

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2006-2010) OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

109th Sitting

Monday, 11th January, 2010

The Assembly convened at 2:12 pm

[Madam Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (70)

Speaker (1)

The Hon. Hari N. Ramkarran, S.C., M.P.

Speaker of the National Assembly

Members of the Government (41) -

People's Progressive Party/Civic (40),

The United Force (1)

The Hon. Samuel A.A. Hinds, M.P.

(R# 10 - Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice)

Prime Minister and Minister of

Public Works and Communications

The Hon. Clement J. Rohee, M.P.

Minister of Home Affairs

The Hon. Shaik K.Z. Baksh, M.P.

Minister of Education

The Hon. Dr. Leslie S. Ramsammy, M.P.

(R# 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne)

Minister of Health

- The Hon. Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, M.P.
(R# 9 - Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo)
Minister of Foreign Affairs
- *The Hon. Dr. Ashni K. Singh, M.P.
Minister of Finance
- The Hon. Robert M. Persaud, M.P.
(R# 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)
Minister of Agriculture
- The Hon. Dr. Jennifer R.A. Westford, M.P.
(R#7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)
Minister of Public Service
- The Hon. Kellawan Lall, M.P.
*Minister of Local Government and
Regional Development*
- *The Hon. Charles R. Ramson, S.C., M.P.
Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs
- The Hon. Dr. Frank C.S. Anthony, M.P.
Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport
- The Hon. B.H. Robeson Benn, M.P.
Minister of Transport and Hydraulics
- **The Hon. Manzoor Nadir, M.P.
Minister of Labour
- The Hon. Priya D. Manickchand, M.P.
(R# 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)
Minister of Human Services and Social Security
- The Hon. Dr. Bheri S. Ramsaran, M.P.
Minister in the Ministry of Health
- The Hon. Jennifer I. Webster, M.P.
Minister in the Ministry of Finance
- The Hon. Manniram Prashad, M.P.
Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce
- *The Hon. Pauline Sukhai, M.P.
Minister of Amerindian Affairs

**Non-elected Minister*

***Elected Member from the United Force*

The Hon. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, M.P.

Minister of Housing and Water

Mr. Donald Ramotar, M.P.

Ms. Gail Teixeira, M.P.

Mr. Harripersaud Nokta, M.P.

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

Ms. Bibi S. Shadick, M.P.

(R# 3- Essequibo Island/West Demerara)

Mr. Albert A. Atkinson, J.P., M.P. *(Absent- on leave)*

(R# 8- Potaro/Siparuni)

Mr. Komal Chand, C.C.H., J.P., M.P.

(R# 3- Essequibo Island/West Demerara)

Mr. Bernard C. DeSantos, S.C., M.P.

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mrs. Shirley V. Edwards, J.P., M.P.

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. Mohamed F. Khan, J.P., M.P.

(R# 2 - Pomerook/Supenaam)

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

Mr. Mohabir A. Nandlall, M.P.

Mr. Odinga N. Lumumba, M.P.

Mr. Neendkumar, J.P., M.P.

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

***Mr. Steve P. Ninvalle, M.P.

Parliamentary Secretary in Min. of Culture, Youth and Sport

Mr. Parmanand P. Persaud, J.P., M.P.

(R# 2 - Pomerook/Supenaam)

Mrs. Philomena Sahoye-Shury, C.C.H., J.P., M.P.

Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Water

Mr. Dharamkumar Seeraj, M.P.

Mr. Norman A. Whittaker, M.P.

(R# 1 - Barima/Waini)

Dr. Vishwa Deva Budhram Mahadeo, M.P.

Rev. Kwame Gilbert, M.P.

***Non-elected Parliamentary Secretary

Members of the Opposition (28)

(i) People's National Congress Reform 1-Guyana (22)

Mr. Robert H.O. Corbin

Leader of the Opposition

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

Mrs. Clarissa S. Riehl, M.P.

Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly

Mr. E. Lance Carberry, M.P.

Chief Whip

Mrs. Deborah J. Backer, M.P.

Mr. Basil Williams, M.P.

Dr. George A. Norton, M.P.

Mrs. Volda A. Lawrence, M.P.

Mr. Keith Scott, M.P.

Ms. Amna Ally, M.P.

Ms. Cheryl Sampson, M.P.

Mr. Dave Danny, M.P.

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. Aubrey C. Norton, M.P. *(Absent)*

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. Ernest B. Elliot, M.P.

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Ms. Judith David-Blair, M.P.

(R# 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)

Mr. Mervyn Williams, M.P.

(R# 3 - Essequibo Island/West Demerara)

Ms. Africo Selman, M.P.

Dr. John Austin, M.P.

(R# 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)

Ms. Jennifer Wade, M.P.

(R# 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)

Ms. Vanessa Kissoon, M.P.

(R# 10 - Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice)

Mr. Desmond Fernandes, M.P.

(Region No 1 – Barima/Waini)

(ii) Alliance For Change (5)

Mr. Raphael G. Trotman, M.P.

Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P.

Mrs. Sheila Holder, M.P.

Mrs. Latchmin Punalall, M.P.

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. David Patterson, M.P.

(iii) Guyana Action Party/Rise Organise and Rebuild (1)

Mr. Everall N. Franklin, M.P.

OFFICERS

Mr. Sherlock E. Isaacs

Clerk of the National Assembly

Mrs. Lilawatie Coonjah

Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

Prayers

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

(1) Death of Dr. Desrey Clementine Caesar Fox

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, with the death of Dr. Desrey Clementine Caesar Fox on the 11th day of December, 2009, a former Minister of the Government and Member of Parliament, a seat in the National Assembly has become vacant. The vacancy is in accordance with section 99(a) of the Representation of the People's Act, Chapter 1: 03, to be filled by a person whose name is to be extracted from the list of candidates from which Dr. Fox's name was extracted. As Dr. Fox's name was extracted from the People's Progressive Party/ Civic list of candidates, I have, in accordance with section 99(a) of the said Act, called upon the representative of the said list to further extract from that list the name of a person who is willing to become a Member of the National Assembly to fill the vacancy in the Assembly.

(2) Resignation of Mr. Anthony Vieira

Hon. Members, I have received from Mr. Vieira a letter dated 1st January, 2010 resigning his seat as a Member of Parliament with effect from that date. With Mr. Vieira resignation, a seat in the

National Assembly has become vacant. The vacancy is in accordance with section 99(a) of the Representation of the People's Act, Chapter 1: 03, to be filled by a person whose name is to be extracted from the list of candidates from which Mr. Vieira's name was extracted. As Mr. Vieira's name was extracted from the People's National Congress Reform - 1 Guyana (PNCR - 1G) list of candidates, I have, in accordance with section 99(a) of the said Act, called upon the representative of the said list to further extract from that list the name of a person who is willing to become a Member of the National Assembly to fill the vacancy in the Assembly.

PRESENTATIONS OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Report was laid:-

The Ministry of Agriculture
Annual Report for the years
2007 and 2008.

[Minister of Agriculture]

PUBLIC BUSINESS MOTIONS

MOTION TO APPROVE FINANCIAL PAPER NO 5 OF 2009

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly approves of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 5 of 2009 - Schedule

of Supplementary provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$1, 449,775,969 for the period 8th December, 2009 to 31st December, 2009.”
[Minister of Finance]

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Assembly will resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider Financial Paper No. 5 of 2009.

Assembly in Committee of Supply

The Minister of Finance (Dr. Singh): Mdm. Chairperson, in accordance to article 171(2) of the Constitution, I signify that the Cabinet has recommended for consideration by the National Assembly of the motion for the approval for the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 5 of 2009, Schedule of Supplementary provision on Current and Capital Estimates for the period ended 31st December, 2009, totalling \$1,449,775,969, and I now move the motion.

Motion proposed.

CURRENT ESTIMATES

ITEM NO. 1 – 14-141 - Public Service Ministry – Public Service Management - \$15,000,000

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, my question relates to this item as well as to all the items in this

Financial Paper No. 5. If you will permit me, I will ask it in its all embracing manner, so that I do not have to rise under each one of these items to raise the same question. But if you will rule me out of order, then I will be forced to rise on each occasion to make a point. Could the hon. Minister explain to the National Assembly how come there is a request for supplementary provisions for funds given from the Contingencies Fund for the period 8th of December 2009 to 31st December, 2009 of which her Ministry is about one element, when earlier, before the Christmas recess, Mdm. Chairperson, we were asked to approve of supplementary provisions under Financial Paper No. 3 of 2009, from the Contingencies Fund covering the period 25th of August, 2009 to 31st of December, 2009? Could the Minister explain why we have this particular request at this time?

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Murray, since individual Minister will be responding, I think you may have to ask the question individually.

Mr. Murray: As it pleases you, Madam.

Dr. Singh: Mdm. Chairperson, with your permission, the hon. Member has asked a question, and I have no hesitation in giving

a general answer. If you will require it to be asked on every occasion, I will answer it. I would simply say that it is in fact a convention that we have always used when we bring a financial paper that we would indicate that it is for the period ending the 31st of December. Notwithstanding, in fact, the hon. Member would have seen that the same convention was applied to the financial papers that we had brought, I believe in July, before the recess. Even at that time, in July, the financial papers were headed up, as transactions - I use transactions, but it is not literally transactions - Financial Papers No. 1 and No. 2 of 2009 - Advances made or Supplementary Estimates for the period ending 31st December. That is a convention which is always used that the period given is up to the end of the year, but that does not necessarily signal the financial papers are the last for the year.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, I have listened and heard what the hon. Minister of Finance has said, and notwithstanding, that it may have been a convention, may I enquire of the Minister, whether he is mindful to consider, in order that these papers will reflect with greater accuracy the point at which they are brought, and up to which point the monies are being dealt with from the particular fund? They will more accurately

reflect the period which is affected by the particular requests.

Dr. Singh: Mdm. Chairperson, I note the observation made by the hon. Member, and obviously it will be something that would have to be carefully considered. I, myself, am not armed with the necessary technical advice as to why it is being done this way, currently, which has been the practice for some time. First of all, I will have that research done, that is to say, to establish why is it this convention has been utilised, before I could respond in any more definitive way to this issue.

Mr. Ramjattan: Mdm. Chairperson, on Item No. 1, could the hon. Minister, this would be the Minister of Public Service Ministry say who has received the advance in this sum of \$15 million?

The Minister of Public Service (Dr. Westford): Mdm. Chairperson, I do not really understand the question.

Mr. Ramjattan: To whom was the \$15 million paid to? That was an advance which was taken out of the Contingencies Fund.

Dr. Westford: Mdm. Chairperson, this money was paid for a chartered flight.

Mr. Ramjattan: What was the name of this chartered flight?

Dr. Westford: Do you want to know the name of the flight?

Mr. Ramjattan: Yes.

Dr. Westford: Okay, this flight was chartered from Venezuela and the company's name was Vargas.

Mr. Ramjattan: Okay. When was the actual advance of \$15 million paid to Vargas?

Dr. Westford: It was paid in October, 2009.

Mr. Ramjattan: Well, could the hon. Minister then say why it is Contingencies Fund for the period 8th of December to 31st of December that it is brought under?

Dr. Westford: Mdm. Chairperson, budgets are run in such a way that we had to pay for that flight to get the students out. We have a budget, a student budget, and we paid that sum out of our normal budget before. This money is replenishing the money that was spent out of the budget.

Mr. Ramjattan: Is the Minister aware that under the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act, you have to come to the National Assembly for the replenishment of money advanced at the next sitting of the National

Assembly? If this was paid in October, it was supposed to come sometime immediately after that, and we had sittings of the National Assembly before.

Dr. Westford: Mdm. Chairperson, I am not aware of such a thing in existence.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, could the hon. Minister explain to the National Assembly under what procedure she was able to utilise monies that were voted for a specific purpose, for a purpose other than that specific purpose?

Dr. Westford: Mdm. Chairperson, chartering of an aircraft, in this instance comes under the broad heading of training, under the Public Service Ministry's budget. That is training - charting of the aircraft to take those students out and anything in the relation to do with students.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, in its submission to the Ministry of Finance, would the Minister not agree that the budget that was appropriated by this National Assembly, in respect to the monies that she has utilised for the aircraft were not for that purpose, and so that it was in effect, although, in the general category, not specifically for that purpose, and therefore, it was misused of the funds that were appropriated? She needed to have done that properly, to have gotten

the permission from the Ministry of Finance. Would she not agree that, that is proper procedure?

Dr. Westford: Mdm. Chairperson that is an inaccurate statement. The monies under the training budget are used and can be used for the chartering of an aircraft to take students to study.

Mr. Ramjattan: Mdm. Chairperson, could the hon. Minister indicate at what stage it became unforeseeable, and urgent, and unavoidable for this fund to have been made? Did they not plan that students have to go back to Cuba for some time?

Dr. Westford: Yes, Mdm. Chairperson, we did plan for that. Unfortunately, the Government of Cuba had requested that all of the students should not arrive there at the same time and we had to separate those students. In separating the students we could not have said that we would put half to walk and half to run. Even if 15 people would have been in that aircraft, that aircraft would have had gone because they had to start school at a particular time. Thereby, the need for us to have an additional aircraft, because those medical students had left very late.

Item No. 1 -14-141 – Public Service Ministry – Public Service Management - \$15,000,000

agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

ITEM NO. 2 - 16-161 - Ministry of Amerindian Affairs – Amerindian Development - \$1,200,000

Item No. 2 - 16-161 – Ministry of Amerindian Affairs – Amerindian Development - \$1,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

ITEM NO. 3 - 21-211 - Ministry of Agriculture – Ministry Administration - \$190,000,000

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, this sum represents a substantial increase beyond the sum originally granted. Could the Minister explain to this National Assembly whether on receipt of this money, all of it is handed over at one time to the Drainage and Irrigation (D & I) Board, and if not could he say what are the criteria used to determine the timing and quantum of release to this Board?

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Persaud): Mdm. Chairperson, the sums allocated here, they fall under the heading subsidies and contribution to local organisations, and in fact, they were allocated to the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority. This is done based on requests by the NDIA to undertake critical works across the country, especially in relation

to the El Niño phenomenon and to ensure that our D & I system, primarily the irrigation system, was at a state of readiness, as far as possible, to provide our farmers with irrigation during this critical period.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, perhaps the hon. Minister did not understand me or I did not make myself clear. Could the Minister say in handing over this subsidy, or contribution, whether it was all handed over in a lump sum or was it handed over in parts, and if in parts, could he say what were the criteria he used in determining the timing and quantum release to this Board? I hope that is clearer.

Mr. Persaud: Mdm. Chairperson, the National Drainage and Irrigation Board Authority is not self-accounting, in fact, its finances are managed by the Central Accounting Unit within the Ministry of Agriculture. Tenders are awarded; there are various maintenance arrangements we have with farmers' groups; there is fuel which has to be procured; a number of Regions have made requests for additional fuel, especially, because some pumps we are running 20 hours per day. Based on those requests, they are channelled, they go through the necessary procurement and, as well as, the administrative systems within the NDIA, and

then they are referred to the Central Accounting Unit (CAU) where the processing of payments are done based on those individual requests.

Mr. Ramjattan: Mdm. Chairperson, intituled here is "Advances from the Contingencies Fund for the period 8th of December, 2009 to 31st December, 2009". I want to ask the Minister when was the advance of \$190 million made to the Drainage and Irrigation Authority. Noting the time that you are giving here for the Contingencies Fund is it the 8th of December to the 31st of December, 2009, when was that made?

Mr. Persaud: At different points in time, between the 8th and 31st of December.

Mr. Ramjattan: Could you state for us how many times that aggregated to the \$190 million and the amounts? How many times and what were the amounts?

Mr. Persaud: Mdm. Chairperson, I have the list of every individual payment that was made. I am not sure whether in the interest of time you would want me to innumerate or should I just circulate it to the hon. Member and hope that this will address his concerns. Because it is a long list, close to seventy-

three different types of transactions or support which the NDIA would have had to be made utilising these resources.

Mr. Ramjattan: Mdm. Chairperson, we need to have copies. At least I would need to have copies of those, because we cannot scrutinise without those. You would want the National Assembly to scrutinise them.

Madam Chairperson: Okay, hon. Minister, you could perhaps send it to him.

Mr. Persaud: Yes, I would share a copy to the hon. Member, Mdm. Chairperson.

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Murray, do you want to ask a question?

Item No. 3 21-211 – Ministry of Agriculture – Ministry Administration - \$190,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

ITEM NO. 4 - 31-311 - Ministry of Public Works and Communications – Ministry Administration - \$200,000,000

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, as with the Ministry of Agriculture, this represents, a subsidy or contribution to, in this case another organisation, the Transport and Harbours Department. Could the hon. Minister inform the National

Assembly whether the sum of \$200 million was paid over to the Transport and Harbours Department as a lump sum, and when it was so paid over?

The Minister of Transport and Hydraulics (Mr. Benn): Mdm. Chairperson, the amounts referenced were paid to the Transport and Harbours Department as a lump sum, sometime during the period the 8th to the 31st of December, 2009. I cannot give you the exact date at the moment.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, could the hon. Minister inform the National Assembly whether in handing over that sum, he had an awareness exactly what that money was to be used for? Secondly, could he inform the National Assembly whether any such conditions included payments to the National Insurance Scheme (NIS) of the more than 14 million dollars that have been outstanding in respect of workers NIS contributions for some time?

Mr. Benn: Yes, Mdm. Chairperson, the sums are intended to take care of issues relating to NIS and some other issues. I need to point out and remind the hon. House that there has been a loss of cash flow to the Transport and Harbours Department contingent upon the coming into operation of the Berbice River Bridge. Certain

adjustments have been underway to make good somehow, some of the loss of the cash flow and to continue additional services to our riverine population over the past year, particularly. I may mention that we did institute additional services on Essequibo, particularly to Bartica and to Supenaam and this is added to the additional services we have made to the North West District, all of which impacted on the issue of cash flow.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, if as the hon. Minister is saying this money represents a cash flow problem, could he say to this National Assembly whether there is an intention that this money will be repaid? Because a cash flow - or is he talking about loss of profitability or lost of the ability to break even - simply represents an interim position, but not a permanent loss of income. So could you please explain which is it? If it is also a cash flow, could you say to this National Assembly when this money will be repaid?

Mr. Benn: Let me be clear by saying it is indeed a loss of revenue.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, is the hon. Minister aware that this particular entity has serious problems with the leakage of fuel, and not leakage through absorption by heat, and if he is, I

want to know what conditions he imposes to ensure that there is maximum efficiency in this organisation before he undertakes to make subsidies available?

Mr. Benn: Mdm. Chairperson, I will be happy to have any information the hon. Member will be willing to share with me on the issues what he terms as leakages of fuel. Let me say that a tremendous effort is underway at the Transport and Harbours Department, even while the Department is challenged to expand its services based upon the demand of the population, to optimise its operations.

Mrs. Holder: Can I ask the hon. Minister given what he has just said to the House and the need to earn additional revenues, whether consideration would be given to having those ferries that operated between Rosignol and New Amsterdam up the Berbice River as they used to do?

2:42 Hrs.

Mr. Benn: Mdm. Chairperson, there was an intention in the last quarter of 2009 to resume the Berbice River service using the MV Northcote. Issues relating to the docking of the vessels meant that the scheduling had to be phased out for this year. We hope that in the first quarter of this year, 2010, to resume that river service.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, since the Minister had asked whether I could provide any information I have, I want to ask him whether it is that he is saying to the National Assembly that this is the first time he has ever heard about allegations of theft of fuel in this organisation. And if he had heard before today about this matter what did he do to investigate it?

Mr. Benn: Mdm. Chairperson, this is not the first time that these allegations have been made. I am saying this is an issue that we have been working on. I did say that if the hon. Member has any particular information which he would want to share with me, I would be happy to have it and deal with it. I am saying in relation to the question that he made for clarity that this is not the first time we have heard such allegations.

Mr. Murray: The question is what have you done to investigate it, if anything? And what have those investigations revealed?

Mr. Benn: Mdm. Chairperson, there are ongoing investigations. We have tightened administrative and accounting procedures with respect to the issuance of fuel and lubricants. The parametric relation between lubricant use and fuel is being examined and there is generally much tighter accounting in respect of fuel and

lubricant usage. That is what we have done. There are ongoing investigations, but I am happy to add to it if the hon. Gentleman is willing to provide the information.

Mr. Ramjattan: Mdm. Chairperson, could I ask the Minister what was the basis for coming to this \$200 million?

Mr. Benn: Mdm. Chairperson, this is of course the accumulated sum of the amounts required by the department. I do not know what he means by what is the basis.

Mr. Ramjattan: Indeed it was. Remember we are dealing with contingencies here. At the time that you made this payment of \$200 million what were the circumstances that caused you to regard it as urgent and unforeseeable.

Mr. Benn: Mdm. Chairperson, as was previously said they were issues of NIS and so on in relation to workers' emoluments. The issue in relation to the payment of fuel is that if we do not pay for fuel the boats are unable to run.

Mr. Danny: Mdm. Chairperson, on the Essequibo River, Supenaam to Parika, there is the Malali which is propelled by a tug. Could the Hon. Minister say if Malali has its own engine

running or is it completely propelled by the tug?

Mr. Benn: Mdm. Chairperson, there is no situation where the Malali is being propelled by a tug.

Mr. Danny: Mdm. Chairperson, I travel on that boat and maybe something is wrong with my eyes or brains, if not it would mean that something is wrong with the Minister's brains. I travel on that boat and I see that there is a tug that propels the Malali. *[Interruption- Is it Malali?]*

The boat that travels from Adventure to Parika is powered by a tug. Can the Minister say if the boat is powered completely by the tug or by the boat itself and the tug?

Mr. Benn: Mdm. Chairperson, unfortunately I am not in a position to refer to the specifics of what the hon. Member is saying. I am aware that all the Makouria class vessels on the Essequibo River are self-propelled at this time. I am not aware that they have any problem requiring them to be assisted by the tug. My update is as recent as this morning. I would presume that if in fact the Arouka went over to Supenaam or Adventure, it may tie up with the Malali or some other vessel to come down, but there is no such situation requiring the Makouria class

vessels to be propelled by any tug.

Mr. Ramjattan: Mdm. Chairperson, just for completion sake. I do not think I asked this question. I might have missed it. When was this advance payment made to the Transport and Harbours Department?

Mr. Benn: I believe I answered that question before.

Madam Chairperson: Yes, Mr. Ramjattan that question was answered already.

Item No. 4 – Agency 31-311 – Ministry of Public Works and communication – Ministry Administration - \$200,000,000.00, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item No. 5 – Agency 46-461 – Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation – Public Hospital – Drugs and Medical Supplies - \$40,000,000

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, could the hon. Minister inform the National Assembly whether in the use of the \$40,000,000 to procure Drugs and medical supplies, the process utilized was that of an open tendering procedure.

The Minister of Heath (Dr. Ramsammy): Mdm. Chairperson, there were both, the open

tender and also the selective tender process were provided for through no objection from Cabinet. The suppliers that were paid were DIAMED, Caribbean Incorporated, INOR Orthopedics, Heman Verma Medical International, New GPC Incorporated, SBS, and International Pharmaceutical Agency.

Mr. Ramjattan: Mdm. Chairperson, I just want to ask the Minister if we could be provided with a copy of the breakdown he just read out.

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes, Mdm. Chairperson.

Mr. Murray: Is the Minister aware that Cabinet does not have any authority to override the law, and that in any situation in which Cabinet expresses a no objection to selective tendering is a violation of the law and that that is not the proper procedure to have followed?

Dr. Ramsammy: Mdm. Chairperson, this is Tender Board approval which Cabinet gave a no objection to.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, does the hon. Minister recall that during the budget debate for 2009 he virtually invited me to go with him the night of the debate to get a letter which he said he had from the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board

giving such a waiver? To this date as I stand here I have not received it. Does he have it available and could we have it now?

Dr. Ramsammy: Mdm. Chairperson, the Ministry of Health provided a copy of that letter to the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, in my respectful view this is very disrespectful of the National Assembly. Here in the National assembly the hon. Minister undertook to make it available to me. Is the minister aware that not having done so, he is in violation of an undertaking he gave to this National Assembly?

Dr. Ramsammy: I would remind the hon. Member that I invited him to my office, but he never came. He never asked me to send it to him. We then proceeded to provide the Public Accounts Committee with that letter.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson is the hon. Minister aware that my place of business in so far as this nation's affairs are concerned is the National Assembly of Guyana and not the Minister's office? Could I therefore repeat the request that the hon. Minister make that information available to me here in the National Assembly?

Dr. Ramsammy: Mdm. Chairperson, the Public Accounts Committee is our Committee.

When we provide it to the Public Accounts Committee we provide it to the Members of this Assembly.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, is the Minister really saying he has a problem with me as a Member of the National Assembly providing information that I asked for that he agreed he would supply? Does he have a problem making it available to me through the National Assembly and not an institution thereof?

Dr. Ramsammy: Mdm. Chairperson, I have no objection to give the Member a copy of the letter. However in my own reasoning when we provided it to the Public Accounts Committee we provided it to all Members of this House.

Madam Chairperson: I think the Minister is saying that he is willing to provide it to you Mr. Murray.

Mr. Murray: He further said to all Members, Mdm. Chairperson. So I think it was expanded.

Item No. 5 – Agency 46-461 – Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation – Public Hospital – Drugs and Medical Supplies - \$40,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item No. 6 – 47-474 – Ministry of Health – Regional and Clinical Services – Drugs and Medical Supplies - \$433,992,352

Mr. Ramjattan: Mdm. Chairperson, can I ask the Minister through you who received the advance or advances for this sum and what was the basis of the award or awards on tender board procedures?

Dr. Ramsammy: Mdm. Chairperson, the sums were paid to Pan American Health Organisation on a selective tender approved by the Tender Board and for which cabinet had no objection, also to the New GPC on an open international tender and the selective tender process; also to the Pan American Health Organisation on a selective tender process.

Mr. Ramjattan: Out of the \$433,000,000 could you kindly say how much was awarded to the New GPC?

Dr. Ramsammy: On the selective tender, \$200,000,000 and on the international public tender, \$100,000,000.

Mr. Murray: Could the hon. Minister make the information available to the National Assembly by providing the names of those who bid, in addition to the New GPC for the open tenders that was awarded to the same?

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes, Mdm. Chair.

Mr. Murray: These things tend to go on forever. Could the Minister indicate how soon he would be in a position to make this information available?

Dr. Ramsammy: At the next sitting.

Mr. Ramjattan: Since this is from 8th to 31st December, could the hon. Minister indicate when actually was this payment made and what were the circumstances that made this big sum so urgent and unforeseeable?

Dr. Ramsammy: The payments were made between 28th and 31th December.

Mr. Ramjattan: And what were the circumstances that made it urgent?

Dr. Ramsammy: We procured Drugs to take us up to April, 2010. We do this every year because we cannot procure in April for April. We have to order before. The amount of Drugs we order throughout the year at different times always has to be adjusted for increasing services. The Drugs were ordered in November and payments made in December. That is when the Drugs arrived.

Item No. 6 – 47-474 – Ministry of Health – Regional and Clinical

Services – Drugs and Medical Supplies - \$433,992,352 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule

Item No. 7 – 51-515 – Ministry of Home Affairs – Guyana Fire Service – Fuel and Lubricants - \$3,000,000

Item No. 7 – 51-515 – Ministry of Home Affairs – Guyana Fire Service – Fuel and Lubricants - \$3,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

CAPITAL ESTIMATES

Item No. 1 – 01 – Office of the President – Information Communication Technology - \$353,548,617

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson could the hon. Minister inform the National Assembly when the fibre optic cable and terminal equipment were acquired. That is the first question.

The Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications (Mr. Hinds):

Mdm. Chairperson, they were ordered in the month of December.

Mr. Murray: So Mdm. Chairperson it would be misleading. Would it not hon. Minister to say in the remarks column that the:

“Provision is for the installation of fibre optic cables and terminal equipment”?

The presumption being that these things have been acquired. That is why I asked the former question.

Mr. Hinds: Mdm. Chairperson, I would have to agree with hon. Member, Mr. Murray that this is not for installation, but for acquisition.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, could the hon. Minister explain in procurement procedure terms if the order was placed in December and if you are saying to the National Assembly that you have paid this money to the suppliers, and if you have, what proportion of the total sum of the suppliers contracts does this represent?

Mr. Hinds: Mdm. Chairperson, this is the total payment for these materials. The whole project would require some more funding which will be provided for during this year.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson is the Minister aware that we have major problems with some of these agencies which come to Public Accounts Committee. Monies are paid way up front for the acquisition of items and often, I would not say very often, we have found many cases of problems in the arrival of these things. Why did the Minister find it necessary to pay 100 percent of

the value of what is ordered upfront without anything having arrived? Would you not agree Minister that surely a better procedure would have been to pay a proportion of the sum and the rest be payable under a credit arrangement at the time of arrival?

Mr. Hinds: Mdm. Chairperson, my understanding is that this is quite normal in this sector for this type of equipment. My understanding too is that there is protection in making the payment.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson could the hon. Minister inform the National Assembly who the suppliers of the equipment are?

Mr. Hinds: Broadly two types of equipment: the optic cable itself, the US based company CORNING and, the terminal equipment, the US based company EXTERA.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson is the hon. Minister aware that with the GT&T installation of fibre optic cables of immense capacity, that there is the capability within GT&T to provide for any additional service which the Government may need, and which investment is therefore unnecessary? *[Interruption - What?!! What?!!]*

Mdm. Chairperson through you, that noise tells you what they

really believe about the private sector. They do not like it a hell of a lot. That is the disposition so they are seeking to undermine it. Listen to them crow and listen to the ones that are crowing and it will tell you the story.

Yes, could the hon. Minister say before embarking on this particular expenditure whether discussions were engaged with GT&T in order to determine whether it was possible for them to provide the cable space that would be necessary to undertake the task which the government contemplates?

Mr. Hinds: Mdm. Chairperson what I have been learning in this area is that there is much to be said for having redundancy. Indeed this issue has come up on a number of occasions for companies wanting to establish call centres in Guyana. This is not necessarily an undermining of GT&T because I learnt also that quite often people seek to arrange loops so that information can come and go in various directions. So if there is a failure in one arm of a loop, one can reverse the flow in the other direction of the loop. So I do not think so.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, could the hon. Minister inform this Assembly whether a feasibility study was undertaken in respect of this project that

establishes its viability? If so, could that feasibility study be made available to the Members of this National Assembly for their information?

Mr. Hinds: I do not know what specifically the hon. Member is looking for, but I would seek to have his question answered. I do not have that information at this time.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, I want to get this very clear. Is the hon. Prime Minister saying he is unaware as to whether a feasibility study was done for the project, and that he has to find out whether that is so? Is that what he is saying?

Mr. Hinds: I am saying Mdm. Chairperson that I do not know what he is looking for and I do not know if I have what he is looking for. I have a paper here that says that the projected price for information flowing through this loop from Brazil is likely to be lower in capital and running cost than the cost of service coming from the ocean side.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, first of all I crave your indulgence to allow me the expression of a sentence. I am astounded to hear the hon. Prime Minister of this country, a man who is an engineer by profession and understands these concepts, saying that he does not know

what I am looking for in asking for a feasibility study. I am amazed hon. Prime Minister that someone of your caliber is saying that. If I may enlighten you, since you appear not to know- a feasibility study would show how profitable, unprofitable or otherwise would be this project. That is what I would like to see Mr. Prime Minister. If you get me clearly could you undertake to provide that information and if so when?

Mr. Hinds: I would provide you with what we have by the next meeting of the National Assembly.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, I have one more question for the hon. Prime Minister.

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Murray I think Mr. Ramjattan had indicated before you.

Mr. Ramjattan: I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister if the acquisition and later on the installation of the fibre optic cable are for the provision of services in partnership with a Chinese company.

Hon. Samuel Hinds: No, this is not for the Chinese company.

Mr. Ramjattan: Is there going to be a partnership with a Chinese company for the purpose of providing these services in competition with GT&T?

Mr. Hinds: No, it is not intended to be in competition with GT&T. Members of this House have said from time to time that the Government must be aware of the developments in E-Governance. The Government has been saying that it seeks to bring 80 percent of the homes of Guyana to the internet world. For that, the Government is looking at ways of putting in what I call backbones, so that this could be provided.

Mr. Ramjattan: One more follow-up question. I need to get this on the record. In relation to this \$353,000,000 for the fibre optic acquisition when was this advance made, the actual date?

Mr. Hinds: I would have to research that and provide it to you.

Mr. Ramjattan: Would you make the commitment to provide it?

Hon. Samuel Hinds: Yes, I am making that commitment.

Mr. Murray: Could the hon. Prime Minister inform this National Assembly whether the installation of these cables and terminal equipment would bring into being a separate and parallel system to that currently operated by GT&T? *[Interruption - "Currently or about to"]* Or about to be brought into operation by GT&T. Thank you, Mr. Ramotar.

Mr. Hinds: As I said, Mdm. Chairperson, we see this as providing the redundancy that all of the people who have been looking to establish IT based work in Guyana, asked and called for redundancy. If there are three different systems when one goes down or the other goes down, there is another one and they would still be covered. Often they want it in different directions and so on.

Mr. Murray: Through you Mdm. Chairperson, are you not acknowledging Mr. Prime Minister that this would be a system independent of the one contemplated by GT&T.

Mr. Hinds: Yes, it provides independent redundancy.

Mr. Murray: Thank you very much. If that is so hon. Prime Minister, does it not follow that this would be in violation of the legislation that has been passed that empowers GT&T and other providers to provide information through their system? Your system would be outside of that and therefore in violation of the very law we have passed.

Mr. Hinds: Mdm. Chairperson I have been advised that there are different opinions at different levels. The issue of what is and what is not allowed is one sort of issue, but what seems clear is that the Government has the right to

put in an independent government system.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, this raises a very worrying situation because it is saying to this nation that the Government is setting up an independent system which will not be subject to the same scrutiny to which the private sector system will be subjected to. We have gone to great cares to set up an elaborate system that will allow through the mechanism of the Court for conversations to be ears-dropped on. This system which the Prime Minister is talking about setting up will completely bypass that arrangement. That is discriminatory. While ordinary citizens will be subject to that kind of spying upon procedure, the Government will be exempt.

Mr. Hinds: I think the hon. Member is anticipating a lot of things. On the issue of security I would expect that the security concerns will also apply to this system.

Mrs. Holder: I would like to put a generic question to the hon. Finance Minister. To ask whether in his opinion these provisions before the National Assembly today which have drawn down funds from the Contingency Fund meet the requirements as spelt out in the Fiscal Management and

Accountability Act, Section 41, (3) and (5).

Dr. Singh: Yes Mdm. Chairperson.

Mr. Ramjattan: Mdm. Chairperson could the hon. Prime Minister indicate when it was and under what circumstances it was then deemed necessary to pay this advance of 355. When did it become as something unforeseen and urgent? When was that, because this is part of a supplementary, but when was it that he saw it necessary?

Mr. Hinds: Mdm. Chairperson, I have said that the order was made in December 2009.

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Ramjattan I think the hon. Prime Minister is telling you that he is going to supply you with the information as to when it was paid.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson could the hon. Prime Minister tell this National Assembly whether he feels no embarrassment at the fact that the Government brought a Law to this National Assembly that would allow for spying on ordinary citizens and then turns around and is going to put in place a system which is going to exempt it from the same level of scrutiny.

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Murray I thought the Prime

Minister had answered earlier that the system would be subjected to the same scrutiny. I think I heard that answer.

Mr. Murray: With great respect to you Mdm. Chairperson that is not what the hon. Prime Minister said. He said "on security matters", but there is a broad issue. I am not talking about security. I am talking about the general application of the Law.

Madam Chairperson: Prime Minister I do not know whether you want to respond to that?

Mr. Hinds: Mdm. Chairperson these are issues which will be addressed as they arise. At this time I am pretty sure the security issues as were raised earlier would certainly apply to this system.

Item No. 1 – 01 – Office of the President – \$353,548,617 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item No. 2 – 04 – Ministry of Foreign Affairs – \$5,535,000

Item No. 2 – 04 – Ministry of Foreign Affairs – \$5,535,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item No. 3 – 31 – Ministry of Public Works and Communications – \$23,000,000 & 184,500,000

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson could the hon. Minister say whether in the original voted provision, there was any sum earmarked there for counterpart contribution? And if so, as indeed what is revealed in the project profile, then would he not agree further that the legend in respect of this item is misleading since it is not provisioned for counterpart contribution but provisioned for additional counterpart contribution?

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Murray I see there are two aspects; bridges rehabilitation – there is one figure, and then there is Moleson Creek Road. Are you asking it in a general straggling boat?

Mr. Murray: Yes Mdm. Chairperson they apply equally to both.

Mr. Benn: Mdm. Chairperson can the hon. Member repeat his question.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, is the hon. Minister aware of the fact that the original voted provisions on both of these items included provisions for counterpart contributions by the Government of Guyana? If he so agrees then would he not further agree that the legend for these two items is misleading. In that they talk about provisions for counterpart contribution, which presumes there has been no

provision made for such counterpart contributions. If that is the case, would he not agree that the legend should be corrected to read provisions for additional counterpart contributions, as I think was the case in one of the Prime Minister's items where he did have that word?

Mr. Benn: Mdm. Chairperson I would have to look into this matter and give an answer.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson I have the project profile here. Could I give them to the hon. Minister so he can answer promptly? Madam it is surprising that the hon. Minister comes to the National Assembly to answer this specific question about counterpart contribution, because that is specifically what it is about, and does not have the necessary information. Is he not embarrassed by that?

Dr. Singh: Mdm. Chairperson if I may. The hon. Member Mr. Murray is correct in saying that the original budget allocation included counterpart contribution. In that regard I suspect that if one wanted to split hairs, they might argue that the word "additional" should be included. But there is a counterpart allocation in the original budget.

Mr. Murray: Through all which the Minister said; is he saying that

he agrees that the proper explanation in the remark column would have been provision for additional counterpart contribution?

Dr. Singh: I am not saying that Mdm. Chairperson. I am saying provision for counterpart contribution is perfectly accurate. That does not preclude, or is it mutually exclusive from the fact that there is a counterpart contribution provided in the Budget. It is intended to provide for counterpart contribution.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson the hon. Minister of Finance could call it splitting hairs but it is very simple. I fail to understand why it cannot be comprehended that the word "additional" here makes it clear that this is in addition to something that was previously provided. Whereas to leave it as it is gives the impression that it is the first time such a contribution is being provided for.

Item No. 3 – 31 – Ministry of Public Works and Communications – \$23,000,000 & 184,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule

Madam Chairperson: This completes consideration of all the items on Financial Paper NO. 5.

Question:

“That this Committee of Supply approves of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 5 of 2009 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on Current and Capital Estimates totaling \$1,449,775,969 for the period of 8th of December to 31st of December, 2009.”

Put and agreed to.

Assembly Resumed.

Dr. Singh: Mdm. Deputy Speaker I beg to report that the Committee of Supply has approved of the proposals set out in Financial Paper NO. 5 of 2009 – Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$ 1,449,775,969, and I now Move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee in the said resolution.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

MOTION TO APPROVE FINANCIAL PAPER NO. 6 OF 2009

“Be it resolved that this Assembly approves of proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 6 of 2009 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Capital Estimate totalling \$6,795,982,309 for the period ended 31st December, 2009.”
[Minister of Finance]

Assembly in Committee of Supply

Item No. 1 – 02 – Office of the Prime Minister – 1,000,000,000

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson could the hon. Prime Minister inform the National Assembly of how much of this \$1 billion of supplementary provisions being sought today has in fact been released to him.

Mr. Hinds: Mdm. Chairperson I do not think any money is released to me. It is released to the GPL.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson is the hon. Prime Minister aware that this item is listed under his agency "Office of the Prime Minister", and therefore it is appropriate that I should ask him the question, and that he has the right to say to me that it was not released to him but to GPL which comes under him?

Mr. Hinds: Yes it has been released to the GPL.

Mr. Murray: Could the hon. Prime Minister inform this National Assembly when this sum of \$1 billion was released?

Mr. Hinds: During December.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson this raises a grave issue of legality. A supplementary provision being sought by the National Assembly presumes that

the authority of the National Assembly is required before any money could be released under such an arrangement. Therefore, any release of a cent of this money prior to this National Assembly approving this supplementary is a gross violation of the Law and of the Constitution. Would the Prime Minister agree?

Mr. Hinds: Mdm. Chairperson I would certainly need advice on this matter, on the specific definitions of releases, commitments and so on. I would have to be advised on it.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson the only thing I then need to ask is; is he saying that he is unaware of what I have said to him about the state of the Law in relation to appropriations? Is that what the Prime Minister saying?

Mr. Hinds: Mdm. Chairperson maybe when I used the word "answer" just now with the issue of release, I may have been inaccurate with respect to the definitions that the hon. Member may be applying.

Mr. Murray: So then Mdm. Chairperson could the hon. Prime Minister inform the National Assembly what is the state of play with respect to this \$1 billion exactly.

Mr. Hinds: My understanding Mdm. Chairperson, not being a

financial and legal expert, is that GPL has certain things ordered, and they understand that this money is coming to pay for things.

Mr. Murray: Then Prime Minister, you are now saying that this money has not been released, but is earmarked for release after what takes place here in the National Assembly.

Mr. Ramjattan: I have a question which is very important. Is this \$1 billion linked to the resignation of Mr. Dindyal? (Mr. Bharrat Dindyal – CEO of GPL)

Mr. Hinds: Mdm. Chairperson, I really do not see how we could link this to his resignation. Mr. Dindyal as we know has been here contributing and assisting at our request and we have been in discussion with him; in his personal life and family life and he has given us a signal that by the middle of the year he would probably want to do other things. I really do not see how it is linked.

Mr. Ramjattan: Mdm. in view of the first answer, “the money did not come to me, it went to GPL” arose my suspicion. Now I am asking; did Mr. Dindyal tend a resignation?

Ms. Teixeira: Mdm. Chairperson, under Standing Order 75(2), whilst we are free to discuss the policy and everything

to do with these funds, I think the Member is getting into extreme details that may get irrelevant. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: I think the resignation of people within the Ministry; unless you can find a direct link, monetary link.

Item No.1 – 02 – Office of the Prime Minister - \$1,000,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item No. 2 – 03 Ministry of Finance – \$560,000,000 & \$18,099,352

Mrs. Holder: Thank you Mdm. Chairperson, I would like to ask the hon. Finance Minister to explain the remark “Provision for additional flows” in the context of the requirements under the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act. Also who are these inflows from and how have they been accounted for?

Dr. Singh: Mdm. Chairperson, the description provision for “additional inflows” is used against foreign funded projects. That is to say, projects which are financed by donor agencies development partners. It is typically used where the level of disbursement at the end of the fiscal year exceeds the voted provision. So in the course of the execution of the project - it is executed and the donor agency disburses an amount in excess of

the amount provided for in the budget - it is necessary at the end of the year, to reflect in the expenditure and in the inflows, to reflect both a disbursement of funds by the donor agency and a corresponding matching expenditure item. That is done in the case of any foreign funded project that executes more than the amount that was originally provided for. Was there a second part?

Mrs. Holder: Yes. I wanted you also to indicate how these funds are accounted for and from whom?

Dr. Singh: Thank you very much Mdm. Chairperson, I thought I had answered that. Perhaps I did not. The Basic Needs Trust Fund is in fact a C.D.B. (Caribbean Development Bank) project. The Basic Needs Trust Fund is a project that is financially supported by the Caribbean Development Bank. That is the source of the funds. That is from where. In terms of how it is accounted for; it is accounted for by the recording of two matching and corresponding transactions. The recording of a disbursement of funds by the Caribbean Development Bank under this project and the recording of corresponding expenditure on the project; two corresponding transactions.

Mrs. Holder: One final supplementary Mdm. Chairperson, Why is the provision coming under a supplementary provision? Why through this route?

Dr. Singh: Mdm. Chairperson, it is done this way because one has to record the expenditure. One cannot record the expenditure in excess of the amount that is voted. So if a project is implemented at a rate that sees it disbursing more than it was anticipated at the start of the year, and one discovers this at the end of the year or close to the end of the year, then in order to reflect the level of disbursement one cannot record a level of expenditure that is in excess of the voted provision. This in fact has been done for some time. If the hon. Member were to peruse Financial Papers over the years, I am sure the hon. Member would observe that this is the mechanism through which these disbursements are recorded.

Item No. 2 – 03 Ministry of Finance – \$560,000,000 & \$18,099,352 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item No. 3 – 41 Ministry of Education – \$600,000,000 & \$68,510,665 & \$144,389,700

Ms. Ally: Thank you Mdm. Chairperson, According to the hon. Minister of Education

B.E.A.M.S (Basic Education Access Management Support) since 2009 has gone into a state of abandonment or transfer. First of all, if so then how can funds be sought to B.E.A.M.S under this head?

The Minister of Education (Mr. Baksh): Mdm. Chairperson B.E.A.M.S concluded on the 31st of December 2009.

Ms. Ally: Mdm. Chairperson, it is un-fortunate that the Minister himself did not recognise the circular coming out of the Ministry of Education dated the 9th of November which speaks of the transferral from B.E.A.M.S to the National Literacy Programme. So I do not know how the Minister can talk of December 2009.

Mr. Baksh: Mdm. Chairperson it is two different things. The financial operations of B.E.A.M.S came to an end on the 31st.

Ms. Ally: Mdm. Chairperson as I understand the B.E.A.M.S unit was transferred to the National Literacy Programme and that is being managed by NCERT (National Council for Educational Research and Training). Could the Minister now indicate what the additional inflows are which he is talking about as requested for this additional sum of money.

Mr. Baksh: Mdm. Chairperson the hon. Member is suffering

from a misconception. B.E.A.M.S has not been transferred to NCERT. There is a newly created literacy unit established. This sum of \$33 million relates to the completion of works at the new secondary school at Hope, payment for consultancy for the final evaluation of the B.E.A.M.S project and equipment purchased in 2009 for the success maker.

Ms. Ally: Mdm. Chairperson, the second part with the Education for All Fast Track Initiative. There is an additional sum here being sought for. I would like to ask the Minister to also give some details of what those additional inflows are for.

Mr. Baksh: The sum being requested here is for the purchase of textbooks for the primary schools.

Ms. Ally: Mdm. Chairperson, I also note that there are approximately nine components of the EFA - FTI programme. I am wondering if at this stage the Minister will be able to say the extent to which any or all of these have been achieved or some attempt has been made?

Mr. Baksh: Mdm. Chairperson I will do so when the 2010 Budget is being debated.

Item No. 3 – 41 Ministry of Education – \$600,000,000 & \$68,510,665 & \$144,389,700 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

ITEM NO. 4 – 45 – Ministry of Housing and Water – Infrastructural Development and Building – \$4,000,000,000.

Mr. Scott: Mdm. Chairperson, I would like to ask the Minister of Housing; when was the request for \$4 billion conceptualized. After having told us for one year, “all we needed to develop housing was \$430 million”, at what point did you realise that you need \$4 billion?

The Minister of Housing and Water (Mr. Ali): Mdm. Chairperson, first of all let me say, I do not know when the hon. Minister of Housing and Water said that all he needed to develop housing was 430 million. This Government since 1992 has been committed to re-energising the housing sector. We came from a position of no house lots in 1992. The position today is that we have distributed more than 80,000 house lots, and the 430 million budgeted earlier this year is part of that massive investment program that has led to the development of the housing sector. The \$4 billion which is here is aimed at further enhancing and developing the housing sector to meet the target which we announced publicly, of creating 17,000 new house lots for the benefit of the people of Guyana. Thank you.

Mr. Scott: I suppose that if we divide 4 billion by 17,000 we will

know what is the cost per house lot. Is there a new housing plan that was developed subsequent to the month of December 31, 2009 that required the spending of \$4B that you did not previously see was necessary when you arrived at \$430M?

Mr. Ali: Mdm. Chairperson, let me be clear, the Government’s commitment to the development of housing for all the people of Guyana, would take us far beyond \$4B and this money was always conceptualized as part of Government’s programme to make house lots available to our people.

Mr. Scott: Mdm. Chairperson, if \$4B was always conceptualised as part of the housing development programme for the past year, can the Minister then tell us why at the beginning of the budget presentation did he not therefore, put \$4B as necessary for the development of housing.

Mr. Ali: Mdm. Chairperson, as I said, the housing programme would require much more than \$4B. The \$4B that we are requesting now, is that which we are in a position of readiness to implement.

Mrs. Holder: Hon. Minister, could you indicate to the National Assembly how soon you will be ready to start utilising these funds.

Mr. Ali: We are ready.

Mr. Mervyn Williams: Mdm. Chairperson could the hon. Minister say in which specific geographic areas would the sum of \$4B be used or has been used.

Mr. Ali: There are many locations across the country in which we are going to implement the housing programme. It is not bounded by region or any other factor; it is bounded only by the needs of the people.

Madam Chairperson: Hon. Members could we have some order? Mr. Mervyn Williams, do you have a supplemental question?

Mr. Williams: Could the hon. Minister provide this National Assembly with a schedule of geographic areas and amounts earmarked for this \$4B? I presume that the timeline would not be necessary because it is at the end of 2012.

Mr. Ali: As I said, Mdm. Chairperson, the housing programme is one that is ongoing and expanding and I am willing to submit all information regarding the housing programme.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson is the Minister aware that according to the Estimates presented to this National Assembly in 2009, under 'Details of Capital Expenditure' for his

particular ministry, this project is listed under which this item comes as project No. 147 in the project profile. Is the Minister further aware that in that project profile, there are specific works identified to be undertaken – construction of roads, installation of electricity at particular areas, upgrading of roads at Mon Repos and No. 77 Village, installation of pure water network at Amelia's Ward, construction of concrete bridge at BelWest. Clearly Mdm. Chairperson, it must be the intention to spend \$4B on some things other than these. Clearly, project profile 147, cannot constitute the requirement for the expenditure of the sum of \$4B.

Before this occasion, I have alluded to the circumvention of the requirements of the budgetary process which demands a project profile for expenditure of capital sums. Where, Mr. Minister is the project profile attached to the expenditure of this \$4B? It is not sufficient, I respectfully submit, for him to get up and pontificate about all regions and everywhere. Where are the specifics of his project profile to show the utilization of this large sum of money of \$4B?

Mr. Ali: I am fully aware, as a Member of this National Assembly, that the hon. Minister of Finance has on more than one occasion clarified this issue. I would advise that Mr. Murray

refer to the records for the clarification he is seeking. Thank you.

Mr. Murray: I really do not understand what the hon. Minister is saying. Could he tell this National Assembly specifically what he is referring to because as far as I am aware, never have we in large supplementary provisions being asked for from this National Assembly, seen project profiles for such additional sums. The Minister must agree that unless such profiles are presented, they are circumventing the very tenets of transparency and accountability which they profess to subscribe to. Could the hon. Minister say, since he apparently does not perceive a question, whether he intends to submit to this National Assembly a project profile in respect of the expenditure of \$4B for housing development? If not, could he say why not?

Mr. Ali: Mdm. Chairperson, as I said before, the \$4B forms part of the intervention in ensuring that we develop housing for the people of Guyana and it falls within the framework of having the 17,000 house lots we announced in our policy, ready for the people. That is what I am willing to provide.

Mr. Murray: Would the hon. Minister not agree that the sentiments he just expressed are

also applicable to the \$430M that was originally approved by the National Assembly. Yet on that occasion, he deemed it proper, as indeed is the case, to submit a project profile. So, what is his problem now that he is coming to this National Assembly for \$4B for which there is no project profile? What is the problem he has now with doing what he did for the \$430M he sought in the beginning?

Mr. Ali: My response remains the same.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, this is the arrogance that we have to put up with in this National Assembly, but I will move on. Could the hon. Minister tell this National Assembly over what period of time he proposes to expend this sum of \$4B?

Mr. Ali: Mdm. Chairperson, as I said, the \$4B has been earmarked to ensure that we implement a programme to have 17,000 house lots available and it would be spent within the time frame it is budgeted for.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, this is the kind of arrogance that the people of this country have to put up with. I am asking the Minister a simple question in the interest of transparency so that we can understand what is happening. I am asking again, could the hon.

Minister inform this National Assembly over what period of time he intends to expend this large sum of \$4B in the development of infrastructure and building for housing? Could the hon. Minister please answer the question and not evade it? Mdm. Chairperson, I ask that it be noted by those present and those listening to the Minister's refusal to answer an obviously simple and straight forward question because that is how the people must note what is taking place in this National Assembly.

Mdm. Chairperson, I have another question for the hon. Minister. Could the hon. Minister inform this National Assembly how much, if any, of this sum of \$4B has already been released to his ministry?

Mr. Ali: Mdm. Chairperson, the resources that are sought here are resources we are seeking to have in the ministry for the execution of the programme for the 17,000 house lots.

Mr. Murray: Mdm. Chairperson, this is an interesting answer because this paper which I have before me – Paper No. 6/2009 talks about supplementary provision for the period ending December 31, 2009. The Minister is now admitting to the National Assembly that he is expecting to spend this money, in which case, may I draw the hon. Minister's

attention to Article 219 of the Constitution which states that he is only permitted to expend resources up to four months requirements into a succeeding year on the presumption that the budget comes into being in those four months. It is clear that the Minister has no contemplation and indeed no ability to spend \$4B within the first four months of the year. Therefore it is an abuse of the budgetary process and of the National Assembly to come to this body and seek \$4B at this time of year when there is a budget forthcoming in the very near future.

Mr. Ramjattan: Is the Minister aware that there is an offence under Section 85 – an official who knowingly permits any other person to contravene any provision of this Fiscal Amendment Act is guilty of an indictable offence and can be sentenced to three years jail?

Mr. Murray: I note that the hon. Minister is not budging and is not answering any of these questions, could I ask whether he has become deaf all of a sudden because I want to know. This National Assembly needs to know. Is there a deliberate act on the part of the Minister to withhold information from the general public about his compliance with the Constitution, compliance with the law and about his observation of a proper

budgetary process? Is that his intention?

The Opposition parties exit the Chambers.

ITEM NO. 4 – 45 – Ministry of Housing and Water – Infrastructural Development and Building – \$4,000,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairperson: This concludes consideration of the items on Financial Paper No. 6/2009.

Question:

“That this Committee of Supply approves the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 6/2009 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Capital

Motion carried.

Mr. Hinds: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, with your leave, I move that Standing Orders Numbers 13 (a), (n) and 54 be suspended to enable the Supplementary Appropriation No. 3 of 2009 – Bill No. 1 of 2010 to be introduced at this stage.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried

Dr. Singh: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, in accordance with article 171(2) of the

Estimates totalling \$6,795,982,309 for the period ended 2009-12-31.”

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion Carried.

Assembly Resumed.

Dr. Singh: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I beg to report that the Committee of Supply has approved of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 6 of 2009 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Capital Estimates totalling \$6,795,982,309 for the period ended 2009-12-31, and I now move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee in the said Resolution.

Question put, and agreed to.

Constitution, I signify that the Cabinet has recommended for consideration by the Assembly the Motion for the approval set out in Supplementary Appropriation No. 3 of 2009 – Bill No. 1 of 2010 and I now present the Bill to the National Assembly and move that it be read a First Time.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried

Bill Read a First Time and taken through the remaining stages.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The next item on the Order Paper is a motion by Mrs. Deborah Backer and I am the person who seconded that motion. I think it was agreed by both sides of the House that the Motion should be deferred.

Mrs. Backer: I rise to move that the motion standing in my name be deferred.

Question put, and agreed to.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is now 4:00 pm and this concludes our business for the day.

Mr. Hinds: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I move that the House be adjourned to a date to be fixed.

**Assembly adjourned at
4:05 pm.**