ministry of Public Health [Dr. Cummings]: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 436 – Standards and Technical Services – \$951,355,000

Dr. Anthony: Could the Minister explain under line item 6282, Equipment Maintenance, what equipment would be maintained during 2019?

Dr. Cummings: It will be plateletpheresis, some fridges, freezers, Elisa washers and some microscopes; biochemistry analysers, haematology analysers, and chemotherapy analysers. I have an entire list of eight pages, so I can lay it over.

Dr. Anthony: Could I ask the Minister to lay over the document, so that we can get a better understanding under this heading?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, Dr. Anthony has made a request.

Dr. Cummings: Yes. I will be kind to do that Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6221 – Drugs and Medical Supplies: Could the Minister tell us, of this sum, how much would be going to drugs? What types of drugs will we be buying? What are the medical supplies that we will be procuring under this heading?

Dr. Cummings: Hon. Member it is \$550 million. This increase caters for the departments of the National Blood Transfusion Service. There are 2,000 more units of blood projected to be collected. The laboratory's Electromagnetic Radiation (X-Ray) Unit has expanded its services to Port Kaituma, Moruca subdistricts, Leguan, Wakenaam, Leonora, Diamond, New Amsterdam and Mahdia. They are all fitted with new equipment, and so some of the equipment, drugs and medical supplies will be going there.

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6284 – Other: Could the Minister say, under this heading, whether or not this is where the funding is allocated for the licencing of health facilities in Guyana?

Dr. Cummings: No. It is not for licencing. Its allocation caters for the purchasing of radiology monitor badges, brokerage cost and the upgrade of our software. This software is used like barcoding. It is for quality control – Delphi software.

Dr. Anthony: Could the Minister be so kind to tell us how many facilities were licenced in 2018?

Dr. Cummings: It is 55 to date.

Dr. Anthony: Could I ask the Minister to lay over the document with the institutions which have been licenced to date?

Dr. Cummings: Yes. I will be pleased to do that, Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: One last question please. Dr. Mahadeo, you have the floor.

Dr. Mahadeo: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Line item 6322 – Subsidies and Contributions to Intl. Organisations: Could the Minister please advise which organisation?

Line item 6282 – Equipment Maintenance: Will this over 300% increase cater for equipment in the regions including Region 6?

Dr. Cummings: There are two questions which you are asking; you will have to repeat the second one. But, on the first you asked about line item 6322, Subsidies and Contributions to Intl. Organisations, here we are talking about contributions to the International Atomic Energy Agency. This is a very important organisation as it helps us to regularise our Radiology Department. It helps us to draft regulations in keeping with international laws, best practices and how we dispose of radiation. So, we want to join that organisation. Also, there is an annual fee to be paid to this organisation.

Dr. Mahadeo: Are you saying that the agency is the International Atomic Energy Agency?

Dr. Cummings: Yes.

Dr. Mahadeo: But Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister of Public Health indicated that this is covered under policy development and administration. So, is it covered here too?

Dr. Cummings: The money comes from this line item.

Dr. Mahadeo: The second question I had asked was on line item 6282; the \$110 million, which is over a 300% increase, whether this caters for equipment maintenance in the regions also, including Region 6.

Dr. Cummings: Yes. It caters for all the regions. It is the updated cost for maintenance provided by the newly constructed procurement in keeping with current market values, increasing the number of remote locations, attracting higher maintenance cost, and that includes traveling.

Dr. Mahadeo: Mdm. Minister, could you please tell us whether this would be outsourced or whether we have the capacity to do the equipment maintenance?

Dr. Cummings: It is either open or close tendering, depending on the equipment.

Programme: 436 – Standards and Technical Services – \$951,355,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 436 – Standards and Technical Services – \$64,875,000

Programme: 436 – Standards and Technical Services – \$64,875,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 437 – Disability and Rehabilitation Services – \$408,532,000

Dr. Anthony: Line item 6321– Could the Minister explain about this organisation, Eye Care Guyana, why are we allocating this money to them?

Dr. Cummings: This organisation, Eye Care Guyana, had closed and lost its funding. We know that it is important to promote good health and we know the importance of low vision and eye care.

So, we will be putting some money to help to resuscitate that – more or less, to keep it going. We will try to absorb it into our department.

Dr. Anthony: Under the same heading, there is an allocation for the Ptolemy Reid Rehabilitation Centre. But a lot of the patients who need prosthetics, when they go there, have to pay part of the cost. Would the Government consider subsidising that cost?

Dr. Cummings: Yes. We do subsidise, but it is also in conjunction and collaboration with the Ministry of Social Protection and the National Insurance Scheme (NIS).

Programme: 437 – Disability and Rehabilitation Services – \$408,532,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 437 – Disability and Rehabilitation Services – \$33,000,000

Programme: 437 – Disability and Rehabilitation Services – \$33,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates. [9.18 p.m.]

9.18 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I thank you. We have concluded consideration of the Ministry of Public Health, Current and Capital Expenditure.

Hon. Minister, we will allow you a few minutes while you have your officers with you. Hon. Members, as soon as you are all seated, we will commence consideration of Agency 49, Ministry of Social Protection.

Agency 49: Ministry of Social Protection

Current Expenditure

Programme: 491 - Policy Development and Administration - \$352,158,000

Dr. Persaud: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: I noted that there has been a decrease in the number of employees but there is a significant increase in the budgeted sum. I am sure, if I ask,

the Minister will speak about the increase across the board. Could the Hon. Minister also say if this caters for salary adjustments?

Minister of Social Protection [Ms. Ally]: I want to thank the Hon. Member for the question. This increase is for the salaries across the board.

Dr. Persaud: I want to clarify that there is no salary scale adjustment. The figure does not really correspond. Even if all staff are given the maximum 7% increase, this is still a significant increase. Would the Minister care to clarify?

Ms. Ally: No.

Dr. Persaud: Am I to understand that the Minister does not care to clarify, or does it mean that this does not cater for the adjustment?

Ms. Ally: For clarification, it is for the 2017 increase. The persons to benefit under this will be a Public Relations Officer (PRO), a Media Officer, a Business Development Officer, two Consultants, a Micro-Credit Officer, a Liaison Officer and a Driver. These are the people who are left.

Dr. Persaud: The Hon. Minister mentioned two consultants. Could the Minister state their emoluments, please?

Ms. Ally: These are the people who have left; one consultant is one of those persons.

Dr. Persaud: The Hon. Minister has left a little more confusion in the wake of that answer, but I will move on. Line item 6222 - Field Materials and Supplies: Could the Minister say what will be purchased or procured under this line item?

Ms. Ally: Line item 6222 - Field Materials and Supplies: This is to purchase rain boots, umbrellas and coats. These are for the additional drivers and office assistants.

Dr. Persaud: Line item 6224 - Print and Non-Print Materials: Could the Minister say what will be purchased or procured there?

Ms. Ally: Line item 6224 - Print and Non-Print Materials: This additional request is to cater for the new Procurement Department and the acquisition of resource materials for the Resource and Documentation Centre.

Ms. Veerasammy: Under line item 6242, Maintenance of Buildings, there is an allocated sum of \$10 million. Could the Minister give clarifications to say which buildings are taken care of here?

Ms. Ally: This is to complete the changing of windows on the building at Cornhill Street to ensure efficient use of energy, the painting of the same building, the fence and other structures within the compound.

Ms. Veerasammy: Line item 6255 - Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: There is a sum of \$2.4 million here. Could the Minister give clarification on this sum to be expended?

Ms. Ally: This will cover the general weeding and cleaning of the compounds at Lamaha and Cornhill Streets and the maintenance works to a section of the compound at Hadfield Street. The increase also is to cater for Hadfield Street.

Ms. Veerasammy: Line item 6243 - Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies: I noticed here that, in 2018, a sum of \$3.28 million was expended and there has been a reduction. Could the Minister give some clarification on why the reduction in this expended sum? Is the new amount asked for going to be enough?

Ms. Ally: This is what we require; we do not require the larger sum. It is for the cleaning of the buildings at Lamaha, Cornhill and Hadfield Streets. Prudent spending.

Ms. Chandarpal: Line item 6294 - Other: Could you tell us what constitutes this line item, please?

Ms. Ally: This will cover the stipend for work study students, purchase of curtains, hampers for senior citizens, wreaths for the department, staff identification cards (ID) and replacements of new ID cards, senior management regroup and round table discussions, purchase of wreaths and staff tokens and the annual staff conference. If you would like to have the amounts I can tell you.

Ms. Chandarpal: Line item 6302 - Training (including Scholarships): Could you provide the information on this line item, please? Who will be the beneficiaries?

Ms. Ally: Line item 6302 - Training (including Scholarships): This increase is due to the Personnel Department's request for staff training in computer software packages, customer relations, special progress, progress meetings and procurement training in procurement and supply. The total will be for approximately 40 staff members.

Ms. Veerasammy: Line item 6281 - Security Services: Could the Minister enlighten us on the security services protecting the buildings of the Ministry of Social Protection. I noticed that the revised sum in 2018 expended on this line item is \$22.592 million. For projection of 2019, there is \$18.751 million. I simply do not understand that.

Ms. Ally: In response, I would like to indicate that the security providers are R.K. Security Services and the Special Constabulary, hence the reduction that you have seen.

Programme: 491 - Policy Development and Administration - \$352,158,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

9.33 p.m.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 491 - Policy Development and Administration - \$296,525,000

Dr. Persaud: Project code 1903700 - Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurial Development (SLED) Projects: Mr. Chairman, I noted that more than \$95 million was spent in 2017. This year \$150 million was spent and, in 2019, \$250 million will be spent to drive entrepreneurial interventions. Could the Minister say what criteria are used to allow beneficiaries to have the benefit of this, if Region 6, which was excluded in 2017, will be included and how is this advertised so that people can access this money?

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, this SLED programme is based primarily on request and it is done through the community development groups in all the regions. With regards to Region 6, we have several programmes in Region 6. We have at Eversham, Kildonan, Fyrish and Sandvoort; Region 6 was not left out on this occasion. In Canje, Glasgow and Angoy's Avenue, New Amsterdam there are several.

Dr. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, is there going to be public advertisement of this? Because this was not done in 2017. Could the Minister say how many beneficiaries were there in 2018, and if there is any special provision, especially in the areas where sugar workers have lost their jobs?

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, the estimated number of persons who are the beneficiaries amounted to 1,264 persons. This I reported in my budget presentation. There is no difficulty in dealing with advertisement of the SLED programme publicly, but we do it through the regions, and we hope that even you, yourselves can help to advertise it in the regions. And once persons come through with the required information and so on, we are willing to approve. What is the other question?

Dr. Persaud: The question also had to do with whether there will be public advertisement. But I do remember receiving a response from the Minister where there was no public advertisement at all and the beneficiaries were supposed to have learnt of this from listening to the budget speech. Now, I would be grateful if the Minister could lay over the beneficiaries and the regions they were from for this year's allocation and if there is any specific criteria that is used to qualify or if all who apply are able to benefit from the SLED programme and the \$250 million that is projected for next year and if there are any specific types of entrepreneurial activities that will be done.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, certainly, I can lay over the details of the 2018 SLED document. But we have areas of business including poultry rearing, sheep rearing, pig rearing, farming, garment construction, preservation of fruits, making of jams and jellies, salted fish processing, shade house cultivation, cash crop farming, catering, hospitality and block making. So once the request comes in, the unit will help them to put together documentation and so on and they can benefit from it.

Dr. Persaud: Just for clarity does it go through the REO of the region?

Ms. Ally: In some cases, yes.

Dr. Persaud: So, there is no specific policy for this then.

Mr. Chairman: Two questions remaining.

Dr. Persaud: Were the village councils involved in this or who was involved in all of this when this proposal was put forth? And I noticed that project code 4504400, Technical Assistance, was

to involve the social protection strategy. Could the Minister say why this was not done and if this is intended to happen this year? Because I see an increase.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, I am sure I did indicate that these requests come through the community development groups within the regions, and in all the regions there are.

In terms of the technical assistance, yes, it will receive some action this year. The due diligence for procurement procedures have been completed recently to hire consultants for the project. The project is for 30 months and will be implemented as soon as approval is received from IDB. As one would know, it is a foreign funded project and three contracts have already been signed.

Programme: 491 - Policy Development and Administration - \$\$296,525,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 492 - Social Services - \$16,143,565

Mr. Chand: Cde. Chairman, line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: There is an increase by 13 employees for 2019. Would the Minister lay over the designation of the 13 new employees and their salary levels?

Ms. Ally: Certainly, I can lay it over, except if the Chairman wants me to read out the 13. I am prepared to lay it over. Thank you.

Mr. Charlie: Mr. Chairman, line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: Could the Hon. Minister say if the makeup of the contracted employees are welfare officers in the hinterland region?

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, no. These are persons from the New Opportunity Corps.

Dr. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, under line item 6116, contracted employees, or any other line item, could the Hon. Minister say if there has been provision for psychologists, psychiatrist or anything of the sort?

The other question pertains to line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. Could the Minister tell us about 'Together in Peace', one of the organisations to which a \$10

million contribution is being made, which is significantly more than what is being made to the others and when this organisation was registered?

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, the contracted employees do not entail any psychologist, and if there is need then we will look at special funding later. But at the moment, no. Together in Peace, was registered 2015.

Dr. Persaud: Could the Hon. Minister tell us what is 'Together in Peace' and why does this organisation have so much more than any other?

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, this is a very important body because it houses the Trafficking in Persons victims. As you know, we have been doing extremely well in that unit because we have moved from tier two to tier one, and we are trying our best to facilitate or to do all that is within our powers to maintain that ranking.

Dr. Persaud: Just a follow-up, is it an entity attached to the Ministry, an NGO, and how many persons are housed? What is the benefit to us?

9.48 p.m.

Ms. Ally: I am sure the Hon. Member knows of the Sisters of Mercy programme. This entity is affiliated to that programme.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6343 – Old Age Pension and Social Assistance: Thirteen billion, seven hundred and eighty-one million and two hundred thousand dollars has been increased to \$14.7 billion. Could the Hon. Minister give us the separation of the amounts for the Old Age Pension and how much of this figure goes to Social Assistance? Could she give us an idea of the number of beneficiaries of the Old Age Pension and the number of beneficiaries of the Social Assistance/Public Assistance?

Ms. Ally: As you know, everyday someone is getting older. We have 54,000 recipients of the Old Age Pension. Giving each Pensioner \$20,500 in 2019, we would have an ultimate figure of \$13,284,000,000 to be spent on Old Age Pension. For the Public Assistance, we have 12,000 recipients. The amount that is given to each recipient is \$9,000. The total would be \$1,296,000,000.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6292 – Dietary: Hon. Minister, now that I understand the New Opportunity Corps (NOC) falls under the Ministry of Social Protection, I think I am right, I am not sure...

Ms. Ally: Yes.

Ms. Teixeira: Could you tell me why the figures fluctuate so much? The figure budgeted in 2018 was \$183,292,000 and expenditure for this year is \$170.3 million. Projected for next year, the budget is less - \$162 million. Was this money only for the NOC or for other institutions where children are located like the Sophia Care Centre? Why has the figure dropped to \$162 million? Are we feeding less children? Could you advise?

Ms. Ally: The dietary supplies are not only for the NOC. The numbers at NOC are reducing significantly. This amount of money for Dietary is also used for the Palms Geriatric Home, the Hugo Chavez Centre, the Mahaica Children's Home and the Night Shelter.

Ms. Teixeira: A follow-up question in relation to this one, the Juvenile Justice Act that was passed states that persons of 18 years of age would be considered as juveniles. Although you are saying that the figures are going down, with the new law the figures will go up. The kids who are now 16 years old and are in adult jail would now have to be moved to something that is equivalent to the NOC. Is there any anticipation, on your part, that this figure is understated at this point, as far as you know?

Ms. Ally: No.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms. Veerasammy, do you wish to ask a question. Please ask it.

Ms. Veerasammy: Line item 6302: Madam Minister, under Training, could you please enlighten us of how much of this money will be passed onto the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute (GWLI) and some of the expected programmes that we could look forward to in 2019? If you will indulge me, Sir, Ms. Ally, in your speech of *Budget 2018* you had promised to do some training programmes for women in local government. Could you shed some light on that? Please tell us what is expected in 2019.

Ms. Ally: Like I said in my budget presentation, we have trained women in all the regions on local government elections and so on. We are not only focusing on small bits of training, but we are also focussing on capacity building, *et cetera*. The GWLI would benefit from \$6.3 million of this amount.

Ms. Veerasammy: Madam Minister, could you tell us of some of the areas, locations or regions where the training took place? To bring to your attention, when I was there we had donated to the Institute an entire laboratory with about 12 computers. We did a lot of training programmes there for young women who immediately, after the training, were passed on to Qualfon Guyana where they were gainfully employed. Could you inform the House if that Programme is still on-going?

Ms. Ally: The computers are still there and are being used. If you do not mind, I could layover or, if you wish, I could tell you which regions we will be doing work for GWLI.

Ms. Veerasammy: Kindly lay it over.

Ms. Ally: Thank you.

Programme: 492 – Social Services – \$16,143,565,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 492 – Social Services – \$75,083,000

Mr. Chairman: I will ask the Prime Minister to seek an extension from the House.

Assembly resumed.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 10 (1)

First Vice-President and Prime Minister [Mr. Nagamootoo]: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Sitting of the National Assembly be extended until the conclusion of this matter under consideration.

Question put and agreed to.

Standing Order suspended.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply

In Committee of Supply.

Dr. Persaud: Project code 2511000: Could the Minister shed some light on what would be purchased and for where?

Ms. Ally: This is to purchase new furniture and equipment for new and existing staff and to replace those that are no longer serviceable. I may add that it is for 12 departments.

Ms. Veerasammy: Project code 2405700: Could the Minister kindly tell us what type of vehicle would be purchased and for which department?

Ms. Ally: It will be a Double Cab Pickup to facilitate officers travelling to interior locations to rescue victims in human trafficking.

Programme: 492 – Social Services - \$75,083,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, may I indicate that Hon. Minister, Mr. Scott would take Programme 03.

Mr. Chairman: I thank you, Hon. Minister.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 493 – Labour Administration - \$635,936,000

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I have noted that the number of employees have been reduced from 24 in 2018 to 18 in 2019. Could the Hon. Minister say if these employees have been reallocated or if they have been placed on the Fixed Establishment?

Minister within the Ministry of Social Protection [Mr. Scott]: There were four Typist/Clerks who have transitioned, one Chief Statistical Officer who has resigned and one Labour Officer who has been appointed.

10.03 p.m.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: I have noted that there has been an increase in that sum from 2018 by \$67,420,000. Under the Board of Industrial Training, the sum has been increased by \$65,770,000, could the Hon. Minister say what this increase sum would be use for?

Mr. Scott: During 2019, we are projected to train 2,000 persons as well as an additional 376 beneficiaries in all 10 regions and that accounts for the increase.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: A follow-up question under that line item: The Guyana National Cooperative Union Limited has been allocated a sum of \$24 million, could the Hon. Minister say what that sum of money would be used for?

Mr. Scott: That money would be use for payment of wages, salaries and other expenditures dealing with buildings as well as training.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Could the Hon. Minister say what is the work programme for this union?

Mr. Scott: We would have to lay that one over for you.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Thank you. A Follow-up question under the same line item: The National Advisory Council on Occupational Health and Safety has an increase from \$2.5 million to \$4 million, could the Hon. Minister say for what would those sums be used?

Mr. Scott: Two surveys would be done in 2019 in Regions 7 and 8 and that is to do with the mining pit accidents and training of miners as well.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Under the same line item; support to other unions, there has been an allocated sum of \$8 million in 2018, could the Hon. Minister say if any union had applied for sums of money in this allocation in 2018?

Mr. Scott: Yes.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Could the Hon. Minister say what are the names of the unions which applied for this sum?

Mr. Scott: The name of the unions are the Guyana Labour Union, the National Association of Agricultural, Commercial and Industrial Employees (NACCIE), Guyana Public Service Union

(GPSU), Guyana Postal and the Telecommunications Workers Union, the Allied and Agriculture Workers Union, the General Workers Union, Guyana Agricultural and General Workers' Union (GAWU), Printing Allied and Industrial Workers Union and National Union of Public Service Employees.

Ms. Burton-Persaud: Could the Hon. Minister layover the name of the unions that applied and the sums allocated to each union?

Mr. Scott: Yes, I could give you that data.

Bishop Edghill: Under line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisation: The Guyana National Cooperative Limited; last year the Hon. Minister told the House that this was to help with the resuscitating of this union in all 10 administrative regions, could the Hon. Minister tell us how many regions this body is functioning in at this present time?

Mr. Scott: We are functioning in all of the regions at the moment.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister confirm that this union had its Annual General Meeting (AGM) and that a financial statement was presented at that AGM?

Mr. Scott: This Union do not function in the way normal cooperative society functions. This is a territory body for which the other unions would report to get help and guidance. In terms of the annual general meeting, it does not function in that fashion. What it has is a subvention which, as you know, is \$24 million every year, so far. It is used for training and to help other unions to become much more efficient.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister confirm that this is a registered organisation that is rules based and part of its rules is compliance with having financial statements submitted at an AGM?

Mr. Scott: It is a registered society.

Bishop Edghill: That is only a part of the question that was answered. I would appreciate the other part. I would like to know if it met, if it submitted an annual report, if it was approved by the committee of management and if that report is available?

Mr. Scott: Yes, they have an annual report and that is available. It explains exactly how the money has been spent and I would layover that report to you.

Bishop Edghill: Much obliged.

Mr. Chairman: One other question.

Bishop Edghill: Same line item, could the Hon. Minister indicate at this time if there would be election of office bearers for this union or whether it is still operating in a secretariat with an administrator who is paid?

Mr. Scott: Yes, there would be elections.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate how soon those elections would be held?

Mr. Scott: In the new year.

Mr. Chand: Line item 6322 – Subsidies and Contributions to Intl. Organisations: Could the Hon. Minister tell us what is the revised number for this year? I see zero, yet \$3,500,000 was budgeted, could he advised why no money was spent and why no money would be spent for next year under this head?

Mr. Scott: Thank you Hon. gentleman, that is so because we have a credit, we have already paid forward up to 2020, so that is why it is not reflected there. We have paid up our dues up to 2020.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Chand, this is the final question, go ahead please.

Mr. Chand: This is money that is supposed to be spent by the Government as fees to the International Labour Organization (ILO), but there had been participation by this Government in the ILO conferences since 2015, so how is it that you are talking about ac credited sum?

Mr. Scott: The ILO is not necessarily only going to Geneva, but it has offices in other parts of the world, for example, in Trinidad. We have been collaborating with the ILO all the time.

Mr. Chand: Just a follow-up, *[inaudible]* ILO on pages 439, this sum is budgeted for the ILO.

Mr. Scott: These are dues that we owe, and we have to pay every year, do we not? When we go forward it is there, but we have the kind of relationship with ILO that we have been mixing...

Programme: 493 – Labour Administration – \$635,936,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 493 – Labour Administration – \$23,302,000

Programme: 493 – Labour Administration – \$23,302,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current expenditure

Programme: 494 – Child Care and Protection – \$604,934,000

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister are you ready?

Ms. Ally: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Dr. Persaud: Line item 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skilled: There is an increase in the number of employees, could the Hon. Minister say, if under this line item, there would have been an increase in the number of case workers, social workers, child physiologists and post trauma therapists for this agency?

Ms. Ally: These persons are eight probation and social services officers and they are appointed by the Public Service Commission (PSC) for Regions 3, 4, 5 and 6.

10.18 p.m.

Dr. Persaud: Could the Hon. Minister say if there is an intention to have any of those persons that I mentioned for the previous question, and what are the vacancies that exist in all of the regions when it comes to those?

Ms. Ally: The authorised strength will be 80 persons across the regions, but we only have 55. We will strive to fill the vacancies.

Dr. Persaud: A follow-up question: Is there a plan to advertise for those vacancies anytime soon? How do you plan to advertise, and would there be any emphasis on any particular category, because I know that particular agency is in dire need of all of these persons?

Ms. Ally: I will say yes, we intend to advertise through the PSC in the new year, possibly within the first quarter.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Minister, I have seen a large increase from \$3.6 million to \$27.8 million. When one looks at page 434 for the breakdown, it has increased to \$27.8 million. When one goes through the list of organisations that would be receiving money, two organisations alone are receiving \$24 million of the \$27.8 million, and a number of the others would only receive \$200,000. These are all orphanages that provide homes for the children who are homeless or are without parents. I am not degrading, in any way, the two organisations that are proposed to receive the \$12 million each. One of those organisations, I know, receives quite a lot of foreign funding. Would it not have been better to have a slightly more equitable hand in the distribution of the \$2.8 million, particularly where it concerned homes for abused children and orphanages which have been around for a long time?

Ms. Ally: I have noted all that you have said.

Ms. Teixeira: She has noted what I said; I hope she will note the next thing that I say. Madam Minister, the Childcare and Protection Agency (CPA) is the authority and protection of our children by law. The increase in its total budget is \$28 million, between last year and this year. The difference in the contribution to the Non-governmental Organizations (NGO), under line item 6321, is an increase of \$24 million. Therefore, the CPA's budget has increased in total by \$4 million. It is unfortunate, Minister, because I believe your heart is in the right place and that you do care, but I am concerned about the Childcare and Protection Agency not receiving adequate funds and resources each year to carry out its mandate effectively. In other words, I am saying to you that you have the total support on this side of the House to be able to bring a budget that will allow this organisation to function effectively. It is the sole legitimate authority, legally and otherwise, for the protection of our children.

Ms. Ally: Thank you, Hon. Member. We seem to be having some good suggestions coming from the other side of the House. I am very happy, and I want to let the Hon. Member know that,

sometimes, you do not only depend on government's funding. Maybe the Opposition can chip in at this stage.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister say which buildings are rented by the Childcare and Protection Agency? The Budget is \$5,280,000. Last year was the first time that it had appeared to be renting a building or buildings for \$3,080,000. It has gone up to \$5,280,000. Could you what buildings are rented by the Childcare and Protection Agency and why the increase?

Ms. Ally: There will be two new office sites and apartment rentals. These are located in Region 9 for Child Protection Officers.

Ms. Veerasammy: Line item 6223 – Office Materials and Supplies: I notice that there is an increase of 125% in the difference between the 2018 and 2019 allocations. Could the Minister say what caused this steep increase?

Ms. Ally: As you know, we are going to commission, early in the new year, the new Drop-In Centre in Sophia. It is to cater for increase in staff, to have more computers - in addition to 12 you left, if you can let us have another dozen that would be fine – and also the introduction of a data management system.

Ms. Veerasammy: Line item 6294: I would stand corrected if I am wrong, but could the Minister explain what is needed under line item 6294 for the tune of \$40 million? I noticed that, between 2018 to this year, there is a \$13 million decrease under the said line item.

Mr. Chairman: Three more questions.

Ms. Ally: I will seek to let the Hon. Member know the areas we will be spending the funds allocated under line item 6292: payments of stipends to youths at the halfway house, screening and processing of potential foster care parents, maintenance of the Adoption Board, multimedia awareness programme, Community Partnership Development Programmes, the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Sexual Awareness Programme, the annual staff conference, the parent and teen prevention programme. It is also to cater for purchases for children at the care centers. For example clothes, shoes, bed linen and other necessities for daily living. I want to add that while there may be a decrease, we believe that it is adequate.

Ms. Veerasammy: A supplementary to the question: Can the Hon. Minister explain how many children are under foster care and what is the remuneration paid to foster care families for each child?

Ms. Ally: The number of children under foster care are 89 boys and 86 girls. Did I hear a second part of the question? It is \$20,000 per month per child.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6292 – Dietary: Minister, \$70.5 million was budgeted in 2018, \$63 million was used. In 2019, it has gone down to \$60.5 million. Could you say, under Dietary, who is being fed or who is being taken care of and why is the figure declining?

Mr. Chairman: One last question.

Ms. Ally: At this time, we are promoting family-based care. The Ministry of Public Security shares some of the cost for the juveniles, and so that is why there is a reduction.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): The sum of \$17.7 million is budgeted, could you identify the forms of training which are offered under this item, under Child Care and Protection?

Ms. Ally: The training is really for the service providers at the centres.

Programme: 494 – Child Care and Protection - \$604,934,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 494 – Child Care and Protection - \$80,099,000

Dr. Persaud: Project code 1216400 – Buildings: Can the Hon. Minister disaggregate the figure, \$49,774,000, based on the legend?

10.33 p.m.

Ms. Ally: The sum of \$49,774,000 is broken down as follows: payment of retention, \$10 million and that is for the Drop-in Centre. The additional works for the same Centre is \$37,774,000 and

the enclosure of the building at Whim is \$2 million which is really to accommodate additional Child Protection Agency staff. That is how we get the \$49,774,000.

Dr. Persaud: Could the Hon. Minister say why has there been such a drastic reduction overall under this head when there is need for centres across the country, especially dealing with children, counselling, and therapy? Is there an intention to come to this House later in the year for a supplemental with regard, especially when there would have been the discussion with the Consultant who came and spoke on child sex abuse and the large number of cases we have been seeing? Could the Minister answer that for me?

Ms. Ally: At the moment, I will say, no. If there is a need, who knows? We may come.

Mr. Seeraj: Project code 2405700 – Land Transport: There is a truck and a bus to be purchased here for \$26,325,000. Could the Hon. Minister inform us what type of truck is it, how much is it for, how much is budgeted for it, and what type of bus we are looking at here?

Ms. Ally: The truck is really a canter and it is to carry around goods to the various centres. The estimated cost for it is \$11,095,000. The bus is a 33-seater and the estimated cost for it is \$15,330,000.

Programme: 494 – Childcare and Protection - \$80,099,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates. (10.36 p.m.)

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, this brings to an end our deliberations for today. I thank all Members for their support and kindness in treating with the matters which we had to deal with. Tomorrow, is our fifth and last day.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel]

Hon. Members, tomorrow is our final day. I shall ask the Prime Minister to move the adjournment. Before we do, let the Assembly resume.

Assembly Resumed

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Nagamootoo: I move that this House be adjourned to tomorrow 14th Friday, December 2018 at 10.00 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Members, the Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, at 10.00 a.m.

Adjourned accordingly at 10.39 p.m.