

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

30TH Sitting

Tuesday, 16th February, 2016

Assembly convened at 1.07 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Reports were laid:

1. The Family Court Rules 2016 – No. 1 of 2016. *[The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs]*
2. Annual Report of the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission for the year 2014. *[The Minister of Natural Resources]*

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTION

MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2016

“WHEREAS the Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana requires that Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for any financial year should be laid before the National Assembly;

AND WHEREAS the Constitution also provides that when the Estimates of Expenditure have been approved by the Assembly an Appropriation Bill shall be introduced in the Assembly providing for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet that expenditure;

AND WHEREAS the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the financial year 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. *[The Minister of Finance]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Assembly will resolve itself into Committee of Supply to continue consideration of the Estimates of Expenditure for the year 2016.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply

Agency: 26 Ministry of Natural Resources

Current Expenditure

Programme: 261- Policy Development and Administration - \$219,441,000

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6116- Contracted Employees: I noticed that the staffing details state that there are 56 in number. Could the Minister kindly give us the emoluments and the designations?

Minister of Natural Resources [Mr. Trotman]: As indicated during Budget debate proper and yesterday, we do have a complement of 56 persons, 31 of whom are contracted persons who were on from scholarships. I have a list which I promise to submit and I will do so momentarily. It has a breakdown of everyone.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6284 – Other: I see that there is a sum of \$8,950,000 budgeted. Could you give us a breakdown, please?

Mr. Trotman: Whilst attending meetings with the Budget Director and her staff, we impressed upon her that, given the fact that Guyana is moving into being an oil producing State, we needed to recruit expertise in the form of a Consultant to advise Government in this area and this sum was set aside for that purpose.

Mr. Neendkumar: Could the Minister state if this Consultant would be advertised for?

Mr. Trotman: Yes. The Terms of Reference (ToR) are being prepared. In fact, advertisements will also have to be sent out internationally because of the nature of the specific skillset that is required. So, there will be advertisements both locally and internationally.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6272 - Electricity Charges: There is a total of \$14,726,000. Could you tell us which are the buildings and where the locations are?

Mr. Trotman: Currently, the Ministry is occupying a building which is owned by the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC). With the new Minister within the Ministry coming on board with her staff, we are cramped for space and we are in the process of acquiring new accommodations. It is a Government building; we would not be renting. Therefore, in anticipation of electricity bills, we are budgeting for this in advance.

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6281 - Security Services: I see that \$13,758,000 is budgeted. Could you tell us whether this was tendered for and which is the security service?

Mr. Trotman: Upon assuming stewardship of the Department and then the Ministry, we found one security company – GEB - there and that company has continued in place. We have not attempted to move them.

Mr. Lumumba: Hon. Minister, of the 58 contracted employees, could you state how many, if any, are assigned to the oil and gas sector. If any are assigned to the oil and gas sector, what are the designations of those?

Mr. Trotman: None at present would be assigned to the oil and gas sector. There were scholarships awarded under the hand of the former Minister of the Public Service Ministry (PSM) in the areas of Metallurgical Engineering and Forestry and Environment. We do have a few trained persons in the oil and gas sector. Some are in the GGMC currently and some are with the Guyana Energy Agency (GEA) and we are currently speaking with international companies and universities, including the University of the West Indies (UWI) and the University of Guyana (UG), to have a complement of trained staff in the oil and gas sector.

Mr. Lumumba: Line item 6115- Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled: Could you explain to this honourable House: of the 58 contracted employees, how many are semi-skilled, how many are skilled and what are their duties in the particular areas?

Mr. Trotman: Under line item 6115, there is zero allocation. I believe that a mistake has been made.

Mr. Lumumba: Well, it is line item 6116- Contracted Employees.

Mr. Trotman: I can give the skillset. The document that I have will speak to that. It includes Permanent Secretary, Accounts Clerks, Forest Rangers, Environmental Officers, Health Officers, Drivers, Administrative Assistants, one Legal Officer, a few Engineers and a Cleaner.

Mr. Lumumba: Line item 6321 - Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Would any of the budgeted amounts be used to implement a process that will lead to more land being available to small miners and what would be the percentage of the increase? Should the answer to this question be in the affirmative, how soon will this process begin? Would there be any confirmation of the date?

Mr. Trotman: Again, the amount under line item 6321 is zero, but I have no difficulty in answering the question, vis-à-vis small miners.

Mr. Lumumba: Please do.

Mr. Trotman: At the beginning of the year, the Ministry held a consultation, a conversation if I may say so, with small miners, ably supported by the Minister within the Ministry, the Hon. Member Ms. Broomes. We have given a commitment, within the first three months of the year, to identify lands, not new lands because as we would have seen most are gone. We are looking at lands that have been returned in what is known as the closed area to see how best those can be reallocated. That commitment has been given for the identification, within three months, but the process will, of course, be on-going throughout the year.

Mr. Lumumba: Line item 6111 – Administrative: Would any of these funds be used to hire a specialist lawyer or lawyers who will be tasked to develop appropriate legislation to protect small miners who operate on other second party properties? Remember, we spoke about the problem of small miners being chased off the land of medium and large scale miners. I am trying to figure whether, under line item 6111- Administrative, any funds will be utilised to hire a specialist lawyer or lawyers to do this work.

Mr. Trotman: Line item 6111 has a sum of \$1,861,000 which caters for a public service position that is already filled. It does not take lawyers into account. We do have legal officers at the GGMC. They have already been tasked with assisting both the Commission and the Ministry with coming up with the programme and the plan as to how we are going to be addressing the issue of land. If I may add as well please, His Excellency has determined that there will be a land commission appointed this year. That commission will look at all aspects of land - agricultural, mining, forestry, Amerindian land titles and extensions as well as ancestral lands.

Ms. Teixeira: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: The Hon. Member said that he has the list available. Could he circulate that now, as we are still awaiting the list that we requested yesterday from the Hon. Member Mr. Harmon? If he has it in his hand, could he please circulate it now? As they say, a bird in hand is worth two in the bushes. Thank you.

1.22 p.m.

Mr. Lumumba: Hon. Minister, line item 6111 – Administrative: I understand, Hon. Minister, that that money has already been allocated. Therefore, I am sure that the Minister would be comfortable in answering whether there is any money in the system that would create a mechanism that would lead to access to capital for small miners, especially in the areas of acquisition of equipment and start-up capital.

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, with the greatest of intentions, though we empathise with the concerns and the condition of the small miners, neither the GGMC nor the Ministry are loan agencies. We can, however, and are pursuing initiatives with micro lenders and other banks and we will be speaking to the Hon. Minister of Finance for 2017's budget to see if so, and to what extent we can have a window for small miners. But, in this Budget, there are no such facilities.

Mr. Dharamlall: Programme 261 - Policy Development and Administration: The Hon. Minister just mentioned that a land commission is supposed to be established during 2016, and one of the things that the land commission will seek to deal with is Amerindian land titling. Could the Hon. Minister, therefore, please confirm whether Amerindian land titling has been put on hold until the commission is established?

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, with the greatest of respect, that is not a matter under my purview. It is at the discretion of His Excellency the President and I am considering the Estimates that are before me. I can neither confirm nor deny anything about the speed or lack of with regards to extensions. Thank you.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, with respect to the land commission, is it that the land commission will be set up and will be in breach of the Amerindian Act? It is because under the Amerindian Act, there is a mechanism and procedure already established for dealing with indigenous lands.

Mr. Trotman: Again, with the greatest of respect, I do not believe that such a question would be permissible, given the fact that we are considering the estimates for the Ministry of Natural Resources. Thank you.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): The Indigenous people are very closely related to many of our natural resource locales and I am asking, under

Training (including Scholarships), what is the intention of the Ministry of Natural Resources with respect to training of Indigenous individuals and young people with respect to the natural resource sectors.

Mr. Trotman: There is on-going training throughout the year but these will be for safety in mines, new techniques, management of the environment, and issues of land reclamation and, of course, our Amerindian brothers and sisters would benefit. In terms of scholarships, those would come under the Ministry of Public Service which is now housed within the Ministry of the Presidency.

Mr. Dharamlall: Under line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence, could the Hon. Minister indicate whether his Ministry will participate, along with the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples’ Affairs, in travelling to resolve conflict issues in Amerindian areas, for example, in Tasserine?

Mr. Trotman: We are already collaborating with many Ministries, but particularly with the Ministry of Communities, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples’ Affairs. We anticipate that there will be joint visits. No specific area has been as yet identified but as the issues arise we will respond to the best of our ability.

Mr. Lumumba: Hon. Minister, I am listing line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, but since these funds apparently are not catered for under Administrative, which has just over \$1 million, he may have to identify an answer since we are here to provide clarity for each other. The question I want to ask you is: does the funding under Administrative or Other cover the management and activities for the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS)?

Mr. Trotman: To the best of my knowledge and ability, I believe that matters arising under the Low Carbon Development Strategy, which is now known as the Green Economy Strategy, come under the Office of Climate Change (OCC) and the Project Management Office (PMO) and not the Ministry of Natural Resources. I am unable to answer any questions with regards to LCDS or anything deriving from that.

Mr. Dharamlall: Line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence: Could the Hon. Minister state whether the Ministry is aware of outstanding conflict issues regarding Amerindian lands in Tasserine vis-à-vis agencies within the purview of the Hon. Minister?

Mr. Trotman: We are unaware of these so-called conflict issues but we invite any Member of the House or member of the public to bring them forward, so that they may be addressed in a timely manner.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Under line item 6116 – Contracted Employees, I noticed that there are 56 workers. Could the Minister tell us how many of the 56 contracted workers are going to be deployed in the area of forestry?

Mr. Trotman: It is contained in the information that I provided, but if I am permitted ten seconds to do some accounting, it appears that 15 of them will be Forest Rangers and Forest Engineers. The information is contained in the document which I have submitted.

Mr. Lumumba: I am going to go back to line item 6321 because it is vague. The Hon. Minister, in his presentation, produced a document which he claims shows that the productive lands in Guyana had disappeared. My understanding, Mr. Chairman, is that there are 5,000,548 hectares of land available...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, state the line item and the question.

Mr. Lumumba: The Minister and I have an understanding about the line item on this issue.

Mr. Chairman: It must be that the Speaker too understands.

Mr. Lumumba: Alright, Mr. Chairman. It is line item 6321- Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Please proceed with the question.

Mr. Lumumba: The Minister knows my question. The question is: would the Minister ensure that the remaining 5,000,548 hectares of State lands would be surveyed and accessed so that the nation can determine what the balance of productive lands in Guyana is?

Mr. Trotman: I do not know whether I can attempt a response but certainly not an answer because there is zero budgeted under that line item and so there is nothing really to respond to. However, the issue of state lands and forested lands is obviously a vexed one. I have noticed that the press has taken it up and the Hon. Member may rest assured that this Government would do all within its power to preserve the patrimony of Guyana – whatever little may be left – and to return and to recover that which some believe they have in their possession.

Mr. Lumumba: Mr Chairman, he did not answer the question that I asked. We are trying to get outside of the realms of propaganda. I recognise that there is zero funding. All I am asking the Hon. Minister is: of the 5 million hectares that are remaining, which have not been assessed, when would he ensure that this amount is assessed so we will know what the productive balance is? That is what I asked the Minister.

Mr. Trotman: Again, there being zero allocation under that line item, I am not obliged to answer, but imagine the prospect of what is being suggested. It is that if anything remains, we must also cut that up and give it out too. No. We are not going to do that.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Under line item 6291 – National and Other Events, I would take it that other events could mean mining week, *et cetera*. Could the Minister tell this House how much of the \$950,000 is going to the Mashramani events sponsored by his Ministry or has the Ministry abandoned that?

Mr. Trotman: I am happy that the Hon. Member noted the figure set aside for annual events throughout the year. It is \$950,000. It would not be used for Mashramani, but will be used for other cultural events as they come up. We do get solicitations for moneys for different events - Amerindian Heritage Month or Diwali or during Emancipation activities - and we try our best, in the office, to apportion what we have to spread out for the year to embrace all cultures and all heritage celebrations.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Is it that the Minister is telling us that he is not putting anything towards the Mashramani, more so particularly that Mashramani represents an Indigenous word?

Mr. Trotman: That is a quantum leap, if one may describe it as that. We have never said so. I think it is now widely known and accepted that there will not be heightened Mashramani

celebrations this year. In any event, the Ministry of Education is spearheading that effort. We can only come along side it as best as we can, but we are not the primary or principal Ministry that takes care of Amerindian celebrations. Of course, as always, I recognise the concern, a concern shared by me because I do have some of that blood in me as well.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I will allow two other speakers to ask questions on this matter.

Ms. Teixeira: I want to thank the Hon. Member for providing the list of contract employees under the three programmes that we have to look at today. On page 179, it states that there are 56 contracted employees. However, under Programme 261: Policy Development and Administration, there are 20 contracted employees because the others relate to Programme 262 and Programme 263, Natural Resources Management and Environmental Management respectively. The document states that there are 56, but the positions are only 20.

I note that your personal assistant is receiving \$409,250, as are the two legal officers. What we cannot tell from your submission is the numbers of persons. It only caters for the posts and the salaries. Could you provide us with the differential between 56 and 20?

Mr. Trotman: We gave the list of contracted employees as requested yesterday and the differential is, as I said, that there are 20 within the Ministry itself and the other 36 are in the various agencies. Two are permanent.

1.37 p.m.

Ms. Teixeira: As there are no personnel under the Minister of Natural Resources, Programme 2, and there are no the persons under the programme of Environmental Management, could the Minister please explain why Forest Managers and Forest Rangers, approximately ten of them, are in the Ministry and not in the Guyana Forestry Commission? Could the Ministry advise us? Is the Ministry running a parallel forestry programme? To my knowledge, rangers are specific to the Guyana Forestry Commission.

Mr. Trotman: I am so grateful for the question being asked. I have in hand a copy of one such contract signed by the former Minister of the Public Service Ministry, dated November 27, 2014. If I may, to answer the question, the contract states: "We wish to introduce..." - the named person - "...who was granted a Government of Guyana scholarship to pursue a degree and the

person has since completed. We would be grateful if you can arrange to have the said person placed within the Ministry.” We then assumed responsibility in 2015 and that person was sent to the Guyana Forestry Commission. The person is not physically within the...

Ms. Teixeira: There are 18 such persons.

Mr. Trotman: All such persons we inherited under the signature of the former Minister for the Public Service Ministry, whose name I would not mention because that person is a Member of the House today. That happened in 2014. As I said yesterday, we have continued the practice and have not thrown them out. They are all still gainfully employed in the various agencies.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6116, Contracted Employees: On the document that was just circulated by the Hon. Minister there are two Personal Assistants, one who is earning \$100,000 and one who is \$409,000. My first question: Could the Hon. Minister explain the differential and what are the duties of these individuals? Secondly, the Adviser to the Minister, I assume, is earning \$530,000. Could he indicate to the Assembly the expertise of this individual?

Mr. Trotman: Sir, at the outset I asked for two days to supply the full list of duties. Second, both the Personal Assistant and Adviser hold postgraduate masters and post masters qualifications. The other Personal Assistant is also highly skilled in his area of service. Sir, these are Personal Assistants to the Minister and their works involve a range of things, as the former Minister himself would appreciate that assistants are wont to provide services. They would research, write papers and memos and arrange meetings. They are highly qualified and, if I may say, more qualified than I.

Programme: 261 – Policy Development and Administration – \$219,441,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 262 - Natural Resource Management – \$6,450,000

Programme: 262 - Natural Resource Management – \$6,450,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 263 – Environmental Management – \$474,537,000

Mr. Neendkumar: Line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Could the Hon. Minister give us a list of the organisations which would be receiving the subsidies and contributions?

Mr. Trotman: The three organisations in this order: the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) - \$226,823,000, the National Parks Commission - \$180,996,000 and the Protected Areas Commission which would receive \$62,598,000.

Mr. Neendkumar: As a follow-up, could the Hon. Minister tell us if there are criteria for these organisations to provide audited financial statements in the year and terms of reference on how they are qualified for the subventions?

Mr. Trotman: All are statutory agencies which are audited by the Auditor General's office, and on a yearly basis their audited accounts and reports are laid in the House so those would be forthcoming.

Mr. Lumumba: I notice that there are ten staff members at the (EPA). I will like to ask the Minister whether these staff members are assigned to EPA, throughout the country with all the related activities, or just the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) activities.

Mr. Trotman: Ten environmental officers are not all located in the EPA but are disbursed throughout the agency because each agency has an environmental function – EPA, GGMC, the National Parks and the Ministry. The ten officers are dispersed throughout the agencies. There is a legal officer as well at the EPA.

Mr. Lumumba: Mr. Chairman, I want the Hon. Minister to tell me whether he believes, based on the condition of ...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, are you speaking to a line item?

Mr. Lumumba: The same line item 6321. We have not moved.

Mr. Chairman: Please proceed.

Mr. Lumumba: I do not know if the Hon. Minister could indicate whether he believes the ten staff members are adequate to address the issues of this country.

Mr. Trotman: The immediate response would be no. We need about 40 such officers, but what the Ministry has is what it can afford and what the Minister of Finance has made available. As I said earlier, we are pursuing all options in, terms of training and recruitment. There are a number of overseas Guyanese who have offered their services at very low rates and we are looking to see how we can have them supplement the workforce. Those, who we have, are inadequate. Guyana is going into oil production and the environmental concerns loom large. The EPA is an area we are paying particular emphasis on.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, could I go back to line item 6321 to raise an issue I raised yesterday? The Hon. Member Harmon promised to ensure that I got the right *Official Gazette*. The 18th January, 2016 *Official Gazette* does not have the Hon. Minister Trotman as being responsible for protected areas or national parks, yet moneys are allocated under his Ministry. Could the Minister say when this will be correct? If it has been corrected, which *Official Gazette* is it in? Ministers have to have authority or assignments in relation to the allocations of funds to them.

Mr. Trotman: My recollection, without being facetious, is that question was put and yesterday answered by the Hon. Minister of State. I rely on that answer that gazetting was done and I do have the authority.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, if you allow me, I have the 18th January *Official Gazette* which I am prepared to hand over to the Clerk of the National Assembly to have it circulated. The Hon. Minister Harmon promised to have the corrected one here today and it is not here. What I recognise is that the Hon. Minister is imputing that I am lying. I am not.

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

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Could the Hon. Minister state, under line item 6321, specifically the Protected Areas Commission, whether any additional protected areas would be designated this year, or to what extent?

Mr. Trotman: Sir, we are looking at one area which is the area of Konashen. There is a legal opinion that has been sent in which we wish to share with our Hon. Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs for his opinion before we proceed on that suggestion. One other

suggestion has come but no steps have been taken in that direction. We do have firmly with us an opinion that suggests we may take in the Konashen community.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Minister, could you state whether the Kaieteur National Park offset with Aurora Gold Mines would be considered also under this subvention?

Mr. Trotman: I did mention that the Government was considering an offset with Aurora Gold Mines but it would not be included here because it is separate. In fact, it would be the Aurora Gold Mines paying to the Government of Guyana a figure we believe is sufficient to compensate for the degradation being caused by the mining. That would be into the credit column of the Government rather than the debit.

Mr. Dharamlall: As a follow-up, could the Hon. Minister state whether a figure has been established or considered?

Mr. Trotman: We are in negotiations. Both sides have proposed figures which I would, with your leave, refrain from mentioning because we are in negotiations and do not wish to prejudice those negotiations, except to say we are committed to the Kaieteur National Park being the offset area and all things being equal it should be in place before the middle of this year.

Programme: 263 – Environmental Management – \$474,537,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

1.52 p.m.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 263 - Environmental Management - \$114,000,000

Ms. Sukhai-Campbell: Under project 3402200, Protected Areas Commission, I noted that there is \$5 million allocated. Could the Minister state whether this is adequate enough or within this sum is it included any boat, engine or all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) that will aid with respect to pursuing free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) with respect to the Indigenous People. I listened to his response earlier as it related to the protected area and the extension and the incorporation of Konashen area as a protected area and he has some legal opinion already on

that. Would \$5 million be adequate to pursue consultative engagement with the Indigenous People?

Mr. Trotman: Sir, again I rise to say that \$5 million is inadequate but it is what is available. However, we have taken, as I intimated in the budget presentation, a one-team approach. All of the agencies will be lending support to each other. In terms of a personnel or equipment, boats, engines, ATVs we will be supporting each other. Specifically, this amount will purchase for us three boats, three engines and should we need vehicles, ATVs or otherwise, those will be supplied by a sister or brother agency.

Mr. Neendkumar: Project 3402100, National Parks Commission: I see that there is \$50 million for the upgrading of facilities. In the legend, in Volume 3, we see that it is for rehabilitation of buildings and purchase of furniture and excavator. Could the Hon. Minister tell us how much will be for that and which building is it in the National Park? How much for the purchase of furniture and how much for the excavator?

Mr. Trotman: This money, the \$50 million, which we are quite happy about, not very happy, but happy, is for work to be done primarily at the Botanical Gardens. We can all agree that it is in need of a substantial facelift and it is flooding. There is the drainage to be done and this is where a mini excavator is being purchased for \$19 million. We are rehabilitating stores and staff offices, raising the walkway at the Botanical Gardens, again, because of the flooding. There is going to be a black caiman walk-through exhibit built. There will be the rehabilitation of the eastern fence, that is, the fence along Vlissingen Road, which is crumbling and has to be reinforced because we discovered that there is no foundation and millions had been spent to erect it and that is why there visible cracks are coming down. That is a major problem for us. We are going to start this year to restore the Botanical Gardens to its original intent and that is to be a place of botany. The Ministry will be investing \$2.12 million in the restoration of the plant nursery. The main *koker*, because of drainage issues, will be rehabilitated for \$1.5 million.

Mr. Neendkumar: The legend talks about the National Park and not the Botanical Gardens. I am talking about project 3402100, National Parks Commission, upgrading of facilities and purchase. In the legend it clearly states the rehabilitation of buildings and purchasing of furniture and excavator for the National Park.

Mr. Trotman: The collective is known as the National Parks but it is a three-park initiative, Sir. There is the National Park, which is at Thomas Lands, the Botanical Gardens and the Joe Vieira Park. All are considered part of the National Park.

Mr. Ali: Project 3402200, Protected Areas Commission: The Hon. Minister, in answering, said that he recognised a funding gap and that gap will be filled from resources from sister agencies. Could the Hon. Minister outline which are those sister agencies and under what authority would he be utilising funds from such sister agencies?

Mr. Trotman: If I am to be quoted, I would like to be quoted accurately. I said that we will use equipment. I never said that we will be using funds, so let us be cautious and careful about that. Sir, we will mount joint operations so that we can share resources, in terms of equipment. I never said money. I am long enough in this Assembly to know that would be illegal and we will not commit any illegalities in this Government.

Mr. Ali: In fulfilling the funding gap, in the capital programme, including the head I just alluded to, would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say whether any resources would be utilised from funds in financing any gap within your sector?

Mr. Trotman: That is not anticipated. In fact, under the programme Environmental Management it includes the EPA, the Protected Areas Commission and the National Parks. Those are the sisters and the GGMC is always known as the big brother. We do not anticipate the GGMC at all will be called on given the fact that has been an issue in the past and, as I said, we do not intend to repeat those mistakes made.

Ms. Teixeira: Project 3402100, National Parks Commission: Could the Hon. Member advise us if there will be funds allocated for the Kaieteur National Park Board because the National Parks Commission and the Kaieteur Park Act are two different legislations and the Kaieteur National Park has a board of its own. Although in this heading it states money allocated for an excavator. I am not sure what an excavator is needed for at Kaieteur National Park. Since money is being allocated for Kaieteur National Park, is that under the rubric of the Kaieteur National Park Board or is it that Kaieteur now comes under National Parks and the board has been dispensed with? I am just trying to clarify their two pieces of legislation that we are dealing with.

Mr. Trotman: Sir, on assuming office, we saw that the Protected Areas Commission had, in fact, rightly started to subsume the National Parks Commission under it and we have continued that good practice. The question put by the Hon. Member, I would say that we do not have an excavator for the Kaieteur National Park. In fact, I do not know how we are going to get it there. Secondly, Sir, we would not be appointing a Kaieteur National Park Board because, as I said, the practice we met was the Protected Areas Commission assuming overall responsibilities for all parts, including the Kaieteur National Park and we thought that was one initiative which we would like to continue.

Mr. Lumumba: I would like the Hon. Minister to answer me. I noticed under project 340200, Environmental Protection Agency, \$47 million seems to be top-heavy in furnishing unless there are sophisticated furnishings from Nice, France or maybe there is some specialised equipment. I just want to know if there is some specialised equipment in this budget, in this area other than just basic furniture.

Mr. Trotman: I am grateful for the opportunity to provide an explanation. A building three years ago had been identified for the EPA new building. As its roll transforms, it rises to the challenge of providing enforcement. We have decided this year, with much persuasion and having met with the Director of Budget and her staff, that we will start the process of designing and the mobilisation cost. We have set aside \$40 million for that. Of this \$47 million, \$40 million is for that process. The other \$7 million will be three global positioning system (GPS), noise metres and calibrators, portable radiation, monitoring equipment, five Canon cameras, air quality monitors, seven office chairs, water dispensers, analysers and metallizers, two air-conditioned units and one photocopying machine for the \$7 million.

Mr. Lumumba: In some quarters a proposed name change for the Botanical Gardens to Forbes Burnham Botanical Gardens and I want to know if there are any funds budgeted for that? I just want to know out of curiosity.

Mr. Chairman: Do you have another question, Hon. Member? We must let the Minister answer before we rise.

Mr. Lumumba: If the Minister has knowledge, then he should answer.

Mr. Trotman: Sir, I was told if I have knowledge I could answer. I do not have any such knowledge of any such thing.

Ms. Sukhai-Campbell: Under project 340200, Environmental Protection Agency, I want to ask the Minister if it is not too late to increase or to negotiate an increase in this \$47 million to include equipment such as satellite phones, GPS and boating engines for the Indigenous People to participate meaningfully in environmental management.

Mr. Trotman: Being a head of the Hon. Member, we bought all that last year. Those were in the Budget 2015.

Ms. Sukhai-Campbell: Could the Minister supply a list of the purchases he made last year and detail the areas which those equipment were distributed? Particularly, I am interested in those distributed to the Indigenous communities which should be participating also in a meaningful way in environmental protection.

Mr. Trotman: Those accounts will be presented to the House through its Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. Dharamlall: Under project 3402300, Wildlife Management Authority, could the Hon. Minister state whether the Wildlife Management Authority is collaborating with the Arapaima Management plan and to what extent is the effect of the dry weather on the Arapaima's in the North Rupununi?

Secondly, under the same project, could the Hon. Minister state whether the Wildlife Management Authority will be conducting any resource identification and count?

Thirdly, on the Panthera Project, it is whether the jaguar corridor is still being executed

Finally, it is to what extent is the Ministry of Natural Resources consistent with gaming of jaguars because I have noticed in the newspaper that an Hon. Minister has a jaguar skin displayed in the office.

Mr. Trotman: I counted at least ten questions and I lost count at about four so I will do my best. We are now in the process of setting up the Wildlife Management Authority and the wildlife matters are dealt with by the EPA. In terms of a species count, yes, I can announce that the

Government of Guyana and the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime is collaborating to do this count and it might sound strange but we will explain the details of that on another occasion.

2.07 p.m.

That is ongoing and the programmes referred to, Sir, are in train. We have met them, Sir. We have not discontinued them. In fact, we are moving to enhance them.

Mr. Chairman: I will allow two other questions after this one.

Mr. Neendkumar: Under project 340200, in the legend, there is the construction of a building. Would this building be put to tender and will the accessories which you will buy – you said that you will be purchasing several - go through the tender process?

Mr. Trotman: Yes Sir. Again, on assuming office, I found in the Ministry the documents pertaining to a building. This was not our idea; we found them there. We were convinced that the EPA does need new structures because on several visits in Sophia, where it is located and how it is appointed, Sir, it does not meet the standard that is, I think, required of an agency that is to oversee the environment. Of course, Sir, given the amount that we hope to spend, because a loan was given by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) – that loan was given two years ago - there will be tenders because that will meet both national and international standards and the standards of the International Financial Institutions (IFI).

Programme: 263 – Environmental Management – \$114,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 52 Ministry of Legal Affairs

Current Expenditure

Programme: 521 – Main Office – \$30,997,000

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, if I may, at line item 6116, Contracted Employees, there is an additional contracted employee. May I ask Sir, what position does that person hold?

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Williams]: A telephonist was employed.

Mr. Nandlall: A telephonist, we are told, Sir, was hired. Sir, contracted employees...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are you still with the same line item?

Mr. Nandlall: Yes Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Are you going to ask a supplementary question?

Mr. Nandlall: Yes Sir. Though one additional staff has been hired, there is an increase in budgetary allocation from \$14 million to \$16.4 million. May I enquire, Sir, whether this increase is towards the telephonist that was hired?

Mr. Williams: That is due to salary increases in 2015.

Mr. Nandlall: May I enquire, Sir, the salary of the telephonist?

Mr. Williams: That salary is \$50,000.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6281, Security Services: There is a recorded increase from \$37,000 to \$100,000. May I enquire what accounted for that increase and which agency provides security services to the Attorney General's Chambers?

Mr. Williams: This is security services provided by MMC Security Force Inc. for the Permanent Secretary's residence.

Mr. Nandlall: Under this line item, may I enquire, whether security services for the Main Office, as the profile suggests, the programme is the Main Office, provided?

Mr. Williams: Under Programme 522, Ministry Administration, there is provision for security services by the Commissioner of Police.

Mr. Nandlall: I am a confused, Sir. The Government's premises is being guarded by the Commissioner of Police but the Permanent Secretary's premises, at home, is guarded by MMC Security Force Inc.?

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

Mr. Nandlall: Yes Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Could you direct the question so that we can hear?

Mr. Nandlall: Yes. That is for my clarification.

Mr. Williams: Sir, it is a system inherited from the time of the former Attorney Generals and it is really an internal security alarm – an electronic alarm. It is paid for quarterly.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, it is if I may go back to line item 6116, with your kind permission.

Mr. Chairman: Please proceed Hon. Member.

Mr. Nandlall: My learned friend, Sir, was very strenuous against the employment of contracted employees. The telephonist, which was hired, may I enquire why was this person not put on the permanent establishment and why the offensive contractual arrangement was chosen instead?

Mr. Williams: All employees on GS1 are contracted employees at the time of their employment.

Mr. Nandlall: A follow-up, Sir. In light of the stated position of the Government's policy, which we have heard, would that change, Sir, in the future, at the Ministry of Legal Affairs?

Mr. Williams: Even in Opposition I had indicated that that will be our policy when we take office as a new Government. That is what we will be doing and that has been said by my colleagues here previously to now.

Mr. Nandlall: I just wanted to confirm that. Line item 6294, Other: I see an increase from \$100,000 to \$1,533,000. May I enquire respectfully from the Hon. Attorney General, what are the matters included under the rubric others? It is for him to kindly account for, but obviously it must be considered a humongous increase.

Mr. Williams: The Judges and Magistrates Commonwealth Conference would be hosted this year by the honourable Chancellor of the Judiciary and the Attorney General is to host a reception in their honour and this cost is attributed to that.

Mr. Nandlall: This \$1.5 million will be for the reception alone.

Mr. Williams: The exact figure is \$1,433,000, Mr. Chairman.

Programme: 521 – Main Office – \$30,997,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

2.22 p.m.

Programme: 522 – Ministry Administration – \$44,455,000

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6284 – Other: There is an increase by nearly 100%. May I enquire from the Attorney General what is catered for as “Other”?

Mr. Williams: The increase is for the purchase of venetian blinds.

Programme: 522 – Ministry Administration – \$44,455,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 523 – Attorney General’s Chambers - \$1,405,354,000

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6111 – Administrative: I see under Staffing Details that there has been an increase from 16 to 18 employees - therefore, there are two additional employees in this department. The expenditure has increased by over \$10 million. On the face of it, it appears as though the two staff, added to this...

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

Mr. Nandlall: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Please leave it with the Chairman at this time.

Mr. Nandlall: I do not think that I have completed my question.

Mr. Chairman: You have not completed your question?

Mr. Nandlall: No, Sir. I would like the Attorney General to explain this increase in budget expenditure and the portfolio of the two staff that were hired.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, one State Counsel and one Parliamentary Counsel were employed with effect from June, 2015 at a salary of \$233,464 each. That was in addition to the general salary increases in 2015.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There is a reduction from 13 to 11 contracted employees, but there is an increase in budgetary allocation by almost \$3 million. My question is: Could the Minister explain why there is a reduction in the number of contracted employees, but an increase in the budgetary allocation.

Mr. Williams: The reduction is related to a Driver and an Office Assistant, who had resigned effective from July and December, 2015, respectively. The increase is due to the increase in wages and salaries for 2015.

Mr. Nandlall: Line item 6281 – Security Services: May I enquire which agency is providing this service? There has been an increase, again. May I enquire the reason for the increase?

Mr. Williams: The Commissioner of Police provides security services at the residence of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel (CPC). There is no increase in the amount.

Mr. Nandlall: Under the rubric, line item 6284 – Other: There is a huge increase in budgetary allocation, from \$635,000 to \$1.2 billion. Could the Hon. Minister explain this increase in budgetary allocation and what projects or works are expected to be undertaken under this head?

Mr. Williams: This increase is for the balance of the payment for the Rudisa Beverages & Juice NV Caribbean International Distributors Inc., which would be over \$672 million or US\$3.2 million, would be paid. The Hon. Member, Mr. Nandlall, would be familiar with this judgement, since this Government inherited it from the previous Government.

We hosted a Hague Convention Conference this year also there was also a Sensitisation Workshop before that, in addition to consultations on a variety of bills. Also there would be the acquisition of *Lexis Nexis* and CariLaw Programmes database to access legal authorities, the world over and in the Caribbean, in particular.

Mr. Nandlall: Under the same line item, I recall that \$300 million was budgeted last year which ought to have paid off about half of the Rudisa Beverages & Juice NV Caribbean International

Distributors Inc.'s judgement. May I ask whether that budgeted sum was paid or whether we are re-budgeting for the entire judgement again, under this head?

Mr. Williams: As I said, the Hon. Member is familiar with this matter. He was just told that the sum of \$672 million represents the balance of the judgement payable to the Rudisa Beverages & Juice NV Caribbean International Distributors Inc. That amount budgeted for last year, that the Hon. Member is referring to, was payment for half of the judgement sum. That is why we are now budgeting to pay the balance. In fact, it would have been more if we had not entered into negotiations with the Company to have the sum further reduced.

Mr. Ramson: Could the Hon. Minister kindly explain whether a sum has been allocated ...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, do you have a line item or a number?

Mr. Ramson: It is in relation to the same line item. It is a follow-up question as to whether a sum has been allocated for the judgement award in relation to the "Dipcon Engineering Services Limited matter, where the Hon. Minister disclosed, during his budget speech, that an award was made against the Government in that regard.

Mr. Williams: Dipcon Engineering Services Limited is not budgeted for under this line item.

Mr. Ramson: Could the Hon. Minister kindly explain whether it will be budgeted for or will payment be made at some point during the course of this year?

Mr. Williams: It is not budgeted for in our votes that we have here.

Mr. Ramson: Follow up to this. Could the Hon. Minister kindly explain if the judgement award was made during his tenure, would it not have made sense to appeal the matter?

Mr. Williams: The present Attorney General has not had the opportunity to occasion this nation, any judgements in that sum that the Hon. Member is referring to. I have not occasioned any large judgement during my tenure, to date.

Mr. Ramson: I just want to be clear about this. Is the Hon. Attorney General saying to this nation that the judgement sum granted to Dipcon Engineering Services Limited was not during his tenure as Attorney General?

Mr. Williams: I thought that I had answered before. The first thing is I do not know anything about the Dipcon Engineering Services Limited matter. I have no files for the Dipcon Engineering Services Limited matter. That is why it is not in the votes.

Programme: 523 – Attorney General’s Chambers – \$1,405,354,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 524 – State Solicitor - \$27,398,000

Programme: 524 – State Solicitor - \$27,398,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

2.37 p.m.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 521- Main Office - \$125,750,000

Mr. Nandlall: If I may there is an item that reads “Provision for roof and land”. A budgetary sum of \$40,750,000 has been allocated towards that item. May I ask the Minister which roof is being provided for, and if it is that the Ministry is acquiring a piece of land somewhere? The Legend is not very clear.

Mr. Williams: The roof being referred to is the roof of the Ministry of Legal Affairs’ building in Carmichael Street. We are going to change some damage zinc sheets, sheet latts, fatifa boards and gutter part.

The land - there are two small lots of lands contiguous to the Ministry’s building that we proposing to acquire or to enter into discussions to acquire. These lots are for the purposes of extending the Ministry’s building so as to increase capacity for the Ministry.

Mr. Nandlall: Am I reading the figure correct? For the repairing of the roof and acquiring of two lots of land in Georgetown, \$40 million is being budgeted. May I ask if that is correct?

Mr. Williams: On becoming Attorney General and discovering that the building that the Land Registry and Commercial Registry had moved into was acquired for over \$550 million. I decided

to stay very clear of that type of expense to the State. So, we are looking at an average of \$20 million per lot, but we are supposed to negotiate with the relevant owners.

Mr. Nandlall: I wish the Hon. Minister all the luck. Twenty million dollars for a lot of land on Middle Street is remarkable.

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

Mr. Nandlall: Yes. The Hon. Member just said that he is hoping to negotiate to buy the two lots of land for \$20 million each. As bad as I am in math, that would equal \$40 million. May I then enquire how would he be able to accomplish the repairing of the roof which is budgeted for?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, what is the question? Hon. Minister, if you understand the question, would you answer please?

Mr. Williams: Yes, Mr. Chairman. The Hon. Member has overlooked the fact that the amount is \$40,750,000. The \$40 million goes to the land and \$750,000 goes to the repair of the roof.

Mr. Nandlall: Thank you very much Sir, I am guided. We will hear about the roof and the two lots next year in the budget.

If I may, in the Legend there is a “Provision for institutional strengthening and purchasing of equipment”, which seem to be expenditure financed by the International Development Bank (IDB). Can the Hon. Attorney General help us in...

Mr. Williams: What is the project Code?

Mr. Nandlall: It is project code 1501500- Justice Sector Programme. Could the Hon. Minister explain to us what are the programmes are that are slated for this project?

Mr. Williams: In relation to this programme, it includes the revision of Laws of Guyana and the constituting and setting up of a permanent Law Reform Commission. This will engender the hiring and training of personnel, the procuring of furnishing and equipment; the employment of commissioners; training for judges, magistrates, prosecutors and other components. The feature there would be on the writing of decisions; sentencing by the judges among others; cyber-crime legislation and training - this is an entirely new regime that is fast becoming one of the major

security challenges and threats in the globe. It would involve training investigators, prosecutors, magistrates, and judges to understand the various cyber-crime offenses. In addition to that, we would have to hold consultations on the cybercrime legislation and generally to develop capacity to protect Guyana in this new cyber-crime age.

Backlog reduction initiatives - this is designed to reduce the civil back log. In terms of strategy, the hiring and appointment of part-time judges for possibly six months at a time to try to reduce the backlog of civil cases.

The voice verbatim recording system for the courts - under the last Administration, two civil courts were targeted, the Commercial Court and the Chief Justice Court. Those systems are not working in the courts. What we are targeting, under this Government is to have speedier trials in the criminal sessions in all the High Courts in Demerara, Berbice, and Essequibo, by having these voice verbatim recordings. Also in the Magistrates' Courts, where serious matters are dealt with, the Ministry of Legal Affairs will have the opportunity to deploy this technology in order to speed up cases. Those are some of the things.

Mr. Nandlall: The Hon. Minister has fed us with a lot of details. Sir, permit me please to ask for some further clarification. The Hon. Minister spoke on the establishment of the Law Reform Commission. May I enquire whether a building has been identified for the location of this Commission?

Mr. Williams: The proposal, in the first instance, would be to rent a building for that purpose. This project would not fructify until 2017, as the Hon. Member would know. In terms of the acquisition of the land to erect structures, that would also be within the contemplation when the time arises.

Mr. Nandlall: Is the Hon. Minister then telling us that the Law Reform Commission would not become operational for the year 2016?

Mr. Williams: As my learned Colleague, the Hon. Member, would know, this is an IDB funded project and the funding is not expected, until either late in the year or very early in the New Year.

Mr. Nandlall: Would all the other initiatives, outlined by the learned Minister, in his presentation, which are all hinged on IDB funding, would they be similar financial circumstance?

Mr. Williams: The answer is yes. Though we have budgeted \$10 million for the initial start-up of the project, we have to set up the Programme Authorising Officer (PAO), *et cetera*.

Mr. Nandlall: One of the initiatives referred to by the Attorney General was the verbatim voice recording equipment, and, of course, the learned Minister told us that the Minister intends to expand what has been started. Since the expansion would come off this year because as the Hon. Minister indicated, the moneys are not going to be available until possibly next year, we already have systems in the commercial courts in the...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are you going to ask a question?

Mr. Nandlall: Yes Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I am holding my breath for it.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, you have to permit me. The question comes at the end of a preamble. I am sorry, that is the only way.

Since we have the systems already installed in the Commercial Court, the Court of Appeal, and in the Chief Justice's Office, over \$100,000 worth of equipment are there. The reason why the project never got started had nothing to do with equipment, it had to do with a particular issue between the Judiciary and the Executive. May I enquire, having said all, since the expansion of the project will not take place, as the Hon. Minister contemplated until next year, would efforts be made to have that which we have now initiated and begin functioning?

Mr. Williams: Frankly, I thought that the Hon. Member was going to tell us what the situation was with that equipment under his tenor because I have not seen or am I in possession of the equipment. I thought that he was about to tell us why we are not off the ground in those courts.

Mr. Nandlall: I can tell the Hon. Member, if he wishes.

Mr. Chairman: I think, Hon. Member, that it would be more appropriate for another place.

Mr. Nandlall: The equipment are...

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

Mr. Nandlall: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Then please ask that question.

Mr. Nandlall: Before I ask I want to predicate what I am going to ask which...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, if you keep on this way, I will ask you to take your seat.

Mr. Nandlall: With the assurance that the equipment are all there, the Hon. Minister would see them every day.

Mr. Williams: Where?

Mr. Nandlall: Some of them are in the Attorney General's Office, and the rest are in the court system. The issue is that the Hon. Minister needs to get staff hired to operate the equipment. The staff have already been trained. Can I enquire...

Mr. Chairman: The question Hon. Member.

Mr. Nandlall: Yes. The question is can the Hon. Minister assure the House whether those staff will be employed this year so that the project can become operational?

Mr. Williams: Which staff?

Mr. Nandlall: The staff to operate the equipment.

Mr. Williams: I am not sure what staff the Hon. Member is speaking about. I did indicate to this honourable House that it is an IDB funded project, and that the funding is expected to kick in either later in the year or early next year. He did not ask me about any staff; staff in relation to what, I do not know.

2.52 p.m.

Mr. Nandlall: For the existing equipment.

Mr. Williams: I do not know anything about that.

Mr. Nandlall: Anyways, I will explain to the Minister later.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are we going off of questions on this equipment or are we going to stay with it? I understand that it is non-functioning.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, I am moving on.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Nandlall: I was trying to get it to function, but I would have to do that elsewhere. Project code 1501600 – Strengthening the Criminal Justice Service: I see \$75 million has been budgeted and it speaks to, “Provision for institutional strengthening and purchase of equipment – IDB”, very generic terminology. I wondered whether my learned Colleague could edify us by giving us some details under this project.

Mr. Williams: This is a Canadian funded project in collaboration with the Government of Guyana (GOG). It is a grant of \$110 million. We had budgeted \$75 million for 2016 and it is in relation to strengthening the criminal justice system. It is being executed by the Justice Education Society of British Columbia in Canada. They have already started working and will continue to work during 2016. This project will end in 2017. It is designed to train investigators in crime scene investigations; the question of collating and preserving evidence; the issue of training persecutors, magistrates and judges in that general way so as to enhance their capacity to deal with criminal matters in the administration of justice; training, coaching and quality control systems for monitoring crime investigation developed and delivered in Georgetown with police training. Even in the higher echelons of the Guyana Police Force (GPF) are also exposed to that; there is training of the prosecutors from the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), along with police prosecutors; and the training of judges and magistrates is expected to be done shortly.

One of the techniques that the Canadian has exposed investigators from the Guyana Police Force to was video analysis. This is very important because of the many Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras that are around, it is important for our investigators to be able to interpret, analyse and understand the images that come up from those cameras. Those are some of the things that the Strengthening of Criminal Justice Programme will address.

Mr. Nandlall: Under this rubric, I am asking a follow-up question. The question is, the Hon. Minister spoken at length about inquests that would take place during this year and he cited a number of some 3,000, which we hope to get started. We passed amendments in the House, and we heard a lot of what would take place in relation to inquests. But so far I did not hear any budgetary allocation towards the holding of inquests. Could I ask whether under this rubric or any other rubric, whether budgetary allocations had been made, as promised by the Hon. Minister, for holding of inquests?

Mr. Williams: I am unaware that we need to make a budgetary allocation for the holding of inquests. We have passed legislation to widen the category of persons who could be coroners to conduct inquests or inquiry, if they are not sitting with the jury. This would be in collaboration with the Guyana Police Force and the normal elements in the Guyana's Administration of Justice.

Mr. Nandlall: I am grateful that the Hon. Minister has confirmed that there is no budgetary allocation under his Ministry for inquests.

I see that there is allocation for the purchase of a vehicle, project code 2401100 – Land and Water Transport - \$6.5 million. May I inquire to what use this vehicle would be put and to which department would it be assigned?

Mr. Williams: This is vehicle would be purchased for the Ministry's Administration and it is to transport general staff of the Ministry.

Mr. Chairman: It may be good if I remind Hon. Members that we are dealing with the Main Office and that the project code, mentioned, is somewhat ahead of our examination here. Thank you. Does that exhaust your list of questions on this item Hon. Member?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, I think that you made a very good observation. That my learned Colleague had actually jumped away from the examination of Main Office, which we did not approve.

Programme: 521 – Main Office – \$125,750,000 agreed and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 522 - Ministry Administration – \$12,500,000

Mr. Nandlall: One other question under this head. To follow-up what I ask about the vehicle...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member which head are you speaking about?

Mr. Nandlall: I am speaking about the Ministry's Administration.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member we are now getting to that.

Mr. Nandlall: Okay sorry.

Mr. Nandlall: I see there is a budgetary allocation for the purchase of a vehicle and I asked about that just now. I want to follow-up. Last year we budgeted for a purchase for another vehicle, for the use of the Hon. Attorney General, at the cost of the sum \$16.5 million. May I enquire whether that vehicle has been purchased and is being used? The Attorney General expresses discomfort in using the current vehicle. He said last year that his shoulder was being affected by that vehicle and that was why he wanted a new vehicle. I am just enquiring.

Mr. Chairman: Are all these details part of your question Hon. Member?

Mr. Nandlall: Yes Sir. It was part of the records last year.

Mr. Williams: I have not received the vehicle. I think the Hon. Member would know more about that vehicle than I would.

Mr. Nandlall: I do not, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Allow me to do what I have to do, Hon. Member. Do not be too anxious, you will be given the floor.

Mr. Nandlall: Knowledge is being ascribed to me about some vehicle. I know that the Hon. Member brought a proposal here, which we supported, for the acquisition of a new vehicle for the Attorney General, at what I thought was an exorbitant cost. I raised it last year and we are told now that it had not been acquired. May I enquire why it was not acquired?

Mr. Williams: The fact of the matter is that that transaction, which the Hon. Member is referring to, was a transaction designed to defraud the State of its revenues. If it was not for the vigilance

of the current Attorney General, our revenues would have been depleted by the nefarious intention to so defraud this State.

In fact, a vehicle was purportedly imported, and represented to be a new vehicle. When it was inspected by my staff and I on the site of the wharf, it was discovered to be a used vehicle and the Guyana Revenue Authority's personnel had described the vehicle as a used vehicle. It was stated to be a new vehicle and that was why I went to the Ministry and made arrangements to purchase a vehicle. Even upon my enquiry, if the particular person or agency could supply new vehicles, I was told yes, they also bring in new vehicles, but in fact, they did not bring in a new vehicle. They in fact had to repay the money. I think that is enough for now, in case I decide to take criminal action in this matter.

Mr. Nandlall: A follow-up question: My Colleague presented a Budget in August 2015, the Parliament approved the Budget at the end of August 2015, the Hon. Minister ordered a vehicle, presumably based on the Budget that he presented and the Hon. Member was the Attorney General. He put in the Ministry's budget a vehicle and he ordered a vehicle. Did he call the police in to investigate this alleged fraud that he is speaking about. That is my question.

Mr. Williams: I do not understand the question.

Mr. Nandlall: I will repeat the question if the Hon. Minister needs help.

Mr. Chairman hit gavel.

M. Nandlall: Could I clarify the question, Sir, if the Hon. Minister is in doubt?

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Attorney General says that he does not understand the question.

Mr. Nandlall: I am going to repeat the question.

Mr. Chairman: You have my leave to do that.

Mr. Nandlall: The 2015 draft Budget that I signed did not have the purchase of a vehicle. It was amended to insert the purchase of a vehicle for this Attorney General, inserted by this Attorney General for the 2015 budget. I am asking the Hon. Attorney General ...

Mr. Chairman hit gavel.

Mr. Williams: On a Point of Order.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, if the Hon. Minister is rising on a Point of Order, you should give way.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, on a Point of Order. As a green Minister, I have no idea whatsoever about procedures for procurement and the like.

3.07 p.m.

I cannot say that for the former Attorney General and I am saying that arrangements were already in place, when I became Minister of Legal Affairs, to perpetrate this act upon the State.

Mr. Nandlall: We will have some problems now.

Mr. Williams: Well, let us have the problems.

Mr. Nandlall: I am saying, to this House, that the Budget that was presented in this House had a vehicle. That Budget was signed by this Hon. Attorney General and presented to this House. We appropriated money for that vehicle - \$16.5 million. If the Minister is saying that the State has been defrauded, I want him to tell the public what he has done to get back the moneys he claimed were defrauded.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we will return to the Budget. Any other question will be on the Budget and, if Members are bereft of questions, the Chairman will put the question.

Mr. Ali: You are a bluff and a complete fraud.

Mr. Williams: Is it a bluff?

Mr. Nandlall: You amended the Budget and put in a vehicle.

Mr. Williams: Who, me?

Mr. Nandlall: You wanted a new vehicle.

Mr. Williams: Could I amend a Budget?

Mr. Nandlall: My budget had no vehicle in it.

Mr. Williams: Could you bring back my law books?

Mr. Nandlall: Your law books?

Mr. Chairman hit gavel.

Mr. Williams: Yes.

Mr. Nandlall: Come for it.

Mr. Chairman hit gavel.

Mr. Williams: Could you and the Permanent Secretary (PS) bring back the law books. You all took away everything.

Mr. Chairman hit gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Legal Affairs, I am strongly of the view that the Hon. Minister would like to lead the way in terms of decorum in this Chamber.

Mr. Williams: I am sorry, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I would simply say that and leave it there.

Mr. Williams: Yes, please. I would not ask for the other items.

Bishop Edghill: Proj4ect code 240100...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, let me hear your Point of Order.

Mr. Ramson: A moment ago the Hon. Minister was imputing improper motive to the former Attorney General and current Hon. Member and I would respectfully ask that the Attorney General withdraws that statement unless he can provide some type of evidence to this House.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the practice is that you rise on a Point of Order, state the Point of Order and then you reclaim your seat and nothing more. Thank you.

Hon. Bishop Edghill, you may proceed.

Bishop Edghill: Programme code 2401000 – Land and Water Transport - Purchase of vehicle: The document before me states that there was a budgeted amount of \$16.5 million and it has also indicated that our latest Estimates of Expenditure were \$16.5 million but we are asking for a provision of \$6.5 million for this year. I just heard the Hon. Attorney General indicating that this expenditure was not incurred. If this expenditure was not incurred, then it should be showing zero. The fact that it is showing \$16.5 million shows that it was spent. I would like to have an explanation on this.

Mr. Williams: I am afraid I do not understand what the Hon. Member is asking.

Bishop Edghill: For clarity, the Budget that was approved was for \$16.5 million. In the Legend that is before us, it states that \$16.5 was spent. If the Attorney General is saying that this vehicle was not acquired, then this should be showing zero and a request for \$6.5 million for this year. This is showing that \$16.5 million was spent in 2015 and a request for \$6.5 million in 2016. I am asking the Hon. Attorney General to explain the \$16.5 million in light of the fact that he said that the vehicle was no acquired.

Mr. Williams: It is a very simple explanation. At the time that this Budget was prepared, the vehicle still had not been delivered but the money had come out because they had actually received half of the purchase price, which I had to retrieve, of course.

Bishop Edghill: That is very interesting. I would like to follow through because this is a matter that needs clarification. If half of the money was spent as of 31st December, when the financial year closed, then this figure should have showed half of \$16.5 million. The Hon. Attorney General must tell this House where the other half is and why \$16.5 million is reflected in this document. If you cut the cheque and held it, then tell us.

Mr. Williams: It is not in any church or anywhere and the cheque was already drawn up...

Bishop Edghill: How is that necessary, Sir? Mr. Chairman, how is that necessary?

Mr. Speaker hit gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, would you please take your seat?

Bishop Edghill: This is getting ridiculous. Mr. Chairman, I would like to put my question again.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I believe your question was understood by the Hon. Attorney General.

Bishop Edghill: Well, I would like to have an answer and not the sarcasm that I am hearing.

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Attorney General is consulting and you must give him time to do so.

Bishop Edghill: Yes, but he cannot make remarks to say that it is not in anybody's church. That is insulting.

Mr. Williams: As I said earlier, the money was refunded to the Ministry of Finance.

Bishop Edghill: Follow-up: If the money was refunded, then something is wrong with this documentation. This documentation is misleading the House because it is saying that, in 2015, \$16.5 million was expended.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Legal Affairs, do you have an answer to the question?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, I can only answer to the best of my ability. All I know is that there was a ruse to sell a used vehicle to the Ministry of Legal Affairs, pretending that it was a new vehicle. I stopped that and so the money was retrieved and saved by the Government. I do not know anything else.

Mr. Ali: Would the Hon. Attorney General be kind enough to provide this House with documentation to show when the money was returned to the Consolidated Fund?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, there is a request that you provide the House...

Mr. Williams: The most I can say is that the Public Accounts Committee, the Auditor General and the police would deal with this issue.

Mr. Ali: Thanks, because I will deal with it.

Programme: 522 – Ministry Administration - \$12,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 524 – State Solicitor - \$8,063,000

Mr. Nandlall: I see, Sir, that another vehicle is listed here to be purchased. Let us hope that the current Attorney General does not get involved. May I enquire, from the Attorney General, what use will be put to this vehicle? Will it be a vehicle for the department or a vehicle for the Solicitor General?

Mr. Williams: This vehicle is purchased to service the Solicitor General's Division, advice and litigation.

Mr. Ramson: Follow-up: Is the Attorney General saying to this House that the vehicle had been purchased already?

Mr. Williams: Might I respectfully point to what line item the Hon. Member is referring to?

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Member did say that it was a follow-up to the first question, Hon. Minister.

Mr. Williams: Is the Hon. Member asking whether the vehicle has been bought already? No; we are now deliberating on these Estimates to get the approval of this honourable House to make purchases. So, I do not understand the question.

Mr. Ramson: Would the Hon. Minister be in a position to state if it is one vehicle or several vehicles and what kind of vehicle he is looking at?

3.22 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, a question has been proffered.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Sir, it is a motor car for the use of the Division.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Minister.

Programme: 524 - State Solicitor - \$8,063,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 32 Ministry of Public Infrastructure

Current Expenditure

Programme: 321 - Policy Development and Administration - \$4,270,037,000

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, we will permit a few minutes while you gather your team together. Thank you.

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: In 2015, there were 20 employees and, in 2016, there are 38 employees. This is an increase on the allocation by \$22,709,000 which is a 79% increase. Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to provide the names, designations, salaries and dates of appointments of these additional 18 employees and explain to us the procedure used for recruitment, selection and appointment? At the same time, we can take a layover of the information on the remaining 20 employees. I must say, Mr. Chairman, that I was promised, yesterday, by the Hon. Minister of Agriculture, a number of documents to be laid over today and I am still waiting...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, your question will be lost in your statement. It seems to me that...

Mr. G. Persaud: I am guided by you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: We should address the questions or not, but if we mix it up...

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Let us try to be helpful to the Minister to whom we address the questions by asking him the questions.

Mr. G. Persaud: Very well, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I might add, as I am interrupting, that perhaps you were not in the Chamber when I pointed out that names of officers will not be permitted to be supplied.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I am happy that you asked that. I was in the Chamber but my research, Sir, would have shown that there was no such ruling made by Mr. Trotman when he was Speaker.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the Speaker has ruled on that and there will be no further discussion about it.

Mr. G. Persaud: Sorry Sir, my apologies. I thought that your ruling was based on the premise that Mr. Trotman said that he made such a ruling; [*inaudible*] waving a document.

Mr. Chairman: I think the Hon. Member should address his question now. He is getting close to the edge.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I am hoping that the Hon. Minister would be able to provide the information requested and I will not be left in limbo as was done with the Ministry of Agriculture yesterday.

Ms. Teixeira: Could we ask that this ruling be put in writing because Speakers' rulings are normally written and circulated to the House. Since you are making a ruling on the matter, could you please have it in a written form and circulate it to all Members?

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member.

Ms. Teixeira: As the Member spoke before, there is no record of that by any of the Speakers previous to you, Sir. I have the evidence in the two books that categorise all the rulings from 1967 to 2015, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member.

Minister of Public Infrastructure [Mr. Patterson]: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was hoping that I would have been given an easy pass like my two previous Colleague Ministers. Relating to the question, I will not be naming any names, there are six Accounts Clerks and they are receiving a salary of \$59,484; one Clerk 'G' receiving a salary of \$57,484; two Typist Clerks who are receiving \$50,294; one Stores Clerk at \$50, 294; one Supply Expeditor at \$50,294; one Office Assistant at \$50,000; one Driver at \$51,586; one Handyman at \$50,000; one Store Attendant at \$50,000; and two Cleaners at \$50,000. They were appointed through the Public Service Ministry (PSM) on bands 1 and 2. I do hope that I have answered the question in its entirety.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a follow-up. I also requested from the Hon. Minister whatever information he is willing to provide with regard to all 38 employees. I am suggesting designations, salaries, effective dates of appointments.

Mr. Patterson: I can provide everything except for the effective dates of employments. Sir, do you want me to hand it over or do I give you that, excluding the effective dates of employments?

Mr. G. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, laying it over would be good.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, would it be convenient to lay it over at another time?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, as long as it is with the Member's leave, I will.

Mr. G. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, line item 6272 - Electricity Charges: The allocation of 2015, when compared to what is requested in 2016, is \$20 million in excess or 72%. Could the Hon. Minister say to us what would have necessitated such an increase, given also the promised reduction in electricity tariff?

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. If you would permit me, Mr. Chairman, to give a catch-all explanation when examining the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, the numbers that Members would see there for 2015 represent four months of the year. The \$48 million represents all 12 months of 2016. I would just like the Members to bear that in mind when making the comparison and jumping to the conclusion that it is a significant increase.

Mr. G. Persaud: Just a follow-up on that very issue: there were two sums - \$13, 31,000 that was allocated for one period in 2015 and, for the four-month period, \$14,969,000. When added, this would give us a total of \$28 million as against \$48 million requested in 2016. I trust that the Hon. Minister would want to have a second look at his Mathematics.

Mr. Patterson: The Hon. Member is good at his three times tables so I must commend him for that, Sir. As was mentioned by previous Ministers, there was a practice when the Ministry of Finance would have paid a sum on behalf of the Ministry. I mentioned the reasons long before, I would not go into them. Now, each Ministry is responsible to pay its own way. In 2015, \$20 million would have been paid on behalf of my Ministry by the Ministry of Finance. It is now reflected here.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, on the same line item 6272 - Electricity Charges - we had an explanation that was given just now that it was a sum that was paid by the Ministry of Finance and a sum that was paid by the actual Ministry that led to the differential in the value. If I go to

table 9, *Abstract of Current Expenditure by Chart of Accounts*, on page 23, in 2015, the total amount was \$3,382,149,000.

3.37 p.m.

In 2016, budgeted is \$5,759,440,000, an increase of almost \$2.4 billion in electricity charges. I would like the Hon. Minister to explain, since he is also the Minister responsible for electricity, why we would be spending \$2.4 billion more in the total accumulated electricity charges for all agencies in 2016, as compared to 2015, when we are expected to have a rebate in electricity charges?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much and the Member is indeed correct. I am the Minister responsible for electricity but, unfortunately, I am not the Minister responsible for finance. So, I would ask him to respectfully hold his question on finance to when the Ministry of Finance appears.

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6281 – Security Services: It is noted that, in 2015, the agency used up \$49,402,000 in 2015. The agency is requesting \$73,106,000, an increase of \$23,704,000 which is 48%. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to give us the name of this security service? When was this service procured and how was it procured? And it would be very interesting if the Hon. Minister can share with us the site or the location where these services are utilised and whether there are 24-hour services?

Mr. Patterson: The contract was let publicly in April, 2015, I think, and then it was awarded. We changed the previous person in 2015. It was awarded to Brands Security Service. Obviously, the sums here reflect the 2015 wages. The Service is at the Ministry of Public Infrastructure; the mechanical workshop on the Railway Embankment; the Government flats, Main and New Market Streets; the Ministry of Public Infrastructure in Fourth Street and the other one in Kingston; Mulhouse in Kingston and there is Echilebar. We also have special constabularies. That is included in this cost as well. This year, we have an increase of nine and the special constabulary, just to give a complete answer, are at the Minister's residence, the Permanent Secretary, the Central Accounts Unit, the Ministry in Wight's Lane, the Work Services Group. There is a guard at the special constabulary entrance of the Ministry, Railway Embankment and Echilebar and there are Government buildings in Wight's Lane. Thank you.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, under line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Could the Hon. Minister please explain, of the \$3,954,146,000, the unit rates of electricity provided to Linden through Linden Mining Enterprise (LINMINE) Community Power? The subvention provided here is \$2.735 billion. Other subventions are: Mahdia Power Company - \$25 million; Moruca - \$10 million; Matthews Ridge - \$15 million; Port Kaituma - \$25 million. Could the Hon. Minister please state what are the respective unit rates for electricity in these areas?

Mr. Patterson: Could the Hon. Member repeat which are the areas he would like.

Mr. Dharamlall: Kwakwani Utilities is receiving approximately \$345 million; Lethem Power Company - \$105 million; LINMINE, Mahdia Power Company, Moruca, Matthews Ridge and Port Kaituma, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, for the Lethem Power Company, the tariffs are, for the first 15 kilowatt hours, it is free; for the second band, it is 16 to 50 kilowatt hours at \$60 per kilowatt hour and, for 51 kilowatts and above, it is \$80.

For Mahdia, the first 15 kilowatt hours are free and, thereafter, it is \$100 per kilowatt hour; the same goes for Port Kaituma.

For the Linden Electricity Company, it is \$5 per kilowatt for residential and \$12 for commercial. Also, there are 271 pensioners who get the first 300 kilowatts free.

In Kwakwani; electricity supply is free except for four consumers - Western Union, Digicel, Russian Aluminium (Rusal) and the Guyana Telephone and Telegraph Company (GT&T), which pay \$60 per kilowatt hour.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, would it be possible for the Hon. Minister to provide that information in writing to the House?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, of course. If the Member had indicated he wanted it in writing first, I would have done that.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, under the same line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - there is an increase of support for electricity in Linden by \$140 million. The

Minister has just indicated that the rates for electricity in Linden is \$5 per kilowatt hour for residential and \$12 for commercial. This, as compared to the rest of the country, is exceptionally low. Could the Hon. Minister explain why there is an increase of \$140 million, if there is an expansion of residential or commercial activity in Linden, especially in the light of falling fuel prices and electricity charges?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the increase of 5.32% in the subsidies provided is in anticipation for the increasing demand in electricity due to the development of the new housing areas and businesses. So, we made allowance in this Budget for those works which will come on stream in 2016.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, a follow-up: I would like the Hon. Minister to be more specific. Where would this new housing development take place that will require electricity in 2016?

Mr. Patterson: Amelias Ward, Bamia, Wisroc, phase three... Sir, is that sufficient for the Member?

Mr. Chairman: Do you have a follow-up, sir?

Bishop Edghill: Yes, Sir. I would like to have the specifics of how many households he is talking about.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I am sure the Hon. Minister of Communities, who is responsible for housing, can provide the very specifics. I have just given you what we have allowed for.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, figures that are arrived at in a budgetary allocation are not flocked out; they are specific calculations. If the Minister is increasing allocations for community power in Region 10, Linden, it must come as a result of a specific number and calculations made and I am asking that the people of Guyana be told how many more households will benefit from \$5 per kilowatt hour for electricity in Region 10.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, is that question addressed to the Minister?

Bishop Edghill: Yes, to the Minister whose allocation...

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I thought I responded to that previously. He can direct that question to the Ministry of Communities' Housing Department and the Department will actually give you the figures.

Bishop Edghill: I am not dealing with the Ministry of Communities, Sir; this is the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and this allocation is under the Ministry of Public Infrastructure. Is the Minister confirming to this House that he cannot explain why there is an increase of \$140 million and, if...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member.

Bishop Edghill: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Please let us deal with the question. I know that you are going to make a speech but curb it.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I am not making a speech; I am asking a question. There is an increase of \$140 million for electricity subsidy to Linden at a cost of \$5 per kilowatt hour to residential customers. I am asking the Minister to be specific in his answer by telling us how many additional households will benefit from \$5 per kilowatt hour for electricity in Linden.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member for his question, although I am bound to say that I heard the question asked twice and I heard an answer given twice. It may not have been the answer the Hon. Member requires but that is the answer which the Hon. Minister gave. Perhaps, a third time he may give a different answer.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, my response remains the same.

Mr. Lumumba: Mr. Chairman, the Minister is a very intelligent person.

Mr. Chairman: Is it a question?

Mr. Lumumba: It is a follow-up.

Mr. Chairman: Well, please not the Minister personally but the question.

Mr. Lumumba: I do not want to upset you today, Sir. Follow-up: Could the Minister be allowed to pull a number in the Budget without an analysis or a determination of how he reached the number? Well, I need to know, Mr. Chairman, where is the analysis?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I wonder whether you can phrase your question differently because that question is *ad hominem*.

Mr. Lumumba: Let me attempt and I am sure you can assist me. Mr. Chairman, the Minister must have some document, some research paper, some methodology, to determine how he reached an amount that is allocated in the Budget. We are asking whether the Minister has such a document, whether the Hon. Minister came up with a number without doing an analysis.

3.52 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: There is a provision, and I will repeat, expansion for Amelia's Ward, Bamia and Wisroc, Phase 3.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Minister. I believe, this, if it is not dead it is dying if we are going to keep on asking that question all the time.

Mr. Dharamlall: Before the death of this question or the already dying answer, could I ask the Hon. Minister how many residents are currently benefiting from electricity in Linden?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, a rounded figure would be 9,000.

Bishop Edghill: I am grateful for the answer that I just received. It is a follow-up to the question by the Hon. Member Dharamlall. Two billion seven hundred and ninety-five million four hundred and seventy-eight dollars is being sought for in this budget, 9,000 customers in Linden for community power, at a rate of \$5.00 per kilowatt hour. Could the Hon. Minister tell this Assembly what is the consumption average, per household in Linden as compared to other parts of the country?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, could he repeat the question, because I am quite lost?

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I will like to have from the Minister the consumption per household as compared to other parts of the country on the Guyana Power and Light (GPL) grid.

Mr. Patterson: The average in Linden is 280 kilowatt per household unit. I hope that satisfies the Member.

Bishop Edghill: That is not a complete answer. I would like to hear the comparison to the rest of the country.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, we are dealing with the Linden Electricity Corporation. I have answered that question already. I do not know where the Hon. Member is going with the rest. I restate 280 kilowatt per month per household.

Bishop Edghill: I go back to the question. I detect the impatience but we still need the answer. There are a number of areas that are given subsidies. I have asked the Minister to tell us what the average consumption per household in Region 10 is as compared to other parts of the country. That would include Georgetown on the GPL grid and the other areas where subsidies are being sought - Lethem Mahdia, Port Kaituma and Moruka. What is the average consumption in those areas as compared to Linden as well as the GPL grid?

Mr. Patterson: Every time the Member asks he expands. In relation to GPL, for residential consumers the average monthly consumption is 150 kilowatt. He just expanded the question again. Just for completeness, it is less than 100 kilowatt per month for the remaining areas.

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6302, Training (including Scholarship): We have heard so much about training. I have seen here there was an allocation of \$992,000 in 2015 but a zero request this year. Would this training be done by the Public Service 'fancy' Training College that is coming on board, Hon. Minister?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, let us try to be polite in the questions asked and in the answers given.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, training is under Programme 2. The Hon. Member is absolutely correct. The Public Service Staff College will deal with all public servants. I would assume he considers that the Ministry of Public Infrastructure is a public service Ministry and employees would have to graduate from that staff college when fully implemented.

Mr. G. Persaud: I want to thank the Hon. Minister. Line item 6291, National and Other Events: There is an increase of 101% on this line item when compared with 2015. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to let us know why there is this increase and also what is intended for the sum allocated?

Mr. Patterson: The allocation this year reflects the Ministry's involvement primarily in the 50th Anniversary celebrations. As a Ministry, we have some long-standing stalwarts which I am sure former Minister Ganga Persaud can attest to, because some of them started working about the same time he did. We are going to recognise those long-standing colleagues. I think it is overdue. We made the allocation for that among other events around the 50th Anniversary.

Mr. G. Persaud: I thank the Hon. Minister for that explanation because it is saying to us that the \$300 million, which is set aside for the 50th Jubilee, is not the total sum that would be expended for the activity.

Mr. Patterson: This is my Ministry's contribution and recognition for my staff, past and present. This is recognition they have made for their country. I do not want the Hon. Member to link this to the nationally provided budget. Every single year there is provision for that.

Mr. Ramson: In relation to line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, subsidies to the energy company, there was the declared discrepancy or I should say the declared varying pricing depending on geographic location. May I ask what is the Hon. Minister intending to do in order to get the rates on a relatively consistent basis, geographically, since it would have been fuelled by a particular pricing scheme?

Mr. Patterson: I really like to thank the Hon. Member for asking that question and allowing me to explain our renewable energy policy, which it is known that there are several areas where we do receive subvention. As I mentioned in my budget speech, we are to have renewable energy. It would not be 100% but in the long run it would reduce the amount of ground fuel needed, reduce the cost of our generation and overhead cost. Thank you again for the opportunity to say that in the long term we are moving to all the external locations to be powered by renewable energy. That would obviously reduce the cost of production in the long run.

Mr. Ramson: May I have a follow-up to that, Comrade Chairman? May I ask the Hon. Minister what is the intended target for the rates on geographic locations, bearing in mind that even though renewable energy will form part of the mix as announced, it does not mean that renewable energy is free? What is the Minister's intended target for the varying geographic locations and your rates?

Mr. Patterson: We have an overall target to ensure countrywide – since we are an all-embracing Government – that the cost of production is no more than 12 or 13 cents and lower. On the average the Demerara grid would be much lower than whatever large scale renewable energy we use. The average should be no more than 13 cents. If you are asking if that is my intention countrywide, that is it.

Mr. Ramson: This may be able to provide a bit more clarity. It is since the Minister has declared there are different locations which require different rates...

Mr. Chairman: Is this a follow-up, Hon. Member?

Mr. Ramson: This is a follow-up, Comrade Chairman. How soon, Hon. Minister, could the nation expect to see a reduction on either consumption in one area or reduction on the rates other areas are paying?

Mr. Patterson: It is within the first five years of this Government – that is our term, five years of action. During our first term, we would try to achieve all our plans.

Mr. Dharamlall: Could the Hon. Minister state, based on his statement on renewable energy, what are the hydropower as well as solar power locations which are being considered by his Ministry as part of the renewable energy programme?

Mr. Patterson: There are numerous. I can list a few but I may slip, so I would hand them over. Obviously, the Member would know that the Mazaruni project is one. For hydropower, there are Tiger Hills and Eclipse Falls. Those are the two we are looking at. For solar there is Bartica, Mabaruma and we are looking at Leguan and Wakenaam. For wind farm, we are looking at Hope. I can gladly supply the Hon. Members with a full listing of our initial projects.

Mr. Dharamlall: Could the Hon. Minister please confirm whether Amaila Fall is also a part of that list?

4.07 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: Of course. As the Minister of Finance repeatedly said - I do not think I can say it more eloquently than him - the project of Amaila Fall is a project which everybody would consider. The concept and format in which we found it in, obviously I can quoted the Minister of Finance words which was that it would be criminal to continue the project scope in the current concept. So the answer to the question if Amaila Fall is a hydropower site in the country, yes, but the form and the concept in which we found it no.

Mr. Dharamlall: As a follow-up, I particularly asked if Amaila Fall was on the list under consideration. Could the Hon. Minister please indicate under line item 6321?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are you asking a new question or a follow-up of what?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes Mr. Chairman. It is a follow-up.

Mr. Patterson: To be absolutely pellucid, there are about 69 possible hydropower sites in the country and, Hon. Member Dharamlall, all are potential hydropower sites. Therefore if Amaila Fall is one in the 69 then, of course, it would be. This Government does not have the authority to scratch off ten sites, which are said to be longer hydropower sites. They are natural phenomenon.

Mr. Dharamlall: It is as a follow-up. The Hon. Minister of Finance in his budget speech referred to the Amaila Fall project and I would like, therefore, to ask the Hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure whether there is any study or what type of consideration is being given to Amaila Fall during the course of 2016.

Mr. Patterson: Under my Ministry, there is none. The Minister of Finance made reference to what is ongoing with that particular project and his pronouncement stands. I should advise the Member.

Mr. Dharamlall: I would just like to remind the Hon. Minister to supply the Assembly with the list. I would like to ask the Hon. Minister if there were feasibility studies done, including any rate analysis, on the wind farm at Hope.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I do not know what line item it is, but obviously to save the Member from fishing all through my Ministry to find it, those are ongoing assessments. Obviously, once again, I would invite my shadow Minister to come and be briefed. He can advise you when you see him at an appropriate time.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6293, Refreshments and Meals: In 2015, in the eight months under Ministry of Public Works' administration \$1,997,000 was consumed or utilised under that line item. Under the four months of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, \$1 million was budgeted but \$5,695,000 was utilised and we are being asked to appropriate \$4,472,000. Could the Minister explain what was responsibility for the increase in 2015, in the four months and what items, or it is to give us a breakdown of the \$4,472,000 being sought in 2016?

Mr. Patterson: Yes Sir. There was a virement under this subhead and you will be well aware of the virement of \$4,600,000 in 2015. The savings from other subheads, which are the other discrepancies, is now back to what it is.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, that does not answer the question. This is for refreshment and meals. He is saying how he got the money, by way of a virement, but I am asking, why is the increase?

Mr. Patterson: My apologies Sir. I did not realise that there was the second part. Sir, there several things that the Ministry of Public Infrastructure would have done being a new Ministry, first we had a staff retreat for all the heads of department in the Ministry so as to update them on the Government's policy, to get from them a feedback on how they see what the Ministry should be doing. At that staff retreat we also did some brainstorming on possible projects and what not. That staff retreat was held at Splashmins. I have a very big agency and I brought in not only the heads of departments, but the admin and as well all the support agencies. We had to do things. I do hope that finds favour with the Hon. Member.

Mr. Charlie: As it relates to budget line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, could the Hon. Minister give a breakdown on the following: the Berbice Bridge Company, Guyana Energy Agency, Hinterland Electrification, Transport and Harbours Department, as it relates to the budgeted sums respectively?

Mr. Patterson: I am just confirming that the Hon. Member has not jumped ahead as yet. The Guyana Energy Agency - \$83.6 million, Transport and Harbours - \$430 million, Berbice Bridge Company - \$150 million, Hinterland Electricity Corporation Inc. - \$43.2 million, Kwakwani Utilities Inc. - \$345.7 million, Lethem - \$105 million, Linden Mining Enterprise (Linmine) - \$2.735 million, Mahdia - \$25 million, Moruka – \$10 million, Matthews Ridge - \$15 million and Port Kaituma - \$25 million, bringing us up to that total.

Mr. Dharamlall: It is a follow-up to that question. Specifically the figures for Berbice Bridge, Guyana Energy Agency, Hinterland Electrification and Transport and Harbours Department, what do those estimates involve?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I heard the first part on Berbice Bridge Company.

Mr. Dharamlall: The question is what is the purpose of the subsidies?

Mr. Patterson: I think the Berbice Bridge Company subsidy is self-explanatory. I do not know if the Hon. Member wants me to remind this Assembly why that was done, but quite willingly I would do. For the Transport and Harbours Department it is obviously for fuel, the Hinterland Electrification, that is admin and other costs, and for the GEA is to offset employment cost.

Mr. Dharamlall: On a follow-up to Hinterland Electrification, admin cost, could the Hon. Minister please state or provide to us the staffing details including emoluments available?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I do not have that information at hand so I would like to willingly lay it over or if you would give me a couple minutes after I could come back to it, whichever is the preference to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, in preference of both, it is coming back as well as providing it.

Mr. Chairman: I did not follow the Hon. Member.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, it is just for clarity. Sir, I am getting the information rather than stall the process. I will ask if I could just redress that later and I will do both before my agency is up. It is if that pleases, the Chairman.

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: You will provide the information to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Patterson: Sir he delayed me enough so that I could do the first part, with your leave.

Mr. Chairman: Please proceed.

Mr. Patterson: One Chief Executive Officer (CEO), one Accountant, three Engineers, one Regulatory Adviser, one Driver and one Admin Assistant.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I had also asked for the emoluments. It is the second part of the first part.

Mr. Patterson: That Sir, I would have to lay over.

Mr. Chairman: Very well Minister.

Programme: 321- Policy Development and Administration - \$4,270,037,000 agreed to and stands part of the Estimates.

Assembly resumed.

Sitting suspended at 4.20 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 5.34 p.m.

5.35 p.m.

In Committee of Supply

Programme: 322 – Public Works – \$2,956,850,000

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6112, Senior Technical: There is an increase of staffing by one and that reflects a 63% on the 2015 allocation. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to give us the designation of that individual, the date of appointment and the mode of engagement, whether this was through the Public Service Commission, public advertisement?

Mr. Patterson: Yes Sir. This one extra position was that of a specialist engineer. He was appointed through the Public Service Commission. He has since resigned and he is no longer with the Ministry. Obviously this here would not reflect that, his resignation.

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6113, Other Technical and Craft Skilled: There are two increases in staffing, and the salary increase is \$3,179,000. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to share with us the designation of these two individuals, when they came on board, and how they were recruited?

Mr. Patterson: Yes. The positions are one Draftsman and one Assistant Draftsman, or draftsperson to be politically correct, Sir. They came on board mid last year, Sir – the Member did not ask anything about the salaries - and they were appointed by the Public Service Commission.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6116, Contracted Employees: There is an increase of five employees. Could the Hon. Minister indicate their designations and their emoluments?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the positions are Research Engineer - \$247,000 per month and Administrative Assistant - \$80,000, two Drivers - \$57,938 per month and one Cleaner at \$50,000 per month.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6293, Refreshment and Meals: In 2015, a sum of \$2 million was budgeted for the four months and an expenditure of \$3.7 million was expended and we are asked to appropriate \$6.9 million for the year. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us what caused the increase in 2015 and what is the reason for the projected sum in 2016?

Mr. Patterson: Yes Sir. In this Budget 2016 we are catering for increase monitoring and supervision of projects, which would require additional hours out in the field. These, I have made mention in my budget speech, that there will be a new Inspectorate Division, which it is known that there are public advertisements out at the moment. Obviously, the officers would be required to travel the length and the breadth. They are not only inspecting the Ministry of Public Infrastructure projects but the Government's projects all over, capital and maintenance works. There is the national task force, which is already in place, so it is increase activity, the increase request granted by the Ministry of Finance.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, the Hon. Minister did not explain to the Assembly what caused the increase in 2015.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I do think the Hon. Member omitted to add the Ministry of Public Works sum to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure sum. Sir, when both are added together, agencies 31 and 32, which would be the January to August, under the Ministry of Public Works, and September to December, the actual allocation was \$6,256,000 that was last year, as a total for 2015. We are now at an increase of \$750,000 and that is what I was explaining, the \$750,000, earlier. I trust that is to the Member's satisfaction.

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6231, Fuel and Lubricants: A total of \$43,682,000 was allocated in 2015. In 2016, the agency is requesting \$58,161,000 which is an increase by \$14,479,000 or 34%. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to share with us what equipment, vehicle or machinery would be using this allocation in the form of fuel and where these vehicle, equipment, or machinery are located?

Mr. Patterson: The last part of the question is countrywide, every region. Where – currently, the Ministry has 158 vehicles and equipment up to the end of 2015. In 2016, there are five additional vehicles coming on board in this budget, so that will carry us up to 163 vehicles. For equipment, I am talking about graders, trucks and all those. It is countrywide.

Mr. G. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, it is a follow-up. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to say to us what vehicle or equipment were added to the 2015 stock that would have resulted in the request for an additional \$14,479,000, given also the reduction there was for fuel at the pump.

Mr. Patterson: In 2015, which would have been added, we bought two Land Cruisers, two Hilux pickups, one car, 2 20-ton dump trucks, one excavator, one Cherry Picker, 500 bush cutters and one grader. In 2016, we are buying a dump truck, excavator, grader, Cherry Picker, scale well, that does not use fuel, and bush cutters. Accumulatively, all those equipment necessitated the increase in fuel.

Mr. Charlie: Line item 6251, Maintenance of Roads: Could the Minister indicate the roads and if the roads in the five sub district of Region 9 is catered for under this line item? If yes, could the Minister indicate the allocated amount as per road?

Mr. Patterson: The Hon. Member is advised that Region 9 will come under hinterland roads. My apologies. I was informed that this is the maintenance budget, as opposed, to the capital

budget, and we do not have any roads for maintenance slated in Region 9 for this year, in the current budget.

Mr. Lumumba: Could the Hon. Minister, under line item 6251, Maintenance of Roads, identify the roads that will be maintained and what is the amount of money that is being identified for each road?

Mr. Patterson: It is quite an extensive list. I have no problems in reading them. In Georgetown, there are Clive Lloyd...

Mr. Lumumba: Mr. Chairman, he can submit the list.

Mr. Patterson: Most gracious.

Mr. Ramson: Line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships): First part of the question is the \$1.6 million that was spent on training/scholarship...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I think we all want to hear the question.

5.50 p.m.

Mr. Ramson: Line item 6302: The first part of the question is what was the \$1.6 million spent for in 2015?

The second part is: There was a jump to \$17 million in 2016, what does that cater for?

Mr. Patterson: First, let me say that the \$1.6 million, which would have been for the quarter, was for training the members of the World Financial Group (WFG), engineers and refreshers courses, *et cetera*.

There are a few things that I want to mention. The Hon. Member had asked earlier on about the \$0 and why no money was allotted there. This is for staff development training and the Engineers' Conference. The Engineers' Conference is budgeted for \$10 million and the Staff Development Training is budgeted for \$7.37 million. Training continues for professional development, both local and overseas.

Mr. Ali: Line item 6251 – Miscellaneous of Roads: Could the Hon. Minister say to us what criteria was used in selecting these roads? What weight has been given to the different aspects of the criteria used in the selection of these roads?

Mr. Patterson: I thank the Hon. Member for asking that question which has given me an opportunity to explain. Firstly as the Hon. Member knows, we have the National Task Force that has been visiting every region and the Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs). The engineers also went out and had consultations in the regions and the communities. After that process, each road was ranked 1, 2, 3 or 4, with 4 being good; 3 being moderate; 2 being poor; and one being bad.

Therefore, we pulled out all the 1s, which all made the list, and some of the 2s, based on budgetary allocations. I must say that was the only criteria. The National Task Force would have met every region it had listed. We will do continuous assessments to ensure that none of the 2s become 1s or that the 3s become 4s. That is the process which was done.

Mr. Ali: A follow-up: Could the Hon. Minister say whether the regional chairmen, in the various administrative regions, were consulted in identifying the priorities or had helped in identifying the roads that would have made the shortlist?

Mr. Patterson: I am pleased to answer in the affirmative to the Hon. Member's question. As the Minister, I am here for all the people and not only for some persons.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister say what is the bloc figure for each region?

Mr. Patterson: For Georgetown - \$269.1 million; Region 2 - \$30 million; Region 3 - \$40 million; Region 4 - \$115 million; Region 5 - \$40 million; Region 6 - \$71 million; Region 7 - \$50.9; Region 8 - \$100 million; Region 10 - \$102 million; and there is an allocated sum - General - \$230.5 million, which is mostly for emergency works.

As I am on my feet and I see Members scribbling copiously, let me say that this is for maintenance. We have roads budgeted for under Urban and Miscellaneous. I am just trying to shorten the questions, so that we can get home as quickly as possible.

Mr. Gill: Could the Hon. Minister explain the astronomical difference in Telephone Charges from \$599,000 last year to \$10 million in this year's Budget?

Mr. Patterson: Which line item?

Mr. Gill: Sorry, line item 6271.

Mr. Patterson: I made an opening statement. The actual amount spent by the Ministry in 2015 was \$4.9 million, not only the \$599,000. It is now \$10 million because the Ministry has been expanded to include the National Task Force, the Inspectorate Division and there are also additions that I had made in 2015. I made mention that we are now supporting and we will be supporting with staff and engineers in the various regions and there is the internet, telephone calls, *et cetera*. That explains the increase.

Mr. Damon: Line item 6254 – Maintenance of Sea Defence and River Defences: I have seen a huge sum here - \$300 million. I want to ask the Hon. Minister, if there is anything in this allocation for the restoration of the Mangrove Project?

Mr. Patterson: I think the Hon. Member is slightly misplaced. The mangroves are actually under the agriculture project, but I do understand that they both serve a sea defence purpose. You can direct questions such as those to the Ministry of Agriculture.

Mr. Damon: I am asking you to answer me. Do not tell me I have to ask the ...

Mr. Patterson: Sir, if it is not under my Ministry, it is obvious that I cannot budget for it.

Mr. Lumumba: I raise my concern on a similar amount, but not for that reason. Administration has...

Mr. Chairman: Do you have a line item, please?

Mr. Lumumba: Line item 6254: Administration has moved from \$59 million to \$300 million in one year. Could the Minister explain to this honourable House, why is it that for the Administration of Sea Defence, where there is a \$700 million allocation for "Actual works", would require \$300 million for administration? It seems extremely high.

In addition to that, could the Hon. Minister outline for us, who the additional staff are that his Ministry has hired, what their credentials are and what was the process used in hiring those individuals?

Mr. Patterson: Like the previous Hon. Member's question, I think this question is totally misplaced, but I will answer both questions.

Firstly, this money is for the Maintenance of Sea Defenses and obviously this is not the maintenance of sea defenses. It is budgeted in all the coastal regions. The wording, lithography and the spelling can be pursued with the Ministry of Finance.

Before I proceed, I would like to tell the Hon. Member, Mr. Damon, that, under the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) Project that will be coming on-stream, we will be dealing with the mangroves as well. It is under agriculture, but the Ministry of Public Infrastructure would be dealing with mangroves as well.

The costs for Maintenance of Sea Defenses will be: Region 2 - \$32.5 million; Region 3 - \$78.3 million; Region 4 - \$85.6 million; Region 5 - \$5.3 million; Region 6 - \$16.5; Region 7 - \$15 million; Region 10 - \$10 million; and we have an emergency fund for Regions 2 - 6 of \$56.7 million. This brings it to \$300 million for Maintenance of Sea Defense.

Mr. Ali: I wish to return to line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads. The Hon. Minister, in outlining the bulk figure for the different regions said that \$269 million will be spent in Georgetown and that \$115 million would be spent in Region 4. The total amount to be spent in Region 4, inclusive of Georgetown is \$384 million, as compared to the total that would be spent in Region 3, which is \$30 million.

Would the Hon. Minister agree with me that the wide expanse of road network and the age of the road network in Region 3 would have required a more superior allocation under Maintenance of Roads, than that of what has been assigned?

My second question is: What percentage of this programme will be tendered and what percentage will be done through Force Account or under whatever name the Force Account is known by now?

Mr. Patterson: The Member is absolutely correct in his observation, in the sense of the amount of work to be done in Region 4. It is unfortunate to have to be saying this. As I had said, we graded the roads depending on how bad they were. I am not ascribing any reason, but when the grading was completed, Region 4 had a great number of grade 1s. We had to correct that discrepancy. I do hope that, by the end of this Budget, all regions would have the same level of parity. From there on then, the former Minister could try and make a comparison.

6.05 p.m.

I would also like to highlight that, when we just look at numbers, we have to remember the total number of roads in an area. There are much more roads in Region 4 than there are in Region 3, surface wise.

Mr. Ali: I had a second part of the question in terms of the percentage that would be tendered and what percentage would be done through special projects or Force Account or whatever it is called?

Mr. Patterson: Unfortunately that has not been determined as yet. Obviously, after the budget has been passed, we will be informed of what has been done by the Special Project Unit.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Can the Hon. Minister kindly share with this House a list of the roads in Regions 7 and 8 that would be maintained?

Mr. Patterson: Yes. The list that the Hon. Member, Mr. Lumumba, had asked for covers the entire country. I do think that it could be shared with everybody. Members can extract from it what they need.

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence: The two allocations for 2015 - \$3,174,000 million, plus \$2,426,000, give us a total of \$5.6 million. The request for 2016 is \$21 million, \$15,400,000 more or a 275% increase. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to let us know why this increase; secondly, having explained to us the number of vehicles that are out there and would consume the \$14 million in additional fuel, who will be using this Local Travel and Subsistence and for what purpose? Can we get a break down as to the projected use per month with this resource?

Mr. Patterson: This line item is Local Travel and Subsistence, not Fuel Charges. Obviously, for that same reason, we have two new departments, the Inspectorate International Task Force. As Members know, the Ministry does have a very substantive hinterland initiative and the policy of the Government is linking our coast with the hinterland. Obviously, it will require the inspectorate and the teams to go out there more often to inspect the work. So, that is what the Local Travel and Subsistence covers and not the fuel.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I will allow three more questions before I put the question.

Mr. G. Persaud: I referred to the fuel under line item 6231- Fuel and Lubricants, given the explanation that was given earlier. I never intended to say that under line item 6261- Local Travel and Subsistence fuel would be provided.

I think that the Minister may have misheard me. A follow-up on that very line item 6261, the Minister said that his Ministry had special teams that would be going in to the hinterlands to check on the works, *et cetera*. He has not given me or provided us with the requests as to the frequency of these visitations and the approximate cost for each visitation, so we can then rationalise the increased request on \$15.4 million.

Mr. Patterson: First, let me offer my apologies to the Hon. Member for assuming that he was mixing fuel with his food in subsistence. This is a provision for these units as well as the Ministry's regular units. The Inspectorate Unit is not only for the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, it covers the entire Government portfolio. We have made a provision to say that, should the Ministry of Education, as it had done already, ask us to go to the Kato Secondary School, I have to send a team from my Ministry out there and they would overnight and return two or three times. So, depending on the severity of the problem, the team may have to stay longer. This is just a provision to offset those costs.

Mr. Dharamlall: I invoke programme budgeting - Public works, could the Hon. Minister please state whether...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, do you have a line item?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, it is programme budgeting, Programme: 322- Public Works. Could the Hon. Minister please state whether staff of the Inspectorate Unit or any other department of the

Ministry is providing technical assistance or supervision to the Jubilee Park Stadium construction?

Mr. Patterson: There is no specific person or agency assigned to one Jubilee Park Stadium, if that is the specific thing. But what I would like to say is that we are part of the Commemorative Committee which is looking at infrastructural works for the entire country. So, I do hope that the Hon. Member does not try to pull out one particular area. There is a lot of infrastructure work that has to be done or advised that has to be given to ensure that we have a successful 50th Independence Anniversary. We are pleased to be associated with it and I invite the Member to join us in embracing it.

Mr. Dharamlall: As a follow up, could the Hon. Minister say, as part of the number of infrastructural works that are being pursued in service of the 50th Independence Anniversary, whether he would be able to provide the types of projects or a list of the projects and the cost associated with each.

Mr. Patterson: There is no project specific in my Ministry for the 50th Independence Anniversary. But once again let me thank the Hon. Member for giving me the opportunity to say that we will be continuing our clean-up work. Those who appreciate would see how the drains are looking and how the City of Georgetown is looking.

There is one project I know, which I particularly like, it is not under this line item. It is for the people and the Township of Corriverton. They have asked for sidewalks, which they would like complete before the 50th Independence Anniversary. The Ministry would like to get the boardwalk started, as I had mentioned before. The Ministry has several enhancement projects which are not specific to the Commemorative Committee, but are all geared towards making Guyana a proud place to be, so that when people visit this year they would be proud and would want to stay. So, once again I invite the Member to join me.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I did say three questions. I beg your Pardon? Two persons asked four questions. Hon. Member, I am putting the matter to the floor now. The Hon. Member is shouting and I have not given you the floor. Please state your question. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Ali: Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Can the Hon. Minister say whether the Durban Park Development Project is catered for under this head and if it is not, where is it catered for? If extra budgetary resources would be utilised for this project, including donations, what measures are in place to ensure transparency and accountability?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, is this under a line item?

Mr. Ali: Yes, line item 6255- Maintenance of Other Infrastructure.

Mr. Patterson: There is no provision whatsoever under...

Mr. Ali: Where is it then?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you would have the option of a supplementary question.

Mr. Patterson: There is no provision whatsoever under this line item or any other line item, contained in the Ministry of Public Infrastructure's budget for that project which the Member is asking about. I hope that that satisfies the Hon. Member.

Mr. Ali: With complete respect for the Hon. Minister, I think that he would have heard the Hon. Minister of Finance announced a few hundred million dollars in the budget for this project. It is not fair. [*Interruption*] Mr. Chairman, the Durban Park Development Project...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we have to be fair all around. If you ask the Hon. Minister a question and he answers the question, it may not be the answer that you want, but it is a question that has been answered. You are now asking the Hon. Minister about another Minister's portfolio.

Mr. Ali: There was a third question. If the resources are coming from extra budgetary channels, what measures are in place to ensure transparency and accountability?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I speak on behalf of myself, my Ministry and Minister Ferguson. I take full responsibility for everything that happens under my Ministry. I mean, of course, I am part of the Government, but I cannot answer the questions that the Hon. Member is directing to me. It is totally outside my remit. I know that he thinks I am absolutely competent to know

everything, but, unfortunately, I have to disappoint the Hon. Member this time. It is way beyond my remit.

Programme: 322 – Public Works - \$2,956,850,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

6.20 p.m.

Programme: 323 – Transport – \$78,775,000

Mr. G. Persaud: Line item 6265 – Other Transport, Travel and Postage: The total allocation in 2015 was \$7,508,000. What is being requested now is \$16 million, an increase of \$8,492,000 or 114%. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to explain to us, firstly - why this 114% increase and secondly - who would be the beneficiaries from this total allocation?

Mr. Patterson: This line item, primarily, covers air transport. We have, if I could recall without consulting, 47 airstrips under the Ministry. We obviously would have to visit all 47 airstrips. The Ministry is also doing major capital works in certain areas which would require its teams to visit more than one. This would include the airdromes, the engineers and the inspectors visiting the airstrips.

If the Member would like, I could give him a list of the 47 airstrips which fall under the Ministry. Thank you.

Programme: 323 – Transport – \$78,775,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 321 – Policy Development and Administration – \$3,227,820,000

Bishop Edghill: Project code 1214800 – Government Buildings: In the Legend, we discovered that there is work to be done on the Umana Yana, rehabilitation to the Oranapai Towers, the completion of the Prime Minister’s Residence and provision for some other services. I would be happy if the Hon. Minister could give us a breakdown on how much would be spent on each item.

Mr. Patterson: The completion of the Umana Yana, the rollover part, is for \$17.2 million and the addition works for it in this new Budget is \$40 million; we have rehabilitation work to the Ministry's building which is \$15 million; general rehabilitation work to the central workshop and stores - Transport and Harbours Department which is \$50 million; general rehabilitation to the Ministry's laboratories - \$10 million; general rehabilitation to the Ministry workshop on Lamaha and Parade Streets - \$5 million; Government flats - \$5 million; construction of a new document centre - \$27.6 million; and rehabilitation of lots 18 and 19 Echilebar Villas - \$15 million each.

We have a large amount of \$171,000, being the retention on the Prime Minister's Residence. Before the Hon. Members ask, that sum is a roll over. The Prime Minister's Residence is supposed to be finished on the 17th February, 2016. The contractor has asked for one to two weeks' extension and is expected to be finished on 1st March, 2016. Thank you.

Bishop Edghill: This same project code 1214800 – Government Buildings: From our profile, this is a \$280 million project, which meant that \$80 million would have been expended last year. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us the breakdown of the \$80 million that was spent last year?

Mr. Patterson: Hon. Member, could you repeat the question. I do not think that the Minister has any round figure like \$80 million.

Bishop Edghill: Same project code 1214800 – Government Buildings: The project profile tells us that there is a \$260 million project - sorry. Sixty million was spent last year. I would like to have a breakdown of what items the \$60 million dealt with last year.

Mr. Patterson: Twenty two million was spent on the Prime Minister's Residence and \$38 million was spent on the Umana Yana in last year.

Mr. Lumumba: Project code - 2606500 – Electrification Programme - “Provision for electrification system – Inter -American Development Bank (IDB)”: May the Minister explain to this House what are the specifics, in terms of how this money would be spent and what the expectations are at the end, when the expenditure is completed and the works are done?

Mr. Patterson: In this year, the \$550 million, which is an IDB and European Union (EU) programme, is for the rehabilitation of the Low Voltage (LV) Distribution Network, Phase Two

in Demerara and Berbice and that is \$552.3 million. We have released retention for the rehabilitation of the LV Distribution Network Phase One which is \$2.8 million.

There is commercial loss reduction for final payments on contracts for the smart metering systems - \$23.36 million and implementation and support of the administration cost, which is \$1.5 million. This is the continuation of a programme, (PUUP), which it is slated to be completely finished in 2018. At the end of the project, it is anticipated that it would reduce the Ministry's technical losses and improved managerial capacity within the Guyana Power and Light (GPL).

Bishop Edghill: Under the same project code 2606500 – Electrification Programme: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House what is the level of losses we are suffering right now in terms of transmission and what this project would bring it down to? While he is seeking to get the answer, could he also deal with the commercial losses as well?

Mr. Patterson: We are now at 29.2%. At the end of the project, we would like it to be reduced by 5.4% to 23.2%.

Bishop Edghill: I ask it differently. I ask for technical losses, and then I said that, while he was getting the answer on technical losses, if he could also deal with the commercial losses - the disaggregation.

Mr. Patterson: I would give the information in a moment.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, are you in a position to give that now?

Mr. Patterson: Yes Sir, one minute please. My apologies for keeping the House waiting, it is \$13.4 million for the technical losses and \$15.4 million for commercial losses.

Mr. G. Persaud: Project code 2606700 – Hinterland Electrification: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to let us know how much is allocated under this programme to ensure that Mabaruma get 24 hours electricity per day?

Mr. Patterson: The allocations here did not cater for 24 hours electricity in Mabaruma, but I would like to say this and I thought it would have come up earlier. As you would have noticed Hon. Member, Mr. G. Persaud, despite the low fuel cost, we have not reduced our subvention.

That is from what we have done for the fuel subvention, we have maintained the same level. What that has done was to move it from eight to 14 hours a day for Mabaruma and Mahdia. That is the reason behind the Ministry not reducing it in light of drop in the fuel prices. It is so that, in these areas, the generators could be run for longer periods.

Bishop Edghill: This very important. Project code 2606500 – Electrification Programme: I thank the Hon. Minister for giving us the breakdown of the losses that we are currently experiencing. What I would like the Minister to do and I hope that he could, is for him to give us a geographical breakdown of the commercial losses – Georgetown and the other regions.

6.35 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: Obviously, I cannot do that now but I have no problem. As long as it is available, I will lay it over to the Hon. Member. I want to, once again, reiterate if the Hon. Member, who is my shadow, accepts my offer to meet, he can have all of this information and can probably save the House a few minutes.

Bishop Edghill: While I thank the Hon. Member for his offer, this is not a private matter. I would like the...

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

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I am trying to get the information that I requested.

Mr. Chairman: Perhaps, you should repeat the question.

Bishop Edghill: I am accepting the offer for the documents to be laid over in the House.

Mr. Patterson: I thought I was clear when I said that I would provide it because I do not have it here. There is a loss profile spread out for where we sell our power. I will give it to the Hon. Member. I will share it with the House but I am only reiterating the point that several of these questions could have been addressed if he had accepted my invitation. There could have been a more focussed discussion.

Bishop Edghill: Project code 2406400 – Land Transport: Could the Hon. Minister tell this House how many vehicles will be purchased, the types of vehicles to be purchased and where they would be deployed?

Mr. Patterson: There would be two land cruisers budgeted for at \$24 million and they go with the Work Services Group and the Inspectorate Division; one motor car at \$3 million goes to the Administration Department of the Ministry; two Hilux Pickups for the Work Services Group; and two pickups for the districts that I mentioned earlier where we will be providing technical and logistical support to the outlying districts and that is allocated at a sum of \$10 million, giving a total of \$55 million.

Mr. Dharamlall: Project code 2606900 – Sustainable Energy Programme: The Hon. Minister of Finance, in his Budget speech, indicated that there is an energy matrix that is being pursued by the Government and that Amaila Falls Hydropower falls within the energy matrix...

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I do not mind the line of questioning but one cannot ascribe words to me and the Amaila Falls is nowhere in my Budget speech.

Hon. Member (Opposition): He never said you said...

Mr. Patterson: The Hon. Member quoted me, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, were you making a point? Please continue.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, I quoted the Minister of Finance in his Budget speech. I would like an update under the Sustainable Energy Programme on the expression of interest regarding the Mokomoko Hydropower scheme, the possible component financing that would be provided to Mahdia Power and Light Company Inc. and the status of the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) *vis-a-vis* the Hope Wind Farm Project?

Mr. Patterson: In relation to the Mokomoko Hydropower scheme, the Expression of Interest (EoIs) will return at the end of March so, obviously, no information on that can be given until. As I mentioned earlier, this is not the project code but, for the wind farm, we are interrogating the data as we speak. There is no PPA with anyone.

Mr. Lumumba: Follow-up: It states here:

“Provision for renewable energy initiatives – IDB”

Could the Minister inform this honourable House as to what the initiative is and the specifics of this initiative?

Mr. Patterson: Allocated in 2016 is the Public Awareness Campaign at a cost of \$6.65 million, the hiring of a consultant for identifying of sites for wind data collection at a cost of \$10.457 million, the procurement of wind measuring equipment costing \$21,947 million, the procurement of on-grid photovoltaic systems for coastal locations at a cost of \$110.448 million, and project administration at \$10.5 million, giving a grand total of \$160 million.

Mr. Lumumba: Follow-up: The Minister is saying to this honourable House that, even though pronouncements have been made, a study has not been completed but this Government is going ahead to commit \$160 million...

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

Mr. Lumumba: Yes, that is my question.

Mr. Chairman: Please repeat the question.

Mr. Lumumba: I am asking the Minister, in the absence of a feasibility study and in the absence of a concrete project, is the Government still going ahead to spend \$160 million of hard-earned taxpayers' money for such a project?

Mr. Patterson: I am trying to recall which project the Hon. Member is referring to?

Mr. Lumumba: Mr. Chairman, I am amazed...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, the Hon. Member addressed a question to you and there is [*inaudible*] response.

Mr. Patterson: Sorry, the Hon. Member made mention of a concrete project and not what concrete project he is referring to so I was seeking clarification so that I could respond.

Mr. Chairman: Is this a follow-up question, Hon. Member?

Mr. Lumumba: Mr. Chairman, I am amazed that the Minister will spend \$160 million...

Chairman hit gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, is this a follow-up question?

Mr. Lumumba: Yes, it is. It is a follow-up.

Mr. Chairman: Then please address the question.

Mr. Lumumba: Well, I am addressing it to you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: I know but I am not...

Mr. Lumumba: And I am saying, Mr. Chairman, that I find it amazing that the Minister will commit \$160 million of the Government's funds for something that is not concrete.

Mr. Patterson: What is not concrete?

Mr. Lumumba: Well, I do not know what is concrete.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member.

Mr. Lumumba: Mr. Chairman, the Minister is yet to identify what this money is to be spent on.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, if you would permit me, I cannot leave these things... Just as how *there is not one dog named Pompey*, there is not one location with wind, if that is what the Hon. Member is telling me. If the wind data equipment that is being bought to do measurement is what the Hon. Member is talking about...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, you should address the Chairman.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, Sir. If the Hon. Member is querying the wind data collection and the wind procurement, I made mention, in my speech, that the Essequibo Coast and other places are being looked at. Just as how *there is not one dog named Pompey*, there is not one area that has wind. I hope that addressed the Hon. Member's question. There are many wind projects that can be done in Guyana.

Mr. Lumumba: Follow-up: Is the Minister saying to this honourable House that the \$160 million is a commitment to carry out the feasibility studies before a decision can be made by this Government on any specific wind project?

First Vice-President and Prime Minister [Mr. Nagamootoo]: That is a pompous [*inaudible*]

Mr. Lumumba: Well, I am a pompous person.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member, once again, is probably mixing his Ps and his Qs. The KEMA data for the Hope Wind Farm Project came from the developer. At the end of January we have one year of additional data and that data is sent to us for our interrogation. The Hon. Member may or may not be aware since the previous Administration would have reviewed that data and issued a Cabinet paper to go even further than where I am. What this particular project code does is to interrogate other sites for wind. Just as how there is not just one wind site, there is not one solar site or one hydropower site in this country. It is incumbent on me and my Government to investigate each and every one.

Bishop Edghill: Project code 2606800 – Power Utility Upgrade Programme: A sum of \$2 billion is being sought but, last year, \$944,599,000 was budgeted for and approved in this House but only \$207,172,000 was spent, which meant that this project underperformed. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House why the underperformance and why, in the light of that underperformance, we should appropriate \$2 billion as it relates... Has capacity been increased? What is the situation and what is the real update on this particular project?

Mr. Patterson: I had to smile because I am sure the Hon. Leader of the Opposition probably cringed when that question was asked. This is a project that I inherited on 15th May. It was dead and I must congratulate the hardworking team behind this. We were able to resuscitate the project to the tune of \$207 million. When I took it over, it was a \$54 million project; US\$300,000 was expended when we took the project over. The Hon. Shadow Minister may be in a better position to say why it was underperforming. I must say that we are on the road to recovery and several of the packages have come back in and will be coming back within the next two or three weeks. We definitely will see vast improvement on the progress of this project. Maybe you should consult my predecessor on why it performed so badly.

Bishop Edghill: Follow-up: I thank the Hon. Member for his political speech but whether the project was dead or whatever, in August of last year, this House was asked to appropriate \$944 million. We only spent \$207 million so I do not see how the Minister can stand to say that I should ask the predecessor. The Minister's implementation staff must tell him why almost a billion was asked for and only \$200 million was spent.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, is this a follow-up question?

Bishop Edghill: Yes, Sir; it is a follow-up question.

Mr. Chairman: Let us have the question.

Bishop Edghill: I would like to know why the programme underperformed in 2015. A sum of \$944 million was asked for and only \$200 million was spent. Why should this House appropriate \$2 billion this year? This was asked for in August and not in May.

Mr. Patterson: I see the Hon. Leader of the Opposition continues to cringe. I would like to apologise to this House on behalf of my staff and I. I did anticipate that my powers of resuscitating the dead were greater than it is.

6.50 p.m.

Therefore, Sir, we did anticipate that we could have done miracles. We just moved mountains, but we could not do the miracles. So we will do it this year.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Minister.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, on behalf of my Amerindian brothers...

Mr. Chairman: I beg the Hon. Member....

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, thank you. On behalf of my Amerindian brothers, project code 2606700 - Hinterland Electrification: At the last National Toshaos Council (NTC) that former Minister Pauline Sukhai hosted, the Amerindian villages in Regions 4, 5 and 6 had requested extension on their electrification programmes within their villages. The Hon. Minister then had written to her colleague, Mr. Robeson Benn. Could the Hon. Minister state whether those

projects are now being funded under Hinterland Electrification as requested by Ms. Pauline Sukhai on behalf of the villages earlier in 2015?

Mr. Patterson: I thank the Hon. Member and I am pleased to inform him, his Amerindian constituency and the Hon. Member, Ms. Pauline Campbell-Sukhai, that yes, they are included in here.

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you.

Programme: 321 - Policy Development and Administration - \$3,227,820,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 322 - Public Works - \$14,861,631,000

Bishop Edghill: Project code 1101100 - Demerara Harbour Bridge: The sum of \$150 million is being sought for capital works on this Bridge. We were also told, by way of a public announcement, that there is consideration for the increased rates for the Demerara Harbour Bridge. Could the Hon. Minister update this House on this matter?

Mr. Patterson: The \$150 million is for: servicing a pontoon at \$80 million, the fabrication of buoys at \$25 million, the supply of sheaves and shackles at \$20 million, and the rehabilitation of the hydraulic retractor span at \$25 million. That is \$150 million. There is no paper in front of Cabinet or anyone for the increase of rates. Is that the answer to your question, sir?

Bishop Edghill: I am happy for the answer received because we were advised, by way of a press release when the Board of this Bridge was...

Mr. Chairman: Is there a follow-up question, please?

Bishop Edghill: Yes, Sir. We were advised, by way of the media when the Board was sworn in, that there was a Cabinet paper for increase of rates at the Demerara Harbour Bridge.

Member: Is the Member trying to call the Minister a liar? The Minister said that there was no paper before the Cabinet.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, am I going to be abused in the House?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I am minded to say let us stay with what we are supposed to be doing here.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, but I need your protection because I am being abused.

Mr. Chairman: That is rather unusual Hon. Member but...

Bishop Edghill: I do not abuse anybody in this House, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please repeat your question. Please address your question.

Bishop Edghill: Yes, Sir. There is a Capital Expenditure item here and the Minister just laid out all of the things that that will be spent on. We are asked to give, from taxpayers' money, money to support the Demerara Harbour Bridge, which we have absolutely no problem with. What we want to find out is, if we are giving money for a Capital item, will there still be an increase in the rates?

Mr. Chairman: Will there still be an increase in the rates?

Bishop Edghill: As announced...

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I would have to report and I would have to repeat, obviously [*inaudible*]. I heard the Leader of the Opposition keep prompting and hinting to his Colleague. There is no Cabinet paper, Sir.

Bishop Edghill: Their Minister said so.

Mr. Patterson: There is no Cabinet paper before the Cabinet on the increase of fees for the Demerara Harbour Bridge.

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

Mr. Patterson: He asked about increases in toll, Sir, and I explained, once again, my answer remains the same. Despite how many times and in how many different fashions he asks, my answer remains the same.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Minister.

Mr. Dharamlall: Project Code 1214900 – Infrastructural Development: Could the Hon. Minister state if Bath Settlement, Bush Lot and Cotton Tree are included for lighting under this project code? If not, when would lights be returned to these villages?

Mr. Patterson: The answer is no. Bath Settlement is not here; these are for new unlit areas.

Mr. Dharamlall: As a follow-up, could I be advised, please, when Bath Settlement, Cotton Tree and Bush Lot will have lights? When will the lights be returned to them?

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much for that question. I would like to think that this Ministry is not responsible for street lights internally for anyone; we are responsible for street lights on the main access roads and main urban roads. Guyana Power and Light Inc. (GPL) obviously has an electrification programme. Before I get to that, I want to say that when areas such as Number 30 get lights, not street lights... Number 30 is in Region 5. Number 30, Backstreet as well as Number 8 and Number 9 do not have any lights. In Calcutta, there are no lights. In Seafield Field, there are no lights. There are areas that have no street lights.

One of the most amazing phenomena that you would see driving down the road is that you pass certain villages that have lights then you hit a dark spot. My Ministry, obviously, would like to put lights everywhere so that places like Yeovil, Chester, Ross, Kingelly, Lichfield, Seafield, Phoenix, Calcutta and Catherina have to get lights. It is my intention to ensure that everyone has lights in their area.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, as a follow-up, could I therefore ask...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, allow me to give you the floor.

Mr. Dharamlall: Sorry, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Please proceed.

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As a follow-up, could the Hon. Minister then state why GPL, which is under his purview, removed the lights from those villages I mentioned earlier? And when will those lights be returned?

Mr. Patterson: As anything, electricity is a finite product. We have only so much and I am sure we have a limited amount. [*Interruption*] Mr. Chairman, could I have a bit of protection from the Hon. Members, please?

Mr. Chairman hit gavel.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you. I am most appreciative, Sir. Electricity is a finite product and I am sure my good citizens in Region 5 would like to ensure all their Members have lights equally. It is a finite product so it has to be shared and they are their brother's keepers. In respect to the light bulbs removed in any area, it is kept at central locations. I think in this case it is Rosignol and they can be uplifted with presentation of a receipt. I do hope that that answers the question.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Minister for his statement. Hon. Manickchand, do you want the floor?

Ms. Manickchand: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, please proceed.

Ms. Manickchand: Your Honour, a follow-up on that: The Hon. Minister was very...

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

Ms. Manickchand: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Do you have a line item to proceed on?

Ms. Manickchand: Your Honour, my question is based on information given by the Hon. Minister when he was answering his question uninterrupted. He said that the equity with demand that everywhere gets lights. We, on this side of the House, have been very clear that we agree. Our question that was raised in the Budget debates was that, for Bath Settlement, Bush Lot and Cotton Tree, the residents therein had erected their own lights without assistance from the Government, excepting so far as GPL had actually erected the lights for them. Those lights were taken down by GPL. I mentioned in the debates that there was one Milton Ramu whose light had not only been taken down, but he had been permanently deprived of it.

Mr. Chairman hit gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I think we are in danger of abusing the privilege we have. You have asked for the floor and this is question time to deal with project codes. I cannot permit you to keep on talking. Now, please address your question.

Ms. Manickchand: My question to the Hon. Minister, Sir, is: Does the Minister believe that it is equitable, as he said, to remove the lights from Bath Settlement, Cotton Tree and Bush Lot that were erected there by residents and to place lights in communities that never before had lights such as Linden, which we are happy about, and those lights are being paid for by the Government? Does the Minister consider that equitable treatment?

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I do not know about equitable. I know that no citizen of Guyana should be in darkness. I did a little check to come prepared. In Woodley Park and Bath Settlement, there are 56 lamps and that is on the main road to ensure that they are lit and working. The lights in Linden are on a main road in the same way. I paid for the lights on the main road for Bath Settlement and Woodley Park. The 48 lights there come out of this Ministry, just like I would pay for any road lights on the main roads. That is my responsibility and I do that fairly, equitably and transparently, if that helps the Hon. Member.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister, who is responsible for GPL, indicated earlier that GPL had removed those lights in Bath Settlement. I am not questioning the lights on the Highway. I was asking the Hon. Minister, why did GPL remove those lights and when would they be returned?

7.05 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, let me say this: the payment for street lights internally - the Hon. Member, Mr. Ganga Persaud, could help, I think - are done by NDCs and RDCs. If anyone connects to the GPL's power without paying, it is an illegal connection. I know that the offer was made to all NDCs that, if they are willing to pay for the lights, they can and they will remain there. Most NDCs said that they could not afford it. The offers were extended to residents at the cost of \$1,200 per month and it saw some residents around the country fulfilling.

Sir, we must remember that we have a finite product in electricity. We must maintain the 10% reserve. We have a limited reserve. It is my duty, I think, to ensure that it is spread equitably and I called a few here in Region 5. I have not even gone to Region 4. Yarowkabra has been established since the 1970's. There are places there that do not have lights and I am sure my good brothers and sisters, wherever, most graciously, being their brother's keeper, request that I share the lights and that everyone have at least one bulb in their house and then we can start to spread them out.

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

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, Sir. I have a follow-up to the Hon. Minister.

Mr. Chairman: There is a saying which might do good to bear in mind, "*do suh nah like suh,*" which is Creole and Hon. Members ought to be familiar with Creole sayings but that is for another time. Hon. Members conveniently invoke the help of the Speaker, but it is not convenient for them in the manner in which their responses have been received. At other times, Hon. Members do not. Some Members even speak when the Speaker is speaking. So, we have to decide how it is that we conduct ourselves in this Chamber. We cannot have it both ways. The Speaker must rely on the cooperation of Hon. Members and Hon. Members must rely upon their own sense of decorum and correctness to assist the Speaker. There is no need to pretend.

It is either we want an orderly Chamber or we will have a disorderly Chamber and then the Speaker close with the authority he has in the Standing Orders, which he has so far not used. He might feel himself obliged to do that because this institution is older than all of us and, God willing, it will be here after we leave, and we have to respect it. So, let us be clear about this. In invoking the help of the Speaker, one must be worthy of it. Let us show that we are all worthy of it.

Mr. Dharamlall: As a follow-up, could the Minister please provide to this House the villages from which GPL had removed lights? Mr. Chairman, just to confirm, is the Hon. Minister is speaking about the finite electricity as a resource or is the Hon. Minister defending the removal of lights in some villages because of the cost? That I am not clear about, Sir.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, GPL removes illegal lights countrywide, so I will provide the Member with a copy of a map of where GPL supplies electricity. Despite what the Hon. Member may think, there are areas with more lights. All I am doing is trying to spread a finite product equitably around so that all our brothers tonight and, at the end of 2016...none of our children should be studying for the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) examinations with flambeau and I hope that is something that my Hon. Brother would embrace. It is for all of us; it is to benefit the entire country; it should be shared by the country.

Dr. Mahadeo: Mr. Chairman, project code 1404100 – Miscellaneous Roads: I noticed, in Volume 3, it states that there will be roads in Regions, including Region 6. Could the Hon. Minister say whether the East Bank Berbice Road is included here?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the East Bank Berbice Road is included but not under this project code. Do you want me to point you to the project code? I can say that it is funding from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB); I announced it in my speech. I think that is US\$8 million so that comes under the Foreign Funded Project. But, yes, it is included and we will get to it.

Mr. G. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, I need your guidance here. I have one question but that question is applicable to several project codes. Should I ask that one question naming the codes or should I ask each separately? The question is the same for each.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Member. If that code does not go outside of the Programme we are treating now...

Mr. G Persaud: It does not.

Mr. Chairman: Then please name the codes and ask the question.

Mr. G. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, project codes 1403800, 1404400, 1404500, 1404600 and 1404700: Last year, I listened very well to our Hon. Minister when he said that the days for rollover and projects not being completed have come to an end. In 2015, project code 1403800 – East Bank – East Coast Demerara Road Linkage - received an allocation of \$10 million from this House and the expenditure was zero; project code 1404400 – Highway Improvement East Bank Demerara - received \$574,206,000 and the expenditure was \$176,464,000; project code 1404500 – Highway Improvement East Coast Demerara - received \$1,137,750,000 and the expenditure

was \$30,270,000; project code 1404600 – Amaila Access Road - received \$220,344,000 and the expenditure was \$81,161,000 and finally, Mr. Chairman, project code 1404700 – Road Network and Expansion Project - received \$1,681,248,000 and we spent \$15,230,000. Would the Hon. Minister please say to us if this is a different description of long-term projects rather than rollover projects? Thank you very much, Sir.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, that was quite an earful and a mouthful. I will try, to the best of my ability, to answer them. Sir, project code 1403800 – East Bank - East Coast Demerara Road Linkage - which is funding from the Export-Import (Exim) Bank of India, it was anticipated that that transaction would have been completed last year, but it was not, and, obviously, it will be done in 2016. If that is the question that he is asking, Sir...

Project code 1404100 – Miscellaneous Roads: In 2015, we requested \$590,151,000. We actually spent \$492,264,000...

Mr. G. Persaud: I did not ask for that, Sir.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, well I am quite lost then.

Mr. G. Persaud: I am sorry, sir, but I did not ask for that.

Mr. Patterson: What are you asking, sir? Please repeat.

Mr. G. Persaud: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I think the Hon. Member will ask you the questions again.

Mr. G. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, project codes 1404400 – Highway Improvement East Bank Demerara; 1404500 – Highway Improvement East Coast Demerara; 1404600 – Amaila Access Road; 1404700 – Road Network and Expansion Project...

Mr. Patterson: Sir, what is the question?

Mr. G. Persaud: The question, Mr. Chairman, is: why was the expenditure far below what was requested in *Budget 2015*? If we know that we could not have expended at the level, then we should not have requested, as we did, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, it seems as if what we did was to request so that we have a huge Budget and expenditure level to custom.

Mr. Chairman: The question suffices.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, project code 1404400 – Highway Improvement East Bank Demerara: I had mentioned that in my Budget Speech. It is done in three lots; two lots were finished. Lot one, that was Dipcon, who I told you ceased work coincidentally at the end of May, 2015. I do not know what the coincidence in that is, but he is no longer on the project. It is an IDB funded project. We had to receive the IDB's no objection to negotiate with the two existing contractors and that is the reason for the delay on the East Bank Road. I was only on the job for 10 days when the contractor ceased working. I do not know why.

Project code 1404500 – Highway Improvement East Coast Demerara: That there is the Export-Import Bank of China. It is unfortunate that the Hon. Leader of the Opposition is not here. He could have probably told you that the reason behind that is that there is a tender out. The lowest tender was awarded by the previous Administration, and the China Exim Bank was uncomfortable with how low it was and is asking us to make a provision just in case so we do not have to go back to the Bank. That is reason that is stalled and we are meeting the officers and trying to resolve that. I have just been advised that they are coming here next week, so, hopefully, we will have some good work. Once again, I met it like that. I tried to breathe life into it and it is my baby now, and I love it. It was a bit deformed when I got it but I strengthened the bones.

Project code 1404700 – Road Network and Expansion Project: This is a big part once again - Sheriff/Mandela. By the time I assumed office, there was already one tender and it has to be said that, when I got into office, one of the tenderers submitted fraudulent documents. We had to do another tender again. The Hon. Member is quite aware of all of these issues. Sir, on top of that, this Administration had an issue with the design. I must thank my team. They have designs that we are reviewing and we are moving forward. That is the reason why that particular one is not there.

7.20 p.m.

Finally, the Amaila Fall Road Project, should I say anymore? No money is voted here so I should say no more on the Amaila Fall Road Project.

Dr. Mahadeo: Back to project 1404700, East Bank Berbice road. A section will be done according to Volume 3, upgrading of roads. Could the Hon. Minister say which section and when he expects the project to start?

Mr. Patterson: From Stanleytown to Everton, we expect to start work during the second half of this year.

Dr. Mahadeo: To go back to project 1214900, provision of highway lighting at Linden, Coverden, Corentyne and Ogle. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to provide us with the areas to be provided with street lighting?

Mr. Patterson: Repeat the project code please.

Dr. Mahadeo: The project code is 1214900.

Mr. Patterson: The money allocated here for 2016 is for the construction of a pedestrian walkway at Corriverton. I mentioned that is something we are going to do for 2016. The highway lighting is for Corentyne - Adventure Arch to Philippi and Number 31 Canal, Berbice - \$20 million. There is highway lighting from Ogle access road, Region 4, for \$8 million. The sidewalk in Corriverton is about \$42 million.

Mr. Chand: Could the Minister advise, project 1404800, whether the Canals Polder road is included in this allocation? If not, what is the status of the Canals Polder road?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, project code 1404800 is for the West Demerara Road/Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) project. It is the CDB/West Demerara Road. It has nothing to do with the Canal road.

Mr. Chand: The Hon. Member did not respond to the Canals Road.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, repeat the question.

Mr. Chand: He did not respond to the Canals Polder road.

Mr. Patterson: Canals Polder road is not in this. This is the road project, as the Member would probably know, which starts on the West Bank, from Hydronie coming down. That is what this

project refers to. If the Member is asking a specific question, I will like to help but not it is not with this project.

Mr. Chand: Comrade Chairman, could you permit me to ask the question? Could the Minister say what the status is of the Canals Polder road?

Mr. Patterson: We had commissioned a study which is not completed. The consultant was doing the study, which predated me, but at the time we had to dissociate ourselves, terminate the contract, because time was at large. He was not completing the work. We are looking at that again. He started but never delivered, so we terminated the contract. We have to re-programme that.

Mr. Chand: How soon will that programme be reconsidered?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I cannot give a specific date. As you know, the study was an IDB project, and funding. We have to go through the entire process again. I do give my assurance Hon. Member Chand that during the course of the year I will update you as soon as we are ready to restart.

Programme: 322 – Public Works – \$14,861,631,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 323 – Transport – \$5,246,586,000

Bishop Edghill: Project 1601300, modernisation of the Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA): Sir, we are being asked to appropriate \$4.450 billion to this project. Last year when we were asked to appropriate I specifically asked the Hon. Minister to provide the Assembly with a copy of the reworked contract and the new designs, having had the negotiations he explained. We were promised that we would have it. As I stand here to ask this question, we have not received it but yet we are asked to appropriate. I want to ask the Minister when we will get a copy of the reworked contract and the redesign that is taking place.

Mr. Patterson: There is no reworked contract. There are variation orders, one to eight, and I think that is maybe confusing the Hon. Member. Those were contract adjustments. I can give him the variation orders once again but there is no renewed contract. The contract is between the

Government of Guyana (GOG) and the Export-Import (Exim) Bank for a fixed amount of money for a project. What we did was issue variation orders extracting and including parts.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, it is on the same project. Could the Hon. Member make a commitment as to when we will get the variation orders, as he calls them, and the new design submitted?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, could I ask the Clerk to collect the variation orders and give them to the Hon. Member, right away? We will save time.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I thank the Hon. Member for the documentation that is coming. There is still a part that is outstanding, that is the redesign. The project for the runway as well as for the terminal, as we understand it, has been changed. There were to be works on both sides of the runway but now we heard it is no longer both sides but back to one side. We will like to have a copy of the new design as well.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I heard the Hon. Member earlier was saying that he was being abused, but I know it is not in this Assembly. There is nothing that has changed; it is both sides. Once again, I will say that he can visit the site. This is well known. It predates my ascension to this office. I am circulating the stuff and he can interrogate. The reason for the variation is well known. I am sure the Hon. Member Lumumba can explain to him the reasons behind it.

Bishop Edghill: It is on the same project. I would like to ask the Hon. Member when we could have a commitment to have the new design offered to the Assembly.

Mr. Patterson: I could provide the Hon. Members with it right away. Let me explain to him. It is obviously a design and build project. What we agreed is the concept and the responsibility of the contractor to design and send it back for approval. That is what was agreed. I will hand it over to the Hon. Members, right now, so we can move on as speedily as possible.

Mr. Lumumba: I just want to get some clarity. Is the Minister saying that there has been an agreement with China Harbour Engineering Company and the Government of Guyana of the final design of the terminal building?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the preliminary and final design is slated here too. The Hon. Member is quite *au fait* that the final design is the one which we finally approve. That would be finished by

mid-year. The preliminaries are what I will share with the Hon. Member but the final design would obviously have the dots in and the as-built drawings.

Mr. Lumumba: Mr. Chairman, to the Minister, have we set a baseline as to the cost? Could this Assembly know at this point in time?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, as I told the Hon. Member, the mandate from Cabinet does not to exceed the \$150 million. That necessitated the revision. To be able to do that, the idea which the previous administration had of building a totally new terminal was out. We took in all the cost, including one which I just approved to pay the GDF \$445 million to remove its things. All those costs had to go into the mix. That is what I am handing over now for the Hon. Member to see what we will get in the final project.

Mr. Lumumba: Mr. Chairman, a follow-up question. Would the new design reduce the amount of gates to the terminal? Would the terminal building be half or three-quarters of the original size? Just need some idea of what the reduction in size would be.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I have it here. The new is supposed to be bigger than the previous. There are provisions for four gates in the contract but we would be installing just two initially. When the project is finished in 2017 there would be two gates and for future expansion there would be an additional two.

7.35 p.m.

Mr. Lumumba: The final question to the Minister. Would the Minister tell me, with consultation with his engineers, whether it would be more cost effective to do the four gates at this point in time as oppose to, down the road, an extension? Have any cost analysis being done to make that determination?

Mr. Patterson: Yes Mr. Chairman. It is a very good question. We have. As I said, there are certain things that would have eaten up the money. I would have loved to do all four, as the Member has asked Sir. We had to spend \$1.5 million dollars to remove the GDF barracks. Sir, we have to move things such as the glide path, the guides, the implementation and things such as that which were not in the budget. There were permits. We had to relocate the existing

generators, the police airport operators, and all those things we had to throw in the mix. Who knows, if we find additional money we may get the other two, but I am doubtful.

Mr. Lumumba: Mr. Chairman, the Government Member, who apparently is a cheerleader, allowed me to direct my question. I understand that there have been additional costs. The question I want to raise with the Minister is whether it is not feasible to do the four gates now than to wait years from now and add an additional two gates because it really needs eight gates.

What I am directly saying to the Minister, from question of engineering and science, there cannot be a terminal building that is going to accommodate eight gates and then it will be reduced to two. It is going to look like a ghostly town. I am suggesting to the Minister that he should go back to Cabinet and seriously consider finding additional money to get the four gates. I think you could argue logically for that argument and I think that is the way you should go.

Mr. Patterson: As always, I have no problem in trying to get additional money, but unfortunately this is what I have at the moment. Who knows, I may catch the Minister of Finance in a very good mood..

Bishop Edghill: I thank the Hon. Member for his explanations that were offered to the Assembly. I would like to have some clarity from the Minister. This contract was a fixed price contract that would have allowed us to have eight gates with a new terminal building, with an expanded runway, parking and a service area. The Minister is now saying to this Assembly that we will get two gates, a renovation of the old terminal and he is still saying that the programme has not been redesigned and there is an escalation in cost.

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

Bishop Edghill: Yes. My question to the Minister is for him to explain to the Assembly as to how a fixed price contract of eight gates, a new terminal building, a parking area, an extended airport, an expanded runway, with apron, and a service area, has been reconfigured to now a renovated terminal with two gates, and if it is not an adjustment to the whole scheme of things. That is what we are asking and it works out to be more expensive. We are getting less and we are paying more. I repeated that last year and I am repeating it again. Let him explain that to the Assembly. We are asked to appropriate \$4.5 billion on this project this year.

Mr. Patterson: It does not matter how much the Hon. Member waxed lyrically, Sir, the facts are the facts. When up all the things are added up, which he is saying, Sir, I say this with all due respect - the Hon. Leader of the Opposition is prompting him to tell.... - they came up to over \$200 million. I would challenge the Hon. Member to bring the maths and fixed [*inaudible*] and tell us. I have them all here, Sir. There were several hidden costs, and you know what it is Sir. They paid the GDF \$300 million to move its own barracks and they said the project cost has not gone up. Sir, I have it right here. Sir, they hid money all over and said that it is not ascribed to the project. What I did, Sir, is to calculate the entire project cost...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, let us keep within the framework of the answers you know you must give. It is possible that when we allow ourselves to go looking at other things, other than what we are talking about, that we can go outside that unit. Kindly stay within the confines for your answer, Hon. Minister.

Mr. Patterson: My apologies Sir. You are absolutely correct and I will withdraw anything that would offend any of the Members unreservedly and ask it to be struck off. I apologise unreservedly Sir. It was a temporary lapse in my case. Sir, when the total project cost was tallied it was way above what the Government...Sir we were able to get an excellent project. I have handed it over to the Hon. Member because he asked for it and I hope he does have it in front of him. Two hundred and five million dollars was the last computation and Cabinet said to me absolutely nothing, Sir. We have what our Government has always wanted, an extended runway. We have an enhanced and a greatly improved terminal building. Obviously, if the Hon. Member Mr. Lumumba would like to join me with pleading with the Minister of Finance for additional funds, Sir, I accept.

Bishop Edghill: It is under the same project code. Would the Hon. Minister confirm to this Assembly that on the CJIA programmes there was a \$165 million contract which was foreign funded, which was stated, and there was a local cost that was totally different from the foreign contract? He is confusing the issue, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you have asked the question. Give the Minister to answer the question.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, could I be allowed to complete?

Mr. Chairman: I was hoping that you would have asked me a question, Hon. Member. Am I mistaken?

Bishop Edghill: I am asking a question, Sir, but I am not completed.

Mr. Chairman: By all means, complete your questions.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, the point, which I am making, is that there is what is determined specific and there is local or foreign funded and what is been making a call on local money. The Minister is merging the two things together and coming to the Assembly. I would want the Minister to explain and answer to the Assembly if, as in originally envisaged, this project did not have a foreign component and any local component.

Mr. Patterson: I would like to explain to the Hon. Member and refresh his... The Hon. Leader of the Opposition knows quite well, because I think he was instrumented in negotiating it. We have a loan for \$130 million with the China Exim Bank. Our counterpart funding, as the Government of Guyana, is \$8 million. Therefore the contract with China Harbour Engineering Company is \$138 million and the previous Government, which we adopted, put aside \$12 million for equipment, *and* so on, which brings it up to a grand total of \$150 million. There was never a contract, Sir, for \$165 million. Maybe that is the number which you started off with. I would like it back.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, are you through?

Mr. Patterson: Yes Sir.

Mr. Lumumba: Project 1601500, CJIA Corporation, provision for equipment: It is if the Hon. Minister could identify that piece of equipment because that might have a lot to do with what Bishop Edghill was saying.

Mr. Patterson: This \$25 million is for a cargo scanner. As you know, all cargo passing through CJIA is up by 6%. I said that is my budget speech. As you know, we are doing more cargo, in particular Dynamic Airways as well as Fly Jamaica and Suriname Airlines, so we are getting a bigger scanner to allow us to scan. It is a Transport Security Administration (TSA)

recommended scanner and it is all to improve the security and efficiency of the airport. Nothing is hidden, nothing is lost.

Programme: 323 - Transport – \$5,246,586,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Mr. Patterson: With your leave, Mr. Chairman, before you move on, I would just like to take this opportunity to thank Minister Ferguson, the Permanent Secretary and all my staff for coming out here and supporting me. I would also like to thank the Hon. Members on the other side, Sir, for what I thought was a very interesting and invigorating examination and I invite them to work with me for the year 2016.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are way past the time for the suspension to be taken. We will return to the Assembly and we will take the suspension. It is now ten minutes to 8 o'clock and we will return at twenty minutes after 8 o'clock.

Assembly resumed.

Sitting suspended at 7.55 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 8.29 p.m.

8.30 p.m.

Mr. Williams: If it pleases you Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of explanation, in relation to proceedings in this honourable House, Sir, presided over by you.

Mr. Speaker: Please proceed Hon. Member.

Mr. Williams: Sir, it is in relation to the abuse of the privilege of the House by the Citizens' Report – a blog.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the Citizens' Report?

Mr. Williams: It is the Citizens' Report. It perpetuated to give an account of the proceedings this afternoon where the Attorney General was answering questions in relation to the Estimates

of the Ministry of Legal Affairs. Sir, the accounts are wholly and entirely inaccurate and it is libellous, and it has always been...

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member, to my left, I will not call the name, let us be courteous. Let us not interrupt other Members when they are speaking. Please continue.

Mr. Williams: Sir, it is a situation wherein on answering a question posed by the Hon. Member Nandlall, the Attorney General said that he was able to prevent the Government from being defrauded by refusing to accept, as a new vehicle, a used vehicle that was being passed off as a new vehicle. I will give the circumstances. The account given by Citizens' Report, and the blogger, Ms. Vanessa Narine, who is well known to us, purports to give an account that suggests that the Attorney General was misleading the House by alleging fraud and not saying what the fraud was. Everyone would know that I clearly said that I prevented the Government from being defrauded of revenue by refusing to accept, as a new vehicle, an old vehicle that was being passed off on the Government. This article does not contain what I said. It is deliberately libellous and calculated to deceive and it impugns the integrity of the Hon. Member of this House. Sir, I am asking, as in accordance with precedent in this House, and the immediate past Speaker is here, where the Speaker...Sir, I am asking you to sanction and call upon the blogger to... *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, a speaker is on the floor, we will wait until that Hon. Member is finished. That is the courteous thing to do. I will put it no higher than that at this time.

Mr. Williams: Sir, the Speaker has all the power to protect the House over which the Speaker presides and to ensure that the privilege of this House is not abused by anyone. The inaccurate account... We are asking that an apology be rendered; that a correction is published by the blogger, who is seated right now in facilities provided by this honourable House to allow the journalist to accurately give an account of its proceedings. I am asking that some action be taken, in relation to this scandalous and wanton attempt. If you cannot take the facts in this House, then what you need to do is just leave the House but you cannot take it upon yourself to spread lies about the proceedings of this House. Sir, if they cannot accept the revelation... *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I request that you allow the Attorney General to continue without interruption.

Mr. Williams: I am saying that if Members cannot accept the revelations in this House, of which many more revelations are going to come in and out of the House, then they cannot abuse the privilege and disrespect the proceedings and the Speaker of this honourable House. We are urging that the Speaker acts in the interest of the House and the sanctity of the House and proceedings in this honourable House.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Minister for his statement. Hon. Member, do you have a comment on this?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes Sir. It is if you would allow me.

Mr. Speaker: Please proceed.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, one of the most sacrosanct rights is the freedom of the press and the freedom of expression, and therefore, Sir, it is highly unusual in this Parliament for any Member of Parliament, particularly a Government Member of Parliament, in the past, to have got up and raised issues published and produced in the media. As you know, Sir, and you may be familiar, that when we are in Government we are under attacked by certain hostile media but we never used the Parliament for the embarrassment of the reporters of those agencies sitting in the House in such an undignified manner.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member.

Ms. Teixeira: Yes Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Please, let us keep it tight. The Hon. Attorney General feels he was wronged with something and he has expressed that view. You, of course, stand on the sanctity of the freedom of the press. Is that right?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Well, then please, let us try to avoid...

Ms. Teixeira: It is the freedom of the press and freedom of expression – both things. Mr. Speaker, we understand that any Member Parliament can be under the scrutiny of the press, or any press in Guyana, including the internet. There are recourses, Mr. Speaker. There are

recourses in the court and in the judiciary to deal with these matters. We are opposed on this side to any attempt to control and muzzle the press of this country, Sir. Therefore we do not support the request of the Hon. Attorney General.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have heard the Hon. Attorney General. I have heard Ms. Teixeira in defence of what is called freedom of speech and freedom of the press. I have this comment to make. All freedoms are subjected to limitations – all freedoms. The right to life is subjected to the limitation that if you break the law, and if it is a committing of a murder, you suffer a penalty, in some instances, it is the final penalty. Freedoms are always associated with obligations. Sometimes what we do is we emphasise the freedom and ignore the obligations that go with those freedoms. I agree that the press ought to be here. As I understand it, the press are here, by leave of the Speaker. The press are free to report whatever takes place in this House but the press are also obliged to at least be truthful, and one might say fair but truth, certainly. Truth is a victim almost every time we talk about these things but the press have that duty. If the press claims the right to be free to put print, it is a very delicate thing but it is true that no one has an untrammelled right to end the exercise of any right – no one. It is no different here in this House. That is why the Speaker of the National Assembly can exclude Members who are free to speak whatever they wish in here but who, if they disrupt the proceedings of this House, can be visited with certain penalties. They are exercising a right and it cannot be so difficult for Hon. Members in this House to understand that. One of the realities is that Members speak in favour of a matter as long as they are wedded to that particular matter. Absent that connection, Members will speak against it. That is the unfortunate reality here in this House.

I do not know if the events of yesterday afternoon and evening have reached the press but they are not events of which any Member in this House can be proud – none. They happened to our eternal embarrassment. Hon. Members must live with that reality, at least for the rest of this Parliament.

Hon. Members, what I am saying is that what will follow from the Hon. Attorney General's statement is yet to come, whether the exposure of it here will suffice that put the Speaker..., who would have suggested that we expose this matter as much as we want to at this time. Perhaps, the Hon. Attorney General might consider leaving the matter there for the moment.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, as I do refer you, Sir, to a precedent of this honourable House involving Mr. Keith Scott and these are including in the *Speaker's Rulings of the National Assembly of the Tenth Parliament of Guyana, 2012 to 2015*. Sir, this is instructive and directly on point. I refer you respectfully to page 51 where it states:

“In the circumstances I am of the view that the Hon. Member Mr. Keith Scott has been disrespected and his privileges violated by the publication of this grossly false story. When any Member is disrespected then the whole House is, in my considered opinion, disrespected. The sanctions of the National Assembly in this instance are many. However, in this modern era where information is as important as the air we breathe, the purveyors of it should be free and unrestrained as they go about their duties.

Further, I believe that the coercive powers should be used sparingly and only in cases of contumacious contempt of Parliament so as to not to interfere with the rights of the press to report freely. Against this background I make the following rulings:

- (i) I find that on the face of it that the publishers of *INews* and the *Guyana Chronicle* have violated the privileged rights of this Hon. Member Mr. Keith Scott, MP.
- (ii) A full and unqualified apology and retraction of the story must be made at the same level and manner of publicity as was given to the false story. This must be done by Friday 5th April, 2013.”

8.45 p.m.

- (iii) “Should the publishers fail to abide by this ruling, the House will be moved at the earliest opportunity to consider allegations of content against the publishers and to recommend an appropriate sanction”.

This is a precedent of this honourable House, where the House has shown that it will protect its Members in proceedings from false presentations on the proceedings of the House in the press. Sir, I am asking for you to be advised.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Attorney General for his statement and for bringing this matter to our attention. The Chairman will consider this and give his report to the Hon. Members.

Honourable Members, before we proceed further, there is a matter that I want to bring to your attention. It is really for future use and guidance of the Hon. Members, as we consider the Estimates. I will thank the Hon. Members to contain their desire to comment while I am speaking.

Today, the Hon. Gail Teixeira, in an effort no doubt to be helpful, did in fact say to this House that the Rulings of the Speaker are contained only in the documents which she had at that time - two Booklets called *Rulings of the Speakers*. I do not know whether, in consequence of that, the Hon. Member, Mr. G. Persaud, felt that he could introduce an element which the Speaker had specially directed should not be used in this House. I do not know if it was in consequence of that. But he did say that he was present when I gave that direction, so it must have been that he determined, by himself or by some other means, that he should proceed nevertheless.

Honourable Members, I think that we want to tell the Members, that the Speaker's Rulings are not contained only in written forms. Whenever the Speaker expresses himself, he will couch it in language to give the impression that it is something that the Speaker is appealing to Members' better nature to respond to. It is nonetheless, a Ruling of the Speaker.

I thought that I should say this to the Hon. Members so that there is more understanding. To proceed otherwise is a grave error. I would suggest that we be warned and be guided. Thank you.

Hon. Member, if you are going to comment on what the Speaker just said, I must express my disagreement on that.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, I wanted clarification because when a Speaker says "I would suggest on a matter", Sir is that a Ruling?

Mr. Speaker: I would want to think that if you ignore it, then the Speaker will not be happy. If he is not happy, he will let you know. Hon. Member, I do not understand why we are pretending, quite suddenly, that we do not understand the English Language.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, with no disrespect, I am not here to make you happy. I am here to represent the people who elected us to this House. I am just seeking... [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I do not wish to miss anything of what you said. So when the Hon. Members pound on the desk and clap loudly, I miss what you say. I would not want to miss anything that you say. I am wondering whether you could start again.

Ms. Teixeira: Yes Sir. I did not say that the Rulings were only contained in these two documents. But since they represent the production by the former Speaker, Mr. Trotman, of his Rulings of 2012 to 2015 and the Rulings of the former Speakers -1967 to 2011, I said that the issue was not contained in any of these documents.

Sir, I also suggested to you, and the suggestion again is the issue, that if you are making a Ruling that the names are not to be included, then it may be wise to put it in writing for posterity. The Ruling that is referred to, in 2014, the former Speaker said, "What I would suggest is that you can have the list with the amounts, but not necessarily with the names."

I think that I understand some English too. My understanding of a Ruling is that you have laid down the law. This is not: This is a suggestion and it says, "But not necessarily with the names". So I cannot comprehend.

By the way, in the 2014 Budget Debates, the issue came up at the Ministry of Local Government. Prior to that, there were eight ministries before, all of which the names of the people who were contracted employees were allowed to be heard. In fact, they were demanded and heard in this House.

There is no precedence for this. With no disrespect, I do not accept the Chairman saying, "What I would suggest and not necessarily so" as a Ruling, Sir.

However Sir, since you wish to and you would like to, and you have the right to make a Ruling, that we have a Ruling in writing and that it should be circulated and becomes the law of this House. Not the law, but obviously the convention of this House. Until that happens, we have a right to ask for the names.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, the Speaker has already ruled, and I think that Hon. Members are aware of that Ruling. I say no more.

We now return to the matter for which we are gathered here, the consideration of the Estimates.

In Committee of Supply

Agency: 42 Ministry of Communities

Current Expenditure

Programme: 421 – Sustainable Communities Management - \$554,981,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6111 – Administrative: There was a \$5 million increase in this allocation, but the Staff complement remained at 24. I would like the Hon. Minister to explain this difference.

Minister of Communities [Mr. Bulkan]: The increase in the proposed allocation caters for the annualisation of the 24 Administrative staff that would be paid under this line item, as well as the 5% increase and the \$5,000 which was granted in 2015.

Mr. Croal: Follow-up: My understanding of the 2015 increases is that it would have been reflected in the expenses for 2015.

Secondly, could the Hon. Minister indicate the designations of the 20 employees that would be benefitting from vocational allowance?

Mr. Bulkan: As I said, the \$5 million increase is to cater for the annualisation and the 24 employees that are catered for under this heading, include the Administrative Staff; Principal Regional Development Officers; Technical Assistant; Auditors; Accountants; Senior Regional Development Officers; Regional Development Officers; Registry Staff; Project Officer; and Personnel Officer II.

Mr. Croal: A further follow-up under this line item: Could the Hon. Minister indicate whether those employees are contractual or are on the fixed establishment?

Mr. Bulkan: All of these employees are a part of the fixed establishment.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There was an increase of \$28.4 million, with an increased staff complement of seven. Three questions: Firstly, could the Hon. Minister indicate who the new employees, their designations and salaries are; secondly, could the Hon. Minister list the top 10 highest paid contracted employees; and thirdly, could the Hon. Minister list the dates of appointment of these new employees?

Mr. Bulkan: These seven additional employees are two engineers who were appointed in the last quarter of last year. These would have been individuals who had returned from scholarships. The salaries are, for the two Engineers - \$184,542 each; a Research Officer - \$157,005; a Legal Officer – - \$320,000; a Technical Assistant - \$180,000; and one Ministerial Advisor - \$300,000. This gives a total of seven persons.

The top 10 employees under this category would be the Permanent Secretary; the Deputy Permanent Secretary; two Ministerial Advisors; a Community Monitoring and Development Officer; a Legal Officer; an Economist; an Engineer and an Education Co-ordinator.

This ranges from a high of \$613,000 to \$150,000, but I can give the individual amounts if the Hon. Member so desires.

9.00 p.m.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: First of all could the Hon. Minister indicate how many buildings now fall under the Ministry of Communities and probably their locations?

Mr. Bulkan: The number of locations would be three. This would be the Ministry's Main Office in Kingston; there is a building on Camp Street; and one on Brickdam that formerly housed the Ministry of Housing and Water.

Mr. Croal: Line item 6272- Electricity Charges: There was a drastic increase by \$34.1 million. Can the Hon. Minister give an explanation for this?

Mr. Bulkan: This explanation was offered before by all the ministries and ministers that would have preceded me, whereby it was explained that, formally, the Ministry of Finance, at the end of the year, had provided a subsidy to the ministries to cater for the electricity consumed during the

year. From this year, there is a budgeted sum allocated to each Ministry from which they are expected to pay for their electricity charges throughout the year.

Mr. Mustapha: I want to go back to line item 6223- Office Materials and Supplies. Could the Hon. Minister say what has led to the increase in the budgetary provision under this line item?

Mr. Bulkan: As far as the increases are concerned, I believe that the Hon. Member is aware that the figures before us have to cater for the fact that the 2015 figures would have been for a four-month period and the 2016 proposed allocations are for the entire year. So that, as was said before, the three times table needs to be applied. This allocation caters for the purchase of office materials, such as, printers, toners, folders, cash books, as well as for the monitoring of activities, community awareness, and support to the Guyana Waste Water Revolving Fund.

Mr. Mustapha: Line item 6255 –Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Could the Hon. Minister explain and provide a list of the other infrastructures that would be maintained?

Mr. Bulkan: This is for maintenance works to be undertaken at the Ministry's main building, the Camp Street building, the Brickdam building, on-going repairs to security huts, to the water tanks and trestles, and for the cleaning of drains; the general maintenance and up keep of these buildings. It includes as well, a sum for the Ministry's road side parking.

Mr. Mustapha: Line item 6284 –Other: Could the Hon. Minister say what other goods and services are proposed to be purchased with this budgetary allocation?

Mr. Bulkan: This allocation caters for consultancy services to be provided for strategic analysis in relation to housing and water as well as our Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs), Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs), and includes, as well, the preparation for the PARs, which are the Plans of Action for Regional Development; it is also for the maintenance to the Ministry's website.

Mr. Ali: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: Could I ask the Hon. Minister whether provision is made here for the Central Housing and Planning Authority (CH&PA)?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, provision is made for the building that houses the Central Housing and Planning Authority because two Ministers are located there.

Mr. Ali: The Hon. Minister said that provision is made for the building housing the Central Housing and Planning Authority, which means that the building contains all the programmes and activities of the Central Housing and Planning Authority. But if we look at the subvention agency, at the back of the Budget, the Central Housing and Planning Authority is not listed as a subvention agency of this Ministry. Can the Minister explain?

Mr. Bulkan: The CH&PA falls under the Ministry of Communities.

Mr. Ali: I am guided by the budget document and the budget document outlines all the subvention agencies that fall under the various Ministries. Under the Ministry of Communities, the Central Housing, and Planning Authority is not listed. Can the Hon. Minister please explain?

Mr. Bulkan: The case is that, for 2016, the Central Housing and Planning Authority is not in receipt of a subvention, but as I said earlier the CP&HA falls under the Ministry of Communities.

Mr. Ali: With full respect to the Minister, it cannot be that the CH&PA is not in receipt of a subvention. A subvention is a sum allocated to an agency under the Ministry. The mere fact that the Minister is spending under electricity charges for that agency, means that a subvention is made for that Ministry. Once a subvention - an expenditure - is made for the entity under that Ministry, the entity should be listed under a subvention agency because resources from the budget are being utilised to carry the expenditure of that agency.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member for his comment. Hon. Minister is there any...

Mr. Bulkan: No, Mr. Chairman, like you said it is a comment and I am not sure that it actually requires an answer. The subvention here, under the proposal for the Ministry, is for the electricity charges for the building on Brickdam.

Mr. Ali: Line item 6321- Subsidies and Contribution to Local Organisation: Could the Hon. Minister say whether this provision for the Local Government Commission, first of all, is adequate to carry the weight of responsibility over the year? Secondly, to say whether the Leader of the Opposition has been consulted, as is required, in relation to the naming of some of the Members of this Commission?

Mr. Bulkan: The Hon. Member is very well aware that the Local Government Commission cannot come into being, unless the Leader of the Opposition is invited to name his nominees. Actually, I am sure he will name the three nominees that he is provided for.

With regards to the budgetary allocation, that answer cannot be a definitive answer at this point, but it will be sufficient to establish the Commission and for it to commence its work, if it is found that later in the year this budgeted sum is inadequate, then a supplementary provision would be catered for.

Mr. Ali: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to advise us when the Leader of the Opposition would be invited to name his nominees?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are we now defused or are we still speaking to line items?

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman it is under line item 6321- Subsidies and Contribution to Local Organisation, which is the Local Government Commission. The functioning of that Commission...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member I thank you.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I have answered the question already with regards to the proposed allocation.

Mr. G. Persaud: On the same line item 6321, when will the Minister invite the Leader of the Opposition to name the three members for the Local Government Commission?

Mr. Bulkan: The question has already been put and an answer had already been given.

Mr. G. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, if you accept that I have no recourse than to go to the next question. Line item 6211 – Expenses Specific to the Agency: The first set of allocations was \$72,356,000 plus \$39,278,000, which gave us a total for 2015 as \$111,634,000. The request now is \$99,901,000 a decrease by \$11,733,000 or 10.5%. My question therefore, is there any regional chairman or regional vice-chairman that is not functioning? Is there any mayor or deputy mayor who was paid by this programme and is not functioning? Is there any REO who was paid by this programme and is not functioning? If so, can the Hon. Minister say to us whether there was any

increase granted to the persons, who are the office holders, and are paid under this programme for the year 2015?

Mr. Bulkan: All of the officers that were named by the Hon. Member are functioning. It is correct that a greater sum was budgeted in 2015 but the case is that we are dealing with 2016 allocations and these are the proposed allocations for 2016 for all of the categories named.

Mr. G. Persaud: It is somewhat very difficult for me to comprehend how the Minister would have expended more in terms of wages and salary for 2015 and he has the same complement of people and is requesting less in 2016.

9.15 p.m.

I do know if the Minister is tired, but the second part of the question he has not answered, whether any increase in wages and salaries had been granted to these office holders in 2015 and if so, what percentage was granted.

Mr. Bulkan: The answer to the question with regards to increases in 2015 is yes. The average percentage increase was in the vicinity of about 16%.

Mr. G. Persaud: My final question, depending on the response. I must thank the Minister for the information provided. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to provide the designation and the emolument of each of the persons who are paid under this line item 6211 – Expenses Specific to the Agency?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister are you in a position to respond quickly?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes. Those officers would be our Regional Executive Officers (REOs), Regional Chairpersons, Regional Vice-Chairpersons, as well as our Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members I must tell you that we would rise tonight at 10 o'clock having completed the work for today. I want to enlist your cooperation to ensure that we do that. We will end the questioning on this item after the next two speakers, not including Mr. Ganga Persaud.

Mr. G. Persaud: Just a follow-up question: Here again, and maybe I speak too fast, the Hon. Minister has given me the designations for which I am grateful, but he has not given me the emoluments, thank you very much.

Mr. Bulkan: The salaries for the REOs are \$300,000 monthly, for the Regional Chairpersons, it would be an average of \$252,000 and for the Regional Vice-Chairpersons that sum is \$189,000. Those are the sums.

Mr. G. Persaud: I am so sorry, but I said emoluments. I am getting salaries. I do not know what is holding back the goodly Minister.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, could you please repeat that part of the question that has not been satisfied.

Mr. G. Persaud: Will the Hon. Minister be kind enough to provide the designation and the emolument of each of the officers or individuals who are paid under this line item, the salaries and other benefits included, please.

Mr. Bulkan: The other benefits would only apply to the REOs and those benefits would be a gratuity, as I believe the Hon. Member is aware of. The gratuity is \$405,000, a vacation allowance which would be annual of \$300,000, there is a duty allowance of \$70,000 and a telephone allowance of \$10,000 and that would be monthly.

Mr. Dharamlall: Under line item 6261 –Local Travel and Subsistence, during the last quarter of 2015, \$2.15 million was expended which approximates to about a few hundred thousand dollars per month. I therefore, would like to have the Minister confirm why that figure has been multiplied by over 20 times to get to \$12 million.

Mr. Bulkan: The 2015 figure was, as earlier explained, for a four-month period, and the 2016 proposed allocation is for the entire 12 months. But, it is indeed the case that, it is proposed that there would be increased monitoring on the part of the three Ministers within this Ministry, as well as the Ministry's staff, which would include visits to project sites, NDCs, RDCs, community meetings and monitoring activities of the Ministry.

Mr. Croal: Two questions: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships), there was an increase of \$4.8 million. Could the Hon. Minister provide a breakdown as to what is envisaged on this training?

Secondly, line item 6211 – Expense Specific to the Agency: I apology for going back there, could the Hon. Minister reconfirm that the Regional Executive Officers’ salaries and other benefits would had increased from approximately two hundred and fifty something odd thousand dollars to about \$300,000, when otherwise, we would have seen in the media that their salaries had double. I just want a reconfirmation.

Mr. Bulkan: The first question regarding the training would include for training to the new councils that would come into being following the Local Government Elections (LGE), which would be held on 18th March, 2016.

With regards to the second question, the media reports that the salaries of REOs were double would have been incorrect and erroneous. The salaries are as stated by me a short while ago.

Programme: 421 – Sustainable Communities Management – \$554,981,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 422 – Sustainable Communities Development – \$876,365,000

Mr. Croal: Line item 6294 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister provide a breakdown of the \$427 million allocated under “Other”.

Mr. Bulkan: Four hundred million dollars of that sum is targeted for the Haags Bosch Landfill Site and \$27 million for the operations at the Lusignan Landfill Site.

Mr. Croal: Could the Hon. Minister provide a further explanation of what is planned for the Haags Bosch Landfill Site with the \$400 million.

Mr. Bulkan: I believe that the Hon. Member is certainly aware that, formally, the operations of that facility was funded under an Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) loan that actually came to an end last year and the budgetary allocation is to cater for the operations of that facility for the year ahead.

Bishop Edghill: Line item 6294 – Other, the same line item the Minister responded to. The Minister just informed us that \$400 million is allocated for the operations of the Haags Busch Landfill Site. Could the Hon. Minister tell this House whether that is for current payments for 2016 or for payments owed for previous years? [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman hit gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members let us assist one another here.

Mr. Bulkan: The proposed allocation is for the funding of the 2016 operations of this facility.

Mr. Hamilton: Same line item 6294 – Other: Could the Minister inform the National Assembly whether the contractor, B.K. International Inc., is still the operator and contractor at the Haags Busch Landfill Site, or whether there has been a parting of ways and we now have a new contractor managing the landfill site.

Mr. Bulkan: The answer to that question is the latter, as posited by the Hon. Member.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, I asked two questions: One was whether B.K. International Inc. was still the contractor and operator at the Haags Busch Landfill Site? And, secondly, if the answer is that he is not, the other question is, who is now managing and operating the landfill site?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer to the question is that there was a parting of ways. The B.K. International Inc. is no longer on site nor operating on the facility there. There is a new contractor the Puran Brothers' Disposal Inc. that is based there on an emergency basis.

Bishop Edghill: Under the same line item 6294 – Other, could the Hon. Minister indicate whether there is any sum owing on this particular project, and if the loan came to an end, as indicated, how much of that loan was not expended?

Mr. Bulkan: We are dealing with the proposed allocations before us for \$427 million for which an explanation has been proffered.

9.30 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I will allow three more questions before I put the question.

Bishop Edghill: Some \$427 million is being sought. We are seeking to verify that that amount covers all of the expenditure, thus the question that I asked earlier. I have not received an answer to the question, which is: are there are sums owing for works already carried out, and if the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) funding has come to an end, how much money was not expended?

Mr. Bulkan: There a sum of US\$2.5 million that was not expended under the IDB loan.

Mr. Ali: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contribution to Local Organisations: would the Hon. Minister say, first of all, whether the moneys from the Central Housing and Planning Authority (CHPA) housing fund was transferred to the Consolidated Fund?

Secondly, as is stated here, the CHPA is no longer a subvention agency. How does the Minister hope to finance the operations of CHPA?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer to the first question is that there was no transfer of the sums in the housing fund and the activities for 2016 would be funded under sums in the housing fund.

Mr. Ali: We were told that Members of the previous Government kept the money in that fund for the purpose of removing it. I am very happy that the Hon. Minister sees the rationale in having the fund there...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are you making a speech or are you asking a question?

Mr. Ali: It is a question.

Mr. Chairman: Please let us have the question.

Mr. Ali: ...and, of course, the justifications that “clean hands” lies over here. Would the Hon. Minister agree with me that the rationale of having the moneys in the housing fund was one that had great merit?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is there an answer to that?

Mr. Bulkan: No, Mr. Chairman, there is no answer to that.

Mr. G. Persaud: After the 18th March, 2016, there will be three new towns. The local authority areas of Mabaruma, Kumaka, Hosororo which has been declared a town and the Ireng, Sawariwau area, which has been declared a town, have never collected rates and taxes. The third area is Bartica which collected rates and taxes. The question to the Hon. Minister is: how will the Government be able to sustain the title of township in these three areas without imposition of rates and taxes? I have not found anything in this Budget which seeks to suggest that there will be subvention support to these three local authority areas.

Mr. Bulkan: Under the capital expenditure, there is a subvention to all of the municipalities as well as to the Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs), as the Hon. Member is aware, and the figure is greater in the case of the municipalities. The Hon. Member is also aware that residents of towns... the question of rates apply, so there will be no exceptions.

Programme: 422 – Sustainable Communities Development – \$876,365,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 421 – Sustainable Communities Management - \$724,190,000

Mr. Croal: Project code 1902900 – Project Development and Assistance: Could the Hon. Minister confirm whether the Fiscal Transfers Act will be applied in the allocation of the subvention to the municipalities and the NDCs?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer is yes. That Act will be used to determine the level of transfers to the local government organs.

Mr. Croal: Follow-up question: Could the Hon. Minister provide the allocation for the subvention?

Mr. Bulkan: The allocation is stated here and it is \$401 million.

Mr. Croal: I am asking for the allocation per local authority. He will say it is 71 but let us cluster it between the municipalities and the NDCs.

Mr. Bulkan: One hundred and forty-six million is provided for the nine municipalities and the sum of \$248 million is provided for the 62 NDCs.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, I will do the math. The Hon. Minister, this evening, provided information on his Ministry's...

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

Mr. Croal: Yes. I am confirming something.

Mr. Chairman: Could you kindly do that?

Mr. Croal: I cannot ask the question without acknowledging the information provided by the Hon. Minister. It goes hand in hand. I just want to thank the Minister for providing his Ministry's capital programme for 2016. Having perused it, I want to indicate that the information was provided for the three new municipalities, Lethem, Mabaruma and Bartica. However, under the subvention to NDCs, I see a repeat for one of the NDCs in Region 1 when that area will become a town. I see a repeat for the NDC in Region 9, Ireng, Sawariwau when Lethem will now become a town. I just want to point out that information to the Hon. Hon. Minister because, based on the information provided, there will be an excess allocation under the NDCs.

Mr. Bulkan: I thank the Hon. Member for his observation which is correct.

Programme: 421 – Sustainable Communities Management - \$724,190,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 422 – Sustainable Communities Development - \$4,593,084,000

Mr. Croal: Project code 1302200 – Community Infrastructure Improvement Project: I have two questions. Could the Hon. Minister, first of all, provide information as to how these areas were identified for the projects that have been identified under this programme?

Secondly, as part of the information provided, under new contracts, an allocation was made for the construction of a concrete tarmac for the Northwest Secondary School in Mabaruma. There is also an allocation under Region 1 – Education Programme for the construction of a tarmac. There is duplication of resources.

Mr. Bulkan: It is the case that this programme cannot cater for interventions in every community across our country, but it does cater for interventions in all of our regions and, in fact, it is an expanded programme. In the determination as to which communities will be the beneficiaries or recipients of financial support, the questions of equity and balance are foremost considerations on the part of the Ministry.

Mr. Croal: Follow-up question: There is an allocation under Project Administration for personnel, vehicles, *et cetera* but there is a \$26.02 million allocation for local office. Could the Hon. Minister provide a breakdown of that expense?

Mr. Bulkan: I would crave the indulgence of the Hon. Member and ask that this be provided later.

Mr. Ali: Project code 1903000 - Infrastructural Development: I see there is no allocation. Last year, the Hon. Minister said that there were some areas in the housing programme that would have had infrastructural work done this year, including Cummings Lodge and Stewartville. Could the Hon. Minister say whether this is catered for and under which programme?

Secondly, could he say whether the communities outlined in the Hon. Minister of Finance's budget speech are also catered for because I do not see it in the profile or in this programme?

Mr. Bulkan: The queries put forward by the Hon. Member as to funding activities in the housing sector are being funded under the provision, utilising the housing fund, to the sum of \$5.6 billion.

9.45 p.m.

Mr. Ali: I am very happy for that piece of information. Could the Hon. Minister say how he intends to replenish the fund?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer to that is: as alluded to earlier by the Hon. Member, which is that this Administration is committed to transferring all those sums to the Consolidated Fund and future drawdowns will be via the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Dharamlall: Project code 1903300 – Georgetown Restoration Programme: Could the Hon. Minister please provide the activities that will be executed under this programme, the

procurement methodologies, and a completion report inclusive of the operational and the tendering procedures that were executed for the \$300 million that was expended last year?

Mr. Bulkan: The Hon. Member may have heard his colleague, the Hon. Member Mr. Croal, say earlier say that a complete breakdown of all of the capital projects has been furnished so he can receive it from his colleague. With regards to the activities to be funded and the items to be procured, those will be done so via public tender process. We are dealing with 2016 and not 2015.

Mr. Dharamlall: As a follow-up question, could the Hon. Minister please provide the contract details on 2015 expenditure of the \$300 million?

Mr. Bulkan: I just said to the Hon. Member that we are dealing with 2016 provisions and not 2015 provisions.

Mr. Croal: Under project code 190330 – Georgetown Restoration Programme, there is an allocation for the construction of an administrative building to the tune of \$60 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate where this building will be constructed and who will be utilising it?

Mr. Bulkan: That building will be for housing the administrative staff of the Georgetown City Council and the location will be within the compound of City Hall.

Programme: 422 – Sustainable Communities Development - \$4,593,084,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we have completed our work for today and I thank you for your assistance and cooperation.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Nagamootoo: I move that this House be adjourned until Wednesday...

Mr. Speaker hit gavel

Mr. Speaker: I beg the Hon. Prime Minister's pardon. Hon. Members, it would be at least an act of politeness if you allow the Speaker to first leave the dais and repair to his Chamber before Hon. Members leave the Chamber. Please Prime Minister.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, I move that this House be adjourned until Wednesday, 17th February, 2016 at 1.00 p.m.

Assembly adjourned accordingly at 9.49 p.m.