

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2015-2016) 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

29TH Sitting

Monday, 15th February, 2016

The Assembly convened at 1.36 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTION TO APPROVE THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER, 2016

“WHEREAS the Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana requires that Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Co-operative 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 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the financial year 2016 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2016-01-29.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2016, of a total sum of two hundred and twelve billion, nine hundred and sixty-three million and one hundred and thirty-two thousand dollars (**\$212,963,132,000**), **excluding seventeen billion and seventy-three million, three hundred and ninety-four thousand dollars (\$17,073,394,000)** which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the undermentioned schedule, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to make further provision in respect of finance.” *[Minister of Finance]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we will now consider the Budget Estimates for the year 2016. For the consideration of the Estimates, we will sit as follows:

- 1.00 p.m. - 4.00 p.m. - Sitting
- 4.00 p.m. - 5.00 p.m. - Suspension
- 5.00 p.m. - 7.30 p.m. - Sitting
- 7.30 p.m. - 8.00 p.m. - Suspension
- 8.00 p.m. - 10.00 p.m. - Sitting.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply

In Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we will now proceed in accordance with the Sub-Committee’s Resolution and Schedule. Members, kindly get Volume 1 of the *Estimates of the Public Sector* and turn to pages 48 and 49.

Agency: 05 Ministry of the Presidency

Current Expenditure

Programme: 051 – Policy Development and Administration - \$2,599,251,000

Minister of State [Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon]: Mr. Chairman, may I respectfully ask that we give the Ministry of the Presidency an opportunity to have the supporting staff seated next to the Minister to answer these questions?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, indeed. I will allow for a few minutes. Hon. Minister, is your staff comfortably seated within reach?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Very shortly please, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we will allow a minute or two for this to happen. Thank you.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, we are ready.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Minister for his readiness. Hon. Member, Dr. Jennifer Westford, you have the floor.

Dr. Westford: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: I see listed 288 employees. Could the Hon. Minister please provide to this House the names, designations, salaries and non-salaried benefits of these workers? Since this is large number – 288 – I am aware that the Minister would not be in a position to give this information in the House. I ask for this information to be provided, in writing, to us. The Minister should say to us when this would be done.

There is a second part to my question. I would like the Hon. Minister to provide to this House the names and salaries of the four lowest paid workers under this category and the names and salaries of the four highest paid workers under this category.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, it would be helpful if the whole question is repeated so that there is no misunderstanding or mistake about it.

Dr. Westford: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: I am asking the Hon. Minister if this House could be provided with the names, designations, salaries and non-salaried benefits of these 288 workers. I am also asking for the salaries of the four lowest paid workers and the four highest paid workers in this category.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: We would be only too willing to present that information to the Hon. Member by tomorrow morning. In fact, I will provide that information to the House the first thing tomorrow morning. I will have the information prepared and handed to the Clerk for circulation to the House.

The second question about the four lowest and the four highest paid workers, I will have to sort out who the four highest paid are. But the four lowest paid would be those persons who are at the \$50,000 level, the minimum wage paid by the State. I can give you the names of the four persons. I will also provide the names of the four highest paid persons but I would require some time to sort that information out. You can get that before I am finished with my presentation today.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: the last time we asked for information, it was very frugal when it came. I want to remind this House that between 2008 and 2014, the then Opposition had asked that the Hon. Member who was in charge of that sector to read all of the names of the contracted persons, their salaries and their positions. It was only stopped during the 2015 Budget. I have been a Minister and my colleagues on this side have also been Ministers. Each one of us came to this House with the list of names of contracted employees from the highest to the lowest paid. We were required, based on the demand of the Opposition, to read all of it. I am sure that the Hon Minister, Mr. Harmon, has the information in front of him. Therefore, I do not agree with giving him an opportunity. The Ministers know that this was a big demand by the then Opposition between 2008 and 2014. I am calling on the Hon. Minister to uphold the demand that they made on the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) when it was in Government. Please read the names, positions and the salaries to this House.

Minister of Natural Resources [Mr. Trotman]: Mr. Chairman, I rise on a Point of Order. Under the procedures in the Committee of Supply, there shall be no debate but questions are put.

Secondly, we cannot approbate and reprobate. One Member, who is the shadow Minister, has asked for the information to be supplied in a specific format; another Member is now demanding another format. What is the Hon. Minister to do? An Hon. Member asked for the information and the request was complied with. Another Member is now demanding that that request be put aside. The Minister said he will have it by tomorrow morning.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Minister for his statement. I thank the Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, for her observations. I understand the Minister has already given a commitment in relation to tomorrow morning. The Hon. Member who raised the questions seemed quite satisfied. I hope that that will suffice until tomorrow morning.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, if you would allow me, I would accept your ruling. However, I want to just state for this House that it is the former Speaker, who is now the Minister – Mr. Trotman, who allowed and ensured that this was done between 2012 and 2014. From dealing with principle, it was the principle that was upheld and is now being treated in this way. Mr. Chairman, you are well aware of our dissatisfaction about questions which were asked in the last Budget for which we have not received answers. I said that the Hon. Minister, Mr. Harmon, had provided some information but it was extraordinary frugal.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we must not try to *push the envelope*, so to speak. I have allowed an intervention from you only to discover that it was not in context of what we are doing. You know that you ought not to make a speech at this time. Hon. Member, let us try to do those things which we know we ought to do in the Standing Orders and in this debate. Hon. Member, Mrs. Chandarpal, you have the floor.

Ms. Chandarpal: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under Programme 051, I would like to know where the Ministry of Social Cohesion is located in the administration of the Ministry of the Presidency. I have looked everywhere and I have not seen it.

The second question is: how much money is allocated to this section of administration?

1.51 p.m.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The Ministry of Social Cohesion is a sub-programme under Programme 051 and that is where the expenses will be located.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, are you through with answering the question?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Yes please, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Chandarpal: Mr. Chairman, I am sorry. I am not satisfied with answer. He did not answer the second question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, it appears that it was two questions addressed and you have answered only one.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: There is a total of \$45 million allocated for that. I would like to respond to the earlier question which was raised by the Hon. Member, Dr. Westford, for the names of the four highest and four lowest paid employees to be provided. The names and positions are as follow: Mr. Andrew Bishop, Lead Negotiator on climate change, the sum of \$1,035,000; Mr. Floyd Levi, Head of the E-Government Unit, \$930,000; Col. Chabilal Ramsaroop, Head of the Civil Defence Commission (CDC), \$808,000; and Ms. Janelle Christian, Head of the Office of Climate Change (OCC), \$700,000.

The four lowest paid on the list of contracted employees are: Ms. Murlene Cordis, Cleaner, \$50,000; Ms. Jacqueline Dowlin, Cleaner, \$50,000, Mr. Andy Simon, Handyman, \$50,000; and Megan Nelson, Cleaner, \$50,000.

Bishop Edghill: I would like to go back to Line item- 6116- Contracted Employees- and ask the Hon. Minister some specific questions. We have noted that the number of contracted employees has moved from 162 to 288. The first question to the Minister is: how many contracted employees were terminated in 2015 and what are their names? Secondly, what is responsible for this increase from 162 to 288? Thirdly, what are the dates of appointment of the persons and what was the process used for their engagement? I have other questions but I would take those now.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I would have to ask the Committee's approval to present the answer to the first question later on because it requires some amount of compilation.

The second part, however, deals with the increase in the numbers from 162 to 288. This increase is by 126 persons and it represents increases across the spectrum of persons who have been employed since May, 2015. Because of the reorganisation of the Ministry of the Presidency, several Ministries and Departments which stood alone before May, 2015 became part of the Ministry of the Presidency. That meant that the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment became the Department of Natural Resources and became a part of the Ministry of the Presidency. The Public Service Ministry (PSM) became a Department under the Ministry of the Presidency. The Ministry of Citizenship, which previously encompassed persons who were in the

Ministry of Public Service and, more particularly, persons who served in the General Registrar's Office (GRO), Department of Immigration and Naturalisation all became a part of the Ministry.

In addition, the E-Government Unit of the Ministry of the Presidency also included persons who were part of another Ministry even though they were working in that Unit. What we are seeing is basically a coming together several Ministries and Departments. Therefore, the respective hiring for those Departments was catered for under the Ministry of the Presidency. They were hired under authority of the Ministry of the Presidency. This budgeted figure is spread across several areas and I will be in a position to provide this honourable House with information on how that figure is broken down and where the money was actually allocated. I can provide that document to this honourable House today.

Bishop Edghill: What was the process that was used for hiring and the dates of appointments?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I would have to provide that information about the dates of employment, *et cetera*. The question of contract employment is a matter which I believe I should address in this honourable House.

Bishop Edghill: We do not want a speech. We want answers to the questions.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I would permit you if, in the context of answering a question, you have a particular opinion to express, but I do not believe that it is appropriate, in this context, for a policy statement on any such issue to be deliberated.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: It was never my intention to do a broad sweep. But in order for this honourable House to understand the context within which these contracted workers were hired and the Government's approach to actually absorbing them into the traditional public service, I believe that if the House is minded to take that explanation, I am prepared to give it. If it is that the Hon. Member is not interested in that and all he needs are some little specifics, I can do that. But in the interest of openness and in the interest of the nation understanding what we are doing, it was my intention to give an explanation.

Bishop Edghill: I have other questions but I would let Hon. Mr. Ali ask his question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, may I suggest that you complete your questions and then we move to another Member? Is that inconvenient for you to do?

Bishop Edghill: If Mr. Ali's question is a follow-up on the current matter that is before us, I think that we should allow it and then go on to a new matter. He is asking for a follow-up question.

Mr. Ali: It is a follow-up based on the Minister's answer. The explanation for the increase in the number of contracted employees from 162 to 288 was that there were some Departments and Ministers that are now under the Ministry of the Presidency. If there is a net off because there are some Departments that...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are you building up to the question?

Mr. Ali: I am coming to the question.

Mr. Chairman: It is a long build up.

Mr. Ali: No. It is not a long build up.

There has been a transfer of the Ministry Natural Resources and Environment and Ministry of Telecommunications to other Ministry. When I look in the Estimates and look at the net off, it does not reflect what the Hon. Minister is presenting to this House. That is because the allocation is still there under the other sectors.

I would like the Hon. Minister to explain why there is a 300% increase under line item 6011- Statutory Wages and Salaries and a 600% increase under Contracted Employees at the same time? It cannot be that there was a transfer of departments because the money is also reflected with expenditure under the different headings in the Estimates.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Might I respectfully enquire what line item the Member is speaking to? Are we dealing with line item 6116 or 6011? I would answer the question once I am clear as to what it is that you want, Hon. Member.

Mr. Ali: The Hon. Minister stated that the Department of Citizenship and the Department of Social Cohesion were transferred under the Ministry of the Presidency and that was the reason

for the increase under line item 6116- Contracted Employees. I am putting to the Hon. Minister that there was also transfer out of responsibility to other sectors that had greater expenditure so the net off could not be because of the transfer in. I am also saying to the Hon. Minister that, under line item - 6011 - Statutory Wages and Salaries, there is also an increase of almost 300%. Could the Hon. Minister explain this anomaly in line items 6011 and 6116?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I think that I gave an answer to the question on line item 6116 – Contracted Employees – and explained that these were actually Departments of the Ministry of the Presidency at the time when these estimates were prepared. I do not believe that I can go beyond that to give any further explanation. I did also indicate to this honourable House that I am prepared to present to the House the numbers and where the persons came from. I believe that that is as much as I can do.

Line item 6011 – Statutory Wages and Salaries: when we get to that, I will look at that. Presently, the questions with respect to contracted employees are what I am prepared to deal with. The percentages that the Hon. Member is throwing around we will look at very carefully because sometimes these percentages look huge but when one gets down to the number they do not bear scrutiny.

Bishop Edghill: Just to remind us we are dealing with Programme 051 which is Policy Development and Administration. I am back at line item – 6116. In last year's budget, there was a split. For eight months, the budget was for the Office of the President and for four months it was for the Ministry of the Presidency. At line item 6116, under Programme 011, there were 40 contracted employees. Under the Ministry of the Presidency, it was 162.

2.06 p.m.

At the time of the creation of this new Ministry, the number moved from 40 to 162 and the explanation given last year was because of the merger of the various Departments. The number has since moved from 162 to 288, an addition of 126. In this, there were other people who were transferred out to a new Ministry. My specific question, and I would like to have that answer now, is: could the Hon. Minister tell us the staffing details by Departments? For example, how many staff are engaged in the Office of Climate Change? How many staff are employed in the State Assets Recovery Unit (SARU) and what are their designations and salaries?

I would like to get the breakdown - names, designations, and salaries by department. It must be disaggregated by department and I would like to get that now, sir.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: As I indicated, I would provide the list with all of the information that the Hon. Member is asking for. It would be in the House by tomorrow morning. The Hon. Member, Jennifer Westford, asked a very detailed question on this question of contracted employees. I indicated to the House that I am prepared to provide all of that information, but what the Hon. Member is asking for now is the information that I have already said that I would provide tomorrow morning.

If the Hon. Member is asking for the information to be formatted in a particular way, then it would have to take a little longer, but I am prepared to give you the list of all of the contracted employees from the Ministry of the Presidency, their designations, salaries and everything. I am prepared to give you that tomorrow morning.

Bishop Edghill: While I heard the Hon. Minister indicating that he would give this information tomorrow, there is a question that I would like to be answered now. The information that he would give is names and designations. I have asked a question. The number of contracted employees had moved from 40 to 162 and we had an explanation about 'the coming together' of the various agencies in this new Ministry of the Presidency. What is the responsible for the further increase by 126 and what was the process that was used for hiring? That has not been answered as yet.

Lt. Col. (Ret') Harmon: There were 148 persons in total, 22 persons were separated so we have 126 persons. I would provide this House with the areas to which they went. These persons were employed based on a need that existed in these Ministries and Departments at the time when we took office.

Bishop Edghill: While I heard the Hon. Member say they were hired because of a need, I am asking about the process. Were there advertising, were there interviews conducted? I am hearing all kinds of things, but I would think that we should be reminded...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, is there a question you are asking?

Bishop Edghill: I am asking a question, Sir. I am asking specific things as it relates to the process. Were the vacancies advertised? Were there interviews conducted?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, could I urge you to ask your questions and then give the Minister a chance to answer?

Bishop Edghill: That is what I am doing. The purpose of this exercise is scrutiny.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please ask the question.

Bishop Edghill: I would like the Minister to explain to this House what process was used. Were interviews conducted? Was there public advertising? How many persons responded to the public advertising?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: These persons were identified and they were interviewed. In fact, they went through a process of interviews. All of these persons who are on contracts have files. I would say that the Hon. Member is asking about contracted employees. Some of these persons were employed based on advertisement and some were identified based on a need which existed at that time and was urgent. That is what happened. They were all interviewed by a panel of persons and they were identified based on what was required at that time.

There were some cases, for example, in which appointments were at that high level. These positions were advertised and the entire process went through in the newspapers. In fact, some of these advertisements went out internationally and I could bring the documents to show.

Bishop Edghill: I would be very much appreciative if the Hon. Member could provide the documents that show the advertisements that were published locally and internationally and the positions that were advertised for when he is providing the other information that he said he would provide. I would be happy to have that tomorrow.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I said what I would give tomorrow. The Hon. Member is now tacking on additional things to that which I had given a commitment to provide. Do not try to run my Office, Hon. Member. What I said was that I would provide the information. If you are now asking for the advertisements and all of that, it would take a little longer.

Mr. Ali: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: would the Hon. Minister be willing to say to us whether any of these employees are assigned to any of the Administrative Regions and, if so, what are their designations and salaries?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Some of these employees are assigned to the Administrative Regions. In the document, which I would provide tomorrow, they are identified. You would see it in the document that I am providing, Hon. Member.

Mr. Ali: I would be most grateful for the Hon. Minister to provide us with that document. Just to repeat it: it is the names, designations and salaries. My second question under line time 6116 – Contracted Employees is: are any employees under this category assigned to any location outside of Guyana? If so, what are their names, designations and salaries?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: When we employ people, we employ persons to work with the State. Whether they work in Guyana or outside of Guyana in service to the nation, it is what they are meant to do. If the Hon. Member is asking for specific details of persons who are employed outside of Guyana, I could provide that information. Invariably, any persons in that category would be persons who are working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Nandlall: Line Item 6116 – Contracted Employees: having regards to the Government's emphasis on employing personnel through the Public Service Commission (PSC), could the Hon. Minister explain to us what attempts, if any, were made to employ these persons through the Public Service Commission rather than through a contract?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: This is precisely what I was trying to address when the Hon. Members said that they do not want it. This is what I was addressing. It was the fact that we have a public service which...and the Hon. Member had said that he did not want me to make a speech, but I have to speak to these matters if there is to be greater clarity. The public service, as it is presently constituted, comprises a large number of contracted employees.

Since 2004, this practice started.

An. Hon. Member: You added to it.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: That is correct. We have added to it. In fact, the bulk of the public service is contracted employees. What we have said is that we would gradually merge all of these persons who are on contracts into the traditional public service. We already entered into conversations with the Public Service Commission and what we said is that at the General Schedule (GS) 1 and 2 levels, we would start with that process.

Additionally, all of those persons under the age of 45 who are now on contracts, we would give them an opportunity to get into the traditional public service. What we hope, over the next five years, is to completely have a public service that is made of career public servants.

This morning, I met with the representatives of the Caribbean Leadership Project (CLP), a Canadian-funded programme, who are here in Guyana and they are going to be training the top-level public servants, the Permanent Secretaries and people at that level. We spoke about the Staff College and it would deal with all of the entrances into the public service and that would be done on an organised. One would have one year, at least, to determine what the requirements are.

Additionally, under the Public Service Commission of Inquiry...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I do believe that you have explained in sufficient terms so that the House understands. I thank you.

Bishop Edghill: I just want to make this observation before I ask my question. We have a time limit for each agency.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the Chairman is aware of that.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you. I move to line item 6284 – Other: there is a significant increase. I would like the Hon. Minister to state the items what would be expended under this subheading and the amount designated for each item.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The items under that line item 6284 – Other are as follow: payment for the Official Gazette; the clearing and rehabilitation of the swimming pool and the surrounding facilities; washing of tanks; purchasing of telephones and accessories; advertising; the payment for banners; rebroadcasting of the 6 o'clock news; Guyana Publication Incorporation subscription; payment of cable services; climate change consultation and payment

for air time on radio and television for the presidential broadcasts. It is a sum of \$196 million for those purposes.

2.21 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I do not think the Hon. Member answered the question. I did ask for the amount designated for each item.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The amount for each item: payment for the *Official Gazette* - \$59,500,000; cleaning of the swimming pool - \$6,700,000; washing of tanks - \$1,500,000; purchase of phones and accessories - \$1,500,000; purchase of drawers, locks, *et cetera* - \$900,000; advertising - \$6,500,000; payment for banners, *et cetera* - \$1,793,000; rebroadcast of the 6 O'clock News - \$696,000; Guyana Publication Inc. subscription - \$1,500,000; payment for cable services - \$5 million; climate change consultation - \$42 million; payment for airtime on radio and television for presidential broadcasts - \$68,411,000 - bringing that to a total of \$196 million.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6294 - Other: There is an increase from \$27,250,000 to \$159 million. Could the Hon. Member indicate to us what the items to be expended under this head are and the amount for each item?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The sum is \$159 million. The payments are honorarium for staff - \$7,200,000; fees paid for the production of Cabinet Minutes - \$1,920,000; receptions to be hosted by His Excellency The President - \$64,740,000; purchase of cutlery and crockery - \$5 million; refurbishment of offices, including office furniture and purchase of dietary supplies under this Programme - \$38 million; kitchen allowances for the cooks - \$1,800,000; youth mentorship - \$1,500,000; stipend for work-study students - \$6,155,000.

Mr. Ali: Under line item 6294 – Other – the Hon. Minister referred to climate change consultations. Could the Hon. Minister tell us how much consultation will take place, where they will take place and the budget for each of the consultation?

Secondly, line item 6223 – Office Materials and Supplies: There is an increase of close to 700% from \$3.9 million to \$23.5 million. Under line item 6224 – Print and Non-Print Materials – there is an increase of 150% from \$11.6 million to \$30 million. Could the Hon. Minister say what

would have caused such an increase and list the items and the costs that would generate such a massive increase and movement in the budgetary allocation?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I prefer to take these questions one at a time because, when they come like that, I can only deal with them in the order they come. I will deal, first of all, with the consultation on climate change. There is a sum of US\$200,000 and it is for The Energy and Research Institute (TERI). This is a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which was signed with the Government of Guyana. This was a long time ago. It was signed by Dr. Luncheon as the head of the Presidential Secretariat. We have not spent this sum. It was identified for the consultation to take place.

What is the other question?

Mr. Ali: In relation to the consultations, we ask for the specific areas that consultations will be held and the individual budgets.

I also asked a question under line item 6223 – Office Materials and Supplies - and line item 6224 – Print and Non-Print Material - which saw significant increases. I would like the Hon. Minister to say what the reasons for such increases are and to list the items that would necessitate such increases and the costs of each item?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The increase was due to the expansion of this Programme, Policy Development and Administration, to enhance a more meaningful operationalisation of the Office of the Advisor on Youth Empowerment, Office of the Advisor on the Environment, Social Cohesion, *et cetera*. All of these are included here. The sum is therefore required to provide administrative support for these entities.

Mr. Ali: I asked specifically if the Hon. Minister can list each item and state the cost associated with each item.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I can list them for you. Office materials and supplies: laminating pouch (500) at a cost of \$200,000; legal pads (300) at \$168 each, giving a total of \$50,400; markers (300) at \$158 each, giving a total of \$47,400; masking tape (150 rolls) at \$315 per roll, giving a total of \$47,250; paper punch (60) at \$750 each, giving a total of \$45,000; rulers (300) at \$100 each, giving a total of \$30,000; scissors (75) at \$735 each, giving a total of \$55,125;

scotch tape (100 rolls) at \$368 each, giving a total of \$36,800; sharpeners (400) at \$21 each, giving a total of \$8,400; staple removers (150) at \$189 each, giving a total of \$28,350; staple machines (300) at \$500 each, giving a total of \$150,000; thumb tacks (150 boxes) at \$210 per box, giving a total of \$31,500...[*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman hit gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the Hon. Member, Mr. Irfaan Ali, did ask some questions. I believe the Hon. Minister is trying to provide answers. Let us give him the opportunity to do so. Thank you.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Whiteout pens (150) at \$200 each, giving a total of 30,000; AA batteries (60 pairs) at \$231 per pair, giving a total of \$13,860; AAA batteries (60) at \$137, giving a total of \$8,220; Compact Disc (CD) rewriteable (2,000) at \$100 each, giving a total of \$200,000; composition notebooks (300) at \$189, giving a total of \$56,700; dry erase markers (300) at \$137 each, giving a total of \$41,100; steno pads (300) at \$210 each, giving a total of \$63,000; toner cartridge ink at a cost of \$9,202,895, giving a total of \$23,500,000.

Mr. Ali: The Hon. Member evaded, very skilfully, the first question which has fewer details.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, could we have a question please.

Mr. Ali: Yes, Mr. Chairman, you will have the question. The questions as to where the consultations will be held, the number of consultations and the costs, which are far less detailed than he has just given us was completely evaded.

The second issue is that I do not understand how the Hon. Minister, in answering the question, could determine the cost. Is a contract already entered into without the Budget being approved for the supply of items?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The Hon. Member has actually gone back to the consultation. I will read the issues in relation to that.

This consultation was something that was entered into by the previous Administration and we are, basically, continuing with it. The head of that institute, Dr. Rajendra Pachauri, wrote His Excellency the President on the 29th July, 2015, indicating a willingness to continue to work with

the Government of Guyana and this was forwarded to the department of Governance and Natural Resources. Notwithstanding that, we, basically, said that we will engage... The US\$200,000 is a sum of money that has been budgeted for in the previous Administration and this is for the consultation to be done. What we are doing is identifying that sum and it was identified under this Programme, the way it was dealt with in the previous Administration. Nothing has changed. Are you happy, sir?

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Member, who asked the question, seems to be happy because he was laughing a few minutes ago.

Mr. Ali: I am completely the opposite of happy. The question has been evaded.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, if the answer you received is not satisfactory, perhaps, you might want to find some other way of asking the question again. The Chairman will not object but we should try to avoid epithets that could lead to other comments.

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, may I? It is just to say that we resent any reference to the Hon. Minister being evasive. It connotes or imputes improper motive on the part of the Minister and, secondly, the Minister answers only what he was asked. If a Member does not know how to ask a question, then he cannot blame the Minister. It is all to be elicited through the proper questioning and then the answers will be given.

Mr. Ali: Line item 6272 - Electricity Charges: There is a movement from \$14 million to \$119 million at a time when a drop in electricity charges has been announced by the Government and at a time when there is reduced fuel cost. What has caused this increase, which are the additional locations that we will now have to pay for electricity services to, and who are the persons living or working at these locations?

2.36 p.m.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: There are no additional locations or so on. What is happening is that, previously, in 2014, there was a prepaid sum. Now, what the Minister of Finance is doing, by way of proper budgetary allocations and following the rules, is that the Ministry has allocated a sum to be spent properly now in this line item. So this is what was there before. Persons used to pre-pay. Now the Minister is saying that this is how it will be done. The Ministry will account

for this money under this line item. There is nothing new that is added here. That is my understanding of it.

Mr. Ali: It cannot move to \$119 million.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants: The cost has moved \$17,673,000 to \$64 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain what accounts for that astronomical increase?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: What we are seeing here is an increase in fuel consumption because we have actually brought back into serviceability several vehicles which the previous Administration had left for rotting. What is happening is that there is an increased level of consumption of fuel by some of these vehicles because they are older vehicles and it is the intention of the Government to phase these vehicles out. This is why we have this increased cost; it is because we have brought more vehicles into the fleet and we now have the Government paying for the fuel for these vehicles and not individuals drawing fuel from the Guyana Oil Company (GUYOIL) for which did not come into the central accounting mechanism.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: There is an increase from \$267,644,000 to \$728,762,000. More particularly, there is an increase under the Presidential Guard. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House what is responsible for the increase of over \$40 million?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: There is actually an overall decrease for the entire year.

Bishop Edghill: How is there a decrease?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: What we are seeing here in the 2015 revised *Estimates of the Public Sector* was \$267,644,000 and that was just for four months of the year. The figure that is there, if it is multiplied by three, it will be much higher than we are dealing with right now. This is the explanation.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I beg to differ. Under the same line item, under the Office of the President, the Presidential Guard Service, last year, received \$181,197,000. Under the Ministry of the Presidency, the Presidential Guard Service received \$124,734,000. The total allocation for 2016

is \$345 million. There is an increase. I would like to have an answer to the question of what is responsible for the increase. Just add the two sums, then do the subtraction.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I believe I gave an answer with respect to the one period that was for four months of the year and this figure is for the entire year. If I address the direct issue with respect to the Presidential Guard Service, there were increases in salaries which had to be dealt with and these were paid for by the Ministry of Finance. Additionally, we are catering for an increase of a certain number of ranks in the Guard Service. I am not going to give the exact strengths and so on but what I can say is that the present organisational structure of the Guard Service, the number of persons, is woefully short. In fact, the Service have been operating under-strength for over five years. We are correcting that situation now and so what you are finding here, Mr. Chairman, is a gradual increase in the numbers to get it to what is the authorised or established strength. That is the reason for this increase.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item, the total that was allocated was about \$305,931,000. We have \$345 million and we indicated that there is going to be an increase in strength. Could the Hon. Member indicate to this House if the Presidential Guard Service, as currently constructed, is also responsible for the security of the Prime Minister?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Lumumba: I noticed, under line item 6321- Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission - in 2015, the allocation was just over \$43 million. In 2016, it has dropped almost 50% to \$21 million. I raise this question not so much because of the 50% reduction, but because of the apparent Government policy on land titling for potential new home owners for the poor, low income and middle class and the Amerindian titling. I just wonder why this amount was dropped by 50% and whether the amount allocated would be adequate.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: That is, in fact, a concern of ours, the fact that we did not get exactly what we wanted but we have to live with what we get. We did ask for some more money but what I can say to you is that, based on the sums allocated by the Ministry, the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission has reprogrammed its activities to address the issue of opening up new lands for agriculture and, in some cases, for housing and, of course, land titling is an important

issue under the land titling arrangement there. Basically, what we are saying is that this amount of money here is for those matters that I addressed.

Minister of Finance [Mr. Jordan]: Just for clarification, Mr. Chairman...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, do you wish the floor?

Mr. Jordan: Yes. If he looks at page 575, the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission has been reprogrammed to Policy Development and Administration. If he goes to number 3, he will see, in 2016, there is \$117,228,000 and, under number 4, the same Natural Resources, there is \$21,834,000. We have not cut the Budget actually; the amount has gone up substantially.

Mr. Lumumba: I am glad the Minister of Finance pointed out where this money is hidden.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I did not hear you clearly.

Mr. Lumumba: I said that I am glad the Hon. Minister of Finance pointed out where this money is hidden.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, that is not a language that the Chairman will permit.

Mr. Lumumba: Let me clarify: where it is appropriated. That is better language, Sir. A follow-up question of clarification to the Hon. Minister, Joseph Harmon, is: will these funds also be utilised for land titling or demarcation of zones in terms of the proposed village projects?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I understand that the sums that have been allocated here are really to assist in the employment costs for the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission.

Ms. Persaud: Under line item 6241 - Rental of Buildings - there is an increase from \$17,109,000 to \$71,800,000. That is an increase of \$54,691,000. Could the Hon. Minister say what resulted in this huge increase and if any new buildings were being rented, where they are located and for which agencies?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I see line item 6241 - Rental of Buildings - at \$15 million.

Ms. Persaud: Sorry, the increase is from \$2,840,000 to \$15 million. The question remains: could the Hon. Minister state what resulted in this increase, if there are any new buildings rented, where they are located and for which agencies?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The \$2,840,000 is for four months. So multiply that by three and it comes to somewhere in the vicinity of about \$8 million. So the increase is roughly about \$7 million. These sums have to do with the rental of buildings that are to be used by the Ministry of the Presidency. They are located at 44 Hadfield Street, Werk-en-Rust. We also have the proposals for the rental of a building for the Office of Climate Change as well as to remove the Office of Climate Change from where it is because it is basically cramped for space with the Ministry of Social Cohesion collocating there. So, that is basically it.

Mr. Lumumba: Hon. Minister, I noticed that, under line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) - there has been a reduction from \$112 million in 2015 to \$44 million in 2016. I thought that, with the pronouncement by the Government in terms of its concern about the monitoring of mining lands, garbage disposal sites and with oil and gas on the rise in terms of training and preparation for the oil industry, this amount would have been kept the same or would have increased. Maybe the Minister can point out where there may be other areas of financing or support for these projects. There might be logical reasons for this reduction.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: There is no reduction. In fact, if we get to pages 575 to 577 of the *Estimates of the Public Sector*, we will see where the sums are identified. There is no reduction; there might be an increase in what is there.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I would like to bring your attention to line item 6281 - Security Services.

2.51 p.m.

There is a significant increase from \$13,378,000 to \$55 million. Sir, in that same line item, 6281 – Security Services - under the Office of the President for the eight months, the revised total was \$4,476,000. So, if we add the \$13 million, which was for the four months, and the \$4 million, which was for the eight months, we will have \$17 million. We are now moving from \$17 million

for 2015 to \$55 million in 2016, an almost 300% increase. Could the Minister tell this House the locations and the name of the security service or services that have been engaged?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I can, in fact, provide that information. What has happened here is that, in 2015 and then into 2016, there were some security contracts which were terminated because of the companies that were providing the service for former Government employees and officials. In 2015 and into 2016 and budgeting for the rest of 2016, we are basically looking at the security services for persons whose contracts require that security services be provided at their places of residence. The security services that are engaged here are: Supreme Security Services Inc., Brans Security Services, Kalibur Security Services, Instant Security Services and John Fernandes Ltd. Security Service. These are all services provided at the places of residence of Government officials where their contracts require that security service be provided for them.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, this will be my final question. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us if these were sole sourced or if there were public tendering?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: These were sole sourced, Hon. Member.

Mr. Ramson: Under line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships) - there is an increase of \$53 million, moving from zero to \$53 million. Could the Hon. Minister provide the names, the training that was provided and by what means the awardees obtained that particular training?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, there is an amount of \$53,700,000 here. This is budgeting for training. This is not for people who have actually been trained already. It is budgeting for persons to be trained under a Youth Leadership Training Programme, Career Guidance and Entrepreneurial Skills Training Programme and training of the Trainers Training Programme. These are training opportunities to be provided by the Ministry of the Presidency, the Youth Empowerment Department, under the Advisor on Youth Empowerment. These are training programmes that are identified under that.

Mr. Ramson: There was a second part to that question, Mr Chairman, which is in relation to the awardees and how they are being identified and selected. Are they going to be limited to a particular geographic location or how will the programme be run?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, it will be all across the regions of Guyana. As the Hon. Member would recall, the Government outlined its Youth Scout Policy and this training is part of that Youth Policy that we are talking about. It is training all across the regions. We have already done some preliminary work in the regions and we believe, by a process of competitive arrangements, we will find the persons for these training programmes. It is not limited to any specific geographic area, racial distribution or political affiliation. This is about young people who we are going to train in these programmes.

Opposition Chief Whip [Ms. Teixeira]: Mr. Chairman, having heard the Hon. Member and the answers and his promise to provide certain critical information tomorrow, we would like to call for the deferral of Programme: 051 being put to the vote at this point.

Mr. Chairman: May I ask the Hon. Member to repeat her statement?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, certainly, Mr. Chairman. What I was saying is that, due to the promise of the Hon. Member to provide us with critical information required and our examination of Programme: 051 - Policy Development and Administration of the Ministry of the Presidency, we ask that this Programme be deferred until we are able to receive the required information. I think this is a reasonable request. It has happened before in this House, Sir.

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, in the past, indeed, such a request may have been made but was never entertained by Government and, in fact, Sir, Ministers have always been given the opportunity to submit their answers on the day or some days after, depending on the extent. Mr. Chairman, certainly when I was Speaker, about 85% of answers were never provided but that notwithstanding... Some Members were very diligent; not all were but we never held up the business of the Government. Government was always allowed to have the Estimates put and the answers submitted, thereafter. That never happened.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Hon. Member has a right to his opinion, of course, as I do to mine on this side of the House. We do not want to obstruct anything, Sir. We have come to this House since last year and said we are not going to do what the Opposition use to do. However, the request we are making is a reasonable one. There is almost \$900 million involved in this head which we have asked for information on. The Hon. Member has kindly said that he will give it to us tomorrow and, therefore, we are saying that this item should be deferred for

tomorrow. It can be the first item after we come out at 1.00 p.m. so that we can discuss it. It is a reasonable request. It is not obstructing anything and, therefore, I certainly think maybe the Hon. Members would like to have the support of this side of the House but, since you do not feel you need it and you have the numbers, well then it is your decision and the political fate you will face.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I can say that the request for information and my offer to provide information were explanatory. They did not affect the actual numbers at the end of the day, and these are explanations which will be given to you. I have undertaken to provide that information. I have not stood here and have tried to defend things that we cannot defend. I have said that I will provide information and you can hold me to that. On the last occasion, the Minister of State provided all of the information you asked us for. In fact, sometimes when we said we would give you the next day, you got it the night before. I have some of the information here but it will require the staff at the office to rework some of the information so that it can be presented in the manner in which the Hon. Member has asked for it. We are not hiding anything. We are giving all the information that you need because we believe that it is important that we send a clear message to Guyanese people that we are very serious about this Budget, and I am going to give you all the information you asked for, Hon. Members.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, before we proceed, the sound we get when Members get up to speak is because they have some electronic article on their person or very near the microphone. We might wish to consider not having those particular items near enough to the microphone when we are speaking. Thank you.

Hon. Members, the question that has been raised by Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, as she said, is perfectly reasonable. I would certainly be guided by the fact that the Hon. Minister has given a commitment to provide all information which he has not provided here or which he is undertaken to provide within the next 24 hours.

I will be guided by that in determining that we should proceed as we are doing. We have a certain period of time for consideration of each item. I would believe that it would be appropriate that no harm would be done on either side of this House if we proceed as we had intended to proceed and that we await tomorrow to receive the answers to all the questions which have been

provided. We will, therefore, proceed with this. If there are other questions on this matter, I will hear them and then I will put the matter.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, could I just ask a question of you? I heard you loud and clear. Could you say, for example, suppose - and this is only a “suppose”, a hypothetical - the Hon. Member does not provide us with the documents tomorrow, and/or it is provided like the last time, in frugal bits, so you could not get a full grasp of it. Were this boat to go ahead, we are then doing it on a basis of honour and not accountability because this is based on the Hon. Member saying, “I will give it tomorrow.” But suppose he does not. I am sure he will, but suppose he does not and suppose he only gives us one-tenth of what we ask, then we would have supposedly supported something with lack of information. I am just trying to turn the question on the other side, Sir. As I said, we do not wish to obstruct anything. However, we believe that we, as the Opposition, have the right to information to scrutinise the Government, its Budget, *et cetera*, as they did to us when we were in Government and rightly so. But this is the first start. Is it not, Ladies and Gentlemen of the House? And why do you not allow certain flexibilities? Defer. Let the item come up tomorrow and give us the information and then you will have our support.

Mr. Trotman: Sir, may I be permitted a response? It is just to say that the Government advises the Chair to follow the precedent and practice of the House. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Members on both sides of the House for their comments. I would like to feel that, when Members rise now, it is also to discuss items before us. If we have exhausted that, then I will put the question.

Ms. Chandarpal: Mr. Chairman, I would like to know how many advisors we have in the Ministry of the Presidency, please. It is line item 6116 – Contracted Employees.

3.06 p.m.

Lt. Col. (Ret’d) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, that information is in the package. I give you my word that it is in the package because I anticipated these questions would have come.

Ms. Chandarpal: It is a pity you brought led pencils and erasers but you did not bring that important information. That is how you respect the Opposition.

Mr. Hamilton: Regarding line item 6116, and all other issues about employment, it will be useful if at the same time the Minister could indicate the non-salaried benefits, also.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member for his question. Hon. Minister you will no doubt note that question.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, the question was asked by the Hon. Member Ms. Westford. That was the first question asked, and I said that all of those non-salaried benefits are in the package that I would provide.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Minister. It may have been overlooked by the Hon. Member and that is why the question was asked.

Programme: 051 – Policy Development and Administration – \$2,599,251,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 052 – Defence and National Security – \$119,217,000

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6116, Contracted Employees: There is a reduction of one person in the contract employment. For the four months under Ministry of the Presidency, \$5,610,000, and under Office of the President, \$11,370,000, a total of \$16,980,000. Sir, we were given the explanation that the increases had to do with salary increases. If seven persons had salary increases under this section, why is there a decrease which was not catered for under this line item?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, have you asked the question?

Bishop Edghill: Yes. I indicated that there is a decrease of one contracted employee and I have given the figures. In view of the explanation, which was given earlier, that the increases in contract employment had to do with increase in salaries, how is it reflected in the figure budgeted here? The person worked for the whole year.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: One person resigned during that period, a secretary. The sum budgeted for that period was \$972,257. That is for salary and emoluments, and so on. That is what represents the difference.

Bishop Edghill: I would want to follow up on this, Sir. I want to draw the Hon. Member's attention that the total sum – he might want to reconsider his answer – expended for the eight persons in 2015 was \$16,980,000. For seven persons in 2016 the budgeted sum is \$15,759,000, which is less. I am asking about the explanation that was given earlier as it relates to the increases catered for, the increase in salaries. He has answered saying the one person earned a certain amount, but what happened to the others who were on the job. Have they been catered for in the increase in salaries?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The answer is yes. The sum for the seven employees would be \$16,308,013. When we add the sum of \$972,257 we get the actual sum we are dealing with. We are taking out from the sum \$972,257, so the sum of \$16,308,018 caters for increases and everything for the other employees listed there.

Mr. Ali: Item 6116, Contracted Employees: Could the Hon. Minister say whether this increase caters for the formation of the Guyana People's Militia?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The answer is no.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister point me to the direction where provisions are made for the Guyana People's Militia?

Mr. Chairman: It would be helpful if there is a line item to which we can refer. It will enable all Hon. Members in the Assembly to follow.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, part of the programme is to follow the line of policy.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you are giving me a lecture. What I am asking is if there is a line item to which we can refer.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, I am trying to find out from the Hon. Minister. I am trying to get him to help me to find the line that would guide me to the location of the Guyana People's Militia.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, how do we ask a question and not be interested in the answer?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: This item does not deal with the Guyana People's Militia. It deals with the Civil Defence Commission, the National Intelligence Centre and the Defence Board.

Mr. Rohee: Could the Hon. Member indicate, under line item 6116, Contracted Employees, whether provision is made here for staff and salaries for members of what is now known as the Defence Department in the Ministry of the Presidency which appears to be something new as reflected in the *Official Gazette*?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: It does not.

Mr. Rohee: While I have no option but to accept that the Hon. Member said that it does not, would the Hon. Member wish to indicate under which line item can be found staff associated with the Defence Department at the Ministry of the Presidency can be found?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: These are serving officers who have been detached from their position in the Guyana Defence Force (GDF) and are serving at the level of the Ministry of the Presidency under the Defence Board of Guyana. They are seconded from the Guyana Defence Force, so their salaries and everything are paid by the Guyana Defence Force.

Mr. Lumumba: Mr. Chairman, I thought it would have been on line item 6116, but since we apparently cannot find the item maybe we can be guided by you or the appropriate Minister. There has been an announcement that the Guyana People's Militia is functioning and there must be a budgetary item. We are not contesting that at this point in time. We just want to identify where it is. I think it is an appropriate question. I think it is appropriate for the Chairman to guide this Assembly as to where we could find it.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member for his statement. Unfortunately, the Chairman would only work with what he has before him. Much the same as you might first work with what you have before you. The Chairman would not allow himself to go beyond what is here. If the Hon. Members sees a particular line item to which he wishes to refer, then there is room for an answer.

Mr. Lumumba: Mr. Chairman, I assume that a budget speaks to the nation about the allocation of funds. Therefore I assume that it would be appropriate for an intervention on behalf of the Minister of State. The Minister of Finance should intervene at this point in time to tell this nation why there is an announcement of a People's Militia, a military trained armed and...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you have a question to ask, please ask the question.

Mr. Lumumba: Yes Mr. Chairman. I have asked several questions and I am asking again. Could you allow me to ask the Minister of Finance to identify where he placed funding for the Guyana People's Militia?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I thank you. I believe we are dealing with the Ministry of the Presidency, Defence and National Security.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, let me give some clarity to this matter. I think these Members have had some association with defence matters before, but they are just skirting around the issue. The Guyana People's Militia is the reserve of the Guyana Defence Force and that there is where one has to look for it. It is not something that was created by the Ministry of the Presidency. It is an element of the Guyana Defence Force and that is where it will be.

3.21 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6294, Other, for the programme Defence and National Security: There is a significant increase from \$28 million to \$40 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this Assembly the items and the sums allocated to each item?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Is it line item 6284 or line item 6294?

Bishop Edghill: It is line item 6294.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: This increase caters for expenses related to the Special Organised Crime Unit (SOCU).

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item the Hon. Minister just told us that this sum is catered under SOCU. The issue, which I would like the Minister to address, is if SOCU is part of the Guyana Police Force, what is this allocation doing under Ministry of the Presidency?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: This is one of the hold over arrangements that have been in place. In fact, it is recognised here that this is a small increase and it is meant to tie us over until such time that the unit can be fully placed under the Guyana Police Force. This is basically trying to phase it into its full role under the Guyana Police Force. This was something that was part of the previous administration's arrangement.

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6293, Refreshment and Meals: The staffing is one less than what it was in 2015, yet line item 6293 has moved from \$140,000 to \$3.5 million, an increase by 240%. Would the Hon. Minister say to us whether there is a big nation feeding under this programme?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: This is a small increase and it has to do with the payment of refreshment and meals. I am advised here that the \$3 million is under the old Office of the President and now we add the \$140,000 to that amount and then we compare that with the \$3.5 million and this is basically how we arrived at this figure. It is really not a huge increase.

Bishop Edghill: It is the same line item that was asked by Comrade Persaud, line item 6293. The Office of the President, Defence and Security, for the eight-month period it was \$1,407,000 and for the four-month period it was \$140,000 which would give us a \$1.5 million. We have moved from \$1.5 million to \$3.5 million, so the explanation given is not accurate. I would like to have the real explanation to this matter.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The explanation is that the increase in this programme caters for the expansion of the programme. Previously the only activity that utilise funds from this programme, under this charge, was the National Intelligence Centre. From September to December, the programme included also the Civil Defence Commission and basic payments were made by the Office of the President advisory on National Security. In 2016 the budget caters for more intensive operationalisation of this programme to include other activities.

I want to say that under the Civil Defence Commission, there are increased levels of activities, greater focus on what civil defence means and at a later stage I will brief this honourable House on some of the things we have to look at under Civil Defence Commission. It is no longer just disaster management. It includes disaster risk management; it includes the establishment and operation of these various units. There are people who are now working 24-hour a day in this emergency response centre that is dealing with emergencies all across this country so that the nation can feel satisfied that there is some group of persons who are there looking after their interest.

Mr. Ramson: In relation to line item 6294, where reference was made to SOCU, could the Hon. Minister kindly provide, even if it is not now but in the morning, the breakdown for the expenses

of SOCU, including the employees who fall under that agency and their emoluments and benefit packages?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: These are small amounts here that we are talking about. I am not sure that I can provide, based on security reasons, all of that information which the Hon. Member required. I will consult and I will provide as much information that is available to the Hon. Member in so far as what these amounts cover.

Mr. Ramson: A follow-up to that question and it is two parts. It is bifurcated. The first is that SOCU forms part of the police and having said so, then there is no national security risk. There would be no difficulty I am sure with the Hon. Minister providing that information.

Would the Hon. Minister clarify the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) has been providing any financial budgetary support to SOCU?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I cannot say that I have that kind of information which the Hon. Member seems privy to. I could only provide, as I said, the explanation for these sums that we are actually allocating to that unit and I am prepared to provide the explanation for it. Beyond that, I cannot say.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item, 6294: The Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Financing of Terrorism Act 2015 made it clear that SOCU and FIU worked together and, in fact, SOCU actually only exists because of the FIU and the anti-money laundering legislation. Therefore, Sir, I am very confused and very worried about the fact that SOCU is being put under the Ministry of the Presidency. In the law, and this was a law that you brought in July 2015. Therefore, Sir, I am asking: How could SOCU be under the Ministry of Presidency?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we must endeavour to follow the rules where asking questions. There is a time for that, but I do not believe that this afternoon is that time. Please address the question.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, could you guide me please? The Standing Orders talk about Member asking questions on policy as well as details and expenditure. Yes, we heard that money was being provided to SOCU. My question is that the money laundering legislation makes it clear. SOCU does not belong here. Therefore it is policy. Is it that the Government is going to

rectify and correct this in accordance with the Anti-Money and Countering and Financing of Terrorism Act 2015 which it passed in this House, Sir? Otherwise this is a policy issue. Is the Government going to comply with the law? SOCU has no place under this arrangement.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, not too long ago I alluded to that, that SOCU is being transitioned out. It is being transitioned out and these arrangements, which are there, were arrangements that were put in place when the previous administration set it up. We are not going to have SOCU under the Ministry of the Presidency. It is going to where it belongs - the police.

Bishop Edghill: It is the same line item 6294. It is just for clarity. I did ask the original question of what is responsible for the increase. The answer that I got was matters which relate to SOCU. What I would like the Hon. Minister to indicate to this Assembly what the other items are under line item 6294 besides SOCU. What are the amounts attached to those items?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: That is the sum and those are the items.

Bishop Edghill: It is SOCU alone.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Yes.

Mr. Trotman: May I rise on a point of clarification from the Chairman? Your Honour, having set aside two hours for this, as per motion moved and adopted by this House, could we be guided, Sir, as to how much time we will go beyond the allotted time that has been agreed to by the House?

We are not asking that we stop but we are asking, Sir, to be guided by you on how much more time beyond that, which the House has already approved, will we be going. Sir, we started at 1.30 p.m. and the motion stated two hours for the consideration of the Estimates for the Ministry of the Presidency. We are now at 3.35 p.m. which will be two hours... I am asking, Sir, for some guidance when I have not... Sir, I am within my rights to move a motion for the question to be put and I have not done so. I have asked for clarification and guidance from the Chairman as to how much more time we will go beyond that which has been approved.

Mr. Chairman: It does not help if we are considering time that we have interruptions that do not contribute to the progress of our considerations of the Estimates. I thank the Hon. Minister for his statement. We will press on and we have consciously agreed on these times.

3.36 p.m.

We have consciously agreed on these times and we are consciously not keeping them. There is some time when the Speaker will feel that we are not doing what we should do here, and he will have to decide how we treat what we have to do. For the moment, we will seek to treat with all the issues and the agency that we are dealing with now. Mr. Ali, do you want the floor?

Mr. Ali: Yes Mr. Speaker. Indeed it was a conscious decision when we settled the timing...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are you commenting on what the Speaker just said?

Mr. Ali: I just want to put...

Mr. Chairman: I am not going to allow that, Hon. Member. Hon. Members, we must try to work together. That is what we are trying to do here, to complete the work before us.

Programme: 052 – Defence and National Security – \$119,217,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 053 – Public Service Management - \$1,150,005,000

Mr. Ali: Line item 6116, Contracted Employees: There is a substantial movement of close to 300%, from \$22 million to \$62 million. The Hon. Minister explained the movement to \$288 million earlier, by saying that it caters for the addition of the Public Service Management under the Office of the President. We are seeing here the Public Service Management by itself, with an increase in the contracted employment, which negates the argument that the Hon. Minister ...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, let us have the question, please.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, I am asking the Hon. Minister to explain this.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I am advised that the sum of the \$22,987,000 represents the four months in 2015 and that the sum, here, for 2016 represents the entire period.

Mr. Ali: This Ministry was transferred in the last fiscal year. In this new budget, there is an increase of eight employees, an increase of \$40 plus million dollars. The Minister said earlier that all additional contracted employees were catered for under the \$288 million. The Hon. Minister mentioned the Public Service Management as one of the agencies that was transferred, but under this programme, Public Service Management, we are seeing eight new additional staff and an increase of \$40 plus million dollars for contracted employees. The Minister must be able to explain this.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: There is a very slight increase that represents eight new employees amounting to \$1,385,416. What has happened here is that there are two periods that have to be added because the Hon. Member, who is very versed in these matters, must recognise that we have here \$43,343,000 as being the previous figure and the figure of \$22,987,000 which will really take us, for the year 2015, to \$66,330,000. The difference between the \$66,330,000 is basically... In fact, my understanding here now, is that there has actually been a decrease. There has been a decrease of \$3,839,000.

Mr. Ali: The Hon. Minister said earlier that all increases in the number of contracted employees were catered for under the \$288 million, which was explained earlier, which included the Public Service Management. How is it that there are these additional eight persons? All I am asking Hon. Minister is whether there was an oversight in the first answer and the actual increases are catered for under the different programme head. That is all I am asking.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I never said that. In fact, I said that there are eight persons who are added to the Department of Public Service. What has happened is that there are eight persons who are coming on at the bottom and two persons who would have left at the top. The actual salaries for those two persons, who would have left, are far in excess of what we are actually bringing on the eight persons for.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6241, Rental of Buildings: I see that in 2015, there was zero expenditure and then in 2016, \$20 million is being budgeted. Could the Hon. Minister explain how many buildings are being rented, the rent for the buildings per month and what are being accommodated in these buildings and where they are located?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, we are making provisions here for the staff college, which is to be established. It is \$20 million which is actually budgeted for that purpose, for a building and facilities for this Public Service Staff College.

Mr. Nandlall: Where?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: We do not have all of the details as yet but, as soon as we have it the House will be the first to know.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6272, Electricity Charges: There is a significant increase that is stated here. I would like the Hon. Minister to indicate what is responsible for the increase in electricity charges, in light of the fact that electricity prices are going down.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: There is an increase of close to about \$600,000 here. This has to do with the fact that we have actually refurbished and rehabilitated the former Ministry of the Public Service. We have actually created a space there for the Public Service Commission of Inquiry, and for all other public inquiries which we intend to hold. This is basically going to reduce the cost that the Government pays for space or buildings for public inquires. We spend some money to fix that up and so the air conditioning for that building is one cost that we are catering for.

Secondly, we are catering for an improved facility at the training division of the Public Service Department of the Public Service, so that when public servants actually go to be trained, they are trained in a comfortable environment that will endure to the benefit of the nation.

Bishop Edghill: Under line item 6281, Security Services, there is also a significant increase, even taking into consideration the eight months, that was allocated under the Public Service Ministry, an increase of about \$5 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us the company that is providing this security service, the date of engagement and if it was sole sourced, or it came about as a result of public advertising and public procurement?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: This sum has to do with the security, an increase guard, which had to be placed at the Training Division of the Ministry of Public Service Department. The company is Brans Security Service. It was advertised, public tendering. Brans Security Service was adjudged the security service to provide this service at the Ministry.

Ms. Chandarpal: I want to go back to line item 6111, Administrative. I noticed that in 2015, there was just one staff. In 2016, there is an additional staff and when the details are looked at, in 2015 it was \$738,000 and now it is \$10,231,000. I need an explanation for that increase, please.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The addition is the appointment of the Permanent Secretary and it is a pensionable position appointed by the Public Service Commission.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships): The figure has moved from \$193 million to \$920 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain what would occasion such huge increase, under this line item?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: In fact, there is a very slight increase. It is not as huge as the Hon. Member is seeking. For 2015, the sum was \$772,000,065 and we are budgeting for an increase of \$147,935,000.

3.51 p.m.

This has to do, of course, with ensuring that we focus on the technological developments of this country. The intention of the Government is to ensure that places like the University of Guyana (UG), the Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA) and all these technical institutes have people placed there that are part of our development thrust. This is what this additional sum is for, which is in addition to the scholarships for persons, who are studying abroad, that we have to support during the course of the year.

Bishop Edghill: There is a matter that I need clarification under, line item 6111 – Administrative. The Hon. Minister just indicated that this increased expenditure had to do with the appointment of the Permanent Secretary under the permanent establishment. As I understand it, permanent secretaries are appointed by the President, and not by the Public Service Commission (PSC).

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

Bishop Edghill: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Please, let us proceed with the question.

Bishop Edghill: The question is a policy question and it is also a numbers questions because I would like to bring the figures. If under line item 6111 – Administrative, in 2015, we expended the sum of \$738,000 and under that same heading, under the Public Service Ministry, we expended the sum of \$1,477,000, which will be about \$2 million, we have moved from \$2 million to \$10,231,000. Could the Hon. Minister state who the Permanent Secretary is and what is his monthly salary?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The Permanent Secretary is Mr. Reginald Brotherson, he is here, and his salary is \$653,824.00.

Programme: 053 – Public Service Management - \$1,150,005,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme 054 – Natural Resource Management - \$122,886,000

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: May I respectfully ask that this programme, Programme 054, be dealt with by the Minister of Natural Resources.

Mr. Chairman: There is a request Hon. Members that Minister Trotman deals with this item. Minister Trotman, will you deal with this item here as it stands?

Mr. Trotman: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Ali: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There is an increase in the Staffing Details from 38 to 56. Could I ask the Hon. Minister whether these employees have all been transferred to the new agency, which is the Ministry of Natural Resources?

Mr. Trotman: As previously indicated, these are really scholarship students, who have not been transferred, but dispersed throughout the various natural resources agencies. I can lay over this evening a list of all the scholarship awardees and their placements under the previous administration.

Mr. Ali: Could I ask the Hon. Minister whether there are any employees, who have been under the Department of Natural Resources/Ministry of the Presidency, that are still there since the new Ministry has been established?

Mr. Trotman: Yes, Mr. Chairman. The employees, as of 1st January, 2016, who were formerly of the Department became the employees of the Ministry.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, the question was whether there are any employees still there? Now that I have heard that the answer is yes, could I ask the Hon. Minister to name the employees, give their designations and their salaries of those who are still there?

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, I will supply that information tomorrow – the names, designations, salaries of the persons who are with the new Ministry of Natural Resources.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister say whether any aspect of climate change or the environment is captured within the employees under this Head?

Mr. Trotman: The Ministry of Natural Resources has under its remit and supervision, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Insofar as the question is concerned, only the EPA and the Office of Climate Change fall directly and squarely within the Ministry of the Presidency.

Mr. Ali: Having answered that question, under line item 6321 – Subsidies to Local Organisations, the Hon. Minister may want to advise as to whether there is any allocation catered for the agency under his Ministry, or whether they have all been transferred under the new Ministry?

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Member. On page 575, listed are subsidies to the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Parks Commission and the Protected Areas Commission. The Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission remains under the Ministry of the Presidency.

Ms. Teixeira: Again, line item 6321 – Local Organisations: When I look at the *Official Gazette*, for Minister Trotman's responsibilities, of 18th January, 2016, I do not see Protected Areas

Commission or the EPA. I am seeing Forestry, Wildlife Management, the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission ((GGMC), the Guyana Gold Board (GCB) and the EPA.

I am little bit confused because, when I look at page 575 which gives an explanation of what the \$92.2 million is for and then I turn to page 577 under the new Ministry of Natural Resources, the National Parks Commission and the Protected Areas Commission are included under the new Ministry of Natural Resources. There are two sets of moneys. I do not know why because this is for January - this month. I guess it will be transferred when it is passed.

Why is it not in the *Official Gazette*? The *Official Gazette* guides us on which are the agencies that come under ministers, and what their responsibilities are. While there have been many changes, and I can quote all the *Gazettes* of 6th June, 17th September, December and 6th and 18th January, Minister Trotman's Ministry has changed several times, in terms of its assignments. The last one of 6th January, gave its assignment...It also has on 18th January. All I am saying is that it makes it very difficult that we are looking at local organisations and not under Minister Trotman's remit, according to the *Gazette*, but it is by his own statement here, that it has moved there.

Could we ask what the authority is and where can we find the authority for the inclusion of the agencies that were not gazetted for?

Mr. Trotman: If I may address two matters, one I believe is subject to correction and there was an amendment to the *Gazette*.

The second one is, where there is no listing, His Excellency the President retains authority over any and all such agencies. Constitutionally, the Hon. Member ought not to be concern, His Excellency would have it in good hands.

Ms. Teixeira: The Hon. Member is being rather flippant and facetious, in the sense that, I am quite aware that the President can take on any Ministry he so desires, but this is not a ministry. The President can be the Minister of Natural Resources. I am saying and it is the principle and I hope that the Government is listening carefully: The Government cannot have ministers with assignments that are not gazetted for. I thought it would be in the Government's interest to say that it is an omission and that it would be corrected, instead of this response by Minister Trotman

about the President. The Hon. Minister Trotman is bringing the President's name to influence this House. That is not allowed.

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, on Point of Order. I did say subject to correction, I believe there has been an amendment to that *Gazette*. However, I said...

Ms. Teixeira: I have the most recent *Official Gazette* here, 18th January. It is not under your remit. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Trotman: I said Sir, if however, it has not been done, the Hon. Member may rest assured that it is in the safe hands of His Excellency, the President. I did say initially that I believe that, subject to correction, that an amendment was made.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, in fact there has been an *Official Gazette* publication where the EPA, the Protected Areas Commission and the Guyana Forestry Commission have been gazetted under the Ministry of Natural Resources, and under Minister Raphael Trotman. I can provide that *Official Gazette* before we finish today.

Ms. Teixeira: I have both here, Sir.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: But you would have something missing. Your records are poor.

Ms. Teixeira: The Hon. Member has given me an opportunity to raise an issue. As the Opposition Chief Whip, I am entitled to receive all the *Official Gazettes*. I have not received any since December. I was told that it would be rectified.

However, the *Official Gazette* is also on a website. I have visited that website and the last two *Official Gazettes* for 6th and 18th January dealt with the Ministers' assignments. All I am saying is that the Protected Areas Commission and the National Parks Commission do not come under the remit of the Minister of Natural Resources.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I think that since the matter of *Official Gazette* was raised by the Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, I am advised that it is the responsibility of the Parliament Office to ensure that the *Gazettes* are sent to Ms. Teixeira. Letters to that effect were sent to the Guyana National Printers and, recently, reminders in respect to that were also sent.

I thought that I should say that since it would be good for Ms. Teixeira to know that efforts were made here to have the *Official Gazettes* delivered to her.

4.06 p.m.

Ms. Persaud: Line item 6116- Contracted Employees: There has been, for 2015, a sum of \$39,392,000, while in 2016 we see an amount of \$21,502,000. Under that same line item, we have for 2015 38 employees as against 2016 with an increase to 56 employees, which is an additional 18 employees. Could the Hon. Minister explain the difference, as it relates to the increase in workers, as against the decrease in the salaries to be paid?

Mr. Trotman: It is noted that these are scholarship students, and the number of contracted workers in the Ministry, proper, has in fact reduce, which has given a net savings to the Government of Guyana. Even the student number has increased, actually by decreasing our overall staff complement we have saved, as I said, for the Government of Guyana.

Ms. Persaud: Could the Hon. Minister provide us with the names and designations of these persons and their salaries. If we are going to have, as the Hon. Minister stated, scholarship students, then we would need to know how many scholarship students as against employees we are having. I am kindly asking, if the Hon. Minister provides us with that information?

Mr. Trotman: I actually thank the Hon. Member for the request, it is fair and reasonable, and I will provide that information, bearing in mind that these were scholarship students awarded by the former Administration, and we are bounded by those terms. We respect them, and we are complying with those terms and conditions.

Programme: 054 – Natural Resource Management - \$122,886,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Assembly resumed.

Sitting suspend 4.09 p.m.

Sitting resumed 5.17 p.m.

In Committee of Supply.

Programme: 055 - Citizenship and Immigration Services - \$398,633,000

Mr. Rohee: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: Is it Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon that is answering questions or is it the Minister in the Department, in the Ministry of the Presidency?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, just ask the question and a Minister would answer.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, that suffices. At line item 6116 - Contracted Employee: Could the Hon. Minister, in the Department of the Ministry of the Presidency, provide this House with a complete break-down of – the question is in three parts, Mr. Chairman - the number of contracted employees that were at the Ministry, then known as the Ministry of Home Affairs, later known as the Ministry known as Public Security, at the time when he assumed responsibility for that Ministry?

Mr. Chairman: What is the line item?

Mr. Rohee: It is line item 6116 – Contracted Employees. I am not finish Mr. Chairman. You said that you wanted all the questions at the same time.

Mr. Chairman: I did not hear the Hon. Member. Could you repeat the question that you asked?

Mr. Rohee: I said my question is in three parts. The first part I just put. I would like, with your permission, to proceed, with the other two parts of the question.

Mr. Chairman: You have it, Hon. Member.

Mr. Rohee: The second part of the question is, on assuming responsibility for the Ministry of Citizenship, how many additional contracted employees were recruited and at what cost? Finally, as we look at the current numbers, the number of contracted employees had jumped in 2015 from 60 to 116, could the Hon. Minister, in the Department of Ministry of the Presidency, explain the astronomical movement of 60 to 116 contracted employees and provide us with the names, the posts that they hold, their salaries and the conditions of service?

Minister of Citizenship [Mr. Felix]: The Department of Citizenship is a new department under the Ministry of the Presidency. Upon assuming office, there were 60 contracted employees. In order to coordinate the work of the new department, we employed staff and staff was absorbed

from what was then the Ministry of Home Affairs. So, we moved to 116 by an additional 56. As the Hon. Member has requested their names, designated positions and offices, that can be laid over tomorrow. Most of it is already here.

Mr. Rohee: Supplementary question to the question I posed earlier, taking into consideration the response of the Hon. Minister, Mr. Felix. The Hon. Member said that, at the time when he had assumed responsibility for that agency, there were 60 employees. I would wish that, in providing the information or laying over the information tomorrow, the 60 names of the persons, at the time when he assumed responsibility of the Ministry, would be provided together with the salaries, positions and the conditions of services.

Mr. Felix: If it pleases you Sir, I would read the list of names now: Ms. Greta McDonald, Registrar General, \$305,869.

Ms. Teixeira: What is the name?

Mr. Felix: The name is Ms. Greta McDonald.

Ms. Teixeira: She is not there now.

Mr. Felix: She was there then.

Ms. Teixeira: We are dealing with 2016.

Mr. Felix: Mr. Louis Crawford, Deputy Registrar General, \$189,313; Mr. Ian Lambert, Systems Administrator, \$159,549; Mr. Ricky Chan, Systems Development Officer, \$123,502; Mr. Willy Shivanand, Systems Development Officer, \$123,502; Mr. Lance Chichester, Systems Development Officer, \$123,502; Ms. Roxanne Ashby, Searcher/Transcriber, \$60,128; Ms. Lisa Major, Searcher/Transcriber, \$60,128; Ms. Tonesha Roberts, Searcher/Transcriber, \$60,128; Ms. Roylyn Primo, Searcher/Transcriber, \$60,128; Ms. Yonette Reece, Dispatch Clerk, \$60,128.

5.28 p.m.

Ms. Michelle Young, Dispatch Clerk, \$60,128; Ms. Julesa Cummings, Searcher/Transcriber, \$60,128; Ms. Lowetta Rowley, Search/Transcriber, \$60,128; Ms. Donette Barnwell, Searcher/Transcriber, \$60,128; Ms. Geneva Maxwell-Marcus, Searcher/Transcriber, \$60,128;

Mr. Leroy Benjamin, Searcher/Transcriber, \$60,128; Ms. Amanda Morris, Searcher/Transcriber, \$60,128; Ms. Laverne Small-Khan, Searcher/Transcriber, \$60,128; Ms. Andravenia Foo, Searcher/Transcriber, \$60,128; Mr. Clinton Forsythe, Searcher/Transcriber, \$60,128; Ms. Adelaide Jackman-Morris, Searcher/Transcriber, \$60,128; Mr. Jerome Sherry, Searcher/Transcriber, \$60,128; Ms. Keolda Trotman, Search/Transcriber, \$60,128; Ms. Jennifer Bruce, Registration Clerk, \$60,128; Ms. Keisha Lawrence, Searcher/Transcriber, \$60,128; Ms. Karen Adams, Search/Transcriber, \$60,128; Ms. Stacy Henry, Searcher/Transcriber, \$60,128; Ms. Jonnel Charles-Shepherd, Search/Transcriber, \$60,128; Ms. Claudette Allick, Cleaner, \$60,128; Ms. Latoya Griffith, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$57,856; Ms. Abigail Rowlings, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$57,876; Mr. Jamal Hazel, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$57,876; Ms. Teresa Raghbir, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$57,876; Mr. Joshua Farius, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$57,856; Ms. Candace Softleight, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$57,876; Ms. Atavia Dos Santos, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$57,876; Ms. Kevlyn June, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$57,856; Mr. Jamal Weeks, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$57,876; Ms. Kenise Williams, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$57,876; Ms. Carletta Green, Accounts Clerk II, \$57,484; Ms. Claudette Harris, Cleaner, \$56,178; Mr. Alexei LaDuvet, Cleaner, \$57,178; Ms. Kenisha Cummings, Searcher/Transcriber, \$53,917; Mr. Chancy Forde, Searcher/Transcriber, \$53,917; Ms. Oranda Glasgow, Searcher/Transcriber, \$53,917; Ms. Taditta Hackett, Searcher/Transcriber, \$53,917; Ms. Tiffany Favourite, Searcher/Transcriber, \$53,917; Ms. Rhonda Fraser, Searcher/Transcriber, \$53,917; Ms. Arian Williams, Searcher/Transcriber, \$53,917; Ms. Queen Cumberbatch, Registration Clerk, \$53,917; Ms. Damini Nanoo, Dispatch Clerk, \$53,917; Ms. Miracle Singh, Searcher/Transcriber, \$53,917; Ms. Kenisha Roberts-Grant, Searcher/Transcriber, \$53,917; and at number 60 Ms. Nakisha Washington, Searcher/Transcriber, \$53,917.

If the Hon. Member wishes, there are 19 other contracted staffs which you should know about.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I do not believe that both of you can occupy the floor at the same time.

Mr. Rohee: I did not say anything, I am just standing. I am not party to the Hon. Minister's conversation. I am attracted to the Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member you have the floor.

Mr. Rohee: Thank you Mr. Chairman. The Hon. Minister has not answered the question to my satisfaction.

Mr. Chairman: Do you have a supplementary question?

Mr. Rohee: Not a supplementary question, Sir. I had asked for the 56 and six employees, the disaggregation. So we need to get the 56. In addition to that, the Hon. Member, if I may crave your indulgence Mr. Chairman, has not referred, thus far, to the staff at the Ministry of Home Affairs/Ministry of Public Security that inherited, which I now understand forms part of the staff under his watch. If the Hon. Member has the information, I would be willing to listen to it.

Mr. Felix: Let me start by listing the employees at the General Register Office (GRO), these are the addition staff which is 19. Ms. Allison Aaron, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$53,917; Mr. David Saul, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$53,917; Ms. Denisecia Henry, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$53,917; Ms. Dianna Angoy, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$53,917; Mr. Kareem Mackenzie, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$53,917; Mr. Keron Ferdinand, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$53,917; Ms. Christina Baird, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$53,917; Mr. Stephan Corlette, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$53,917; Ms. Naomi Barry, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$53,917; Ms. Nikkita Samuels, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$53,917; Ms. Penelope Quinn, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$53,917; Ms. Rashanna Griffith, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$53,917; Ms. Tamera Tia Tiwari, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$53,917; Ms. Toya Harris, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$53,917; Ms. Timeka Maxwell, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$53,917; Ms. Ashmini Parmanand, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$53,917; Ms. Latoya Innocent, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$53,917; Ms. Abigail Albert, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$53,917; and Ms. T. Primo, Encoder/Data Entry Clerk, \$53,917.

I now move to the staff who were transfer from the Ministry of Home Affairs/Public Security...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I want to propose that, in matters of this nature where it consist of recitation of a number of names of persons, verifiable names of persons, it seems to me that that could properly be provided in writing, which would allow Hon. Members, who have requested the information an opportunity, to examine it in details and to satisfy him or herself as

to the reliability of what he/she receives. It is possible that the Chairman is holly mistaken, but it seems to me that, if I am listening to names, unless I am recording those names, then one asks the question to what end? What I would suggest to Members is that where the answer involves just a simple registration of names, then an undertaken is given to provide it to the Hon. Member who raised the question, at a time which would be indicated by the Minister answering. I think it would assist us.

Mr. Rohee: I take cognisance of what you have said, but I believe that in the public's interest, and I think that term rings a bell, it is important for the general public to be aware of the information that had just been provided. Also, to be aware of the salaries as well as the positions that they hold, and not to forget the practises by which or through which these persons have been hired, if I may encapsulate all of this, to satisfy your query, in the interest of transparency and accountability. That I believe is the underlying factor behind the information that we are seeking.

Mr. Chairman: Does the Hon. Member have more to say or are you finished?

Mr. Rohee: Well, I wanted to solicit from the Hon. Member, as he was going on to mention the number of persons who had been inherited from the former Ministry of Home Affairs/Public Security, before you intervened with the position that you put. If the Hon. Member could proceed with that information ...

5.43 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: What is your request to the Hon. Member?

Mr. Rohee: The question is for the Hon. Member to proceed, as he has been doing in the past two instances, with the information that he has, which forms part of the original [*inaudible*].

Mr. Chairman: Are you asking the Hon. Member to recite all of the names?

Mr. Rohee: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Felix: The staff transferred from the Ministry of Public Security includes: Carol Primo, Head, Immigration Services - \$299,655; Darshan Singh, Investigator II - \$102,895; Carlotta Bruce, Clerk II General - \$58,984; Quacy Callender, Typist Clerk - \$53,917; Mira Manesha Sookoo, Typist Clerk - \$53,917; Anester Thomas, Typist Clerk - \$53,917; Fanesa Hameed,

Typist Clerk - \$51,589; Paulette McGowan, Typist Clerk - \$51,589 and Martina Rambarran, Typist Clerk - \$51,589.

Mr. Rohee: Could the Hon. Member inform the House, for the new Members of Staff that were recruited, the 56, of the process through which they were recruited?

Mr. Felix: The process was that we received the applications and they were interviewed for various positions and consequently appointed.

Mr. Rohee: Could the Hon. Member inform the House as to the date when the advertisements were placed in the newspapers, which newspapers and whether they were in all of the newspapers that are usually published.

Mr. Felix: I did not inform this House of any newspapers or publication. What I did say was that we received applications. From the moment, and even on to this day, the department was established, we continue to receive applications.

Mr. Gill: Line item 6284 – Other: Would the Hon. Minister kindly give a breakdown on this line item that is budgeted at \$194 million?

Mr. Felix: This project relates to the computerisation of the records at the General Register Office (GRO). That project was publicised for tendering; there were tenders but certain issues developed and the project has to be redone. That is the reason it is here now. The tendering process has to be redone and bids have to be received for this project.

Mr. Gill: In the 2015 Budget Estimates, \$183,000,450 was allocated, of which only \$32 million was spent. How can we be assured that you have the capacity to spend \$194 million which is now budgeted?

Mr. Felix: In our usual fashion, the money, since the project has to be retendered, has been returned to the Consolidated Fund.

Bishop Edghill: I am returning to line item 6116 – Contracted Employees - because I followed, very keenly, the answer given by the Minister. The Ministry received three categories of people: the first was 60, then 10 and then 19. From my count, there are 27 outstanding. I would like the Hon. Minister to indicate to this House what the assignments are of the 27 additional persons

who were engaged that were neither transferred from the Ministry of Home Affairs or from the GRO, what their designations are and what their salaries are.

Mr. Felix: As it pleases you, Mr Chairman, let me, first of all, say that we have Ms. Steffi Allen who is an Administrative Officer at \$122,859; Michael DeSantos who is a Systems Development Officer at \$118,502; Debbi Vaughn, Confidential Secretary, \$115,000; KellyAnn Bovell, Accountant, \$103,233; Lloyd Bahadur, Investigator, \$86,464; Keenan Joseph, Investigator, \$85,287; Lloyd Thomas, Investigator, \$81,464; Warren Hackshaw, Driver, \$68,362; Rhonda Griffith, Systems Support Officer, \$67,681; Tianna Ross, Data Processing Clerk, \$60,358; Donetta Merick, Data Processing Clerk, \$60,358; Colletta Mingo, Data Processing Clerk, \$60,358; Winston Toot, Clerk II General, \$55,000; Chandra Hendricks, Accountants Clerk II, \$55,000; Savannah Hunte, Clerk II, \$55,000; Alicia Foo, Clerk II General, \$55,000; Rose Mortley, Receptionist, \$55,000; Kerry Mendonza, Typist Clerk, \$55,000; Simonica Cooper, Typist Clerk, \$55,000; Ayanna Harris, Clerk II General, \$55,000; Yolanda Booker, Clerk II General, \$55,000, Jamal Angus, Accounts Clerk, \$53,984; Ryan Edinboro, Filing Clerk, \$52,801; Jamal Gray, Data Processing Clerk, \$50,385; Denise Monplaisir, Data Processing Clerk, \$50,385; Eurlian Somerset, Cleaner, \$50,000; Shawn Sullivan, Office Assistant, \$50,000; Michele Morris, Cleaner, \$50,000. Here ends the reading.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item, I am asking a question as it relates to policy. As it relates to employment, is it the practice of the Government, when vacancies exist, not to advertise and give notice to all that whoever would like to apply can do so? It is a matter of policy and we are allowed to ask questions on policy.

Mr. Felix: This Government - and I am saying this with firm conviction - will not be continuing with the contracted employees. That would be phased out. As we inherited it, we used it but we will eventually return to the old system of advertisement and notifying the public of the vacancies *via* the newspapers. Because of the unemployment situation, the moment the department of citizenship was mentioned, hundreds of persons kept applying for jobs. We do not even have jobs for all the applications.

Bishop Edghill: I thank the Hon. Member for the explanation and the assurance he has given but the specific question has not been answered. This issue about employment is not a small issue.

People are being paid with taxpayers dollars and so it means that any citizen of this country must be given an opportunity to apply for the job, whether as a contracted employee or on the pensionable establishment. Notice to all is party of the necessary criteria that are required. I am going to put the question to the Minister. Would you consider the employment of contracted employees without public advertising as a fair process of recruitment?

5.58 p.m.

Mr. Felix: I am reminded of a statement which was once...

Bishop Edghill: Answer the question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, when the Minister is finished answering the question, if he does not answer it to your satisfaction, you have the right to ask another question.

Bishop Edghill: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Felix: I am reminded of a statement which was once said to me: he who comes to equity must come with clean hands. In this regard, the question posed by the Hon. Member, this Government is committed to a fair and equal system and we will be embarking on that. Let me end here at this moment, Mr. Chairman.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I have asked a specific question and I have not received an answer. The specific question was, would the Minister consider the employment of this amount of...

Minister of Social Cohesion and Government Chief Whip [Ms. Ally]: What line item?

Bishop Edghill: I am under line item 6116; we are not going to get through if we keep like this.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member...

Bishop Edghill: I am sorry, Sir. The specific question is, could this could be considered fair employment practices? Sir, \$130,523,000 of taxpayers' dollars is under this line item that is to be appropriated and we are simply seeking to find out if the process that was used for the engagement of these persons so named were a fair system.

Mr. Felix: It was a fair system, particularly when compared with the employment practices of the Marriott Hotel.

Bishop Edghill: We are glad it was fair. Thank you.

Ms. Chandarpal: Mr. Chairman, I wish to draw your attention to line item 6114 - Clerical and Office Support. There is a sum of \$15,501,000 allocated. When I look at the staffing details, last year, it was 21 and, this year, it is 21. Can we have an explanation for the increase, please?

Mr. Felix: This was accounted for in the fact that we started off with a four-month Budget. If it is properly checked, we will find that, for 2015, it was \$14.1 million and, this year, it is \$15,501,000, which is a marginal increase.

Mr. Ali: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: The Hon. Minister, when he answered, said that the Government's new policy is to move away from contracted employees and move towards the fixed establishment. Could I ask the Minister of Finance to confirm whether this is indeed the new policy position of Government? It is important for us to understand this policy.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we are treating with a Minister under a certain heading and you are addressing questions to a different Minister. How do we do that? What I am suggesting is that you hold that question until the appropriate Minister is on the floor and you address the question to him. You cannot run all over the place.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, the situation is that the policy position the Hon. Minister Felix just outlined has implications for a number of other questions and we need to understand the policy framework of the Government when we contextualise the question. So that is what I am asking.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I understand all that you have said. I am saying that that question cannot be properly addressed, at this time, to Minister Felix. We are not going to have a dialogue. That is all we will do.

Mr. Chand: Comrade Chairman, will you allow me to ask the Minister of Citizenship when the policy of contracted employees will come to an end? Since he is clear that it is a Government policy, can he say whether it will come to an end at the end of this year? If not, when? He was specific just now.

Mr. Felix: I do not know if my good Hon. Member was paying attention to Minister Harmon. It was first mentioned by Minister Harmon and I followed through. I am aware of it. This policy is coming to zero.

Hon. Members: When?

Mr. Felix: We will decide that; you cannot force it out of us.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, if one Member is on the floor, the other one sits.

Mr. Chand: My apologies.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Minister for his answer.

Mr. Chand: Will Minister Harmon please advise this House about when this policy will come to an end? Your Colleague Minister said...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I just pointed out that we cannot deal with these matters in this way. I thank the Minister for his statement.

Mr. Ramson: Comrade Chairman, a follow-up question for line item 6284 – Other: In relation to the \$32,794,000 that was spent in 2015, the Hon. Minister said, a moment ago, that it is the current Government's habit of returning money to the Consolidated Fund. Could he explain what the \$32,794,000 was spent on and, if that is so, that it is the habit of the Government to return money to the Consolidated Fund, how do you account for the increase of over \$160 million?

Mr. Felix: Mr. Chairman, the \$32,794,000 was expended on birth certificates imported from overseas.

Mr. Ramson: There is a second part to the question, Hon. Minister.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, it would be helpful if you reminded the Minister of the second part of the question.

Mr. Ramson: I have no difficulty with that, Comrade Chairman. The second part of the question is: if having spent \$32,794,000 in 2015 when the Budget was catered for \$183,450,000, how do

you account for the extra \$160 million plus when you said that the vast majority of it was returned to the Consolidated Fund?

Mr. Felix: Since the project did not go through, the money available for it has been returned to the Consolidated Fund. That was explained.

Mr. Ramson: So is the Hon. Minister saying that \$32,794,000 is again budgeted for birth certificates importation of some kind?

Mr. Felix: No. If you look at the right hand column at the end, you will see \$194 million. That is the money requested for in this Budget.

Mr. Ramson: I am aware of that but, if \$32,794,000 was spent, in 2015, in relation to that specific explanation of importation of birth certificate documents, then is \$32,794,000 budgeted for in 2016 and, if so, how do you account for the increase of another \$12 million or so?

Mr. Felix: I am advised that the project cost is \$176 million.

Mr. Ramson: This is my final follow-up in relation to this. Hon. Minister...

Mr. Chairman: Please go ahead, Hon. Member.

Mr. Ramson: I notice that he is being...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you have a question to ask. Would you please ask your question?

Mr. Ramson: If it is the case that \$176 million is budgeted for the specific project, then what is the amount budgeted for the importation of birth certificate documents?

Mr. Felix: The sum of \$32,794,000 has been expended on the birth certificates. I had said so before.

Mr. Ramson: We are talking about 2016; we know what was spent in 2015. If you are saying that \$176 million...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you have addressed a question and the Minister has answered. If it is not satisfactory, you ask another question but let us try to minimise the dialogue.

Mr. Ramson: Hon. Minister, a moment ago, you said \$176 million is budgeted for the project and you also said that \$32,794,000 was budgeted for and spent last year, as well, on birth certificate documents. The computation of the two figures does not match, so how do you explain the discrepancy?

Mr. Felix: The remainder of money which the Hon. Member is querying related to other costs related to the project. This is not direct cost; this is start-up cost.

6.13 p.m.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, just quickly to take the Minister back to 2015. When this line item came up last year, it was \$183,450,000 and the Minister was specific that the \$183,450,000 was to computerise the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA). The issue now is that we have \$194 million budgeted for 2016 and we have \$32,794,000 spent in 2015. So, the total cost for this project now is about nearly \$230 million. The question I ask the Minister is, could you confirm that the cost for this specific project has escalated beyond \$183,450,000 budgeted in 2015?

Mr. Felix: The cost has not escalated. We had a situation where we had to deal with birth certificates and, since the project was halted, we used money from there to deal with the birth certificate issue. The project cost, in itself, has not gone up.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Minister, if the project cost, in 2015, was \$183,450,000 and it is now \$194 million, it has gone up by \$10 million.

Mr. Felix: My answer remains the same; the project cost has not gone up and will not go up.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I have three quick questions for the Minister. Under line items 6111 to 6117 – *Total Wages and Salaries* - we have moved from 87 to 142 personnel. Could the Hon. Minister tell this House what the additional responsibilities are, apart from the GRO and the departments that were taken over from the Ministry of Home Affairs, now Ministry of Public Security, that he is engaged in that warrant this increase in staff?

Secondly, under line item 6284 – Other - the Minister just indicated that the project cost did not escalate, it did not go up, but it would indicate that there was a change of programme as against

money spent as against what it was budgeted for. I would like to know under what circumstances there was that change of programme.

Mr. Felix: With regard to the first question, line item 6116 – Contracted Employees - that has already been explained in this very staffing detail table here.

Bishop Edghill: I asked about line items 6111 to 6117, the total staffing details.

Mr. Felix: Well, all the increases are at line item 6116. There is no increase elsewhere. Go again; check it.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, the question is - and I do not think the Minister listened - what additional responsibilities fall under this Ministry or department, as against the GRO and the services that were taken over from the Ministries of Home Affairs and Public Security. What additional services are being offered by this department?

Mr. Felix: Let me explain to you in detail. If you create a new department, immigration on one side and the Register office on the other side, how are they to be coordinated? They came under the Ministry of Home Affairs but there is no Ministry of Home Affairs now; they have been removed, Mr. Chairman. The services have been brought under one roof and there is need for a staff to coordinate the activities of the department, and that is where the increase in staff has manifested itself.

On the second part of the question, line item 6284 – Other – do you mind repeating your other question?

Bishop Edghill: On what authority was there a change of programme?

Mr. Felix: We wrote to the Ministry of Finance and we got the necessary permission. It was not done unilaterally.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, a follow-up question: Would the Minister confirm that the same task that was undertaken by 87 persons is now being undertaken by 142 persons?

Mr. Felix: I want to assure you that, under the Department of Citizenship... Let me explain this to you. Previously, under the Ministry of Home Affairs, people waited for years to get their

visas, to get their citizenship; some people waited from as long as 2007. In order to have an efficient service, it was necessary to expand numbers. And even as I stand here now, we can do with some more numbers to sort out the various applications for visas and so on.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, line item 6284 – Other: The Hon. Minister said that he got the necessary approval from the Ministry of Finance for a change in programme. Could I ask the Minister whether he has the multiyear approval for the continuation of this project?

Mr. Felix: Mr. Chairman, there is no multiyear arrangement here because the money has been returned and we are seeking permission this year to carry on the project. The project has not even started.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, the money could not have been returned. The Hon. Minister earlier said that the money was spent on another project, the birth certificate project. We all sat here and heard the Minister say that there was no increase in the cost of the project because some of that amount had to be used to sort out a birth certificate issue. There was an initial amount that was paid on the project that he spoke about, the digitising of the GRO, which would have started in 2015. The fact that the project would have started means that this allocation...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I think you are getting to a point. Please get there quickly.

Mr. Ali: It is for a continuation of that project and, if the project is continuing, he has to get a multiyear approval. There is no escape from it. I am asking the Hon. Minister to present to this House a copy of the multiyear approval.

Mr. Felix: For the sixth time, I never said that the project started. I said the project was aborted because certain flaws developed. At that stage, we had an emergency and we used some of the money to cater for that emergency, and the remainder of money was returned to the Consolidated Fund. Please wake up.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, under line item 6284 – Other - I would like to ask, through you, whether provision has been made for the procurement of equipment or the production of the machine-readable passports and for the upgrading of the existing machine-readable passports.

Mr. Felix: Mr. Chairman, machine-readable passport is under a different head. It was done at a different time; the money has been paid to the Canadian Bank Note Company, Limited. We are awaiting the arrival of equipment. This is a separate issue, using the Minister's documentation.

Dr. Anthony: Under line item 6284 – Other - we heard the Minister say that he had expended \$32 million on the procurement of birth certificates. Could the Minister please tell us how many birth certificates that sum would have purchased?

Mr. Felix: Mr. Chairman, we are purchasing over 300,000 birth certificates with certain security features, and I would end it there.

Ms. Teixeira: I would like to draw the Minister's attention to page 27 of Volume 2, which describes the citizenship and immigration services in the Ministry of the Presidency. It states the indicators for your Ministry and, under line item 6284, \$194 million, it states that indicators for performance in your Ministry are:

- “Number of birth registration processed
- Number of death registrations processed
- Number of marriage registrations processed
- Number of adoptions processed.”

That one confused me a little bit because I did not know you had to deal with adoption, Hon. Minister.

“Number of late registrations...”

However, I see no reference in the description and, therefore, even on the question on line item 6284, you are talking about birth certificates. But could you say how many birth certificates have been purchased and issued in the last year? We are dealing with accountability. How many visas were issued? How many work permits were issued in relation to expenditures that would have been related to \$194 million? We cannot find under which head we should be asking about your work permits and your issues. It is all part of your accountability, sir. So, under \$194 million, how many birth certificates were imported, how many were issued, what are the security

measures you have for those birth certificates to make sure that they are not replicable, *et cetera*, how many death certificates have been issued, how many marriage certificates have been issued and how many visas?

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

Ms. Teixeira: When will it be laid over?

Mr. Felix: It would be before the end of the week.

Ms. Teixeira: You have a small Ministry. What are you talking?

Mr. Felix: I said before; I did not say up to.

Ms. Teixeira: Tomorrow.

Mr. Felix: My boss.

Ms. Teixeira: I was but you forgot.

Dr. Anthony: Under line item 6284 – Other - the Minister answered in saying that 300,000 birth certificates were purchased last year.

Mr. Felix: On a Point of Order, I never said so. I said that we have ordered over 300,000 passports with certain security features. I said that I would end it there.

6.28 p.m.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, I specifically asked if it was \$32 million that was used last year to buy birth certificates. In answering that question, the Minister said 300,000 birth certificates which were purchased. That is what I heard. On average, every year, there are about 15,000 births. My question is: Why are we purchasing so many birth certificates in one given year?

Mr. Felix: The Hon. Member should not confuse births with the demand for birth certificates. There are persons who have had their birth certificates damaged or lost, and it would be needed for all sorts of reasons which take up the demand for birth certificates. Academically, the Hon. Member is correct, but there are other issues to be added to assess properly the demand for birth certificates. [Mr. Ali: Rigging.] Ask the Hon. Member Mr. Rohee.

The other issue raised about birth certificates has been properly answered. We have answered that.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, some Members have a distinct disadvantage in hearing answers to questions. I wonder if we can help them. I have heard at least two Hon. Members asked questions the answers to which had been given before. Perhaps they did not hear the answers when they were given, so we can assist them in that regard.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6241, Rental of Buildings: Mr. Minister, I see an increase from \$2,818,000 in 2015 to \$9,220,000 for the rental of buildings. Could you, Sir, tell us which buildings are being rented? What is accommodated in the building? What is the rent?

Mr. Felix: The building involved is Guyana Post Office Corporation (GPOC), which is exactly where the project is intended to be conducted. It is over \$800,000 per month, I am advised.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, after the next three speakers I will put the question.

Mr. Gill: Line item 6302, Training: The Hon. Minister alluded to the computerisation of the passport office to improve the system with computer readable passports. Could the Hon. Minister advise whether the increased amount, from the revised Budget 2015 of \$1,695,000 to the \$3 million allocated in this year's budget, would be adequate to accomplish this goal?

Mr. Felix: In the form of a question, the sum moved from \$2.3 million to \$3 million, an increase of \$605,000. It involves training, which has not been done for some time, of marriage officers, registrars, and so on.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, just before I ask the question, in response to the question just asked the Minister pointed out that \$2.3 million was budgeted but actually \$1.695 million was spent. The figure he offered is not correct.

Going back to line item 6284, since we learnt that the project has been abandoned and the moneys are being sought for it in the new year, we would like to find out from the Minister if this programme would be retendered.

Mr. Felix: I am on a course of repetition tonight. Very early this evening I said this project, which was abandoned, has to be retendered. I am saying so for the third time. In the form of a correction, again, we spent last year \$2.3 million.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Minister. Hon. Members, I would allow one other question.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, just for clarification, the Minister is...

Mr. Chairman: Is the Hon. Member asking a question?

Bishop Edghill: Yes Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Please ask your question.

Bishop Edghill: Budgeted was \$2.3 million, revised, which was actually spent, was \$1,695,000. Is the Minister prepared to accept that the \$2.3 million was not spent as he is indicating?

Mr. Chairman: I now put the question.

Bishop Edghill: Is he is not going to answer?

Mr. Felix: I rely on my answer.

Programme: 055 – Citizenship and Immigration Services – \$398,633,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 051 – Policy Development and Administration – \$346,945,000

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I am asking a question on project 1214100. A sum of \$110 million is budgeted for 2016, but in the project profile, in Volume 3, it indicates that the total project cost is \$110 million. Last year under this same heading and item the sum of \$66,179,000 was budgeted but apparently the sum of \$73,626 was expended. My question: Is this \$110 million a continuation of works that were carried out? If it is not, could I have a breakdown of the \$110 million for the new works listed?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, this \$110 million is for new projects. I have a list with the breakdown for the Hon. Member of the projects. If he wants I can state them or give him a copy.

Bishop Edghill: I will be happy if it is stated.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Extension and modernisation of the Cabinet room - \$20 million, construction of fence, walkway and extension of the guard hut - \$30,400,000, complete rewiring of State House - \$8 million, rehabilitation of the roof, including ceiling and rafters of State House - \$3,100,000, painting the entire interior and exterior of State House - \$8 million, rehabilitation of the barrack room at State House - \$4,700,000, rehabilitation of the security guard barrack room at State House compound - \$6 million, rehabilitation of drainage and irrigation system - \$13,300,000, wiring and installation of lights on the lawns of State House - \$2.5 million, changing windows from louvers to aluminium and casement windows on building A in State House compound - \$1.8 million, lifting of the ground floor at the Ministry of the Presidency - \$8 million, construction of parking lot at State House - \$4.2 million, a total of \$110 million.

Ms. Teixeira: Could I ask a follow-up on the same project 1212400?

Mr. Chairman: Proceed.

6.43 p.m.

Ms. Teixeira: I notice the Hon. Member referred to State House and the number of changes, rehabilitation, including the \$13 million, I think. The Minister may have got the figure as there are too many to do with the windows and other casements at the State House. This is a heritage building and therefore we are very concerned that the architectural integrity of the building is maintained. The Minister referred to putting in aluminium windows, I believe, but this is a heritage building and therefore there must be some care to be taken to preserve its architectural integrity. This is a lot of money being spent on what would clearly change the architecture of the building.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Thank you Hon. Member.

Bishop Edghill: Project 2507900, Purchase of Equipment: In 2015, Sir, a sum of \$43,564,000 was budgeted but a sum of \$92 million was expended. For 2016, an additional \$63,145,000 is being sought for the same provision of furniture and equipment. Could we have a breakdown of what are the items intended to be procured? While we get a breakdown of what are the items intended to be procured, what causes the increase of almost \$50 million over what was budgeted to be expended in 2015?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The sum represents purchases for several items of security significance for the President's guard. I will not itemise some of those because they are of a security nature, but suffice it to say that there is a specific sum allocated there for it. In addition to that, there is the acquisition of fire alarms system for the Ministry of the Presidency that is for \$6,379,916, the installation of new telephone system at State House, the acquisition of desks, computers and accessories for the Ministry of Social Cohesion, three multi-purpose printers for the Ministry of Social Cohesion, two laser jet printers for Ministry of Social Cohesion, a Xerox photocopier for the Ministry of Social Cohesion and protection accessories for the Ministry of Social Cohesion.

In addition to that, there some other items with respect to the State House, the purchasing of a lawn mower, grass blower, tree trimmers, complete cubicles for the Ministry of the Presidency, acquisition of an integrated fire alarm system for Bidford House as well as the purchase of a portable mixing board for the Ministry of the Presidency. That is the gist of the purchases to be undertaken under this line and the sum comes up to \$63, 145,000.

Ms. Teixeira: Could I ask the Hon. Member, under project 1214100, Office and Residence of the President, if there is any provision in this for the works that are going on at the D'Urban Park to do with whatever is being built there?

Secondly, under project 1701700, Minor Works, could the Hon. Member also say if there is any money in there to be used for the construction of D'Urban Park project, I am calling it that. I do not know what it is called. Also, could the Hon. Member advise us on, approximately without great detail, the \$95 million that is under this heading for developmental, humanitarian and other activities?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The answer to the first two questions is no. The answer to the third question on the \$95 million for minor works is that these are sums to be spent at the discretion of His Excellency the President.

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Member say if the provision for furniture and equipment \$63,145 million, under project 2507900 - I did not hear him mention it but I just want to check - whether there will be anything for Castellani House and the National Art Gallery? Or is that now being move elsewhere? I am not finding on any gazetted responsibilities. It is a national repertoire of the entire nation's history.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: There is no provision under this line item for that heritage facility. I believe that is under the Ministry of Education. They will have to be dealt under the Ministry of Education.

Bishop Edghill: Under project 2405200, Land Transport, a sum of \$53 million is being sought for the purchase of vehicles. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this Assembly how many vehicles and for what purpose will they be used by whom?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Vehicles are to be used as part of the vehicles used by His Excellency the President. In addition to which there is a vehicle purchased for the Minister of Social Cohesion.

Mr. Ramson: Under the same line item, could the Hon. Minister explain what accounts for the additional \$3 million for 2015? How many vehicles were purchased in 2015?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The \$3 million was an additional sum which was required for the purchase of a vehicle for the Defence Board. There was a sum allocated and there was a shortage of \$3 million and this is where it came from.

Mr. Ramson: In follow-up to that same line item, could the Hon. Minister give a number of the expectation for the purchase of vehicles that fall under the sum \$53,000 for the year 2016, in addition to the one for the Minister of Social Cohesion?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: There are four vehicles to be purchased under that line item, Hon. Member.

Programme: 051 - Policy Development and Administration - \$346,945,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 052 – Defence and National Security - \$39,000,000

Programme: 052 - Defence and National Security - \$39,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 053 - Public Service Management - \$36,000,000

Bishop Edghill: Project 2508100, Office Furniture and Equipment: A sum of \$27,183,000 is being sought. Last year this sum was just about \$2 million, an increase of \$25 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate what is responsible for this increase and give the items and cost of the items, which are to be procured, and the location of which building these office furniture would be used at?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: This is the capitalisation of the Public Service Staff College. It is furniture and equipment which we identify for use at the Public Service Staff College. The breakdown is as follows: 15 desktops , 9 laptops, 1 generator, 2 UPS, 3 server racks, a server, training software, 4 copiers, as in printers, 6 projectors, 3 network switches, installation of a network, installation of circuits for the UPS system, 3 scanners, 10 filing cabinets, 150 chairs, 55 desks, 5 water dispensers, 14 intercom systems and instruments, 11 air-conditioned units, 2 fax machines, 4 microwaves, 18 bookshelves, 4 stand fans, 3 binding machines, 4 refrigerators, 3 guillotines and a telephone system.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I would like to direct your attention to the project profile in Volume 3. Sir, some of the items mentioned there are not in this description. I would just like to bring that to the Minister's attention.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is there a comment which you would wish to make on the observation?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Comrade Chairman, the Hon. Member asked for a breakdown. In fact, the description of the project is descriptive but I was being very precise in the actual items. We are itemising the items that were purchased under these headings here. In fact, if we were to

look at the description of the project there is not a single item, which I listed here, that is not covered by the description of this project.

Programme: 053 - Public Service Management - \$36,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

6.58 p.m.

Programme: 055 – Citizenship and Immigration Services – \$15,000,000

Bishop Edghill: Under project 2507900, Purchase of Equipment, Sir, last year a sum of \$9.7 million was sought and a sum of \$28,443,000 was spent, in excess of \$21 million. An additional sum of \$5 million is now being sought for 2016. The question: Could we have an explanation of what the additional \$21 million was spent on in 2015? What is the \$5 million, in 2016, is to be spent on?

Mr. Felix: The issue at hand is in relation to the acquisition of equipment for security purposes with the immigration department. The sum was not enough and other sums of money had to be acquired, but this is in relation to security equipment.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, a follow-up. I would like to have a further explanation from the Hon. Minister because we are talking about a piece of equipment or equipment. I am not sure what it is. He said that it is for security purposes but the cost went up by 300%. If at the time of budgeting we did not have quotations...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, is there a question? Will you please let us have the question?

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I am trying to frame my question in a particular context.

Mr. Chairman: I am sure that the Minister will be able to manage it, if not you have a supplementary.

Bishop Edghill: Yes Sir. The cost went up by 300%. Could the Hon. Minister explain what would have been responsible for the under budgeting?

Mr. Felix: Let me come in the clear. There is a border control system at the immigration department. Prior to our arrival in office, the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs had ordered it. I

cannot explain why he under invoiced. We had to make it up and we have done so, so that we can have the border control system up and running, and not waiting for money.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, while I heard the explanation of the Hon. Minister, this is a procurement issue Sir. If it had gone out to tender for an item that cost \$9 million, for the cost to go up by 300%, then there had to be some form of retendering or something of the sort. I do not understand the explanation given. I would like to have further explanation as it relates to how the cost went up by 300%. It is a procurement issue. It is not just a simple order and delivery. How did the cost go up by 300%? What is responsible?

Mr. Felix: The equipment, we requested, was done by sole sourcing. That was approved. The company, which we were buying from, was already set for us. The previous Minister had set it there. We have an arrangement with that company and all of that were required. It is because of the nature of the equipment, it had to be sole-sourced.

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Member say, in relation to project 2507900, Purchase of Equipment, the increase of what was budgeted of \$9.7 million in 2015 to the final figure in 2015 of \$28.443 million, whether there was a supplementary Financial Paper brought to this House to cover the increase in the cost from the purse? Figures can go up but either they can be waived; they have to get the approval; there has to be additional money and usually there has to be a supplementary Financial Paper approved by this House. Could the Hon. Member say if there was any such Financial Paper to cover the additional amounts that are in this document?

Mr. Felix: I know that there has been a request for a supplementary.

Ms. Teixeira: The money has been spent already.

Programme: 055 – Citizenship and Immigration Services – \$15,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 53 Guyana Defence Force

Current Expenditure

Programme: 531 - Defence and Security Support - \$ 9,581,867,000

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships): Is Minister Harmon answering the question? Could he say whether the moneys, which were included in this, line item 6302, are provisions for the Guyana People's Militia?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The answer is no.

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Member say whether the figures for the Guyana People's Militia are under line item 6294, Other?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: It is not there. Just that we do not prolong this, let me please, with the permission of the Assembly, give an explanation about this matter on the Guyana People's Militia. The Guyana People's Militia has been part of the army for years. In fact, over the last 10 years, or so, the arm, or that branch of the military, was derecognised, almost, and it became a battalion. It was called the Second Infantry Battalion of the Guyana Defence Force. What that meant, and the Hon. Member Teixeira would have known this, she sat on the commission's board, is that the structure of what used to be the Guyana People's Militia was maintained under the Second Infantry Battalion. All that is happening now is that we are augmenting the base and training reservists under a provision that has already been made within the Guyana Defence Force's budget for training. What is going to happen is that in addition to that training, what we are doing is that we are merging some of the activities of the Civil Defence Commission so that the persons, who are receiving training through the Guyana Defence Force, will also become a reservoir for the Civil Defence Commission for emergency works in all of the regions of this country.

This is really what it is all about. There is no special provision that is being made for the Guyana People's Militia. It is basically activating or reactivating a service which was already there but is basically providing under the training of the Guyana Defence Force for those persons to be mobilised from time to time.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, thank you for allowing me. I find that fascinating, what the Minister has just pointed out – absolutely fascinating. As a former member of the Commissioning Board of the Guyana Defence Force and also a member of the Defence Board at the Cabinet level, I find this information radically revealing, Sir. It is because I have never heard of it before. That might be because I am getting old and I have forgotten, so I forgive you.

However, the issue Sir, is that reservists have always been there and they have always had promotions through the system, including the Commissioning Board of the Guyana Defence Board. As it is well known, the reservists in this country, who have come from many parts of the country...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, is there a question there?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes. I am getting to it, Sir. Since you have allowed my colleague to talk about reservists and Guyana People's Militia, I have to now try to figure out what he was saying because I was there, Mr. Chairman. I was on the boards and I have never heard of this Second Infantry Battalion. It is all very enlightening, I assure you. It shows that you are never too old to learn. Is it?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: That is quite true.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, the issue of reactivating the Guyana People's Militia, as my colleague just said, since they are already there... Am I to understand the Hon. Member was saying the Guyana People's Militia became the Second Infantry Battalion, the Second Infantry Battalion is now being repackaged as the Guyana People's Militia, and somehow, this is all under the training heading of the GDF? Is that then for the \$165 million at line item 6302? Have I gone in a circle again? It is because I am trying to figure out if we are taking a battalion, which is already in place, and converting it to Guyana People's Militia. The concept of the Guyana People's Militia was volunteers and people coming up from the grass roots, and all that kinds of stuff. This seems to be a militarisation of the Guyana People's Militia. I am trying to figure out what the Minister was saying, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you have asked your question and the Minister will answer the question.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I think I am surprised to know she sat on the Defence and Commissioning Boards and did not know that the Second Infantry Battalion was there.

Ms. Teixeira: I know it was there. I did not know that it was the Guyana People's Militia.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: It has a structure. Mr. Chairman, there is a permanent structure.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you asked a question, at least see whether you will get the answer you were expecting.

Ms. Teixeira: I never said that I did not know about the Second Infantry Battalion.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: What did you say?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister...

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, the commander structure of the Second Infantry Battalion now becomes the head of the Guyana People's Militia. That is what it was in the past. Under the People's Progressive Party/C (PPP/C) administration, it was disbanded, almost, and it was made into a battalion, but it is an arm of service under the Defence Act of Guyana. It is so provided under the Defence Act. What we are saying here, Mr. Chairman, is that this is basically, resuscitating something that is provided for in the Defence Act. I know that the Hon. Member is well versed in these matters, and I need not remind this Assembly that we continue to have issues on our borders and that we cannot spend excessively on the regular force because it is far cheaper to train a reserved element than for us to train and keep mobilised, a regular force.

7.13 p.m.

What we are doing here is basically looking at our own situation, how best we can utilise the Guyana Defence Force's dollar, and at the same time, provide a certain level of security as well as a level of Civil Defence arrangement in the country. That is really what it is all about. As I said, Mr. Chairman, I know the Hon. Member is very versed in these matters. She is well connected to the Guyana Defence Force and would know.

Mr. Lumumba: I am seeking some clarity. Is the Minister saying that the use or sole purpose of the reorganised Guyana People's Militia would be for emergency infrastructural works and protecting our borders and not for any other internal matters?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The Defence Act of Guyana, Chapter 15:01, provides for the establishment of a Guyana People's Militia and the operational use of that force resides with the Chief of Staff of the Guyana Defence Force. Its roles and functions are clearly defined and clearly set out.

Therefore, if in fact, the Hon. Member wishes to be engaged in the Guyana People's Militia, I think he is young enough to come out at the Reserved Training Camp so that he can have some...

Mr. Lumumba: I have bad knees.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Well we still need you. We need every single person in this country.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I am seeking your indulgence. I have heard the Hon. Minister say: "The Defence Act, Chapter 15:01 – Guyana People's Militia". I have no reason to doubt him. I know it. I am asking him where are the budgetary provisions in the GDF to address this reactivation that they are doing. That is all I am simply asking. If it is not under lines items 6302, 6294 or 6284, then where is it Hon. Minister? It is a simple question. We do not have to hide the fact. We are not taking a position against you. We are just asking where it is.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: As I said, the Guyana People's Militia is not a new creation. It has been there. In fact, the funding for the Guyana People's Militia will come from the regular funding of the Guyana Defence Force. There is a fixed establishment there already. Therefore, training, uniforms and all of these things will come from the allocation that was granted to the Guyana Defence Force. There is no special figure anywhere which says the Guyana People's Militia.

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Minister say under line item 6116 whether we are dealing with Members of the Reserves and Members of the Guyana People's Militia? They are two distinct categories completely.

Where can we find that information under "Contracted Employees"? I am just fishing Mr. Chairman because the Hon. Minister believes that this is top secret. They are putting advertisements and have said in the newspapers that you were going to hire 500 people for the Guyana People's Militia. There were no advertisement or criterion on the basis, according to Section 15:01 of the Defence Act, and yet we are skirting around the issue in this Parliament as if we are dealing with top secret matters. The Guyana People's Militia is governed by the Act. It has a completely different function than the GDF.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I think the point has been made and the question has been raised. Hon. Minister, there is a question.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I think we can, in fact, proceed because the Hon. Member would know that the Reservists are mobilised for specific periods and are paid a stipend when they are mobilised. When they are demobilised, they go back to their normal civilian jobs. That is what it is.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: In 2015, we had moved from \$78 million to \$186 million. The question to the Hon. Minister is what is responsible for such a whopping 150% increase, especially in the light of falling electricity prices?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The previous practice was for the army to consume the electricity and then the bills were paid by the Ministry of Finance. The practice now is that the Ministry of Finance will be giving this money to the GDF and they will spend it to deal with the issues of electricity at all of its major bases. These major bases, as we know, are Camp Ayanganna, Camp Stevenson and the other bases where electricity bills are to be paid to the Guyana Power and Light, Inc. (GPL).

Bishop Edghill: As a follow-up for clarification...

Mr. Chairman: I am bound to tell Hon. Members that I will put the question shortly. Please go ahead.

Bishop Edghill: From the explanation given by the Hon. Minister, in 2015, we expended \$78.5 million on electricity charges. This is what the army would have paid. Is the Hon. Minister saying that, apart from what the army would have paid, the Ministry of Finance paid additional sums?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Yes.

Bishop Edghill: Then this would have been an under-budgeted amount? We are now having all paid by the army, as against two parts? Is that the explanation?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is there an answer that you wish to give to this question?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman that is in fact the explanation. The Hon. Member was at that time the Junior Minister of Finance and understands the process. You are quite right Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Rohee I have given you the floor.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, I am seeking, with your permission, a matter of clarification with respect to the Guyana People's Militia. I will ask a question. The question is...

Mr. Chairman: Before I put the question, I will allow one other speaker on this matter. Please proceed.

Mr. Rohee: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I am addressing you. For the Guyana People's Militia to function in the way that the Hon. Minister, Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon, has so described, as far as I am aware and from historical experience I am sure that the Minister is aware of, it would require the Guyana People's Militia to be in uniform. The Guyana People's Militia is a uniformed body. This means that kits, uniforms, boots, caps, trainees, *et cetera*, would have to be purchased for the Guyana People's Militia. There must be a line item under which these resources or these items would be procured.

Would the Minister be kind enough to indicate, notwithstanding the fact that the Guyana People's Militia would fall under the Guyana Defence Force, where and how much will be allocated for the procurement of these items for members of the Guyana People's Militia?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I did indicate earlier that the equipment, kit and everything else that had to do with the Guyana People's Militia will be purchased and acquired through the lines that are going to be utilised for the purchase of kits and equipment for the Guyana Defence Force.

Programme: 531 – Defence and Security Support - \$9,581,867,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 531 – Defence and Security Support - \$543,000,000

Programme: 531 – Defence and Security Support - \$543,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 62 Public Procurement Commission

Current Expenditure

Programme: 621 – Public Procurement Commission - \$1

Ms. Teixeira: I thought that on 14th January, 2016, when we had dealt with the Constitutional Bodies, *et cetera*, we had passed this \$1 for the Public Procurement Commission. I am just questioning. I believe that we have finished this and it should not have been on the Schedule. Is that correct?

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member for her observation. Hon. Members, we are almost at 7.30 p.m. We can take the suspension and return at 7.55 p.m.

Assembly resumed.

Sitting suspended at 7.28 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 7.58 p.m.

In committee of supply.

Agency: 02 Office of the Prime Minister

Current Expenditure

Programme: 021- Prime Minister's Secretariat- \$501,157,000

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, the Prime Minister's Secretariat, a part of the Ministry of the Presidency, line item 6116 - Contracted Employees. There has been a huge increase to \$82,766,000. Could the Hon. Member advise the House on the 26 members of staff of the Prime Minister's Secretariat - names, designations, and salaries please?

Mr. Chairman: During the recess, I discovered that this House, in 2013 and 2014, in consideration of this very item, did agree that while all information sought would be provided,

the names of the persons will not be mentioned. I would recommend that we would observe that in our treatment of matters. The positions, designations, and salaries are information which should be provided, but not the names of the individuals. I will embrace that ruling here.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman that might be so, but as a Member on the Government side, my name was called every single year during 2008 to 2014, despite whatever was the 2013/2014 ruling.

Every time the Office of the President came up, Bishop Edghill as the Minister responsible, read out all of our names and everybody who was working. That was how the Members on the Opposition at that time had our names, designations, and salaries. That was circulated in this House; and the media had it. Mr. Chairman, if you do not believe me with anybody else, my name was called every single year during 2008 to 2014, regardless of that ruling. So, I am just saying that it was never operational because the Opposition at that time demanded that and the Government complied.

Mr. Chairman: Perhaps, I apologise for not making myself clear. With respect to information provided on employees of Government and public servants, whether contracted or otherwise, is what I am referring to.

Ms. Teixeira: Sir, with due respect, I am not sure what that means in relation to me. I was a Member of Government and I was an Advisor to the President. So I am not sure if I fell under the category of persons to have been protected under that ruling, but I was not.

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, if I may be allowed an indulgence because it does impinge, I believe, on my character to some extent. A question had been put to the House in the Tenth Parliament for the list of all names of Presidential Advisors, designations, and salaries through a Notice. In fact, that information was provided by way of question. But during the Budget Debates and the consideration of the Estimates process, we did not allow names of persons to be given. I have the transcripts. If the House would wish to be guided I can also share them with the Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, where it was agreed that the names of persons would not be mentioned. It was the Hon. Member, Mr. Nadir, who in fact provided me with much vitally important information on the whole issue of confidentiality. I was persuaded by his argument

and I, therefore, made a ruling that names would be omitted, but that designation and salaries would be provided. That is the ruling that I have in hand. Thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: I asked a question in relation to line item 6116 - Contracted Employees. The number has increased astronomically from \$21,681,000 to \$82,766,000 and before I just...

Mr. Chairman: Can I have the benefit of the line item which you refer to?

Ms. Teixeira: I am referring to line item 6116- Contracted Employees. We, on this side of this House, rely on the *Hansard* records of this House from 2008 to 2014. Therefore, I will not continue further debate on the issue raised.

However, I am calling on the Hon. Prime Minister to explain to us this rather significant or rather large increase to \$82 million, which covers 26 employees. This becomes rather more interesting as that his portfolio is in no way the size of the former Prime Minister whose contract secretariat was \$16 million in which that Prime Minister portfolio included the GPL, Linden Mining Enterprise (LINMINE), Guyana Public Utilities Commission (GUYPUC), Guyana Energy Agency (GEA), Lethem Power Company, Mahdia Power Company, and the Port Kaituma Power Company. So, in contrast, that Prime Minister had an enormous portfolio. So I would like to know why this huge amount of people for his secretariat?

First Vice-President and Prime Minister [Mr. Nagamootoo]: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, mentioned before I gave the answer that the former Prime Minister had a number of portfolio assignments, but that also between 2011 and 2014, the budget allocated to the former Hon. Prime Minister, Mr. Hinds, was in excess of \$30 billion and there was no staff to show for it. I am told that the staff was supplied by the National Industrial and Commercial Investment Limited (NICIL).

Therefore, when I assumed the Office of Prime Minister, there were 17 persons on the roll. In the course of last year, they had attrition by resignation and through terminations. I have the names for the persons who had been terminated. There had been two of them. I could circulate these Mr. Chairman. The staff was reduced in the course of last year to six. Last year, 20 persons were employed from the Gardener of the Prime Minister to the Maid, Housekeeper, to the Kitchen Assistant and Administrative. They are all contracted employees on salaries varying from

\$61,000, to the Advisor to the Prime Minister and the Director of Public Information, on salaries ranging from \$320,000 to \$530,000 which is the highest paid salary. The average salary of the contracted worker is not \$463,000 as the Hon. Member, Bishop Edghill, had said. The average is salary is \$197,478 for technical and highly qualified staff, several of whom have Master's and Bachelor's Degrees.

In terms of the positions, from the contracted employees, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister, who was the Special Assistant to the former Prime Minister, Type I Clerk, Telephonist, Supply Expediter, Office Assistant and Office Secretary General, who were all retained from the previous staff of former Prime Minister, Mr. Hinds. These were not the NICIL employees. The NICIL employees disappeared and faded away with the \$30 billion. These 20 employees are: the Special Assistant of Public and Diaspora Affairs and Investigations, a Confidential Secretary...

Ms. Teixeira: What is that Diaspora Affairs?

Mr. Nagamootoo: Do you want to know his name? I can give you his name. He is a fellow Canadian citizen, Guyanese born like you. Should I supply this or do you want to hear the salaries? I can read all the names if your Mr. Chairman...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister the Chairman would prefer that names were not mentioned. Designation and salaries are quite in order.

Mr. Nagamootoo: The designation - Gardener at the Prime Minister's residence - \$61,683.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, it seems to me that that information can be properly supplied in writing to answer the request of the Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira. It need not be read out in this House. We are press for time and we need to complete every item for today, today. Unless it is absolutely necessary Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, to have this information read out, I can see no reason why it should be read out here and not be made available.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I think that we have to keep recalling in this House that this Parliament is live streamed. The public needs to know. The public has a right to information and the role of the Opposition is to scrutinise and examine. So, expediency may be of concern and pragmatism, and I appreciate that Sir, it cannot go on endlessly. However, the public wants to know. Whether they are sitting in the gallery, they are looking at their computers or they are

looking at the National Communication Network (NCN), they have a right to know. The information is not my personal property. It is the property of the people of this country.

Mr. Chairman: I say no more, except that the Hon. Member is quite correct that the people are observing us.

8.13 p.m.

Mr. Nagamootoo: I also agree that the people have a right to know, which right includes that the Office of the Prime Minister includes the consideration of governance, public information, parliamentary affairs, constitutional reform and a number of parliamentary sub-committees. These are some of the areas over which the Prime Minister's Office ... There were absolutely no qualified staff to be able to manage the positions in very key areas. I can give the designations of the persons and also the support staff that are office staff. I have the information in writing. I do not know what the Hon. Members want to know.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, give the designations and whatever you were asked to give.

Mr. Nagamootoo: The Hon. Member wanted the destinations and salaries. Could I give those without giving the names? I said that the Gardener – \$61,686; Maid/Housekeeper – \$68,907; Kitchen Assistant at the Prime Minister's Residence – \$62,733; Administrative Assistant Region 6 – \$70,000; Administrative Assistant Region 2 – \$70,000; Administrative Officer – \$110,000; Videographer/ Editor – \$120,000; Information Officer – \$130,000; Information Officer Producer – \$140,000; Press Officer – \$155,000; Public Assistant for Finance – \$207,000; Regional Representative Region 5 – \$194,000; Regional Representative Region 6 – \$194,000; Regional Representative Region 2 – \$194,000; Regional Representative Region 10 – \$194,000; Confidential Secretary – \$225,000; Special Assistance, Public and Diaspora Affairs – \$320,000; Advisor Safety Security and Information Technology to the Prime Minister – \$372,500; Director of Public Information and Press Secretary to the Prime Minister – \$530,000; Advisor to the Prime Minister – \$530,000; Assistant Secretary-General – \$142,029; Office Assistant – \$56,178; Supply Expediter – \$51,589; Telephonist – \$53,917; Type I Clerk – \$76,380; and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister – \$211,661. That completes the list, none of whom could be categorised as a parasite, as the Hon. Bishop Edghill had said in this House.

Ms. Teixeira: Could we move to line item 6284 – Other, where the figures have increased from \$13.6 million to \$45.5 million. Could you say Hon. Prime Minister, whether the funds herein for other goods and services purchased would include allocations with regards to governance, parliamentary business, constitution commissions, and constitutional reform commission? Are these included in here because I cannot under any heading allocations of those bodies that were gazetted in the 18th January, 2016, *Official Gazette* as your responsibilities. Could the Hon. Prime Minister advise me if this is the right heading, line item 6284 – Other? If I am wrong, could the Hon. Prime Minister then advise me what this covers?

Mr. Nagamootoo: These portfolio responsibilities have been gazetted. I know that from the \$45 million that had been allocated for this year, \$20 million had been identified for constitutional reform. We have received an interim report from the Steering Committee on Constitutional Reform. The final report is expected at the end of March. That is for office space, administrative staff and fees for consultants. We also have an allocation for governance, reporting on treaties, \$8 million consultancy fees. This is in a new area just brought over to the Ministry of Governance, which is now being absorbed as the Governance Office of the Office of the Prime Minister.

The Department of Public Information - we have an allocation for public education campaigns, mass media, advertising, posters and banners and outdoor advertising, online and social advertising, press conferences, websites designs and building, external hard drives and memory cards, website administration, graphic design and layout, printing and publications, Prime Minister Community Outreach and the photography generally associated with this Office. Those are all included in the \$45 million. I have been assured by the Minister of Finance that we could always approach him, when constitutional reform gets underway, if we should need additional sums. But this is an indicative amount for all the new areas brought under the Prime Minister portfolio.

Ms. Teixeira: In Volume 2, page 29 of the Estimates, under the Prime Minister's Secretariat. It says that one of the tasks is Constitutional Reform.

“...under this sub-programme, the Prime Minister will establish a Constitutional Reform Commission to fashion comprehensive constitutional reforms designed to guarantee a democratic society free from abuse of citizens by those in high office...” *et cetera*.

Could the Hon. Prime Minister say whether the \$20 million he spoke about for consultancy is, as I had read in the newspapers, to do with proposals for changes? Is there any money in this Budget this year, to move towards a Constitutional Reform Commission, as stated in Volume 2 of the Estimates?

Mr. Nagamootoo: It is the intention to carry out the promise of the A Party For National Unity and Alliance For Change’s (APNU/AFC’s) elections Manifesto to embark upon constitutional reform this year. The proprietary process has not been started. Once the final report is in and it has been considered, a way forward would then be approved with appropriate consultations and involvement of the Opposition party, as well as other stakeholders in the society, to deal with the scope of the reform process. But it is envisaged that, sometime this year, a Constitutional Reform Commission ought to comprise a broad based commission. So this process should take place.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: The Prime Minister, a short while ago, said to the House that the average salary of the members of his staff is \$197,000. By my calculations of 26 staff times 12 months it would be just over \$61 million. Could the Hon. Prime Minister tell us what would account for the other \$21 million under this line item.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Well the figures would move from 15, as the Hon. Member had rightly alluded during his contribution, to six which came over from last year. We had an addition of 20, so there are 26 contracted employees. There are three that are not contracted employees. For those 20, the average salary, as I said, is in excess of a \$197,000. I do not know what figures you have used, but I heard you say that the average salary was \$463,000. I am advised that is not what the average salary is.

Bishop Edghill: I can only go with the figures offered to the House. In 2015, there were 15 contracted employees and their total emoluments were \$21 million. So there was only an addition of 11 staff for 2016. For the 11 staff for 2016, the increase in emoluments is \$62 million. Divide \$62 million by 11...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please get us to the question.

Bishop Edghill: Yes, I am getting to the question, Sir. The Prime Minister is challenging my figures and I am asking him to...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, let us get to the question please.

Bishop Edghill: The question is, 15 employees earned \$21 million, an additional 11 and there is a \$62 million increase. The Prime Minister is saying that the average salary is \$197,000.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, what is the question to the Prime Minister. Please address that. We cannot have speeches all the time.

Bishop Edghill: The question is what accounts for the other \$20 million, if the average is \$197,000 per person?

Mr. Nagamootoo: I do not think I could say anything different than I have said. I said that there was a slide in the number of persons in 2015, leaving six persons looking over in some varying period of 2015. There were not 11 new staff; there were 20 in all. The Hon. Member is conveniently taking out 11 here because if Hon. Members look here, from 15 to 26 that would give the 11 in the explanatory note. But I am explaining what actually happened in the course of 2015. We remained with only 6 of the contracted staff that were now brought over this year. They were paid, as they all would have been paid for last year. The additional amount of money would be an additional amount for 26 persons, 20 of whom are new. As I had said before, they vary from various categories and in terms of the salary, from \$61,500 to five hundred odd.... There is no \$1 million or \$3 million per month employee in my office as we had before.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are you asking the same question or another question? Where are we going?

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I am asking another question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, after three more questions, I will put the question, please proceed.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: There is a significant increase in the allocation to the NCN of about \$50 million. The first question: I would like to know what the expected expenditure for this increase is and the House would also want to know what the total revenue was for NCN in 2015? Apart from the total revenue, the total expenditure, if there was a surplus or a deficit.

Mr. Nagamootoo: The National Communications Network brings in revenue of an average of \$33 million per month, but expends \$55 million. It is a loss making entity. At the beginning of this year, it was reported that they were in red by \$200 million and has accumulated debt, receivables, for many years for doing free work, most of which were political work.

8.28 p.m.

This subvention of \$125 million is for capital expenditure for the National Communications Network (NCN) and \$150 million for the current maintenance and salaries to make up for the loss. I have a list of items of all the capital works and some details on the current for circulation. I am explaining that, out of the allocation of \$320 million, \$150 million will go towards NCN and \$170 million of this amount is for the Government Information Agency (GINA).

Bishop Edghill: I asked the Prime Minister a specific question. What is accounting for the \$54 million increase and, if he can tell us, what would it be expended on? And I asked what the total revenue and the total expenditure were. I have not received those figures.

Mr. Chairman: I wonder if the Prime Minister would be in a position to provide those figures now or will later on give them to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Nagamootoo: If the Hon. Member would agree, I am prepared to present all of the figures to the House. I just talked about the loss performance of the NCN of \$20 million per month. The NCN was received, by this Government, in a state of almost total disrepair and rundown and the maintenance is what moneys have been...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, would you be in a position to present that information to the Hon. Member and to this House?

Mr. Nagamootoo: I can give that in detail.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I would like to have that figure now.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, you will do this at a subsequent time. Would it be tomorrow? When would it be ready?

Mr. Nagamootoo: I can present that later in the week.

Bishop Edghill: While I hear the Prime Minister when he said that he will present the information later in the week, to come to this House to ask for \$54 million and not know what the bottom lines are – expenditure and income – to tell this House... What is so difficult about that right now?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I believe that the Prime Minister has said that he will provide the information and that must suffice now. You could not get anything more.

Bishop Edghill: If a Member, who is asking a question, is not satisfied, then he or she can ask a follow-up question.

Mr. Chairman: Indeed, but you probably would not get another answer.

Bishop Edghill: Well I would like to ask a follow-up question, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Very well, Hon. Member. There is one other speaker besides you. This is the second question that is being asked now.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item, 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - a sum of \$170 million has been allocated to GINA, an increase over 2015. I would like to know the strength of staff of GINA and what the items that will be covered under this expenditure that is being sought are.

Mr. Chairman: Is the Hon. Prime Minister in a position to answer these questions now?

Mr. Nagamootoo: The staff have decreased from 35 to 30. That is the staff strength as at January, 2016. The allocation that is being sought is for the increase in salaries and for the various material, equipment, supplies, fuel and lubricants, rental and maintenance of buildings, transport, travel and postage, utility charges and other goods and services purchased. There is an item by item documentation of the cost under each head for last year as compared to what is

being asked this year, \$170 million to GINA. I can also make this available to the House if the Hon. Member would so agree.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6284 – Other: The Hon. Prime Minister told us that, under this head, his office will address the issue of constitutional reform. Could the Hon. Prime Minister tell us what staff he has to assist him with this very complex and important exercise and the salaries that they are being paid?

Mr. Nagamootoo: This year, we intend to advertise for competent staff, with a legal background, who would be able to undertake the preliminary work in terms of the constitutional reform process. At the moment, there is one person, an attorney-at-law, who has come over from the Ministry of Governance and is now being placed. I can disclose the name to my learned Friend, if he so wishes, and in keeping with not disclosing names for contracted employees. I am not sure... Efforts will be made to have a compliment of staff to make the necessary preparation and to help to undertake the research to kick start the constitutional reform process.

Mr. Nandlall: If I may follow-up, Sir, I would appreciate if the Hon. Prime Minister can supply me with the name of the person and the remuneration package of the person whom we are told migrated from the Ministry of Governance into the prime ministerial secretariat.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the Prime Minister will not provide the names of anyone in this House. Designations and salaries are enough for Hon. Members to make an assessment of the expenditure. That is what was agreed to in 2013, in 2014 and, Hon. Member, I embrace that agreement. Please be guided by that.

Mr. Nandlall: I will await the information from the Hon. Prime Minister.

I am under the same line item 6284 – Other. Article 119A of the Constitution speaks to the establishment of a Committee for Constitutional Reform. The Prime Minister has informed us that he shall soon establish a constitutional reform commission. Am I to understand that they are going to be one and the same thing or that there will be a constitutional reform commission established by the Office of the Prime Minister and then there will be one operating within the Parliament, as is required by the Constitution?

Mr. Nagamootoo: If you crave my indulgence, to supplement the process, to kick start the work of the steering committee, a highly competent committee was set up, headed by Mr. Nigel Hughes and including Professor Harold Lutchman. There is a core of persons already who are helping in the preparatory work for constitutional reform.

In the Office of the Prime Minister, there is one person who has a...

Mr. Nandlall: That is not the question I am asking.

Mr. Nagamootoo: ...who is qualified in law. You had asked before and I am supplementing that answer.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I think you know how you should do that. Let us try to remember. Please proceed, Hon. Prime Minister.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Two of the persons in the present component, as I said, a highly qualified core of persons have degrees in law who are helping in that process. Coming to the penultimate question...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, we are somewhat away from answering the question. Could we get back to answering the question, please?

Mr. Nagamootoo: The Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional Reform is a different committee altogether from a Constitutional Reform Commission of which I had been a Member in 1966 and from 1996. This Commission is one that would be appointed with a special remit, not to deal with matters that are referred to it in a routine manner by the Parliament but to examine the Constitution with a view to have a total reform of several of the provisions in keeping with recommendations that would be elicited from the Guyanese people.

Mr. Nandlall: One last follow-up question, Sir: My esteemed Prime Minister was kind enough to remind us that he was part of the constitutional reform process in 1996.

Members: What is the question?

Mr. Nandlall: I am getting to the question. The Prime Minister has given great latitude in arriving at his answer.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, let us deal with the question.

Mr. Nandlall: The question is that the process to which the Prime Minister made reference culminated with certain reforms being made in the Constitution, one of which is to establish, within the Parliament, a permanent Constitutional Reform Commission and that was made as part of the Constitution. My question to the Hon. Prime Minister is, is he not departing from the letter and spirit of this constitutional provision by establishing a commission outside of the Constitution and outside of the parliamentary process?

Mr. Nagamootoo: As I understand it, and I have been a Member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Constitutional Reform, it is a Committee of the House. Even though my learned Friends do not want to hear me say these things, I have to remind them...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister...

Mr. Nagamootoo: It is a difference and I said that before. There is no violation of either the spirit or the letter of the Constitution. It is, for me, a *non sequitur* because the two things are different. I have served on both and I must know. Perhaps my Friend never had that knowledge.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Prime Minister and I now put the question.

Programme: 021 – Prime Minister’s Secretariat - \$501,157,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

8.43 p.m.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 021 - Prime Minister’s Secretariat - \$156,300,000

Ms. Teixeira: Project code 1701000 – Minor Works - \$10 million: According to the profile in Volume 3 of the *Estimates of the Public Sector*, it states at Description of Project: “The project entails provision for developmental, humanitarian and other activities”. At Benefits of Project it states, “Improved living conditions of vulnerable groups”. Could the House be provided with some details on this, as this is very broad? Secondly, does this include support to Radio Paiwomak? I saw in the newspapers that the NCN will be assisting this radio station in the

Interior to run 24 hours a day. I am not sure what that support is. Could the Hon. Prime Minister clarify those two questions relating to this head?

Mr. Nagamootoo: The support for Radio Paiwomak is not under “Minor Works”. Provisions have been made out of the NCN funds for the work that had been done there. This amount of money for last year was \$10 million and it was revised downwards to \$8 million.

Ms. Teixeira: The 2016 Budget...

Mr. Nagamootoo: The \$10 million...

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, it is here.

Mr. Nagamootoo: The \$10 million would be for the Minor Works: “...provision for developmental, humanitarian and other activities”. These sums would be given on a needs-to-be basis. For example, last year, funds were given to help the kids in Liliendaal, to fence a playground and for people in distress who could not afford the cost of a burial and such other minor works. Of course, for CineGuyana, a group of local photographic and cinegraphic producers, who could not afford to produce a documentary on Guyana, dealing with the issue of our territorial sovereignty, help would be given on a selective basis that is informed by actual need for a purpose that is social. This process is based on discretion and people come asking all the time to receive some assistance.

Bishop Edghill: Project code 4502900 – National Communications Network: An allocation of \$125 million is being sought and, in the project profile, we see “establishment of communication station, provision of cubicles, provision of lights and purchase of broadcasting equipment”. Could the Hon. Prime Minister tell this House if there are any sums allocated here for the activation of the uplink equipment that was publicly declared to be locked in a garage at NCN?

Mr. Nagamootoo: The answer to that is yes. As of last year, we spent \$23 million on the uplink facility, which has been partially installed, and we have voted for the Very Small Aperture Terminal_(VSAT), phase two, a sum of \$8 million in this Budget so that we could do the support infrastructural system to tap into satellite television. We would be able to reach nine sites in Guyana and perhaps link up with *The Learning Channel* and to have an additional 16 sites

serviced so that we can have information, entertainment and news spread to Guyanese through this network.

Bishop Edghill: A follow-up, Sir: It is just to indicate that I did not see any of that in this project profile. Could the Hon. Prime Minister tell us when the uplink system will be operational?

Mr. Nagamootoo: In fact, if you look at reference 17 in the Capital Expenditure of Agency: 02, it states at 4, "Purchase of broadcasting equipment, tricastors, UPS, radio automation systems, transmitters..." There is mention in the Legend for that, but what I want to say is that, by the end of February, we should be able to assume the control of *Channel 28 TVG* facility, the service that it rendered and NCN would have its satellite uplink to *The Learning Channel*. The phase two is what the \$8 million is for because the equipment that had been purchased before has been installed and we are now ready to go nationwide. I will be happy to provide the Hon. Member with a very detailed list.

I am just going a little bit outside here in anticipation of a supplementary. The sum allocated in the Capital Budget would be for two community radio stations in Mabaruma and in Lethem and these would also have the money allocated - \$45 million in all - so that you will have two community radio stations that will have a capacity to link to central NCN radio so that we can have connection with those areas in Essequibo where our people need to be informed, particularly in the face of a threat from the western neighbour.

Also, a large sum of money has also been allocated, having made an access road to Onderneeming where the transformer for NCN is located, unfortunately very far. We have been taken out of Sparendam for Pradoville two. We are providing generating capacity for that facility so that we do not have shut down of radio and television when there is outage in Guyana. There is a very exciting programme for NCN expansion in this phase.

Programme: 021 - Prime Minister's Secretariat - \$156,300,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Thank you to the supporting staff for ably navigating these very difficult questions.

Agency: 25 Ministry of Business

Current Expenditure

Programme: 251 - Policy Development and Administration - \$200,401,000

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6111 – Administrative: The sum budgeted was \$1,492,000; the revised sum shows us \$3,136,000; the budgeted sum for 2016 is \$13,927,000. When one looks at the staffing details, there is just an addition of two persons. Could the Minister advise the House what the likely salaries are for the two additional persons that is taking us from \$3,136,000 to \$13,927,000?

Minister of Business [Mr. Gaskin]: The two additional salaries are at \$475,380 per month and the other at \$273,520 per month.

Mr. Hamilton: What are the designations of the persons? The figure that the Minister just gave cannot be right. We are talking about an additional \$13,927,000.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, do you have a question? I am hearing a voice that is not yours.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, the Minister can indicate to us the designation of the two staff. He has indicated that one is paid at \$475,380 and the other at \$273,520.

Mr. Gaskin: Mr. Chairman, the two positions are those of Permanent Secretary and Deputy Permanent Secretary.

Mr. Hamilton: Is the Minister saying that, when the last Budget was presented, there were not a Permanent Secretary and a Deputy Permanent Secretary in the Ministry?

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

Mr. Hamilton: Thank you. Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: Again, the number of persons has moved from 24 to 29. Could the Minister advise on the designations and the salaries of the five new persons that are added to the \$24 million?

8.58 p.m.

Mr. Gaskin: The designations are two cleaners at \$50,000 per month each, one Handyman at \$50,000, one Personal Assistant at \$360,000 per month and one Communications Officer at \$184,542 per month.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, do you wish to speak again?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Please proceed.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Minister, could you advise the House whether any person who was working in the public service, preceding the Ministry of Business, were seconded or went over to the Ministry of Business after its establishment, and whether the five persons that were added are from out of the public service or are new contracted workers?

Mr. Gaskin: The five persons who were contracted were all new persons. I did not quite understand the first question. The Hon. Member asked if any members from the public service were transferred...

Mr. Hamilton: I am trying to find out whether all the 24 persons, before the 29 persons, came out of the public service to your Ministry or whether they were new employees. I am not dealing with five; I am dealing with 24.

Mr. Gaskin: They all came from what was previously the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, which was divided into the Ministry of Business and the Ministry of Tourism; the staff of the former Ministry was split as some went into the Ministry of Tourism and some into the Ministry of Business.

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: The location that the Ministry of Business resides was always a Government Ministry for the last decade and more. Therefore, the argument about the Ministry being four months old will not *hold water*. There was a budgeted sum of \$11,612,000. The revised is showing \$10,493,000 and the sum budgeted for 2016 is showing \$32,780,000. Could the Minister explain?

Mr. Gaskin: Yes, Mr. Chairman. The argument, as the Hon. Member puts it, that the four-month period does not apply to this particular line item because the building was always there, I am

afraid, is not a valid argument. The four-month argument applies to every single line item on this page because the Ministry of Business, which is the budget agency, which is funded through this Budget and was funded through the 2015 Budget, only came into being in September, 2015 and, therefore, could only have become a budget agency from September, 2015. Therefore, any budgetary allocation for the Ministry of Business, in 2015, only applies to the months of September, October, November and December - four months.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, I am saying to the National Assembly that, unless the Minister can say to the National Assembly that there are new buildings, the electricity charges cannot get to \$32,780,000. We are not dealing with the Ministry...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, do you have a question for the Minister?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes. I am seeking to find out whether there are additional buildings that the Ministry of Business would have to now pay electricity charges for.

Mr. Gaskin: The amount budgeted for last year's electricity bill was \$11,612,000, of which we actually spent \$10,493,000. That represented our electricity charges for four months. If you multiply that by three, that would give you an estimate of what the annual electricity usage would be, and that comes up to about \$31 million.

In addition to the building in South Road, there is the National Exhibition Centre in Sophia, for which we are also responsible and which is also included in these charges here.

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6281 – Security Services: The budgeted sum for 2015 was \$12,518,000. We saw a revision upwards to \$13,737,000. Could the Minister explain that, secondly, the securities services provider or providers, thirdly, explain how the services were procured and, finally, the \$37.1 million that is asked for in this Budget?

Mr. Gaskin: The difference between the budgeted amount for security for 2015 and the revised amount was due to a shortfall in the amount appropriated and that shortfall was met from another line item; it is the electricity line item. The procurement was done by public advertising and the \$37.1 million... I think we could use the same argument and the three times table; you multiply everything by three and then I think the amount would be closer. Like I said, it could be applied to all the line items. I do not know if you want to try that or...

Mr. Hamilton: The service provider and the method of procurement...

Mr. Gaskin: The service providers are Brans Security Services and Kalibur Security Services.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, two other questions could be asked and I will put the question.

Mr. Ramson: Could the Hon. Minister please provide this information in relation to line item 6116 – Contracted Employees? Does the Ministry have any communications officers and, if so, what is their exact designation and what are their exact salary and benefits?

Mr. Gaskin: There is one Communications Officer. The exact salary is \$184,542 per month.

Mr. Ramson: Also the benefit package...

Mr. Gaskin: The benefits are a 22% gratuity and a vacation allowance equivalent to one month's salary.

Mr. Ramson: Would the Hon. Minister be in a position to provide the qualifications for that specific person who is employed there and would the Hon. Minister be able to say whether that person is the sister of the Hon. Minister, David Patterson?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I do believe that you should try to practice some propriety in the House. I do not know that that advances... When an Hon. Member tries to, so to speak, get in under the radar, he may not be lucky but what he does is put the Speaker on notice that, perhaps, all that he sees is not what is, and that applies to all Hon. Members.

One other speaker, please, and then I will put the question.

Mr. Ramson: I would withdraw the second part of the question but the first part of the question remains.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, are you in a position to answer the question?

Mr. Gaskin: Yes. I do not have the job description with all the qualifications on...

Mr. Ramson: Her qualifications...not the job description.

Mr. Gaskin: I do not have the job description with all the qualifications here. I can provide this within 24 hours.

Programme: 251 – Policy Development and Administration – \$200,401,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

9.13 p.m.

Programme: 252 – Business Development, Support and Promotion - \$405,792,000

Mr. Hamilton: Could the Minister indicate to the Assembly, at line item 6111, Administrative, what is responsible for the decrease of staff from two to zero? Secondly, could the Minister under Contracted Employees, line item 6116, indicate the designation and salary of the additional one staff member?

Mr. Gaskin: I will start with the second question on line item 6116. The additional staff member is a Senior Industrial Development Analyst. The salary for that position is \$198,791 per month. In the first question the Hon. Member asked that I explain the movement from two staff members to zero. One person retired and another moved on to take up appointment of Deputy Permanent Secretary within the Ministry.

Mr. Hamilton: Could the Minister clarify, for the benefit of the Assembly, whether, under “Administrative”, there are two vacancies to be filled at present?

Mr. Gaskin: Two vacancies under, which programme or line item?

Mr. Hamilton: I am talking about Administrative, line item 6111. You explained the decrease from two to zero. You did not go on to say the positions became redundant and, therefore, I am positive that suggests there are two vacancies to be filled, at the administration level.

Mr. Gaskin: There are indeed two vacancies.

Mr. Hamilton: Following on from the earlier answers that we do our calculations and tabulations based on four months expenditure, I refer the Minister to line item 6284, Other. The budgeted sum was \$964,000, the revised sum was \$570,000. If we use three by the four-month

period it would be about \$1.8 million. Yet in 2016 the budgeted sum asked for is \$8.1 million. Could you explain?

Mr. Gaskin: I thank the Hon. Member for learning so quickly. The \$8.1 million is going to be used for the procurement of a number of items such as design software for computerising our licensing section. We are also establishing a help desk and we will be requiring printed materials for that, brochure; the establishment and publishing of a national database of service providers, the preparation of reports and recommendations for policy development in areas of trade, price control and other forms of interventions, the reviewing of international agreements. These are additional activities which will be undertaking to be funded under that line item. There is an advertisement for consultancy on industrial policy and strategy. I think that covers that particular line item.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Minister for his statement. Hon. Members, I will allow two more questions.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, I can assure you that I have only one question. Line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, I note that the sum budgeted in 2015 was \$123 million and the revised sum stands the same. Presently, the sum asked for in 2016 is \$367.7 million. Could the Minister advise?

Mr. Gaskin: The \$367 million for 2015 represents the total amount budgeted for three subvention agencies, namely, the Guyana National Bureau of Standards with \$148,231,000, Guyana Office for Investment (GO-Invest) with \$170,252 and the Small Business Bureau with \$49,248,000. The difference in amounts between this year and last year represents additional activities being carried out by all three of those agencies, especially local travel, to all ten regions of Guyana; additional training. I think that covers the additional activities, the out of town visits and the additional training. That is what is taking the sum from \$123 million to \$367 million.

Mr. Chairman: This is the last speaker on this item. Hon. Member Mr. Ali, you have the floor.

Mr. Ali: Line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisation: Could the Hon. Minister say whether any of these organisations are revenue generating and, if so, whether the revenue derived has been paid over to the Consolidated Fund?

Mr. Gaskin: Yes. The Guyana National Bureau of Standards is revenue generating. At the end of last year there were no funds left.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, with your humble permission, the answer requires a follow-up. The Hon. Minister is saying that the Guyana National Bureau of Standards is revenue generating but that at the end of last year there were no funds. May I ask the Minister what occurred with those funds at the end of last year and under what authority were the funds utilised?

Mr. Gaskin: I am told that the bureau has over the years utilised funds from revenues generated to meet its budgetary shortfall. Apparently, it has been the practice for the Ministry of Finance to enquire as to the projected revenue for any given year and deduct that from the amount required for expenditure. Therefore at the end of the year there is not much left or very little left in the account.

Programme 252 – Business Development, Support and Promotion – \$405,792,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

9.28 p.m.

Programme: 253 - Consumer Protection - \$62,371,000

Mr. Hamilton: Under line item 6111, Administrative, we are moving administration from 0 to 1 person with \$1.9 million budgeted for salaries. Could the Minister advise the designation and salary of the person? Whilst I am on my feet maybe I could ask him about line item 6116, Contracted Employee, where there were zero employees and now there are four. Could he do the same thing that I have asked for line item 6111?

Mr. Gaskin: The mistake is forgiven. Line item 6111, the position is Director of Consumer Affairs and the salary is \$183,894. Under line item 6116 there are four employees, two Research Analysts, one at 76,464 per month and the other at \$72, 823 per month, one Research Assistant at \$58,014 per month and one Consumer Affairs Officer at \$76,464 per month.

Mr. Hamilton: Line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, we are moving from zero budgeted in 2015 to a proposal here for \$47.6 million. Could you advise the local organisations that this subsidy and contributions is going to?

Mr. Gaskin: The explanation is quite simple. The subsidy goes to the Competition and Consumer Affairs Commission as well as a number of small organisations. The Consumer Advisory Bureau gets \$500,000, the Consumer Movement of Guyana gets \$400,000 and the Guyana Consumers Association gets \$500,000 with the rest going to the Competition and Consumer Affairs Commission. Prior to 2016, the responsibility for consumer protection was that of the Ministry of Tourism and that was changed this year when the Ministry of Tourism became the Ministry of Public Telecommunications and the responsibility for consumer protection was given back to the Ministry of Business and therefore you would not have found an allocation for that particular programme under the Ministry of Business last year. I am not sure if that satisfies you.

Mr. Ali: The Competition and Consumer Affairs Commission, may I ask the Hon. Minister how much of these resources will be utilised to ensure that our sister Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries grant access to our local products to their market in a fair way, for example our poultry and agricultural products to Trinidad and Tobago?

Mr. Gaskin: The amount budgeted for the Competition and Consumer Affairs Commission is \$47, 115, 000. Unfortunately, I cannot say how much of that money will go towards the particular exercise that the Hon. Member has prescribed or suggested. I do not know if there is a methodology for working out that particular figure that he is seeking. Unfortunately, I cannot answer that question.

Of the \$47 million that is allocated, \$40,338,000 will go towards covering our employment cost. Our utility cost and a few other overheads will take care of the rest of those allocations. If you do the math, I do not think there is a whole lot of money that is going to go towards what you are recommending.

Mr. Ali: From the Minister's explanation, I have done the math. After covering the administrative cost, the Ministry is left with little or nothing and in the policy framework the Minister said that the Ministry is working towards protecting the border from illegal entry of goods. Now, how does the Ministry intend to protect the local producers of poultry and other poultry related products from the illegal importation if the Ministry does not have the resources?

Mr. Gaskin: Is there a particular line item that we are dealing with?

Mr. Ali: Yes Sir. It is protecting our consumers from inferior goods.

Mr. Gaskin: I assuming that the Hon. Member is referring to line item 6321?

Mr. Ali: Yes Sir.

Mr. Gaskin: He is referring to the Competition and Consumer Affairs Commission.

Mr. Ali: Yes Sir.

Mr. Gaskin: I am also assuming that the Hon. Member would have heard me say that this particular organisation was under the purview of the Minister of Tourism until the end of last year. Administratively, I think, it was until the end of February. I am asking for some understanding perhaps to be given to my lack of total familiarity with this particular organisation and I intend to rectify that over the coming weeks.

Mr. Ali: It is no problem, Sir. That is oaky.

Mr. Gaskin: Thank you.

Programme: 253 - Consumer Protection - \$62,371,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 251 – Policy Development and Administration - \$73,500,000

Mr. Hamilton: Project 1214700, Building: The budgeted sum is 55 million. We are talking about provision of stage, buildings, trestles and drains. The question: Could the Minister identify the projected cost for the four items mentioned? Secondly, outside of the four activities, is there any other activity that this \$55 million would cover?

Mr. Gaskin: The breakdown is as follows: the construction of a concrete outdoor stage - \$12 million, the three concrete trestles - \$2,038,000 million, the new auditorium, phase 1 - \$35 million and the concrete drains in the compound \$5,962,000. Those bring us to a total of \$55 million.

Mr. Hamilton: It is just for clarification. Are we talking about the Sophia Exhibition Complex?

Mr. Gaskin: That is correct.

Mr. Hamilton: Project 2406300, Land Transport: A provision here for a purchase of a vehicle, \$8.5 million. Could the Minister indicate what kind of vehicle for \$8.5 million that we are talking about?

Mr. Gaskin: The vehicle in question is a four-wheel drive pickup truck and it will be used for the entire Ministry's out of town visits.

Mr. Hamilton: Is it a four-wheel drive pickup truck?

Mr. Gaskin: A four-wheel drive pickup truck, yes.

9.43 p.m.

Mr. Hamilton: Project 2508500, Office Equipment: Could the Minister indicate the equipment that he is likely to purchase, utilising the \$10 million requested?

Mr. Gaskin: I can go through the entire list. There are eight computers, one industrial UPS, two laptops, six multi-purpose printers, 27 semi-executive chairs, eight desks, three air-conditioned units, two paper shredders, four filing cabinets, four carpets, one book case, 13 visitor's chairs, two wooden tables, one ladder, one heavy-duty drill, one television, one guillotine, one binding machine, one laminating machine, one plastic fold up table, one refrigerator, seven fans, one ceiling fan, two UPS. That is it.

Mr. Hamilton: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Just to make a point, Sir. When I ask a question, Mr. Minister – very gracefully, I just want the category of the items, I do not want the list and that would suffice for me.

Mr. Chairman: Honourable Mr. Hamilton, I see you raised your hand. Is that in surrender, or...?

Mr. Hamilton: No. I was going on to the other, but I just realise that that completes Programme 251. I was going to ask a question under Programme 252.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you have the floor if you so wish it.

Mr. Hamilton: No Sir.

Mr. Chairman: You raised your hand in surrender. That is fine.

Mr. Hamilton: No. I am saying that Programme 251, Policy Development and Administration, the last item was based on the question I asked and the Minister answered. That has to be put for us to finish this and move on.

Programme: 251 – Policy Development and Administration – \$73,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 252 – Business Development, Support and Promotion - \$471,603,000

Mr. Hamilton: Project 3401900, GO-INVEST: Three items are identified to be expended under the \$26.5 million. Could the Minister give us a breakdown by the categories there is here listed, the cost?

Mr. Gaskin: I cannot give you a breakdown of the cost. I can give you a list of items, since we had submitted a longer list for a larger amount, and the entire amount was not approved. We have to sort of redistribute whatever funds we have received and we have not done that as yet. The items, which are going to be purchased, are one vehicle, one laptop computer, or I should just say office equipment. There are a number of items of office equipment, and rehabilitation of the building.

Mr. Hamilton: I note that even with the subtraction at the Ministry of Finance, I would suppose, that of the \$26.5 million, the Ministry of Business must be in a position to say that we will spend 'x' of this for the construction, we would spend 'x' of this for the vehicle or vehicles, and we would spend 'x' for the purchase of office equipment.

Mr. Gaskin: The vehicle was budgeted at \$10 million. The rehabilitation of the building is now budgeted at \$10 million and the remainder will go towards the office equipment.

Programme: 252 – Business Development, Support and Promotion - \$471,603,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 253 – Consumer Protection - \$2,150,000

Mr. Hamilton: Project 4403000, Competition and Consumer Protection Commission: It is just for clarification. For \$2.150 million, it is stating purchase of equipment and payment of retention. Could the Minister indicate to us what retention he is talking about, and to whom, and disaggregate what is for equipment and what is for the retention payment?

Mr. Gaskin: The retention is in the amount of \$638,346. It is for the balance on a walkway and concrete slab that was put down in the National Exhibition Centre, Sophia Compound. It is payable to Nabi Construction and Engineering Inc.

Programme: 253 – Consumer Protection - \$2,150,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we must have a motion at this time, Hon. Prime Minister.

Assembly resumed.

Suspension of Standing Order No. 10

Mr. Nagamootoo: If it pleases you, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move that this House continues to meet until 11.00 p.m. to continue the consideration of Estimates on this sheet before us but not beyond 11.00 p.m.

Motion carried.

In Committee of Supply.

Agency: 21 – Ministry of Agriculture

Current Expenditure

Programme: 211 – Ministry of Administration –\$13,382,826,000

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6113, Other Technical and Craft Skilled: Could the Hon. Minister give us the designations of the three additional persons and their salaries that would have resulted with the allocation moving from \$7.5 million to \$9.9 million?

Minister of Agriculture [Mr. Holder]: The three employees are Assistant Accountants employed with effect from July and August 2015. The salaries are \$62,451, \$72,502 and \$74,924 monthly, respectively.

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6115, Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled: There is a reduction of staff by one person but there is an increase in allocation by about \$200,000. Could the Hon. Minister give us an explanation?

Mr. Holder: Although there is one Cleaner who resigned with effect from February 2015, there were salary increases, generally, which caused the difference. It was the 5%, I think.

9.58 p.m.

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: We have an increase of 25. Would the Hon. Minister provide us with the designations, date of appointments and salaries of each of the additional 25 employees? Would the Hon. Minister lay over for our benefit, the designations and salaries of each of the contracted employees?

Mr. Holder: I can supply information on the increase for the 25 employees who came on. In terms of the names and designations of the other total contracted employees, I can make that available to the Hon. Member within 24 hours.

The increase from 175 to 200 is due to 25 Public Service Ministry's new recruits. This included two Public Relations Officers (PROs) with effect from September, 2015 - salary \$99,777; seven Crop Extension Officers with effect from September, 2015 – salary \$175,754; one Planner with effect from June, 2015 – salary \$175,753; 10 Engineers with effect from September, 2015 – salary \$175,754; one Agronomist with effect from May, 2015 and one Plant Protection Officer with effect from September, 2015 – salaries \$175,754; one Livestock Extension Assistant with effect from September, 2015 – salary \$52,656; and one Quarantine Officer with effect from September, 2015 – salary \$175,754.

Mr. G. Persaud: Follow-up under line item 6116: Could the Hon. Minister say to us what method of recruitment was used, whether it was a public advertisement and if it was, would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to lay-over a copy of that advertisement for the benefit of us.

Mr. Holder: As I said before, these were 25 Public Service Ministry's new recruits who were sent to the Ministry of Agriculture from the Public Service Ministry. There was no advertisement or no recruitment as such. They were scholarship students.

Mr. G. Persaud: My final question under this Programme. Line item 6117: We had 20 employees under this line item in 2015. We are seeing zero employees in 2016. Could an explanation be provided as to whether these employees are still with the Ministry of Agriculture or what would have been the state of affairs?

Mr. Holder: These temporary employees were Gardeners who were assigned to the Ministers' residences. They now fall under the Parliament Office. They were removed completely from the Ministry of Agriculture. There is no budget for them anymore.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Mustapha, do you require the floor, sir?

Mr. Mustapha: Yes, Sir. Under line item 6242: Could the Hon. Minister give us a breakdown on those buildings that were maintained in 2015 and those that are now earmarked for maintenance in 2016?

Mr. Holder: This concerns the maintenance of the Head Office Building; routine maintenance, electricity, carpentry and plumbing to the Ministry's building. The increase is due to the changing of outer walls of the main building, which have rotted.

Mr. Mustapha: Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Could the Hon. Minister say what other infrastructure will be benefitting from maintenance under this line item?

Mr. Holder: It concerns the payment for the repairs to the perimeter fence, the recapping of the drive-way and to recap and tile the Voucher Room floor that is in a poor state, all at the Head Office.

Mr. Mustapha: Under Line item 6272: In light of the reduction in fuel costs and the substantial increase in electricity costs that we are seeing here which amounts to about \$1 million, could the Hon. Minister say why this big increase of \$30 million? Last year it was only \$17 million.

Mr. Holder: We have taken on 25 new recruits and there are office spaces for them. A lot of this amount is for electricity to the new accommodation for the new recruits.

Mr. Mustapha: Follow-up: Are these pumps electrically operated?

Mr. Holder: I am not sure what pumps the Hon. Member is talking about.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, would you repeat the question?

Mr. Mustapha: I am saying that the Hon. Minister spoke about sluices, electricity and some pump stations. Are these pumps electrically operated or by fuel?

Mr. Holder: I spoke about accommodation for recruits. I am not sure where pumps and so on...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I think that perhaps, what was conveyed to you was not what the Minister said. Perhaps you would like to repeat the question and have another answer. It can be difficult, Hon. Member if you could not hear the Minister clearly.

Mr. Mustapha: It is okay, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Does that mean you would no longer pursue the question?

Mr. Mustapha: No, I will not pursue it.

Mr. Seeraj: Line item 6294: There is a significant increase in "Other". Could the Hon. Minister you give us a break down of this significant amount of \$36 million?

Mr. Holder: This represents facilitating the payments of stipends and other related costs incurred by the Rice Assessment Committee (RAC) which is about \$4.6 million; the "Jagdeo Initiative" - \$1.6 million; the Food and Nutrition Strategy - \$5.4 million; Hinterland Development - \$7.5 million; the Agriculture Disaster Risk Management Plan - \$2.3 million; Monitoring and Evaluation Unit - \$7 million; and Ministry Administration - \$8 million.

Mr. Seeraj: Line item 6321 - \$12.4 billion, Hon. Minister could you say if there is any amount of money here or part of that \$23 billion that was promised to rice farmers, that represents any contribution to the rice industry?

Mr. Holder: No, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Seeraj: If not, could the Hon. Minister give us a break down of this \$12.4 billion?

Mr. Holder: If we turn to page 576, Mr. Chairman, we will find the break-down which shows: National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) - \$1.7 billion; Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA) - \$229 million; Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA) - \$458 million; Mahaica/Mahaicony/Abary/Agriculture Development Authority (MMA/ADA) - \$135 million; Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals and Control Board (PTCCB) - \$14.8 million; the Guyana Marketing Corporation (GMC) - \$135.8 million; GuySuCo - \$9 billion; Hope Estate - \$3 million; National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) - \$762 million and the Guyana Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (GSPCA) - \$400,000.

Mr. Anamayah: Under the same heading, the subsidy for Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo), I see it is reflected as \$9 billion. My two questions to the Hon. Minister: Would this be enough, in light of the fact that GuySuCo had requested \$12 billion? The Hon. Prime Minister had stated at a get-together in New York that \$12 billion would be given to the Corporation.

Secondly, for the \$9 billion, could we have the specifics of what exactly the sum would be used for, perhaps the programme or a breakdown?

Mr. Holder: Yes, Mr. Chairman, with some re-adjustments the sum will, on a break-down, give us Judicial Strengthening - \$2.3 billion; Creditors, Operating Suppliers and Services/Fertilisers - \$2.1 billion; Fuel and Lubricants - \$2.54 billion; Freight and Other Shipping Services Providers - \$1.5 million; and Contractors in general - \$469 million, making a total of \$9 billion.

Mr. Lumumba: Mr. Chairman, I always seek your help whenever I try to seek the Minister's help. I have been trying to identify the area or the role that the Minister of Agriculture would play in stimulating the village economies. I am trying to figure out which line item the money is allocated under. Could the Minister humbly assist me? I want to work with the Minister.

Mr. Chairman: Do you have a question for the Minister?

Mr. Lumumba: Yes. Could the Minister please identify the area that the Ministry of Agriculture would play in ensuring that the village economy becomes a productive sector in Guyana? I cannot identify it under any line item. I am trying to figure out where it is.

Mr. Holder: The stimulation of village economy, I imagine that will cover a number of Ministries, including the Ministry of Communities; the Ministry of Agriculture would be the

Drainage and Irrigation Department, which have to do with the drainage and looking after sluices, *et cetera*; the Guyana Livestock Authority helping in the question of the developments of the cattle, sheep and goats; and the National Agriculture Institute with its crop programmes. I am not sure what exactly the Hon. Member would like from me.

Mr. Lumumba: I would assume that a capable Minister of Agriculture ... [*Interruption*] I never said he was incapable... [*Interruption*] Let me complete. Why are they so defensive?

10.13 p.m.

The Minister has just indicted that the Ministry of Agriculture will have a role to play with the infrastructure development. Has the Hon. Minister identified the quantum or how much money he would allocate to the development of the village economy?

Ms. Ally: What line item are you talking under?

Mr. Lumumba: The Minister did not say what line item. The Minister must say what line item. The Minister cannot willy nilly spend the people money.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, once you have asked the question let it suffice and give the Minister a chance the answer.

Mr. Lumumba: I agree with you.

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, I was under the impression that we were considering Agency: 21- Ministry of Agriculture, Administration. What the Hon. Member is asking about falls under a number of other projects like raid and things of that nature, which is not what we are discussing right now. Mr. Chairman, could you advise me how to respond to the Hon. Gentleman, bearing in mind that we are looking at Agency 21: Ministry of Agriculture – Programme: 211- Ministry Administration?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Lumumba, do you have another meeting there? The Chairman is seeking to address the question you raised.

Mr. Lumumba: Mr. Chairman, were you speaking to me? I did not hear you Sir. Mr. Chairman, I would always respond if I hear you. I have too much respect for you not hear you.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the difficulty the Minister of Agriculture has is that he is unclear as to what it is that you want him to answer. Is it possible that you can make your question clearer?

Mr. Lumumba: Yes Sir, I will attempt to. The Minister had indicated that several Ministries would be involved in the development of the village economies. He also said that his Ministry would probably be dealing with things like drainage and irrigation. So, all I was asking is whether he had determined how much money he will spend in a village and what type of drainage and irrigation work he would do? He must have some idea of this budget.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, can you shed greater light?

Mr. Holder: Perhaps if the Hon. Member could tell me which particular village he is interested in, I would be able to channel my thoughts towards it. Bearing in mind how all-embracing the Ministry of Agriculture is and all the areas it covers.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we would have to move on. It seems that the Minister, in the absence of a line item to direct his mind, cannot answer your question in the manner in which you put it.

Mr. Holder: Could I perhaps attempt to put the Hon. Member problem or concern at rest. I suspect he is concerned about the village of Buxton because I know that under the CARICOM Development Fund, the Rural Agriculture Infrastructure Development Project, there are sums for Buxton, Ithaca, Triumph, and Mocha, a \$200 million estimated cost, among others.

Ms. Manickchand: Hon. Minister, when you were answering an early question, I am sorry it came so late, it just took long for me to get recognise, you were answering the Hon. Member, Mr. Seeraj, and you said that money was allocated under, I believe it was, line item 6284 – Vehicles Spares and Services or line item 6294 – Other, for the Rice Assessment Committees. When are the Rice Assessment Committees going to be appointed? I know that the Rice Assessment Committee for Region 5 has not been functioning since last September, nor in Region 6, I am told. You would know Hon. Minister that this is the first tribunal where Landlords who rent rice lands would go to for relief. In the absence of these tribunals, these landlords are finding it extremely difficult. When are they going to be appointed?

Mr. Holder: What I can say here is that the Committee has been appointed. It should be going for gazetting shortly or probably almost immediately and it should be in place, hopefully, within a week, depending on how soon.

Mr. Chan: Line item 6131 - Other Direct Labour Costs: Could we have an explanation as to what category of labourers this item covers. And, secondly, what is the explanation for the massive increase of over 100% in expenditure for this year for the same line item?

As I am on my feet, Mr. Chairman, could I ask the last question? The Minister referred to an allocation of \$9 billion to GuySuCo. In view of the Prime Minister's announcement of \$12 billion, will the remaining \$3 billion be provided in a supplemental budget later this year?

Mr. Holder: I am not sure what the question was Mr. Chairman. I did not get it clearly concerning GuySuCo.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Chan, would you wish to shorten your questions so that the Minister can get the gist of them?

Mr. Chan: Yes. Mr. Chairman, the question is with respect to line item 6131- Other Direct Labour Costs, could the Hon. Minister indicate what category of labourers this item covers? Secondly, what is the explanation for this massive increase in expenditure of almost 100%? The Minister announced the grant of \$9 billion to the Guyana Sugar Cooperation and the Prime Minister announced a release of \$12 billion. Will the remaining \$3 billion be made available to GuySuCo later this year in a supplemental budget?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I hope that the matters are now clearer to you.

Mr. Holder: They are much clearer Mr. Chairman. With regards to the increase to 774 from 321, I am advised that it has to do with the question of allowances, overtime, and gratuities that need to be paid at this point in time for the number new employees that I mentioned who were hired. They were hired on contracts, with a 22 % gratuity that has to be paid. That is the other cost, a part from their salary.

On the question of GuySuCo, I think that most of us in this room, certainly on this side of the House and of course on that side too, know that when we ask for funds, we would request \$100

million in our budgets, and the Minister of Finance very often time cannot find the \$100 million and he would give what he can afford, bearing in mind your Ministry's needs. So, while there was a request for \$12 billion, all that the budget could afford was \$9 billion. Therefore, GuySuCo had to go back to the drawing board to see how it could cut and contrive, as we all did on this side of the House. That basically is the short hand side.

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration - \$13,382,826,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 213 – Fisheries - \$140,717,000

Mr. G. Persaud: Line Item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There is an increase by one in terms of number of contracted employees. The allocation has increase by 15.1% which is \$7 million. Will the Hon. Minister be kind enough to tell us the designation, salary, and the effective date on which the employee came on board? Will the Hon. Minister be kind enough to provide us with the designations, salaries and the effective date of employment for all 28 employees listed under that line item? We can have that information laid over.

Mr. Holder: I can answer one of the questions right now, which is the additional employee and we can provide the information on the other 27 employees shortly before the end of the week or by tomorrow. The one person is a new recruit, who is a Senior Fisheries Officer at a salary of \$204,590. I think that should account for the difference of your 15%.

Mr. G. Persaud: My simple math of \$204,000 x 12 would not give me \$7 million.

Mr. Holder: I think that across the budgets, we will find that can kind of increase, largely because of the 5% increase in salaries last year to this year.

Mr. Mustapha: Line item 6242- Maintenance of Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister indicate, under this line item, which are the building earmarked for maintenance?

Mr. Holder: What is the line item again, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, can you repeat the line item?

Mr. Mustapha: The line item is 6242- Maintenance of Buildings. Could the Hon. Minister indicate which are the buildings earmarked for maintenance?

Mr. Holder: It is some repairs to the Satyadeow Sawh Fish Station at Mon Repos and at Tarlogie.

Mr. Mustapha: Line item 6294 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister state what constitute “Other” operating expenses under this line item?

Mr. Holder: Is it line item 6294 or 6284?

Mr. Mustapha: It is line item 6294.

10.28 p.m.

Mr. Holder: That line item is to purchase items such as mats, hand and kitchen towels, office utensils, cleaning agents, jerseys for the inspectors and other miscellaneous items for the department.

Mr. Seeraj: Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: There is an amount here, could the Hon. Minister could give us an idea of the National and Other Events that is budgeted for here.

Mr. Holder: That covers National Fisher Folks Day, Guyana Exposition (GuyExpo), Berbice Exposition, Essequibo Exposition, Caribbean Week of Agriculture and Agriculture Month activities and this year Guyana would be hosting the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Forum.

Programme: 213 – Fisheries – \$140,717,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services – \$529,038,000

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skilled: There is a reduction by one in terms of the staff entitlement, but there is an increase in the allocation for 2016. Could I ask the Hon. Minister, at the same time, if he could look at line item 6114 – Clerical and Other Support, where there is a similar decrease by one, but there is an increase in the allocation? Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There are 46 employees there, could the Hon. Minister could

layover for us the designations, salaries and the effective dates of when these employees would have come on board.

Mr. Holder: With regards to the reduction, one Hydromet Technical Assistant resigned so that caters for that. With regards to the overall increase for the whole department, as I said before, this has to do with the current situation of the 5% increase in salary across the board. Salaries were raised en bloc and that accounts for the difference.

The other information we will provide, as I said before, for the other agency.

Mr. Chairman: Would you layover the information as was requested by the Hon. Member, Mr. G. Persaud?

Mr. Holder: Yes.

Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services – \$529,038,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration – \$2,862,055,000

Mr. Seeraj: Project code 1301600 – National Drainage and Irrigation Authority: I noticed a significant reduction here in the allocation for this year as against last year - about \$600 million less. Could the Minister indicate to this House if this is an indication of the Government's deemphasising importance of drainage and irrigation?

Mr. Holder: There is less of a rollover this year than there were in previous years. It is only \$400 million rolling over due to the improve monitoring of the section. There is \$1 billion for new projects during the course of this year.

Mr. Seeraj: If I could have a follow-up question. In view of the intended closure of the Wales Estate, these estates provide a lot of drainage services to surrounding communities, I am wondering if the Minister, in this Budget, made provisions under this project code 1301600 – National Drainage and Irrigation Authority, to take up the provision of drainage and irrigation for that particular community with the intended closure of the Wales Estate.

Mr. Holder: I think the Hon. Member wavering under a misconception. First of all, the Wales Estate is not being closed either this year or any year. The Factory is being close and Estate is been merged with Uitvlugt. Furthermore, is it not going to happen this year, so the question of any drainage and irrigation effect for this year is premature because the situation remains the same for 2016?

Mr. Seeraj: In the legend it says:

“Completion, construction and rehabilitation of drainage and irrigation canals, pump stations and other structures and payment of retention.”

Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough as to provide the details of the canals, pump stations and other structures, especially locations by each region, and a breakdown? If at the same time, the Minister could provide a list of each contract sign, the value of those contracts, the percentage of works completed, the amount paid to each contractor and the retention.

Mr. Holder: There is so much that I would probably need to supply the details to the Hon. Members, separately. There are a number of sluices in Regions 2, 3, and 4 and the pumping stations. It is a lot.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, but you surely could provide it to the Hon. Member, not this evening, but on another occasion?

Mr. Holder: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, this would be the absolutely last question I am permitting. I will put the question after this.

Mr. Dharamlall: Could I ask the Hon. Minister whether GuySuCo will continue to provide the D & I services on the Wales Estate agricultural lands.

Mr. Holder: Question asked and question answered. Nothing will change at the Wales Estate this year.

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration – \$2,862,055,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 212 – Crops and Livestock Support Services - \$1,129,000,000

Mr. G. Persaud: Project Code 1405500 – Rural Agricultural Infrastructure Development: There is an allocation of \$200 million. The Estimates in Volume 3 states:

“The project entails provision of design and supervision of critical agricultural infrastructure interventions in selected communities”.

Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to share with us the communities where these interventions will take place, and at the same time to say if the Mainstay Road is included in those communities?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, could you treat this question?

Mr. Holder: Yes, this is the project area I referred to when the Hon. Member, Mr. Lumumba, had asked this question just now. It really concerns infrastructural development for Buxton, Ithaca, Triumph and Mocha for \$200 million.

Programme: 212 – Crops and Livestock Support Services - \$1,129,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 213 – Fisheries - \$20,000,000

Programme: 213 – Fisheries - \$20,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services – \$43,550,000

10.43 p.m.

Mr. Seeraj: Mr. Chairman, I have consulted Volume 3 of the Estimates but can the Hon. Minister give us a breakdown for this amount for the different items mentioned?

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

Mr. Seeraj: Sir, it is project code 2100100 – Hydrometeorology?

Mr. Holder: There are four parts to this. The first is expansion of the National Weather Watch Centre at Hyde Park, Timehri - \$6,691,757; the construction of multipurpose building in

Mabaruma, Region 1 - \$6.3 million; expansion and reactivation of the hydrological water quality laboratory and storage bond in Brickdam at the headquarters - \$20 million; and the purchase of the automatic weather stations and tidal gauges at the old rifle ranges at Timehri and at Supenaam in Region 2 - \$10.5 million, giving a total of \$43,550,000.

Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services - \$43,550,000 agreed to and ordered to stand party of the Estimates.

Agency: 17 Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs

Current Expenditure

Programme: 171 – Policy Development and Administration - \$776,533,000

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Under line item 6111 – Administrative – could the Hon. Minister explain the reason for the increase, what the categories of workers are who are benefiting from the increase and which position benefits the most with regard to this increase?

Minister of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs [Mr. Allicock]: There is an increase because a Deputy Permanent Secretary (DPS) was employed. The other positions are Procurement Officer, Accountant, Administrative Assistant, Chief Accountant and Personnel Officer.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: The Hon. Member did not respond to the question with respect to which position benefitted the most from this increase?

Mr. Allicock: The Deputy PS.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House what the amount for benefit for the DPS is?

Mr. Allicock: It is \$273,520.

Mr. Dharamlall: Under line item 6111 - Administrative – could the Hon. Minister state whether the DPS position is a new position within the structure of the Ministry and what recruitment procedures were executed to recruit the DPS?

Mr. Allicock: The position was advertised, application was received and that was how she was interviewed and selected.

Mr. Dharamlall: Follow-up question: I asked whether it is a new position created within the organogram of the Ministry.

As a follow-up to the Minister's answer, could the Minister please provide the Assembly with a copy of the advertisement?

Mr. Allicock: It was not a new position.

Mr. Charlie: Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Could the Hon. Minister elucidate the execution of the said line item?

Mr. Allicock: Could the Hon. Member ask the question again?

Mr. Charlie: Could the Hon. Minister elucidate the execution of the said line item?

Mr. Allicock: I have a little difficulty understanding the question.

Mr. Charlie: I am simply asking the Hon. Minister to explain what will make up the sum budgeted for under this line item.

Mr. Allicock: This is for Maintenance of Other Infrastructure – guardhouse, washing and painting of trestle and the Amerindian Hostel.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Under line item 6116 – Contracted Employees – I notice there was an increase from 72 to 79, which means there are seven new contracted employees. Could the Hon. Minister tell this House the designations, dates of employment and salary scales of each of the seven new employees?

Mr. Allicock: Administrative Assistant to the Minister - \$120,000; Special Assistant - \$369,350; Special Assistant on Projects and Community Development - \$369,350; Typist Clerk - \$50,000; Confidential Secretary - \$65,565; Community Development Officer - \$76,464; and Handyman - \$56,178.

Mr. Chairman: I will now put the question, Hon. Members. We have five minutes to complete our work.

Programme: 171 – Policy Development and Administration - \$776,533,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 171 - Policy Development and Administration - \$1,407,000

10.58 p.m.

Programme: 171 - Policy Development and Administration - \$1,407,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, it would be true to say that we have managed to complete the work allotted to us for today. I thank you for your assistance and cooperation. Tomorrow, Tuesday, 16th February, 2016, we will start with the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: The Assembly is now in session. Hon. Prime Minister, please proceed.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Assembly be adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, 16th February, 2016 at 1.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: I thank you Hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Members, the House stands adjourned until Tuesday, 16th February, 2016, at 1.00 p.m.

Adjourned accordingly at 10.59 p.m.