

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2012-2013) OF THE TENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

39TH Sitting

Thursday, 14TH March, 2013

Assembly convened at 2.37 p.m.

Prayers

[Mdm. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Mdm. Speaker: Thank you, please be seated.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Apology for late start

Mr. Speaker: Good afternoon, Hon. Members. My first announcement is to issue an apology for the late start. Some Senior Members of the Government and Opposition were having a discussion on procedural matters that are likely to come up later in the sitting. I have quite a few announcements and I crave your indulgence that I may read them.

National Day message

Mr. Speaker: Firstly, it is that I am in receipt of National Day messages from his Excellency, the Speaker of the National Assembly of Kuwait, his Parliament and the people of Kuwait's congratulations to Guyana on its Republic Day celebrations. I have also received a similar message from the President of the Senate of Canada congratulating the Parliament and people of Guyana on the observance of our Republican Anniversary.

Intolerable behaviour at last Sitting

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, on the last occasion, during the 38th Sitting of the National Assembly I called the sitting to an end following what, in my opinion, had become intolerable behaviour and remarks. Remarks such as “thief”, “liar” and “prostitute” were just a few of the ones most audible, at least that I heard. In addition, there was what I considered to be open disdain, disgust and disrespect being shown by Members to each other and even to the Chair.

We are all reminded, including myself, that we are elected officials – servants and stewards of the people’s trust and their aspirations. The people are not only expecting a more fruitful, workable and honourable National Assembly in this Tenth Parliament, I believe that they are entitled to it. I am not excluding myself, as I said, from this and so for my part, I want to apologise to anyone and to everyone that I might have offended during the previous sitting. There are far too many statements and actions of intolerance in our society, coming from as far away as Babu John to Marudi Mountain and we, representing the apex of leadership in this country, must deliver a higher level of behaviour and governance.

Setting date for Sitting

Mr. Speaker: My third announcement is that by way of a letter dated 4th March, I wrote to the Clerk to set today’s date for a sitting. I did so under what I believe are my powers, particularly under Standing Order No.47 (9) where if in the opinion of the Speaker the Assembly is suspended, he may name a time for the resumption of that sitting. Admittedly, there was a difference of opinion expressed to me by the Clerk and today, just a few hours ago, I also received a letter of protest from the Government’s Chief Whip challenging my decision to convene this sitting. I believe that it is important for us to resume after a month’s hiatus and to put our House back into order before the much anticipated Budget Debates commence within a few weeks.

Death of President Hugo Raphael Chavez Frias

Mr. Speaker: Also, by way of announcement, I have, on behalf of the entire National Assembly, expressed condolences on the tragic passing of President Hugo Raphael Chavez Frias in a letter sent to the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Mr.

Diosdado Cabello. Hon. Members I wish to remind you all, as I am sure that some of you have been invited, that there is a memorial service being held for the Late President today at 5.00 p.m. at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Members may wish to attend if they feel the need to.

Letter of congratulation

Mr. Speaker: A letter of congratulation has also been sent to Cde. Zhang Dejiang who was elected Chairman of the 12th National People's Congress Standing Committee on yesterday's date; this is of China's top legislature. Born in 1946, Cde. Zhang Dejiang is a Member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China and of their central committee.

Commonwealth Day activities

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, in observance of Commonwealth Day 2013, the National Assembly held a number of activities to commemorate that day which was observed on Monday last, 11th March. The Commonwealth of Nations is a voluntary association of 54 countries with 170 Parliaments and Assemblies within its Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). This year's theme was *Opportunity through Enterprise*. The initiatives organised by the Guyana branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association were many and they included, firstly, a simple handing over ceremony of books and material which were handed over by the British High Commissioner, His Excellency Mr. Andrew Ayre, who made a presentation on behalf of the United Kingdom, House of Commons. The delegation that visited last year was shown this pile of books and we were promised that they would be delivered and so we thank the Parliament of the United Kingdom for their books. This afternoon I will have them shared out between the parties.

A tour of several schools was also organised – Ketley Primary School, Smith's Memorial Primary School, St. Sidwell Primary School, Sophia Special School, St. Stanislaus Collage, St. Mary's Secondary School, Central High School and the Kurukuru Training Centre on the Soesdyke-Linden Highway.

We also had a debate held in this very chamber which was organised in partnership with the Commonwealth Youth Programme and the University of Guyana to debate the moot, and I quote *“The movement of skilled labour from several Regional Commonwealth Territories to developed countries is cause for great concern. Governments in Regional Commonwealth Territories do not have enough conditions in place to curb this problem.”* We had a lively debate and at the end of which Mr. Michael Xavier of the Faculty of Law was adjudged the most outstanding and best speaker. The competing Faculties of the University of Guyana were the School of Education and Humanities which competed against the faculty of Law. The Faculty of Law won the debate.

On the evening of the 11th March, on Monday, there was also an evening of music, food, dance and drinks celebrating the rich diversity of the Commonwealth. This was held at the Umana Yana and was well attended. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed it.

Finally and most recently, must at about 1.55 p.m. this afternoon there was a tree-planting ceremony which was held just prior to the convening of today’s session. An almond tree was planted in the ground of the Assembly to celebrate and to honour the values of the Commonwealth which are democracy, freedom, peace, the rule of law and opportunity for all of its two billion people who comprise all faiths and ethnicities.

International Women’s Day

Mr. Speaker: On Thursday, 7th March, as well, by way of announcement, the National Assembly, in keeping with its tradition begun last year, observed National Women’s Day with a lecture and luncheon held at the tower Hotel. The lecture, considered a seminal one on women’s involvement in Guyana’s politics, was delivered by Senior Lecturer, Ms. Cecilia Mc Almont, of the University of Guyana and at the luncheon four women were recognised for their long service to the National Assembly, Ms. Gail Teixeira, Mrs. Indra Chandarpal, Mrs. Clarissa Riehl and a member of staff, Ms. Olga Aaron. Members will recall that last year Ms. Amna Ally and Ms. Jaitun Haniff were honoured for their long service and I wish to personally thank all of those who organised those wonderful events, Mr. Isaacs and staff as well as all of the Members of Parliament who participated.

Tomorrow, Hon. Members, the Women and Gender Equality Commission will be staging its annual exhibition here and that exhibition will be declared open at 10.00 a.m. and so I invite all

Members to be a part of it. It is part of the observances for International Women's Day so we ought to support it.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: I have one final announcement to make. It pertains to a ruling that I had issued on the 22nd February in which, by coving letter, I indicated that I will make the announcement accordingly. At about 12.30 p.m. today I received a letter from Mr. Basil Williams, Member of Parliament (MP), saying that he wishes to rise on a Point of Order before I make any announcements and to be heard and after extensive discussion in my chambers with the Clerk present and Senior Members of both sides of the House, I have determined that my announcement is just an announcement because it is my opinion based on all of the precedents that I have seen that the ruling has been issued and I just formally announce that I recognise the right of Minister Rohee to speak and Mr. Williams, if he wishes, may now rise on a Point of Order.

Mr. B. Williams: Mr. Speaker, you would appreciate that the Hon. Members, Mr. David Granger and Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan, immediately before you sent the matter, when you were presiding in the Assembly from the Chair to the Committee of Privileges, there was a motion pending before you. It is still pending in this Hon. Assembly. In fact, you ruled on a Point of Order made by the Hon. Attorney General and the Point of Order having been resolved by arguments on both sides, we then got your ruling. No disrespect is meant because this is a learning experience in this Parliament and I wish to submit that this is not a Westminster-modeled Parliament. This Parliament is different from any other Parliament within CARICOM and the Commonwealth Caribbean. We have an Executive Presidency and that is what brought us to this point where one could actually have a President in Government, but the Opposition in the majority within the Parliament. This is once in a thousand years. It would not happen in CARICOM because under their Constitution the Governor General, who is titular, or the President, who is titular, would invite the majority parties, whether in coalition or singly, to form the Government so one would not have, for example... the Government would never bring a Motion of No-Confidence in an Opposition MP because an Opposition MP does not spend the people's money - the taxpayers' money. This is a novel event in this country and in this region, if not in the world, that the people have an opportunity through their representatives in the

Parliament and the National Assembly who vote moneys for Ministers to do the duty of the people. They now could have true accountability.

In addition to that, following on the recent judgment of the learned Chief Justice, Mr. Chang, the Ministers must now enjoy the confidence of the Assembly. There are two issues. If they do not perform and if they spend the money in a way that the people are not benefiting, the people have a right to bring them to account. We reach to this point...

Mr. Speaker: I was just about to ask Mr. Williams' Point of Order and I think he is at that point now.

Mr. B. Williams: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In this Parliament we must never ever let partisan views subvert the democratic nature of this Parliament. This is a democratic Parliament. We want to move this Parliament from the paradigm it was in for the last 20 years and bring about a new paradigm in this country. We are saying that we are entitled to be heard when decisions and rulings are going to be made in relation to matters that we bring before this Hon. House.

Mr. Speaker, my respectful submission is that you are the authority for procedural matters. You are the final voice for procedural matters and this is supported by all of the readings. I refer you to the Parliament of Canada, House of Commons Procedure and Practice, Second Edition, 2009. Speaker's Rulings: "The Speaker has been duty bound to decide all questions of procedure since representative assemblies were first established in the colonies which later formed Canada." That is your domain Mr. Speaker, but what is the domain of the Members who were elected by the people of this country? It is to determine what issues must be brought into this Hon. House and we are saying that the A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) reserve the right to determine what content they bring in this House. The Alliance For Change (AFC) has that right too and I believe that the People's progressive Party (PPP) exercised that right for the last 20 years. It means therefore that when we bring an issue to this House, for example, as the motion brought by Mr. Granger, the issue in that was that there was a resolution of No-Confidence and as a result of that, we believe that the Minister should not act or speak as Minister in this House. That is a substantial issue; it is not a procedural issue and in fact, Mr. Speaker, you had admirably dealt with the procedural issue in relation to this motion and you, at the time that you had sent the

matter to the Committee of Privileges, had already determined the procedure quite admirably, but we are saying that this is a substantive matter of whether Mr. Rohee could speak or not. It is a substantive matter and the Standing Orders do not speak to whether Mr. Rohee could speak as a Minister or whether an MP could speak; the Standing Orders are merely there to regulate how people speak and approach motions and acts of Parliament.

It is clear that we have not been heard before you made your ruling and I am happy now that you have given us your opportunity on the Point of Order because we are saying that it is a substantive issue. It is an issue that any Member in this Parliament under Article 171 of our Constitution could bring any motion. If one wants to bring a motion that this male must be a female, it is just a question of voting in the Parliament. That is an issue that we want to bring. Notice Mr. Neendkumar is agitated. You will notice, Mr. Speaker, that Mr. Neendkumar has become agitated. We want to make this Parliament a Parliament that has never been of precedence within this region or within this country.

This is a matter of substance. The Hon. Attorney General took this question to the learned Chief Justice in the High Court. This is the question that the court was asked to determine and I quote:

“Whether the National Assembly can prohibit Minister of Home Affairs, Clement Rohee, from speaking or not recognising the Minister of Home Affairs.”

There is nothing here about MP – whether he can speak as an elected Member of Parliament but as Minister. Now the learned Chief Justice answered this question and he answered it in the preliminary judgment five times and in his last judgment he made it even clearer. He said that Mr. Rohee has no right to speak as Minister in this House. His right to speak in the Parliament is as a Member of Parliament and that that was the question that the Hon. Attorney General took and the learned Chief Justice answered this question and he said, “No, he has no right to speak, we would help ourselves, as Minister”. That is what he said. No matter the propaganda and our media that they are using to... that is the position.

Now since we have not been heard on the substantive issue, we believe that this is a question of the right of the National Assembly to debate any matter brought before it after confirming with the standing orders and, Mr. Speaker, because you are saying that that was your ruling, your ruling came before the learned Chief Justice’s ruling and what is the effect of that? Because your

ruling came before, this is the learned Chief Justice's ruling after you make yours and he said this which is important to us in this Assembly: "The court is the final and sole arbiter of matters of law and the Constitution, not the Speaker." That is a clear decision taken by the learned Chief Justice – "not the Speaker". It is the domain of the course of our land. This is borne out by the practice in Canada which says, "Finally, while Speakers must take the constitutional statutes into account when preparing a ruling numerous Speakers have explained that it is not up to the speaker to rule on the constitutionality or legality of measures before the House." That is the point we wish to emphasise. Whether Mr. Rohee could speak or not is not a procedural matter. It is a substantial issue and the court is saying that that is a matter for the courts.

Mr. Speaker: The court has ruled.

Mr. B. Williams: The court has ruled that it is not a matter for you.

Mr. Speaker: No, it is unconstitutional.

Mr. B. Williams: No, the court has not ruled that. I just said to you that the court ruled pellucidly that the Minister has no right to speak as Minister in this National Assembly. Because of your ruling coming before the learned Chief Justice, this is the question that we are confronted with in this Honourable Assembly: Will the Speaker ignore the Chief Justice's ruling to the Attorney General's and Mr. Nandlall's, question that MP Rohee has no right to speak as Minister. Is the Speaker going to ignore this? This is a ruling. It is a ruling of the learned Chief Justice.

The second question is: Will the Speaker ignore the Chief Justice's ruling that matters of law and the Constitution are for the determination by the courts and not the Speaker? I know that you probably want to go to court on this one.

Mr. Speaker: Me? No, I am not going to court.

Mr. B. Williams: I am closing. I wish to remind this Hon. House that our Parliament, as I said earlier, is not a strict Westminster-modeled Parliament. We have an Executive President. He is voted for who is also Head of State and he also an arm of the Parliament. Our system of voting is by proportional representation. We have a minority Government and a majority Opposition in the Parliament. Our Parliament is not supreme, but the Constitution is and the former derives its

powers from the latter. We are not a colonial legislature, but we are an independent republican Parliament so do not tell us about the House of Commons' practice and procedure. Do not tell us about that because we are not a strict Westminster-modeled Parliament.

I respectfully contend that we are in a similar position to that of our Court of Appeal when it was established as our final court. That court was no longer bound by precedence of the House of Lords, the Privy Council or by the law of any other country. All of those laws in so far as they were not received into our laws by legislation were persuasive authority only, *mutatis mutandis*, for the benefit of Hon. Member, Mr. Neendkumar, "in like manner".

Our Parliament, our National Assembly, from 1980 at least, was no longer bound by the rules of practice and procedure of the House of Commons which became persuasive only. In other words, they are guidelines for us.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Williams I have to stop you because you in an e-mail invited me to consider Standing Order No.113 that because our rules are silent, you said that I must go to England because the convention is there that the Minister...

Mr. B. Williams: In my e-mail to you, Sir?

Mr. Speaker: You said that...

Mr. B. Williams: No. My e-mail does not have that.

Mr. Speaker: Not now. I am saying about a few months ago you said that because we are silent on this issue Standing Order No.113 must kick in; that is that I must refer to the practice of the House of Commons.

Mr. B. Williams: That is not of consonance with what I am saying here.

Mr. Speaker: I see.

Mr. B. Williams: All Ministers have guidelines. What, Mr. Speaker, you must appreciate is that you are really sitting atop of history. You are now sitting in a position where you are in a Parliament that is unprecedented in this hemisphere, possibly in the entire Commonwealth.

When one looks at the learning, one is told clearly how important is decision of Speakers in creating precedence.

In other words, to be frank, you must now strike out in a direction where you would be developing solid rules and precedence that would last 1000 years. That is where you are sitting right now. This is what they say and I refer you to the second edition of 2009: “In arriving at a decision, Speakers will also review cornerstone events of the past known as precedence which may be useful in the application to a new situation.” A precedent is something that happened once upon a time and that everyone decided to follow. In legal terms it is usually the consequence of a decision made after argument has been proffered to the Chair.” May I repeat that, Mr. Speaker? It is usually made after arguments have been proffered to the Chair on a certain point.

Mr. Speaker, you referred us and I referred you, in my e-mail, to page 7 of the 22nd Edition of Erskine May, under the caption “*Rulings from the Chair*” and I see highlighted what someone you said gave to you, as they highlighted these lines. Do not forget...

Mr. Speaker: I think you were there when the Clerk shared that out.

Mr. B. Williams: Yes, Somebody gave it to you. Was it the Clerk?

Mr. Speaker: I am saying that you were there when it was shared out by the Clerk. You make it sound as if there was some innocuous, mysterious sharing...

Mr. B. Williams: No. I do not want to call a name.

Mr. Speaker: Does it give a sense of mystery that somebody...

Mr. B. Williams: No misguiding is attempted. This is what I am going to read, it says this, Sir, this is supposed to be the substratum upon which you must predicate the decision that you have the right to rule away from the Chair from the Assembly. This is what Erskine May says here and this exceptional; this entire page he ignored and came to this one line: “...but sometimes rulings are given privately on matters before they are brought to the House.” Mr. Speaker, I am sure that you would agree with me, using your legal mind, that this cannot apply to you because you have been dealing with a matter that has been long before the House so this is totally

irrelevant to you that you could use this to say that you have a right to make a ruling on this matter outside of the Chair but what they ought to have highlighted to you, Mr. Speaker, is that part of the learning on page 7 that says this:

3.07 p.m.

“The procedure for obtaining a ruling from the Chair is generally as follows:

Notice is given to the Speaker by a Member who desires to raise a Point of Order so that the ruling, publicly delivered in the House, may take account of any relevant precedence and of all the considerations involved.”

They ought to have highlighted that to you. This is what is stated the *Erskine May Parliamentary Practice*, Sir. What is given to you is one of the exceptions in private matters. This is not a private matter that has not been brought before the honourable House. This is a matter that is solidly before this honourable House, Sir.

I am saying that the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the AFC, both of whom brought this motion, have a right to determine the content of their motion in this honourable House. It is for the Government to vote it down and it is for you to decide whether it is within the procedural framework because we have a right to determine the content of the issues we bring here. Mr. Speaker, we cannot have the court determining the content or what issues political parties in Parliament must bring to this honourable House, otherwise, how could we be men? How could we be women? It would be a question of James A. Michener, of mouse. Is it a question of mouse and men? [**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** It is of mice and men.]... of mice and men? No...

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Colonel Harmon.

Mr. B. Williams: No. I was thinking singly though, Sir, at the time.

I am saying, respectfully, the APNU, and I am sure the AFC, and I am sure to some extent the Government, wants a Parliament in which its Members can bring their own issues. It is a matter for us to vote on them.

The case of *Hong Kong rediffusion verses Hong Kong*, a motion was passed there and they thought it was outrageous but the Privy Council stated that any motion can be brought. The fact

of passing a motion in the House is not in itself unlawful; that it is a matter of content. All that is to be done is to vote it down, but you cannot do anything that affects the Standing Orders, the procedural matters, because, remember, they say constitutional matters and legal matters are for the courts.

Mr. Speaker, I know that you said that the matter is still before the Committee of Privileges, that is the issue of whether Mr. Rohee could speak as a Minister. I know you head that Committee of Privileges. I know you would honour your undertaking that the matter will be determined there, but, as you know, we will have this conundrum. The issue to be determined by the Committee of Privileges is the issue in the motion, and that is whether Mr. Rohee could speak.

Mr. Speaker: The issues were whether or not this House has powers to restrain a Member or Minister from speaking or participating. That is the issue; it not whether or not this particular person... It is what powers does the Assembly has *vis-à-vis* a Member, and whether that Member is a Minister or not. That is the issue that was before us.

Mr. B. Williams: No Sir. That was our motion. Our motion states...

Mr. Speaker: No. I am saying what was referred and what is on the agenda for the Committee of Privileges.

Mr. B. Williams: Is that not what we raised in our motion?

Mr. Speaker: I think we can get a copy from Ms. West.

Mr. B. Williams: Yes Sir. We need to clarify that because we are saying that this is...

Deputy Speaker [Mrs. Backer]: The motion is here on the Order Paper today.

Mr. B. Williams: The motion is on the Order Paper, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: I am just saying that what is before the Committee of Privileges is not that the Minister is under sanction...

Mr. B. Williams: It is not the issue that is in the motion.

Mr. Speaker: It is the issue and it is not the person before the Committee. What powers...

Mr. B. Williams: That is all right with us. We are talking about the principle.

Mr. Speaker, you would appreciate that we have to be efficacious in this Parliament. You would appreciate that we want to have certainty in how we go about our business. We must have precedence that would bind all of us and so we are in a quandary, in terms of your ruling and what is to be ruled on by the Committee of Privileges. That is where we are.

We will urge that this is matter really and truly goes to the Committee of Privileges and be determined forthwith. I am respectfully submitting that, Mr. Speaker, and I thank you for showing us that we are going to have a democratic Parliament. We would hope that in the future, that whenever decisions are to be made that we are heard before the decisions are made.

I thank you Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: And I thank you, most kindly, Mr. Williams. I have said a lot and I have written a lot, and I do not purport to go over this issue. I have given a ruling. The Clerk advises that if it is to be challenged there may be a substantive motion to challenge it and that is the right of any Member.

Mr. Williams, you said something that I consider profound and that is that we should never allow partisan issues to subvert the democracy of this Parliament, and that is the rule by which I will live by as long as I am here. Whether I have come from the Opposition or the Government side I will do what I consider to be right and just. I thank you for those words. As I have stated, in the ruling, the matter is before the Committee of Privileges and Members are invited, if they so desire, to have it determined or to be brought back here. That is the right of the Members.

I overruled my own view and opinion. Having gained certain knowledge, I considered that my opinion was not in keeping with what was right and just. Having gained that knowledge, I consider that it would have been perverse to continue in that knowledge and, as a result, I gave a ruling. I am convinced, based on all of the authorities that the Clerk has stacked up before me, even now, that a Speaker may give a ruling out of the Chair, in the Chair and they are no different. However, I take the point that perhaps in the future I ought to have given notice, but I do not know that the ruling should have been debated, because, as I said, it is my position, as Speaker, when I took a decision on the night of the 22nd November, 2012 not to allow the Hon.

Member to speak. I, having gained certain knowledge, decided that I could not. You spoke of precedent; there is a case particularly, on point, out of Australia which I would recommend, being [*inaudible*] the Attorney General, that you can look at.

In my opinion, the ruling is the ruling and the Members, as I am advised, may bring a substantive motion to overturn it. Thank you very much.

Death of a former Member of Parliament

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to, I am sure on behalf of the entire Assembly, make the announcement that a former Member of this House, Mr. Pariag Sukhai, has passed, Regional Chairman for Region 3. We express our collective condolences on his passing and as is the practice and precedent of this House we will honour him accordingly in due course.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Paper was laid:

Compensation Agreement in the Framework of the PETROCARIBE Energy Cooperation Agreement dated December 28, 2012 between the Cooperation Republic of Guyana and the PDVSA Petroleo, S.A. (PDVSA) for the cancellation of the oil debt in compensation for white rice and paddy shipments under the Guyana/Venezuela Rice Trade Agreements in the amount of US\$100,822,924. 12. [*Minister of Finance*]

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

The following Reports were laid:

- (i) Minutes of the proceedings of the 7th Meeting of the Committee of Selection held on Friday, 25th January, 2013. [*The Speaker of the National Assembly – Chairman of the Committee of Selection*]
- (ii) The Report of the Special Select Committee on Guyana's Commitment to the United Nations Human Rights Council with regard to the Abolition of Corporal punishment in the schools, the abolition of the death penalty and the decriminalization of consensual adult same sex relations and discrimination against Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual and

Transgender Persons (Resolution No, 23/2012). *[Minister of Human Services and Social Security – Chairperson of the Special Select Committee on The Report of the Special Select Committee on Guyana’s Commitment to the United Nations Human Rights Council with regard to the Abolition of Corporal punishment in the schools, the abolition of the death penalty and the decriminalization of consensual adult same sex relations and discrimination against Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual and Transgender Persons]*

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

[Written Replies]

1. PLACEMENT OF CYRIL POTTER COLLEGE OF EDUCATION GRADUATES

Ms. Ally: Could the Hon. Minister inform this House:

- (i) Whether all the teachers who graduated from the Cyril Potter College of Education have been placed at schools across the country?
- (ii) Whether this has any effect on the rehired retired teachers?

Minister of Education [Ms. Manickchand]:

- (i) For the year 2012, a total of eight hundred and forty-nine (849) teachers graduated from CPCE and they were all placed in schools across the country.
- (ii) No retired teachers are re-employed to teach in subject areas where there are vacancies and to teach the Six Year Curriculum at the secondary level where the students are exposed to a remedial type programme during the first year.

2. DORMITORY ACCOMODATION FACILITIES

Ms. Ally: Could the Hon. Minister:

- (i) Identify the areas where there is need for dormitory accommodation facilities particularly in the riverain communities?
- (ii) State how soon Government will put in place facilities where these are absent?

Ms. Manickchand: The Ministry, certainly the Planning Unit, believes that the minimum viable size for a secondary school in Guyana is an enrolment of about 250 students. It is not cost efficient or quality effective to have a secondary school that is smaller than that. Indeed the recommendation in reports from several consultants, the Howes Report 2007 being the most recent, is that an enrolment of even 250 is too small for a secondary school. The intent is to provide equitable access the Ministry to secondary education, hence is aiming at offering the full range of technical, science and general academic subjects offered by any of the Grade A schools. With small numbers there are times when these facilities are underutilised, or not utilised at all, depending on students' choices. More crucial is that a proliferation of small schools worsens the shortage of trained teachers in some subject areas, e.g. Mathematics, Science, IT and some other technical subject areas. Educators also feel that there are benefits which are gained when the school is large enough to employ more than one teacher in a subject area. It is felt that quality improves when there is interaction/collaboration/consultation among colleagues teaching the same subject. This of course is not possible in a single stream school (i.e. one in which there is only one class for each grade).

The above explanation should help to explain why the Ministry does not construct a secondary school in almost every village as is the case at the primary level. Where the potential school population is too small, as is the case in most hinterland and deep riverain communities, the Ministry will build a school to serve several communities, and because some of these communities are quite distant from the location of the schools it may not be practicable for the children to travel every day so residential facilities are provided. It should be noted that in general residential facilities are an expensive option and sometimes not the most desired option by parents and wherever possible regions exercise the option of providing transportation for those students who can travel every day.

Present situation

All secondary schools in hinterland, Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9, have dormitories attached to them. There are 12 schools in these regions at the present time and later there will be another secondary school, with the construction of the school and dormitory facilities at Kato in Region 8.

There are also residential facilities in Regions 2, 4, 5, 6 and 10 which serve riverain

communities.

In Region 2 there are dormitories at Anna Regina Secondary, Charity Secondary and at Wakapau. In light of what was said above the Ministry does not envisage the need for an additional school at this time. There may be a need eventually to expand the facilities at the existing schools.

There is no existing residential facility in Region 3 at this time, but there is a proposal to construct a dormitory at Parika Salem to cater for students from communities in the Essequibo river area e.g. Caria Caria, Great Truli Island, Western Hog Island, Northern Hog Island, Fort Island, Aliko, Lanaballi, Saxacalli, Upper and Lower Bonasika. There are, of course, students in riverain areas of 3 and 4 who can access Dora Secondary and Friendship Secondary on a daily basis

President's College in Region 4 is a special situation in that it caters for students from all regions who qualify for placement at the school and it provides residential facilities for those who live far from the school. Some of these students are from riverain communities. Originally St. Cuthberts, in Region 4, had a dormitory but as numbers from other communities declined this service was no longer needed.

In Region 5 there are no residential facilities attached to a specific school but there is a hostel at Mahaicony, under Ministry of Amerindian Affairs which caters for students from the riverain communities (Karamat, Esau and Jacob, Gordon Table and Maraikobai who are placed at Bygeval, Mahaicony and Belladrum Secondary Schools. This residential facility was expanded in 2009 to cater for 55 students but the trend in enrolment suggests that there may be need to cater for about 20 more. There is, however, an alternative suggestion from the region which is to procure a boat and transport students daily from some of the villages mentioned above.

In Region 6 there is a hostel at Springlands which caters for students from Orealla and Siparuta. Recently a hostel has also been constructed at Orealla to cater for students from Siparuta who attend the Secondary department of Orealla Primary school. Students coming from Canje Creek, Berbice River and Upper East Bank Berbice River usually have to find accommodation in the New Amsterdam area. Some thought has been given to the construction of a dormitory in the New Amsterdam area to cater for some of these students but a full analysis of the potential need still

needs to be firmly established.

In Region 10 there is a hostel managed by the Regional Administration and one at Kwakwani, which comes more specifically under the Regional Education Department. These are adequate for the number of residential students at this time. In fact the Kwakwani facility is underutilised because some parents are not comfortable with their children in dormitory facilities.

3. REHIRED RETIRED OFFICERS IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Ms. Ally:

- (i) Could the Hon. Minister list the positions of rehired retired officers in the Ministry of Education?
- (ii) Do these officers have contractual arrangements?
- (iii) What is the duration of these contracts?

Ms. Manickchand:

AMOUNT	POSITIONS	STATUS	DURATION
1	Technical Facilitator	Contract	Three (3) years
1	Administrative Assistant to Minister	Contract	Three (3) years
1	Senior Technical Officer (Accreditation)	Contract	Three (3) years
1	Chief Planning Officer	Contract	Three (3) years
1	Assistant Secretary (General)	Contract	One (1) year
1	Human Resources Manager	Contract	Three (3) years
1	Typist Clerk	Contract	One (1) year
3	Placement Officer	Contract	One (1) year
2	Senior Education Officer	Contract	One (1) year
1	Education Officer I	Contract	One (1) year

1	Head, Inspectorate Unit	Contract	Three (3) years
3	School Inspector	Contract	Three (3) years
1	School Inspector	Contract	One (1) year
2	Driver/Mechanic	Contract	One (1) year
1	Senior Schools Welfare Officer	Contract	One (1) year
1	Director, TVET	Contract	One (1) year
1	Senior TVET Officer	Contract	One (1) year
1	Coordinator, SCCP	Contract	One (1) year
1	Assistant Superintendent of Exams	Contract	One (1) year
1	Coordinator, Physical Education	Contract	One (1) year
4	Administrator	Contract	One (1) year
1	Secretary General, UNESCO	Contract	Three (3) years
1	Director, NCERD	Contract	Three (3) years
1	Head, Multi Media Centre	Contract	Three (3) years
8	Regional Literacy Coordinator	Contract	One (1) year
1	Learning Resource Development Officer	Contract	Three (3) years
1	Senior Test Development Officer	Contract	One (1) year
2	Senior Subject Specialist	Contract	One (1) year
1	Curriculum Development Officer	Contract	Three (3) years
3	Senior Lecturer	Contract	One (1) year
19	Lecturer II	Contract	One (1) year
11	Lecturer I	Contract	One (1) year
1	Equipment Operator	Contract	One (1) year
2	Cleaner	Contract	One (1) year

1	Vehicle Driver	Contract	One (1) year
2	Instructor II	Contract	One (1) year
1	Instructor III	Contract	One (1) year
1	Store Keeper I	Contract	One (1) year
1	Education Officer I	Temporary	Month to month
88			

4. TWENTY-FOUR HOURS SECURITY AT SCHOOLS

Ms. Ally: Could the Hon. Minister:

- (i) List the schools as well as the security services where a twenty-four hour security is being provided?
- (ii) Will the remaining schools that do not enjoy this luxurious facility of security at their schools be provided with these facilities in 2013?

Ms. Manickchand:

Georgetown

Schools which receive 24 hours security services

Nursery Schools	Security Companies Contracted
1 Precious Jewels	Frank Security
2 Smyth Street	Clinton Security
3 Fraser	Martin's Security
4 Liana	Security Services Limited
5 Alexander Village	Security Services Limited
6 Roxanne Burnham	Home Safe Security

7	St. Christopher	Security Services Limited
8	Albouystown	SAFE Security
9	South Ruimveldt	Frank Security

Primary Schools

10	F.E. Pollard	Inter Services Enterprise
11	Rama Krishna	Security Services Limited
12	Sophia	Glenkev Security
13	St. Gabriel's	Security Services Limited
14	St. Ambrose	Martin's Security
15	St. Angela's	Security Services Limited
16	North Georgetown	Frank Security
17	Stella Maris	Inter Services Enterprise
18	St. Sidwell's	Martin's Security
19	Thomas Moore	Inter Services Enterprise
20	Winfer Gardens	Clinton Security
21	Ketley	Security Services Limited
22	David Rose School for the Handicapped	Benjamin Security
23	St. Pius	Security Services Limited
24	West Ruimveldt	SAFE Security

25	South Ruimveldt	On Guard
26	St. Barnabas	On Guard
27	Enterprise	National Security
28	Tucville	On Guard
29	East La Penitence	Security Services Limited
30	Agricola	Clinton Security
31	Graham's Hall	Inter Services Enterprise

Secondary Schools

Security Companies Contracted

32	Kingston	On Guard
33	Tutorial High	National Security
34	North Georgetown	Crime Buster
35	Richard Ishmael	Crime Buster
36	St. Joseph's High	Martin Security
37	St. John College	Home Safe Security
38	Christ Church	Clinton Security
39	Bishops' High	Instant Security
40	Central High	On Guard
41	Charlestown	Crime Buster
42	Carmel High	Home Safe Security
43	Dolphin	Crime Buster

44	Campbellville	Martin Security
45	Brickdam	Crime Buster
46	Tucville	On Guard
47	East Ruimveldt	On Guard
48	Queenstown	Home Safe Security
49	St. Winefride's	Crime Buster
50	St. George's	Crime Buster
51	North Ruimveldt Multilateral	Martin's Security
52	South Ruimveldt	Crime Buster
53	Ascension High	Crime Buster
54	St. Mary's High	SAFE Security
55	St. Stanislaus College	Fernandes
56	Houston High	Clinton Security
57	Lodge	Inter Services Enterprise
58	St. Rose's High	Home Safe Security
59	Cummings Lodge	Crime Buster

Practical Instruction Centre (PIC)

60	Kingston Industrial Arts	Security Services Limited
61	Sophia	Inter Services Enterprise
62	Sophia Special School	Inter Services Enterprise

Thirty (30) schools do not have 24 hours security service. It is proposed that in 2013 these schools be given 24 hours security which will cost approximately 16,598,400.

5. POST OF REGISTRAR OF THE SUPREME COURT

Mr. Bond: Could the Hon. Minister inform this House on the following:

- (i) Who is the person filling the post of Registrar (ag.) of the Supreme Court?
- (ii) What are his/her qualifications?
- (iii) Are those qualifications reposed in the said Registrar (ag.) in keeping with the requirements of the Act?
- (iv) Who was the person who performed such functions preceding the appointment of the current Registrar (ag.)?
- (v) What are the qualifications of that person?
- (vi) Were those qualifications reposed in the previous Registrar (ag.) in keeping with the requirements of the Act?

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Nandlall]:

Article 199(1) of the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana vests in the Judicial Service Commission, the authority to appoint persons to the offices to which Article 199 relates. Article 199(3) of the Constitution sets out a non-exhaustive list of offices to which Article 199 relates. These expressly include:

- Registrar of the High Court; and
- Deputy Registrar of the High Court.

The posts of Registrar and Deputy Registrar of the Supreme Court were created by Parliament and the requisite job descriptions and qualifications of such posts are designated by the Public

Service Minister. A copy of the said job description is hereto attached and marked 'A1' and 'A2'. **See Appendix**

As Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, I will answer the questions posed by the Honourable Member of Parliament, Mr. Bond. These answers are within my personal knowledge, save where based on information or are available to me from records of the Public Service Ministry.

- (i) Mr. Rasheed Mohamed, a retired re-employed employee, currently holds the post of Registrar (ag.) of the Supreme Court of Judicature. He was appointed by the Judicial Service Commission.
- (ii) I am informed that Mr. Mohamed has three (3) General Certificate of Education (GCE) subjects.
- (iii) There is no legislation which prescribes any qualifications for the post of Registrar of the Supreme Court. That is contained in the job description provided by the Public Service Ministry.

In keeping with the job description issued by the Public Service Ministry, those qualifications are not reposed in the current holder of the office of the Registrar of the Supreme Court of Judicature (ag).

- (iv) Immediately preceding the appointment of Mr. Mohamed, the post of Registrar of the Supreme Court of Judicature was vacant. I am informed that Ms. Bibi Ali was appointed by the Judicial Service Commission to fill the vacant post of Deputy Registrar. She was subsequently appointed by the Judicial Service Commission to act as Registrar.
- (v) I am informed that Ms. Ali is a qualified Attorney-at-law, admitted to practise before the Guyana Bar on the 5th November, 2004.
- (vi) As stated before, there is no legislation which prescribes any qualifications for the post of Registrar of the Supreme Court. That is contained in the job description provided by the Public Service Ministry. The holder of the post must have

a Bachelor of Laws Degree along with the Legal Education Certificate plus ten (10) years experience in the Supreme Court Registry.

I am informed that Ms. Ali possessed the qualifications but lacked the experience.

6. NOTE-TAKING BY JUDGES AND MAGISTRATES

Mr. Bond: Could the Hon. Minister inform this House when will the arduous task of copious note-taking by our Judges and Magistrates be replaced by stenographers and/or voice compilation equipment?

Mr. Nandlall: I am informed by the Honourable Chancellor and Chairman of the Judicial Service Commission that:

"The Judiciary is in receipt of used recording equipment (which are in good condition) from British High Commission in Georgetown. Technical assistance is being sought to install the equipment and to test its functionality"

7. ASSIGNMENT OF RESEARCH CLERKS TO JUDGES AND MAGISTRATES

Mr. Bond: Could the Hon. Minister inform this House whether Judges and Magistrates will be assigned Research Clerks?

Mr. Nandlall: I am informed by the Honourable Chancellor and Chairman of the Judicial Service Commission that:

"The post of Research Clerk within the structure of the Supreme Court does not exist. Appointment or assignment is usually made to established posts."

8. MAKING COURTS SOUNDPROOF

Could the Hon. Minister inform this House which of our Courts are soundproof and which ones will be made sound-proof?

Mr. Nandlall: I am informed by the Honourable Chancellor and Chairman of the Judicial Service Commission that;

"No Court in Guyana is soundproof, though soundproofing of courts would be a welcome albeit costly intervention. The Judiciary has not budgeted for sound proofing the courts."

9. APPOINTMENT OF AN OMBUDSMAN

Mr. Bond:

- (i) Could the Hon. Minister inform this House how long the Republic of Guyana has been without an Ombudsman?
- (ii) What are the circumstances responsible for the non-appointment of an Ombudsman?
- (iii) Is the Hon. Minister taking any positive measures to remove those circumstances?
- (iv) If he is, what are the measures being employed by him to remove those circumstances?
- (v) If the Hon. Minister is not employing any measures to remove those circumstances, does he have a good and proper reason for his inaction?

Mr. Nandlall:

- (i) Since the retirement of Justice Sheik Mohamed in 2005, the Republic of Guyana has been without an Ombudsman.
- (ii) Article 191 (1) of the Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana sets out the procedure to be used in appointing the Ombudsman Article 191 (1)states:

"That the Ombudsman shall be appointed by the President acting after consultation with the leader of the opposition."
- (iii) His Excellency the President has held consultations with the Leader of the Opposition.
- (iv) Steps are actively being taken to fill this vacancy.

10. UNEMPLOYMENT AMONGST THE YOUTHS IN GUYANA

Ms. Selman: Could the Hon. Minister of Labour inform this House what analysis has been made by his Ministry of the special factors contributing to increasing unemployment amongst the youth population in Guyana with specific emphasis on rural dwellers?

Minister of Labour [Dr. Gopaul]: Over the years, this Ministry has continued to monitor the general unemployment situation and intervene/implement various programmes to assist in easing the unemployment situation as it relates to the various regions, age groups, differing abilities among others.

Some of the analyses undertaken are as follows:

- 1. ANNUAL OCCUPATIONAL WAGES ANALYSIS** - This annual survey is conducted to analyse salaries, wages and hours of work across regions, job categories, industries by gender, based on experience/training, academic achievement amongst others. Among its findings it seeks to identify factors responsible for general unemployment, for example low wages, in order to determine the relevant changes to policy and interventions required.
- 2. CHILD LABOUR SURVEY** - This survey is executed from time to time. The aim is in part to understand the nexus between the exploitation of child labour and its contribution to the unemployment situation among other things.
- 3. SKILLS SURVEY** - These are regularly conducted in order to determine which skills are becoming scarce or obsolete and plan training programmes to alleviate the relevant situations in these regards.

TYPES OF FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO UNEMPLOYMENT

During our various surveys, we have identified various factors which contribute to our general unemployment situation. Among these factors are:

- A. VOLUNTARY UNEMPLOYMENT** - whereby persons are unwilling to work for the prevailing wage rate or due to cultural factors, but prefer to live on remittances, etc.
- B. SEASONAL UNEMPLOYMENT** - this relates to, for example, agriculture and harvesting season, catering, etc.

- C. STRUCTURAL UNEMPLOYMENT** - arising from the changing pattern of demand leading to the flooding of the market and reduced demand for some products leading to some producers/vendors being unemployed.
- D. CASUAL UNEMPLOYMENT** - this relates to factors such as the wealth which affects work in industrial occupations in, for example, the construction fields, especially for those without other types of skills.
- E. CHRONIC UNEMPLOYMENT** - this relates to long term unemployment due to underutilisation of resources/raw material arising from globalisation, for example, some industries which produce for export.
- F. TECHNOLOGICAL UNEMPLOYMENT** - whereby improved technology led to reduced need for skills, for example, as in cement mixing, sugar industry, etc.
- G. DISGUISED UNEMPLOYMENT** - where persons work for payment in kind, or work in low skill jobs to prevent being unemployed.
- H. FRICTIONAL** - this is a temporary situation, where one might be suspended or on strike, etc.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE RURAL AREAS

However, unemployment relates to a situation whereby jobseekers are actively looking for work, but not finding same.

For the youths in the rural areas, we have factors such as:

1. **LACK OF REQUISITE EDUCATION, SKILL & EXPERIENCE** - resulting from youths dropping out of schools due to distance from school, less qualified teachers discouraging school attendance, to seek income generating activities to supplement family income. To this end, training is being conducted to correct the shortage of skills in mining industry. Also, to help reduce numbers of work permits being issued to alleviate shortage of skills in various areas.

2. **SEASONAL EMPLOYMENT** - this is evident in the agricultural industry. This Ministry conducts training programs to ease this problem.

3. **MOST OF THE BUSINESSES ARE BASED IN THE CITIES** - many businesses are moving sub-agencies to various regions.

4. **HIGH COST OF TRAVELLING TO GET TO WORK IN SOME RURAL AREAS** -

By and large, the Central Recruitment & Manpower Agency has reported a drastic reduction in applications from young persons seeking employment. We will continue to monitor the situation and intend to establish regional offices for the Central Recruitment and Manpower Agency with a view to capturing the attention of the unemployed young persons.

11. POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES TO REDUCE UNEMPLOYMENT IN GUYANA

Ms. Selman: Could the Hon. Minister of Labour say to this House what policies and programmes are being formulated to reduce unemployment in Guyana and the timeline for the implementation of those policies and programmes?

Dr. Gopaul: Before the execution of the National Training Project Youth Empowerment, the Board of Industrial Training looked at the labour market trend vacancies publicised, as well as discussions with employers, to secure training attachment for the trainees in the various regions. Information from the Statistical Unit also was an indication in developing programmes for example, the recent survey in the mining sector. In summation, the strategy was to train those skills that were in demand.

- A significant number of the out-of-school youths, who were unemployed, were due to the lack of the requisite competence demanded by employers.
- The excessive wage demands of a lot of youths were another factor, they prefer to speculate.

One of the measures to combat unemployment is the GOG expansion of the vocational training opportunities. This did not only target youths but also adults.

The National Training Project for Youth Empowerment now has a budget in excess of \$120 million to facilitate training for out-of-school and unemployed youths. The concept is that the skills acquired will make them more marketable or improve their job prospective. The NTPYE registered 1302 trainees in 2012. A total of 977 trainees graduated and another 184 would complete training in March, 2013.

There is also the Single Parent training project which registered a total of 408 persons for training in 2012. This programme received funding in the sum of \$25 million. Both programmes are executed across the various regions or rural areas.

Since the Government of Guyana cannot find jobs for everyone; hence these programmes have fashioned with modules in entrepreneurial training, so that the graduates can form themselves in groups and start their own small business. The Ministry has been engaging the Co-ops Officers in the regions to deliver discourse or discussions on co-operatives as well.

The table below will give an indication of the number of persons trained under the Board of Industrial Training sponsored programmes:

Apprenticeship

Year	Male	Female	Sub total
2008	48	2	50
2009	73	3	76
2010	51	0	51
2011	69	3	72
2012	62	2	64
Total over 5 years			249

Empowerment

National Training Project for Youth Empowerment (NTPYE)

Year	Male	Female	Sub total
2008	230	341	571
2009	449	694	1143
2010	912	1135	2047
2011	734	1261	1995
2012	447	855	1302
Total over 5 years			7058

Single Parent Training

Year	Male	Female	Sub total
2009	1	256	257
2010	1	185	186
2011	1	422	423
2012	2	406	408
Total over 5 years			1274

Answers were not provided for questions 12 and 13.

14. INFRASTRUCTURAL WORKS AT AMELIAS WARD

Ms. Kissoon: Could the Hon. Minister of Housing and Water inform this House why infrastructural works ceased in Phase 2 in Amelias Ward and Phase 3 has commenced in the same area?

Minister of Housing and Water [Mr. Ali]: Infrastructural works in the Amelias Ward, Phase 2 area, never ceased; the area is one of the selected schemes for upgrade of infrastructure under the GOG/IDB Second Low Income Settlement Programme and in this regard, the Central Housing and Planning Authority was required to prepare an Engineering Design Report for submission to

the Inter-American Development Bank, as part of the usual procurement process. A site visit was conducted by CHPA Engineers and Mr. Orin Gordon, the Chairman of the IMC Linden Town Council, for the roads to be selected for paving, in keeping with CHPA's participatory approach with the involvement of stakeholders. This information was incorporated into the design report and the report submitted to the Bank for its no objection.

As of Saturday, February 16, 2013, the tender for this project was published and is scheduled to be opened on Tuesday, March 19, 2013.

Works were given priority in the Phase 3 area in response to the demand for lots in Region #10. To date, the works in Phase 3 are approximately 90% completed. The main access roads are completed with asphaltic concrete surfaces and the tertiary roads are completed with crusher run and laterite/white sand surface.

As of Saturday, February 16, 2013, the tender for this project was published and is scheduled to be opened on Tuesday, March 19, 2013.

Works were given priority in the Phase 3 area in response to the demand for lots in Region 10. To date, the works in Phase 3 are approximately 90 per cent completed. The main access roads are completed with asphaltic concrete surfaces and the tertiary roads are completed with crusher run and laterite/white sand surface.

15. GUYANA-CHINA US\$130 MILLION LOAN AGREEMENT FOR THE CHEDDI JAGAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT EXPANSION

Mrs. Backer: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to lay in the National Assembly the Guyana-China US\$130 million loan agreement for the Cheddi Jagan International Airport expansion signed on or around the 31st October, 2012, between the Government of Guyana and the People's Republic of China?

Minister of Finance [Dr. Singh]: The loan agreement in question was tabled in the National Assembly by the Minister of Finance on 7th February, 2013.

16. GY\$998.0 MILLION ON ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION AGREEMENT

Mrs. Backer: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to lay in the National Assembly the GY\$998.0 million on Economic and Technical Co-operation Agreement signed on or around the 28th December, 2012 between the Government of Guyana and the People's Republic of China?

Dr. Singh: Such technical cooperation agreements are not routinely tabled in the National Assembly, unlike loan agreements which are tabled in accordance with statutory prescription. Nevertheless, the Minister of Finance has made available a copy of the agreement to the Deputy Speaker.

17. THREE CO-OPERATION AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA AND THE GOVERNMENT OF CUBA

Mrs. Backer: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to lay in the National Assembly the three Co-operation Agreements signed between the Government of Guyana and the Government of Cuba on or around the 19th October, 2012?

Minister of Foreign Affairs [Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett]: The Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs wishes to lay in the National Assembly the following two agreements, which were signed in Cuba on the 18th day of October, 2012 between the Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and the Government of the Republic of Cuba:

- (i) Sports Cooperation Agreement between the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and the National Institute of Sports, Physical Education and Recreation of the Republic of Cuba.
- (ii) Agreement of Cooperation between the Ministry of Health of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and the Ministry of Public Health of the Republic of Cuba.

The third Agreement concerns the Reciprocal Exemption of Visa Requirements for Holders of Diplomatic, Official and Service Passports.

**SPORTS COOPERATION
MINISTRY OF CULTURE,
COOPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA AND THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
SPORTS, PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND RECREATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF**



**AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE
YOUTH AND SPORTS OF THE
COOPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA AND THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
SPORTS, PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND RECREATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF**

CUBA

On the one party: The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, represented herein by Mrs. Carolyn Allison Rodrigues-Birkett, in her capacity of Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and International Cooperation.

On the other party: The National Institute of Sports, Physical Education and Recreation of the Republic of Cuba (INDER), represented herein by Christian Jimenez Molina, in his capacity of President.

Inspired by the desire to promote the bilateral relationships in the field of Sports and Physical Education and to strengthen the ties of cooperation and mutual understanding between both bodies based on the relations that forge our two countries, have decided to agree the following:

Article 1

The Parties shall work with the aim to foster, promote and strengthen their technical cooperation in fields of Physical Education and Sports, in accordance with the legislation in force in both countries.

Article 2

1. The Parties agree to contribute to the exchange of delegations, coaches, experts and specialists concerning Physical Education, Sports and its Sciences applied.
2. Each Party agrees to send to the other Party, where requested, Sports coaches to provide training for local athletes.
3. It is agreed that such coaches shall be provided under mutually agreeable terms in keeping with the Parties' joint aim of enhancing Sports in their respective countries.

Article 3

The Parties agree to promote the exchange of information, documents, studying and methodological materials, regarding Physical Education, Sports, and Technical Literature of each specialty.

Article 4

The Parties agree to foster the participation of professors and specialists in seminars' courses and scientific lectures, held in both countries having as their main theme the Physical Culture and Sports.

Article 5

The Parties shall contribute to increase the level of sports in their respective countries through the development of activities such as:

- Program Organization;
- Sports Facilities and equipment;
- Formation and Upgrading of Coaches and Specialists;
- Academic exchange;
- Sports Medicine;
- Sports for All;
- Antidoping Control;
- Sports Management;
- Computing applied to Sports;

As well as other activities that the Parties agree upon.

Article 6

To exchange every year proposals for sports meeting based on the interest of each country's National Sports Federation.

The financial and participation terms for each case shall be arranged between the National Sports Federations concerned.

Article 7

As for the transfer of Coaches and Specialists as technical advisers, the organization of training camps and upgrading courses; the Cuban party shall be officially represented by CUBADEPORTES S. A.

Article 8

Activities organized with bodies or institutions of both countries that are outside of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and the National Institute of Sports, Physical Education and Recreation of the Republic of Cuba are not included in the framework of this Agreement.

Article 9

The Agreement shall come into effect as of the date of signature and shall be in force for five (5) years although it can be automatically extended for subsequent five (5) year terms, unless one of the Parties states, in writing, its intention to amend or terminate it at least ninety (90) days prior to its expiry date.

Any difference derived from the interpretation or enforcement of this agreement shall be solved by the parties through mutual agreement.

The present Agreement has been written in two (2) originals, in Spanish and English, respectively, with identical legal value.

Issued on the 18 days of October, 2012.

On behalf of the Ministry of Foreign

On behalf of the National Institute of Sport.

Affairs Foreign Trade and International

Physical Education and Recreation of

Cooperation of the Cooperative

the Republic of Cuba

Republic of Guyana

Mrs. Carolyn Allison Rodrigues- Birkett

Christian Jimenez Monlina

Minister

President



AGREEMENT OF COOPERATION BETWEEN

THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH OF THE COOPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

AND

THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA

OF THE FIRST PARTY: The Ministry of Public Health of the Republic of Cuba, represented for this purpose by Dr. Roberto Morales Ojeda, in his capacity as Minister of Public Health of the Republic of Cuba.

OF THE SECOND PARTY: The Ministry of Health of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, represented for this purpose by Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, in her capacity as Minister of Foreign Affairs.

BOTH PARTIES DECIDING to strengthen the solidarity and friendship between their peoples,

AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING:

FIRST: The Ministry of Public Health of the Republic of Cuba shall send a Medical Brigade with two types of cooperation to the Cooperative Republic of Guyana:

Comprehensive Health Programme and Operation Miracle, both with compensation for expenses, made up of collaborators in various specialties, who shall provide support for the health system at the primary and secondary care levels, participating in teaching activities (Internship Rotation), as well as in other actions that should be considered convenient in order to benefit the quality of medical care.

SECOND: The Ministry of Public Health of Cuba shall select a full-time Head of the Mission ahead of time, who shall work in close coordination and harmony with the Embassy of the Republic of Cuba to coordinate all actions deriving from this collaboration and the other health programmes that should be set up.

THIRD: Cuban health cooperators will remain in Cooperative Republic of Guyana during two (2) years.

FOURTH: The **Ministry of Public Health** of the Republic of Cuba shall assume the following responsibilities:

- Contributing specialists and qualified technical personnel required for the functioning of the hospitals which, along with the backing of Guyanese doctors educated in Cuba, shall be providing medical care for patients.
- Ensuring that the aforementioned specialists and technical personnel should be registered to practice in the Republic of Cuba and be suitable for the provision of services where they are to be located, bringing the necessary documentation for their registration in the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.
- Ensuring sending additional collaborators whenever it becomes necessary to replace any collaborator for any reason.
- Assuming payment of air fares and other moving expenses should any collaborator have incurred in any form of misconduct that, because of its magnitude, is considered to require repatriation.
- Providing consumables and medicines needed for the treatment of cataracts and pterigium.

FIVETH: The Ministry of Health of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana shall assume the following responsibilities:

- Providing the facilities necessary for providing medical care, ensuring sustainability of the basic services that should be required and providing the non-specialized human resources needed for its functioning.
- Paying international air fares at the start, for holidays and at the end of the mission for every collaborator, from the Republic of Cuba to the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, and vice versa.
- Assuming the expenses and formalities for obtaining visas for entry, stay and departure from the country, those required in transit countries and all other documents, permits, travel taxes and obligations set by law for foreign collaborators.
- Assuming the costs incurred by the Medical Brigade in the course of performing, ensuring, having function and control of its activity.

- Ensuring that in the process relief staffing, new collaborators should arrive one *week* prior to the end of the period when the previous group ends their mission in order to ensure a proper transferral of service.
- Guaranteeing, together with the pertinent institutions, all types of assurances that a suitable education-teaching process will be undertaken.
- Carrying out actives for the departure of collaborators along with the Cuban Medical Brigade heads, and deliver acknowledgement with the signing of Guyanese authorities.
- Guaranteeing that patients have access to Hospital Services for treatment of cataracts, pterigium and refractive and retina conditions.
- Evaluating the provision of these services by the Hospital and determining, along with the Cuban Party, inclusion of other additional ophthalmologic conditions. Nevertheless, the Parties may conduct surveys in all regions of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana depending upon the conditions and needs that should present.
- Guaranteeing consumables, medicines, equipment and spare parts for services of retina and refractive surgery.
- Ensuring that importing and exporting equipment placed at the disposition of the Centre should be free of customs duties or other similar duties or taxes.

SIXTH: This Agreement shall be executed in close cooperation and mutual agreement between the Parties. Communications shall be carried out through the Ministry of Health of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and the Embassy of the Republic of Cuba in that country.

SEVENTH: Any difficulty associated with the performance of Cuban professionals and technicians during the time they are providing medical services must be dealt with directly between the Parties through the Head of the Cuban Medical Mission. A similar procedure shall be followed if for any reason a collaborator should have to provide a statement before a court. Controversies arising from interpretation or application of this Agreement shall be resolved in an amicable fashion between the Parties via diplomatic channels.

- Assuming payment of 20 kg. excess baggage charges for each collaborator at the end of their

mission.

- Providing general information to new arrivals about the system of health in the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.
- Guaranteeing lodging that is suitably furnished and has all the necessary domestic commodities, assuming the costs of electricity, water, gas, and local telephone lines.
- Guaranteeing free medical and dental care to deal with acute events and infections including the necessary medicines and diagnostic means to be obtained in the private sector.
- Paying for lodging, meals and transport when, for reasons related to the provision of service, the collaborator has to travel to a location different from the one where he/she resides.
- Guaranteeing transportation that permits travel from residences to work sites, and vice versa, at the start and end of each working day.
- Guaranteeing that collaborators under this Contract are only employed in the Public Health Sector, not being employed in any activity other than that agreed to by the Parties, during or after the period of service covered by this Agreement.
- Delivering to each collaborator, as a stipend, the amount of 700.00 USD or its equivalent in national currency. New arrivals shall be delivered an advance payment, and the total shall be adjusted the following month.
- Assuming the expenses for health and funeral services in the event of the death of any collaborator, along with those of documentation and international transportation for the body and an accompanying person back to the Republic of Cuba.
- Assuming the costs caused by the moving of collaborators back to the Republic of Cuba whenever their evacuation should be necessary as a result of diseases or serious accidents, as long as it can be shown that conditions required for medical care and recovery for the collaborators do not exist in the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.
- Guaranteeing conditions for living, working and transportation (including maintenance, repairs and fuel) for the Person In Charge of the Brigade, so that they may adequately

perform their functions.

- **EIGHTH:** This Agreement may be amended by mutual consent of the Parties, in **respective amendments**. Amendments shall enter into validity on the date the Parties should communicate compliance with requirements demanded by their respective national laws.
- **NINTH:** This Agreement shall enter into validity on the date of its signing and shall remain valid for a term of 3 years; it can be automatically prolonged.
- **TENTH:** Termination of the Agreement can be carried out by mutual agreement of the parties. Also, either of the parties may terminate this agreement by written notice via diplomatic channels; this shall take effect sixty (60) days after the date of the aforementioned notice and shall not affect the development of the programmes and activities that are in the course of being executed.
- **ELEVENTH:** Agreements and provisions that are contrary to those provided in this document are considered to be null and void.
- Signed at La Habana city, on the 19th of October of 2012, in four copies, two in the Spanish language and two in the English language, with both versions being equally authentic. In the event of any differences in the interpretation of this Agreement, the version in the English language will prevail.

**Ministry of Health of the Cooperative
Republic of Guyana.**

Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett

**Ministry of Health of the Republic
of Cuba.**

Dr. Roberto T. Morales Ojeda

18. AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES

Mrs. Backer: Will the Hon. Minister be kind enough to present to the National Assembly the two below stated Agreements signed between the Government of Guyana and the Government of the United States of America on or around the 1st day of February, 2013, and if so, when?

- (i) The Caribbean Basin Security Initiative Agreement; and
- (ii) The Cooperative Sensor Information Integration Agreement.

Minister of Foreign Affairs [Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett]: Two Agreements were signed between the Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and the Government of the United States of America on the 1st February, 2013 as follows:

- (i) Modification/Amendment two to the Letter of Agreement of Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement of April 8, 2011; and
- (ii) Coordinating Arrangement between the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and the U.S. Government concerning the Cooperative Sensor and Information Integration Program.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs hereby presented the two Agreements to the National Assembly.

MODIFICATION/AMENDMENT TWO TO THE LETTER OF AGREEMENT ON NARCOTICS CONTROL AND LAW ENFORCEMENT OF APRIL 8, 2011 BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

I. GENERAL

The Government of the United States of America ("United States") and the Government of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana ("Guyana"), each individually, a "Party" or collectively, the "Parties," jointly agree to modify and amend the Letter of Agreement (LOA) between the U.S. government and the Government of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana signed April 8, 2011, (the "Agreement") in the following respect:

Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption: The U.S. government will provide funds in the amount of \$350,000 USD for new projects designed to assist the Co-operative

Republic of Guyana to strengthen its justice sector.

Law Enforcement Professionalization Support: The U.S. government will add additional in the amount of \$150,000 USD to the projects described in the letter of agreement dated April 8, 2011 and its subsequent amendments. In addition, the U.S. government will add \$50,000 USD for a new "**Borders and Ports**" project.

Strengthening Counternarcotics Control Capabilities: The U.S. government will add additional resources in the amount of \$200,000 USD to the projects described in the letter of agreement dated April 8, 2011 and its subsequent amendments. In addition, the U.S. Government will add \$50,000 USD for a new "**Vetted Units**" project.

Money Laundering/Financial Crimes: The U.S. government will add additional resources in the amount of \$60,000 USD to the projects described in the letter of agreement dated April 8, 2011 and its subsequent amendments.

The new project descriptions and project performance goals are described in Sections II and III below. This amendment to the LOA dated April 8, 2011 does not alter the performance measurements applicable to projects enumerated under that LOA or its subsequent amendments. All other obligations, terms, and conditions contained in the letter of agreement dated April 8, 2011 and its subsequent amendments shall remain applicable and in full force and effect. Provision of U.S. government funding beyond the current fiscal year is conditioned upon satisfactory progress toward project goals and the availability of funds authorized and appropriated on a year-to-year basis by the U.S. Congress and approved by the U.S. Department or State.

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

This amendment **adds** the following new projects:

Project Name: Law Enforcement Professionalization Support - Borders and Ports

Funding: \$50,000

This project aims to enhance security at Guyana's ports of entry (air, water, and land) by providing training, equipment, and technical assistance to Guyana's law enforcement agencies.

Training will be provided in areas such as immigration procedures, detection of fraudulent documents, identification and handling of suspicious persons, and other areas targeting the illegal smuggling of aliens, narcotics, and other illicit goods across the borders, ports and airports of Guyana.

The planned life of this project is two years.

Project Name: Strengthening Counternarcotics Control Capabilities - Vetted Units

Funding: \$50,000

Vetted Units are groups of host country officials who are polygraphed, trained, equipped and partnered with U.S. law enforcement agencies. These units conduct complex multinational investigations and will work as a critical component in Guyana's efforts to interdict the trafficking of narcotics and combat transnational crime. Project funds will be used to support vetting procedures for members of the Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit (CANU) to develop a vetted unit to work in partnership with U.S. law enforcement agencies and in accordance with the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs' policies and procedures.

The planned life of this project is two years.

Project Name: Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption -Prisons

Funding: \$150,000

This project aims to expand Guyana's capabilities to operate prisons and correctional centers that are safe, secure, fair, and humane; and conform to internationally accepted standards and norms. It will enhance the knowledge, skills and abilities of corrections officials to appropriately and effectively manage a sustainable, multi-gender, multi-custody offender population so that the correctional system contributes to public safety, positively impacts efforts to combat transitional crime, and provides prisoners with opportunities for reform and rehabilitation. Funds for this program will provide training and mentoring of corrections officials at all levels of operations and provide them with exposure to different correctional methodologies.

The planned life of this project is three years.

Project Name: Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption - Justice Reform

Funding: \$50,000

This project is designed to strengthen the Government of Guyana's judicial sector ability to address narcotics trafficking and transitional crime. Training will be provided in such areas as judicial administration, case management, case filing systems, anti-corruption, and transparency and accountability of judicial sector institutions. Additionally, projects may support training in investigation and prosecution of complex financial crimes, money laundering, and asset forfeiture. Funds will build the capacity of police, judicial investigators, and prosecutors to address cases related to narcotics and transnational crime.

The planned life of the Justice Reform project is five years.

Project Name: Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption - Forensics

Funding: \$150,000

The Forensics project is designed to assist in building the capacity of the Government of Guyana to collect, analyze, and present in a legal proceeding, forensic evidence to enhance criminal investigation and prosecution. Forensics activities will include targeted technical assistance, training, and equipment for crime scene investigation and evidence collection. The Forensics project will also enhance the function of the forensics laboratory and work with the judicial system to utilize forensic evidence appropriately.

The planned life of this project is two years.

III. PROJECT PERFORMANCE GOALS AND ACHIEVEMENT VERIFICATION

The Parties agree that the purpose of performance goals and measurements of effectiveness is to demonstrate to their respective citizenry that resources committed to the cooperative efforts described in this amended Letter of Agreement are being effectively utilized. To that end, they agree to establish appropriate targets and measures for the projects covered in this amended Letter of Agreement as follows:

Law Enforcement Professionalization Support - Borders and Ports

The long term goal of this project is to assist the Co-operative Republic of Guyana to detect

contraband smuggling and migration offenses and interdict illicit goods. Progress toward achievement of the project goal will be measured in terms of the outcomes noted below. Methods of verification of project achievement include observation by personnel of the two cooperating governments and project implementers. Government of Guyana stakeholders agree to provide annual statistical data starting with calendar year 2012 arrests, detainments, and seizures in order to determine a baseline to measure against. Government stakeholders agree to provide this same data and other statistics as needed for the remaining years of the project in order to monitor performance and success of project.

Outcome 1: The number of individuals with criminal records or open investigations identified in screens and detained at Guyana's borders and ports increases by 10% over calendar year 2012 baseline by the end of the project.

Outcome 2: The number of individuals found with contraband items, to include narcotics, at Guyana's borders and ports increases by 10% over calendar year 2012 baseline by the end of the project.

Outcome 3: 50 immigration officials stationed at border locations are trained to identify fraudulent documents by the end of the first year of the project and surveys and reviews of training show the officials are putting the training to use throughout the project life with an increase in false document detection.

Outcome 4: Watch-list database (including data from various national, regional and international sources) is being used to screen all arriving travelers and applicants by the end of project life (two years).

Strengthening Counternarcotics Control Capabilities - Vetted Units

The long term goal of this project is to ensure the quality and integrity of the personnel assigned to the Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit (CANU) and to strengthen the investigative partnership between CANU and U.S. law enforcement agencies. Progress toward achievement of the project goal will be measured in terms of the outcomes noted below. Methods of verification of project achievement include observation by personnel of the two cooperating

governments and project implementers. Government of Guyana stakeholders agree to provide statistical data on seizures of contraband for the next five years in order to monitor performance and success of project.

Outcome 1: A functioning CANU with screened employees: All currently employed members of CANU will be subject to a series of screening requirements (e.g., drug testing, financial disclosures, polygraph testing) within year one of the project start date. Appropriate policies will be developed by CANU to address members that do not meet screening requirements. By the end of the project period (two years), CANU will house a vetted unit, as defined by Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement procedures and guidelines, and will work in full partnership with 13.8. law enforcement agencies.

Outcome 2: The seizures of contraband shipments from suspected criminal organizations will increase over the next five years. In the first nine months of calendar year 2012, CANU seized 92.25 kg of cocaine and 109.5 kg of cannabis. Yearly goals for the next five years of the program would be as follows (following an approximate 10% increase in seizures each year):

Year 1/2013	130 cocaine/165 marijuana (kg)
Year 2/2014	145 /180 (kg)
Year 3/2015	160 /200 (kg)
Year 4/2016	175 /220 (kg)
Year 5/2017	190 /240 (kg)

Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption - Prisons

The long term goal of this project is to strengthen the management and security of Guyana's prison system and increase the safety of prison staff by improving legal and effective correctional practices that include, but are not limited to, prisoner intake and classification, contraband control, and direct inmate supervision by prison staff. Progress toward achievement of the project goal will be measured in terms of the outcomes noted below. Methods of verification of project achievement include observation by personnel of the two cooperating governments and project implementers. In order to develop accurate baseline data information

to evaluate the performance of this project, the Government of Guyana agrees to provide official incarceration, trial and release data related to the number of inmates; or other official data referred to below. In addition, the U.S. government will conduct a comprehensive prisons assessment in collaboration with the Government of Guyana.

Outcome 1: The number of escapes from prisons and detention facilities will be reduced by 10% from the established calendar year 2012 baseline.

Outcome 2: The number of complaints registered by an ombudsman or outside human rights organizations about misconduct by prison officials will be reduced by 10% from calendar year 2012 baseline.

Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption - Justice Reform

The long term goal of this project is to have Guyana's justice sector, police force (GPF) and CANU demonstrating a coordinated ability to address complex narcotics trafficking crimes, particularly those relating to organized crime, corruption, and money laundering/financial crimes. Progress toward achievement of the project goal will be measured in terms of the outcomes noted below. Methods of verification of project achievement include observation by personnel of the two cooperating governments and project implementers. Government of Guyana stakeholders agree to provide statistical data related to arrests, convictions of drug law violators, asset forfeitures, extraditions, mutual legal assistance requests fulfilled, and legal reforms. The U.S. government will conduct a justice reform assessment and develop a work plan in collaboration with the Government of Guyana in order to guide future justice reform collaboration.

Outcome 1: Authorities will initiate the prosecution of at least one new anti-money laundering case in each of the five years of the Justice Reform program. This will be an increase over the FY12 baseline of zero (0) cases.

Outcome 2: The number of narcotics cases prosecuted will increase by 5% each year of the project over the 2012 calendar year baseline. The Public Prosecutors office, GPF and CANU agree to provide the U.S. government with statistics of narcotics prosecutions in order to establish the baseline.

Outcome 3: The proportion of narcotics convictions, in relation to narcotics prosecutions, will increase by 5% over the 2012 baseline each year of the project. The Public Prosecutors office, GPF, and CANU agree to provide the U.S. government with statistics on narcotics prosecutions in order to establish the baseline and measure results.

Outcome 4: Within five years, the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) determines Guyana to be 'Compliant' on, at minimum, 25% (4 out of 16) of CFATF's key recommendations.

Outcome 5: Interagency standard operating procedures for GPF, CANU, and public prosecutors are established for preparing evidence based on investigating Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) intelligence.

Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption - Forensics

The long term goal of this project is to increase the use of forensic evidence for prosecution and investigations by: increasing the capacity of forensics experts to produce reliable physical evidence and coordinate with law enforcement and other authorities, increasing the capacity of police to protect the integrity of physical evidence, and increasing the capacity of prosecutors • and judges to present and evaluate forensic evidence, respectively. Progress toward achievement of the project goal will be measured in terms of the outcomes noted below. Methods of verification of project achievement include observation by personnel of the two cooperating governments and project implementers. The Government of Guyana will provide data on the number of cases initiated using forensic evidence in calendar year 2012 and their resolutions by law enforcement and prosecutors in order to develop a baseline for measuring the outcomes below.

Outcome I: The number of cases completed that utilize forensic evidence increase by 5% over the overall number of cases completed over the calendar year 2012 baseline. ("Completed" refers to all cases opened, investigated, and closed regardless of disposition.)

Outcome 2: The number of cases utilizing forensic evidence that result in successful prosecutions increase by 5% over the calendar year 2012 baseline.

Outcome 3: Policy and procedures for the GPF's forensic unit are reviewed and updated, as necessary, to meet internationally accepted norms and standards.

IV. EVALUATION PLAN

Representatives of the Government of the United States and the Co-operative Republic of Guyana will meet and discuss the results of these programs as part of their ongoing dialogue related to Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) projects at least annually. A joint report of such meetings will be prepared to summarize the results of these evaluations. Progress will be evaluated in accordance with the measurements of success described above. Information to be considered in conducting these evaluations will include qualitative and quantitative indicators. These evaluations are in addition to the ongoing monitoring of the programs and activities conducted by the relevant personnel of both governments.

DONE at Georgetown, Guyana, in duplicate this **1st** day of **February, 2013**.

For the Co-operative Republic of
Guyana

For the Government of the United States of
America.

The Honorable Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett
Minister of Foreign Affairs

D. Brent Hardt
Ambassador.



COORDINATING ARRANGEMENT BETWEEN THE COOPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA AND THE U.S. GOVERNMENT CONCERNING THE CO-OPERATIVE

SENSOR AND INFORMATION INTEGRATION PROGRAM

The Co-operative Republic of Guyana and the U.S Government, collectively referred to herein as the “Participants” or “Participant” singularly, desiring to increase regional cooperation and domain awareness have reached the following understandings:

Section 1: Purpose

This Coordinating Arrangement is intended to enable the Participants to share information through the Cooperative Sensor and Information Integration System. The Cooperative Sensor and Information Integration System is an internet-based, information-sharing network that allows the Participants to fuse data on airborne, maritime, and ground tracks in order to develop a common operating picture. The fused data is shared as part of a network designed to support multiple mission areas and objectives, such as counter-illicit trafficking, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, maritime and flight safety, and search and rescue. This Coordinating Arrangement does not create any rights or benefits, substantive or procedural, against the Participants, their agencies, personnel, or any other person. Moreover, this Coordinating Arrangement does not impose any legally binding requirements on the Participants.

This Coordinating Arrangement does not alter the Participants’ responsibilities under the Aerial Interception Assistance Agreement (AIAA), effected by an exchange of notes in Guyana on December 30, 2011 and December 31, 2012, or any other applicable international agreements. In accordance with their obligations under the AIAA, participating nations are not to use information exchanged pursuant to this Coordinating Arrangement to damage, destroy, disable or threaten civil aircraft in service.

Section 2: Radar and Sensor Data Access and Use

The Participants are to use the Cooperative Sensor Information and Integration system to access and share radar and sensor data with each other and other regional partners. The Participants, through the selective sharing application, are to have the ability to select the data the Participants desire to share; however, the Participants' intent is to maximize regional sharing.

Each Participant is not to share radar and sensor data originating from the other participant with other countries other than data the other Participant selected expressly for sharing with other countries. All data sharing is to be done in accordance with the provisions of the AIAA. This Coordinating Arrangement does not limit a Participant's ability to share its own radar and sensor data with other countries through other means.

To manage the Cooperative Sensor Information and Integration system effectively, the U.S. Government is to have unrestricted access to all data developed through the Cooperative Sensor Information and Integration system.

The Participants are not to charge each other or regional partners for use of the data.

Section 3: Radar and Sensor Integration

To increase domain awareness, the Participants may, as mutually approved, integrate Guyana's radars and other sensors into the Cooperative Sensor Information and Integration system.

Section 4: Radar and Sensor Integration Equipment

If radar and other sensors are integrated into the Cooperative Sensor Information and Integration system, the U.S. Government may install and use in Guyana integration equipment, networking equipment, or both for the purpose of sharing data. The U.S. Government understands that the installed integration or network equipment is not to affect Guyana's radar and sensor systems.

The Co-operative Republic of Guyana is to provide the U.S. Government with adequate facilities to install the integration or networking equipment; access to commercial electrical power; and access to the integration or networking equipment for maintenance purposes. In addition, the Co-operative Republic of Guyana is to continue to be responsible for the operation and maintenance of its radars and sensors.

Section 5: Radar and Sensor integration Equipment Ownership

The U.S. Government is to retain ownership of all U.S. Government property. Guyana is not to alter or use software provided by the U.S. Government for any purpose not described in this Coordinating Arrangement.

Section 6: Funding

Each Participant is responsible for funding its own expenses under this Coordinating Arrangement, including expenses related to the installation, operation, and maintenance of property owned by that Participant and expenses related to the integration and transmission (internet service) of radar and sensor data for its own use.

The Participants' financial contributions under this Coordinating Arrangement are subject to the availability of authorized and appropriated funds for these purposes in accordance with the respective national laws of the Participants. Nothing in this Coordinating Arrangement should be construed as the actual obligation, commitment, or the creation of a requirement for the obligation or commitment, of appropriated funds by the U.S. Government or any of its agents.

Section 7: Modification

This Coordinating Arrangement may be modified by the mutual consent of the Participants. The details of any such modification should be memorialized in writing and signed by both Participants.

Section 8: Commencement

This Coordinating Arrangement is to be effective on the date of the last signature.

Section 9: Duration

This Coordinating Arrangement is intended to remain in effect for a period of ten (10) years. Either Participant may end the Coordinating Arrangement, but should endeavor to provide the other Participant with a ninety-day written notice of its intent to do so. This Coordinating Arrangement may be extended by mutual consent of the Participants.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the undersigned, being duly authorized by their respective Governments, have signed this document.

DONE at Georgetown, Guyana, this 1st day of February, 2013, in four originals, by:

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF

THE CO-OPERATIVE
REPUBLIC OF GUYANA:

THE UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA:

Hon. Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett
Minister of Foreign Affairs

D. Brent Hardt
Ambassador

19. TELEVISION CHANNELS AND RADIO FREQUENCIES IN GUYANA

Mrs. Hughes:

- (i) Can the Hon. Prime Minister say which channels and radio frequencies have been allocated for television and radio broadcast in Guyana?
- (ii) Can the Hon. Prime Minister provide the names of the Individuals, Companies including their Directors, or Entities that have been allocated or are using each allocated frequency/channel and the numeric frequency/channel assigned from 1992 to 2012?
- (iii) Can the Hon. Prime Minister also state the date of granting of the licences for each of the frequencies/channels assigned?
- (iv) Can the Hon. Prime Minister say which frequencies are currently available for television and radio broadcast?

Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs [Mr. Hinds]:

Background

Prior to and during 1992, licensing of TV broadcasting stations was not done in a very structured manner. While some broadcasters were granted licences, by the then Minister, to broadcast (Vieira Communications Ltd., Rex Mc Kay, Guyana Television Corporation, H.G.P. Television & Sound Studios, Noel Blackman, Stardust Ltd), others simply made a payment of forty

thousand dollars to the General Post Office, for and commenced broadcasting on what we think was a misapplication of the Broadcasting Receiving Set Licence, issued under the Post and Telegraph Act Chapter 47:01. This latter approach occurred during 1992 and sometime after.

There was later acknowledgement and receipt of licence fees by the NFMU.

Records of when what frequency was actually assigned in the period 1992-2001, just prior to when the television broadcasting sector was regularised, may not have been properly maintained. As such, accurate dates may not be possible. However, from 2001 onwards, records are more reflective of what transpired.

One or two TV stations in the interior have not been captured in previous exercises. These will be addressed in the current new dispensation as set out by the Broadcasting Act 2011. In daily use the words allocation and assignment are used interchangeably, but in the language of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), they have specific meanings as set out below:

allocation (of a frequency band): Entry in the Table of Frequency Allocations of a given frequency band for the purpose of its use by one or more terrestrial or space *radiocommunication services* or the *radio astronomy service* under specified conditions. This term shall also be applied to the frequency band concerned.

Frequency *allocations* are reviewed internationally at ITU World Radio Conferences every three to four years. Allocations for frequency bands are synchronised either globally or regionally. Guyana is part of Region two, the Americas Region. At the national level, frequency allocations are expected to be synchronised as much as possible with the regional allocations. Any departure from the regional allocations would not enjoy protection if any interference occurs with another country.

assignment (of a radio frequency or radio frequency channel): Authorisation given by an administration for a radio *station* to use a radio frequency or radio frequency channel under specified conditions. Radio is a general term applied to the use of radio waves (electromagnetic waves of frequencies arbitrarily lower than 3000 GHz, propagated in space without artificial guide) and includes sound and television broadcasts.

According to the Broadcasting Act 2011, broadcasting has the meaning as set out below:

broadcasting means the transmission of any programme whether or not encrypted and whether or not actually received, by wired or wireless medium or technology for reception by all or part of the general public, but does not include telecommunications.

This does not include point to point links (link), two-way radio and other transmissions.

Regarding the principals of the companies that have been granted permission to broadcast, the Deeds Registry would have the most accurate information.

Licensing in the broadcasting sector in Guyana is in a state of transition. This is a direct result of the Broadcasting Act 2011 becoming effective on August 28, 2012. Applications for licences to Broadcast (sound and television) are currently being accepted for processing by the Guyana National Broadcasting Authority (GNBA).

Given that this exercise is still taking place, the answers to questions (ii) and (iii) are subject to change.

It is expected that information pertaining to licences granted by the GNBA would be published.

- (i) While the frequency bands identified in Table 1 below have been allocated for broadcasting services, some of them have also been allocated for other services on a primary basis, such as fixed and mobile. As such, all of the bands would not be used exclusively for the broadcasting services. Additionally, some of the frequencies within a band may not be used for broadcasting services. Given that Guyana is a user (rather than a manufacturer) of technology, usage of frequencies are also informed by global and regional trends.

Table 1

Frequency Bands Allocated for Broadcasting Services (sound and television)
525 – 1,705 kHz
2,300 – 2,495 kHz

3,200 – 3,400 kHz
4,750 – 4,995 kHz
5,005 – 5,060 kHz
5,900 – 6,200 kHz
7,300 – 7,400 kHz
9,400 - 9,900 kHz
11,600 – 12,100 kHz
13,570 – 13,870 kHz
15,100 – 15,800 kHz
17,480 – 17,900 kHz
18,900 – 19,020 kHz
21,450 – 21,850 kHz
25,670 – 26,100 kHz
58 - 72 MHz
76 - 88 MHz
88 – 108 MHz
174-216 MHz
470 – 608 MHz
614 – 698 MHz
698 – 806 MHz

806 – 890 MHz
1 452-1 492 MHz
12.2-12.7 GHz
40.5 – 42.5 GHz
74-76 Hz

(ii) & (iii)

List of persons/entities granted permission to broadcast television signals

Name of Broadcaster	Broadcasting Channel(s) assigned up to Dec. 31, 2012	Date first permission was granted to Broadcast	Location of Main Broadcasting Transmitter
Television Guyana Inc. Contact person Dr. Ranjisinghi Ramroop (Formerly Vieira Communications Ltd.)	Cable 'O' (28), 12, 25 (link), 35 (link)	Prior to 1992	Georgetown
National Communications Network Inc. (Formerly Guyana Television Broadcasting Company)	11 (replaced ch. 10 which was assigned earlier) 27 (replaced ch. 29 identified earlier), 8,13,15,21,25,50 (link), 40 (link)	Prior to 1992	Georgetown
Rex Mc Kay	7, 38/cable 89 (replaced ch. 6 which was assigned earlier)	Prior to 1992	Providence, EBD
Blackman & Sons, Inc. Contact person Mrs. Eve Blackman.	9	August 18, 1992	Georgetown

(Formerly Noel Blackman)			
STVS 4/21 Contact person Mr. Richard Sanchara (Formerly Stardust Ltd. F. Sanchara)	4, 21/cable 72 (Licence for Channel 4 has since been revoked)	September 1992	Georgetown
Mohamed Yussuf Ghanie (Tarzie) – TTS (Formerly Neville Alert)	5	September 20, 1992	Bartica
HGP TV – Omar Farouk Contact person Nygel Fraser (Formerly H.G.P. Television & Sound Studios)	16/cable 67, 23/cable 74 (secondary broadcast)	October 1, 1992	Beterverwagting, ECD
Chandranarine Sharma / Savitree Singh	6 (replaced channel 12 in 1998)	Commenced broadcasting in 1992 by paying \$40k to the GPO. Was Regularised in 1993	Georgetown
Rambarran Broadcasting Systems Ltd. Contact person Mr. Wilfred Rambarran	13	Commenced broadcasting in 1992 by paying \$40k to the GPO on June 17, 1992. NFMU invoice dated December 04, 1992	Georgetown
Rocliffe Christie	10, 17, 37(Link)	1993	New Amsterdam
Tony Rambarran	8	1994	New Amsterdam
21st Century Communications Ltd. – MBC.	42/cable 93	Sometime between 1993 and 1996	Georgetown

Contact person Ms. Narmala Shewcharan			
Godfrey E. Washington	2	Commenced broadcasting on April 06, 1996. Was regularised sometime between 1996 and 1999	Georgetown
Countryside TV/David Subnauth (Formerly Dr. Roy W. Ibbott)	19	October 1997	Corentyne, Berbice
Multi Technology Vision (MTV). Contact person Ms. Kaminie Persaud	14/cable 65	Sometime between 1997 and March 1999	Eccles, EBD
K. A. Juman Yassin / Ahamad Rahaman	46/cable 102	August 1997	Georgetown
Brahma Prasad / Chandra Narine	5, 18/cable 69, 40 (link)	December 12, 1997	Georgetown
Alfro Alphonso	8	January 1, 1999	Charity, Essequibo
(Ministry of Education) Guyana Learning Channel. Contact person Dr. Seeta Shaw-Roth	3, 5, 10, 24/cable 75, 29/cable 80 5	March 2011	Georgetown. Other locations include: New Amsterdam, Benab, Orealla, Linden, Bartica, Kwakwani, Mahdia, Annai, Aishalton, Lethem, Mabaruma, Port Kaituma

Ali's Broadcasting Contact person Mr. Raymond Ali	2.5 GHz band	1997	Tain, Berbice
E-Networks Inc. Contact person Mr. Vishok Persaud	2.5 GHz band	December 2010	Georgetown
Quark Communications Inc. Contact person Mr. Brian Yong	2.5 GHz band	December 2010	Versailles, WBD

List of persons/entities granted permission to broadcast television signals via cable

Name of broadcaster	Date first permission was granted to broadcast	Main area of operation
Atlantic Cable Network Contact person Michael Bess	2001 for a limited area (4 villages only). This was expanded to several other villages in 2007	East Bank Demerara
Infinity Telecommunications Inc. Contact person Mr. Bryan Copeland	2007	Wismar/Linden
Linden Cable Network Contact person Mr. Gavin Bovell	2007	McKenzie/Wismar (not currently in operation. We understand that the network is being acquired by Infinity Telecommunications Inc.)
Bartica Communications Network Contact person Mr. Pierre Wallace	2007	Bartica

Carib Atlantic Cable Network. Contact person Mr. Khakan Ramzan	2007	Mahaicony
E3 Communications. Contact person Mr. Steve Ramsuchit	2007	Corriverton

List of persons/entities granted permission to broadcast sound signals

Name	Frequencies (MHz) Assigned / identified up to December 31, 2012	Date permission was first granted to broadcast	Location of Main Broadcasting Transmitter (All transmitters have not been established/installed as yet)
National Communications Network Inc. (Formerly Guyana Broadcasting Corporation) Contact person Mr. Michael Gordon	97.1, 98.1, 100.1, 102.5, 106.5 (100, 102 and 106 were replaced). (560, 700, 760, 3290, 5950) kHz	Prior to 1992	Georgetown
Radio Guyana Inc. Contact person Dr. Ranjisinghi Ramroop	89.3, 89.5, 89.7, 106.9, 107.3	November 2011	Georgetown
Telcor & Cultural Broadcasting Inc. Contact person Mr. Omar Lochan	89.7, 90.1, 91.5, 104.9, 103.3,	November 2011	Georgetown
NTN Radio Contact person Mr. Anand Persaud	89.1	November 2011	Georgetown
New Guyana Co. Ltd. Contact person Mr.	91.1, 90.7, 90.5, 105.9,	November 2011	Georgetown

Dharamkumar Seeraj	105.3		
Rudolph Grant	92.1	November 2011	Georgetown
Wireless Connections Contact person Mr. Maxwell Thom	93.1	November 2011	Georgetown
Hits & Jams Entertainment Contact person Mr. Rawle Ferguson	94.1	November 2011	Georgetown
Alfro Alphonso & Sons Enterprise Contact person Mr. Alfro Alphonso	91.7	November 2011	Charity, Essequibo
Haslyn Graham	104.3	November 2011	Linden
Little Rock Television Station Contact person Mr. Rocliffe Christie	88.5	November 2011	New Amsterdam

iv) Determining the availability of channels for broadcasting depends on many factors. These include transmitter power and specifications, height of antenna, location of proposed transmitters.

Given the propagation characteristics of sound broadcasting signals in the medium frequency (MF) and high frequency (HF) bands, frequency availability is not based on national considerations only. International frequency usage and results of international notification and coordination are some of the considerations that would determine frequency availability. Frequency usage in the very high frequency (VHF) and ultra high frequency (UHF) bands, etc., in border areas, would also be informed by coordination with neighbouring countries.

To give a rough approximation (from a radio frequency standpoint) in the Georgetown area (the area with the highest demand), at least ten (10) more channels in the VHF band (FM sound broadcasting) can be assigned. One (1) more VHF channel can be assigned for television broadcasting. In the UHF band (up to 692 MHz, channel 50), approximately five (5) channels are available for assignment for television broadcasting. Frequency availability mentioned, have not taken into account applications submitted and/or processed by the Guyana National Broadcasting Authority (GNBA) nor any change in technology/broadcasting formats. The discussion in this paragraph has been based on the traditional analogue format, however, Digital Broadcasting formats currently offered via terrestrial Broadband systems (e.g. as offered in the 2.5 GHz band) and used in real, drop-line cable as well as the Direct to Home Satellite Broadcasts (e.g. Direct TV) each has the potential for hundreds of television and sound feed programmes/channels.

Digital Terrestrial Television Broadcasting (DTTB) is now common in many countries worldwide and the analogue format is expected to be brought to an end, worldwide in the not too distant future. The switch off date for analogue TV signals is June 17, 2015 for many European and African countries. Guyana would be following the transition to DTTB – a date is yet to be set.

This analogue to digital TV broadcasting switchover, while offering many benefits to viewers (including the capacity for additional television feeds/programmes), will introduce a very different scenario. The National Frequency Management Unit is currently working on this issue. Stakeholders are expected to be consulted on same in the near future.

20. CHINA CENTRAL TELEVISION (CCTV) STATION CHANNEL 27/CABLE 78

Mrs. Hughes:

- (i) Can the Hon. Prime Minister state whether NCN is receiving monetary remuneration or fees for managing the entity CCTV on behalf of the Government of China?
- (ii) Can the Hon. Prime Minister detail the procedure that was followed by NCN to obtain the relevant licence for the CCTV operation and what fees were paid to the National Frequency Management Unit?

Mr. Hinds:

- (i) NCN is not managing anything for CCTV so there is no question of fees for so doing.
- (ii) There was no need for, and hence there was no application from and no grant of licence to CCTV.

21. MONEY RECEIVED FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION FOR THE YEARS 1992 – 2012

Mrs. Hughes:

- (i) Can the Hon. Minister say how much money was received from the European Union for the years 1992 – 2012 for the diversification of Guyana’s sugar industry?
- (ii) Can the Hon. Minister provide a list of the projects funded with the money received and how much was spent on each project?
- (iii) Can the Hon. Minister say if any money set aside by the European Union for the diversification of Guyana’s sugar industry was not accessed?
- (iv) If money set aside for the diversification of Guyana’s sugar industry was not accessed, can the Hon. Minister provide explanation(s)?

Minister of Agriculture [Dr. Ramsammy]:

- (i) Under the ‘Implementation of the Guyana National Action Plan (GNAP) on Accompanying Measures for Sugar Protocol countries affected by the reform of the EU Sugar Regime programme, the EU has provided 91.5 M Euros over the period 2006 – 2012. The disbursements were provided as budget support.

The disbursements were tied to-

- General Conditions – GOG indicators, Fixed Tranches
 - Implementation of stability oriented macro-economic conditions,
 - Satisfactory progress in the implementation of credible and pertinent reform to improve public financial management,

- Satisfactory progress in the implementation of the (GNAP)
- Specific Conditions – GuySuco indicators, Variable Tranches

These conditions were defined each year and disbursements were made in accordance to the levels of achievement.

Receipts to date account for 78.5% of committed funds of 116.7M Euros and account for –

- 100% received on Fixed Tranche with MoF meeting all general conditions, and
- 60% received on Variable Tranche due to GuySuCo not meeting all specific conditions.

(ii) As stated above, the EU disbursements are provided under budget support and project specification does not feature.

The GOG has provided to GuySuCo some 143.5M Euros (G\$39.6B) since 2005 to support its development and diversification programme. This amount is far in excess of the 91.5M Euros provided by the EU under GNAP to date.

The GOG provided funds for the following:

- Skeldon Sugar Modernisation Programme – G\$24.6B, (NB – 13.4B are CDB and EXIM Bank Loans, GOG direct support is 11.2B)
- Enmore Packaging Plant – G\$2.64B
- Capital programme – G\$4.0B
- Severance benefits for Diamond Sugar Workers – G\$209M
- Land Sales – G\$8.1B

(iii) 25.1M Euros were not accessed due to unmet sugar indicators.

(iv) The wet conditions of recent years have severely hampered field operations and yields. Targets set for land conversation to machine friendly layouts, acreage harvested via semi-mechanisation, yield, sugar production, supply of farmers cane were considered by

the EU to not being met despite claims of *force majeure*. In some cases, achievements were just short of target.

22. SENIOR SECONDARY BOARD MANAGED HIGH SCHOOLS IN GUYANA

Mrs. Hughes:

- (i) Can the Hon. Minister state which Senior Secondary Board managed High Schools in Guyana are currently in receipt of an annual subvention?
- (ii) Can the Hon. Minister state which Senior Secondary Board managed High Schools received a subvention during the years 2005 – 2012 and how much money was allocated each year to each school?

Ms. Manickchand:

- (i) Queen’s College and President’s College are the only Board Schools in Guyana that receive subvention.
- (ii) The schools stated above received subventions during the years 2005-2012. These allocations were as follows:

Year	Queen’s College	President’s College
2005	85,336,000	145,915,000
2006	88,340,000	150,110,000
2007	88,340,000	153,947,000
2008	88,875,000	160,402,000
2009	89,152,000	180,963,000
2010	91,521,000	185,065,000
2011	91,521,000	208,802,000

2012	96,317,000	215,608,000
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No answer was provided for question 23.

[Oral Replies]

24. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS

Ms. Kissoon: I beg to ask the Hon. Minister of Local Government and Regional Development Question No. 24 on the Order Paper standing in my name:

- (i) Could the Hon. Minister inform this House why moneys for Community Development Councils (CDC) do not go to the Regional Democratic Council for payments to the councils?
- (ii) Could the Hon. Minister explain to this House what is the role of the Director of the Community Development Council (CDC)?
- (iii) Could the Hon. Minister explain to this House why staff of the CDCs have to travel from Linden to Georgetown to uplift cheques?

Minister of Local Government and Regional Development [Mr. Ganga Persaud]: Mr. Speaker, let me thank the Hon. Member for raising the three-part question.

Community Development Councils are voluntary organisations operating within communities and the Constitution, guiding Community Development Councils, is very explicit with regard to the statement that I have just made. Community Development Councils are not a part of the budgetary framework of the region. Hence, the question, with regard to payments to the council, is not a question that the regional administrations can answer.

The second part of the question with regard to the role of the Director of CDC: The role of the Director of the Community Development Council as is stated in the Ministry's guidelines is to coordinate the efforts of community groups, to establish community development groups and to provide the necessary guidance and ensuring that these councils operate and function within the guidelines documented in the Constitution.

The third part of the question:

- (iii) Could the Hon. Minister explain to this House why staffs of the CDC have to travel from Linden to Georgetown to uplift cheques?

I think this is related very much to the first part of the question. There are, from time to time, projects may be approved by the CDC secretariat and when those projects are approved then volunteer members of those CDCs will have to travel to the city, so that the necessary paper work can be done. I am not aware that we have staff at the level of Community Development Council. There are volunteers who hold positions within those councils and the holders of such positions are elected by the community. Thank you very much Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Speaker, a follow-up through you to the Hon. Minister. Hon. Minister, could you indicate whether these guidelines that you spoke of are in writing? Is it a written document?

Mr. G. Persaud: Yes.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Member, would you be prepared, and a request is hereby made, to provide those guidelines with Members of the National Assembly within a time that you deem reasonable? Are you prepared to give that commitment?

Mr. G. Persaud: Yes Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Backer: What timeline will that be?

Mr. G. Persaud: It will be before the next sitting.

Mrs. Backer: Further, could you indicate, Hon. Minister, what is the salary and benefits of the Director of the Community Development Council?

Mr. G. Persaud: I guess you can pre-empt the response. I will have to enquire and provide the response.

Mrs. Backer: Well, if you are respectfully asking for leave, could you also provide, in addition to the salary and benefits, the name of the Director of the Community Development Council?

Mr. G. Persaud: Mr. Speaker, I was wondering how many follow-ups I will take, but the question has been asked and so I can provide...

Mr. Speaker: We are allowed two supplemental, but I think Mrs. Backer's question flowed naturally. It is really taking the question to its natural conclusion. If a person's salary will be noted ... I suspect who the person is, if that is the person I am thinking of, but...

Mrs. Backer: And he knows who the person is.

Mr. G. Persaud: Mr. Speaker, I will provide the response, as suggested.

Mr. Speaker: Most grateful. What I, Mr. Minister, need to find out is that when persons have to travel to Georgetown, is the opportunity cost borne by the travellers? If a person has to come to collect \$5,000 and it takes that person the cost of \$2,000 to travel and have a meal, then the opportunity cost to collect \$5,000 is spending \$2,000. That is a constant complaint around the regions. What happens in an instance such as that?

Mr. G. Persaud: The Community Development Council, as I said, are volunteer groups operating within communities to enhance community progress and development as the name suggested. When approvals are granted for projects the project document, in itself, caters for movement, travelling expenses in the project itself. Whenever there is such cost as travelling or meeting dietary need, as a result of travelling, the project does cater for that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Minister. I hope you will ensure that that is so because people collecting, which in some instances is a pittance, it is sometimes oppressive for them to come to collect. I think that is what the Hon. Member was trying to bring out.

25. REHABILITATION OF THE EAST BANK BERBICE PUBLIC ROAD

Dr. Mahadeo: I beg to ask of the Hon. Minister of Public Works Question No. 25 on the Order Paper on the standing in my name:

Could the Hon. Minister of Public Works say -

- (i) Whether there are any plans for the rehabilitation of the East Bank Berbice Public Road?

- (ii) Will this commence in this year and what length of road is projected to be done in this phase?
- (iii) What are the projected costs or budgetary allocation, if available, to do these works?
- (iv) Has there been any remedial works done in the meantime to alleviate the situation?
- (v) What are the costs of these works?
- (vi) What distance of roads will be completed?

Mrs. Backer: You prepared the question and the answer.

Minister of Public Works [Mr. Benn]: I do not know whether the Hon. Member Mrs. Backer is suggesting that the Hon. Member does not have the right to ask a question of me.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think she is saying that. She thinks that there is an implication that because it came from the Government side you may have had advance notice and knowledge.

Mr. Benn: Mr. Speaker, I submit that he has a right to ask...

Mr. Speaker: I agree and I ...

Mrs. Backer: I second that.

Mr. Speaker: ...encourage that right because as I said, in Scotland...

Mr. Benn: I am glad that she seconded it. I hope that she would...

Mr. Speaker: I wish more Members would ask questions...

Mr. Benn: ...allow the Hon. Member Rohee his right to speak in this Chamber.

With respect to the question from Dr. Vishwa Mahadeo, there are indeed plans to rehabilitation the East Bank Berbice public road. We intend to fund this East Bank public road through a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) under Loan Lo2454BLGY, which is a road network upgrade and expansion.

With respect to the commencement of this work, we intend to have the feasibility studies and designs beginning in this month, March 2013, but we are anticipating, given the length of the road, that civil works will commence in the first quarter of 2014. [**Mrs. Backer:** There was election ... *inaudible*] Mr. Speaker, I am being heckled as to the question of elections and this road. I believe that it is within the ambit of the other side to determine, perhaps, when elections may occur.

Anyway, let me say that in respect to the funding of the roads, the feasibility and the design will determine the cost. This is because, under this loan, we intend to address issues with respect to the rehabilitation of the West Coast Demerara road and the West Bank Demerara road, and also the canals polder two roads. We are looking at those issues under the funding available here.

With respect to the issue of remedial works, the Force Account Unit of the Ministry of Public Works has carried out remedial works during last year - July, August and September.

We have previously done in July 2005 and in December 2006, rehabilitation works on this road, on the last five miles of the road. Works were also done by K.P. Jagdeo General Contractors on this stretch.

The cost of remedial works being questioned is that we have spent \$20 million, \$10 million last year from the regional programme and \$10 million from the miscellaneous roads programme of the Ministry of Works.

For this year, in the Budget 2013 we have requested G\$20 million under the miscellaneous roads programme to address issues to hold the road in an acceptable standard until the feasibility studies and designs and funding are properly identified.

The preliminary studies indicate that sixteen kilometres of road from Stanleytown to Light Town will be addressed for sure, but the final distances will be determined by the feasibility studies and design and the total length of road is 42.6 kilometres from New Amsterdam to La Prudence. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Lawrence: To the Hon. Member Mr. Benn, could you kindly indicate what type of road the feasibility study will be talking about? Is it a 'chip and run' road? Is it a sand road? What type of road are you talking about?

Mr. Benn: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Hon. Member for her interest in this matter. Declared public roads are always done with asphaltic concrete for rehabilitation. I have never heard about a ‘chip and run’ road. That may have been roads done previously.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND FIRST READING

The following Bills were introduced and read for the first time:

1. MOTOR VEHICLES AND ROAD TRAFFIC (AMMENDMEN) BILL 2013 – Bill No. 8/2013

A Bill intituled:

“AN ACT to amend the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act.”

2. EVIDENCE (AMENDMENT) BILL 2013 – Bill No. 7/2013

A Bill intituled:

“AN ACT to amend the Evidence Act.”

[Minister of Home Affairs]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT’S BUSINESS

BILLS – SECOND READINGS

CUSTOMS (AMENDMENT) Bill 2013 – Bill No. 2/2013

A Bill intituled:

1. “AN ACT to amend the Customs Act.” *[Minister of Finance]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we will now proceed with the second reading of the Customs (Amendment) Bill 2013 – Bill No. 2/2013.

Ms. Ally: In view of the ongoing discussions on this particular Bill and in concurrence with the Minister of Finance and the AFC I wish to propose that this Bill be deferred.

Mr. Speaker: Minister, are you in agreement?

Minister of Finance [Dr. Singh]: Mr. Speaker, I have noted. Indeed, I am in receipt of a request from my colleagues on that side of the House that consideration of this Bill be deferred to a subsequent date.

3.37 p.m.

While we, on this side of the House, would be prepared to accommodate the request, I would urge that my friends in the Opposition, the Hon. Members on that side of the House, would accelerate as quickly as possible their reflection on the matter contained in the Bill because, as we are all aware, the matter is of some urgency and there is, indeed, pending consideration of an issue before the Caribbean Court of Justice that is of some relevance to this Bill. We have no difficulty accommodating the request, but I would urge that the consultation, which are being engaged in by the Opposition,...

Mr. Speaker: Are you deferring the Bill?

Dr. Singh: I am quite happy to accommodate the request and defer it. Yes Sir.

Bill deferred.

2. TELECOMMUNICATIONS BILL 2012 – Bill No. 18/2012

A BILL intituled:

“AN ACT to provide for the establishment of the Telecommunications Agency and for a regular, coordinated, open and competitive telecommunications sector and for matters incidental thereto or connected therewith.”

3. PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION (AMENDMENT) BILL 2012 – Bill No. 17/2012

A BILL intituled:

“AN ACT to amend the Public Utilities Commission Act.”

[Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs]

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask that the consideration of the second readings of these Bills be deferred once again, but I would like to report to the House that we have been holding meetings. We held meeting with the Guyana Telephone and Telegraph Company (GT&T) on Monday of this week and meetings with Digicel on Wednesday of this week, yesterday, and I think that we are making progress to get to a point where we could proceed with some agreement. [Ms. Ally: Timeline.] Yes we expect to conclude these discussions in a timely way Sir.

Bills deferred.

4. FIREARMS (AMENDMENT) BILL 2012 – Bill No. 21/2012

A BILL intituled:

“AN ACT to amend the Firearms Act.” [*Minister of Home Affairs*]

Minister of Home Affairs [Mr. Rohee]: I am pleased that we have finally reached the stage to have this Bill debated. This Bill is very timely, in the sense that only recently at the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Heads of Government Meeting, in Haiti, Heads of Government met with the distinguished Attorney General of the United States of America who, for his part, felt that for them, in terms of the relations with the Caribbean and CARICOM countries, the most important thing was how to stem trafficking of firearms and ammunition in the region.

The mater has become so important that when the statistic is looked at, generated by IMPACS which is the Implementation Agency for Crime and Security in the region, associated with the Caribbean Community, it shows that Guyana ranks behind Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago in respect of seizure of firearms in the region. Up to the year 2011, in Jamaica, two thousand eight hundred and eighty-nine and one hundred and eighty-seven firearms were seized over that period of time between 2006 and 2011. For Trinidad and Tobago, between the same period, one thousand two hundred and twenty-six and three hundred and eighty-three firearms were seized in that jurisdiction, and for Guyana seven hundred and forty-one and nine hundred and eight firearms were seized.

Firearms are mainly used according to the same IMPACS for the commission of crimes, but in this respect we are speaking about illegal firearms and the statistic, again, from IMPACS shows

that illegal firearms accounted for much as seventy per cent of all the homicides in CARICOM region and sixty-one per cent in the Caribbean as a whole. Between 2006 and 2010 twelve thousands three hundred and sixty-six homicides were reported by the thirteen CARICOM Member States. Overall, the weapon of choice in most countries is small arms and light weapons obtained through illicit trafficking. This matter, in terms of the international context, regionally, if we are to take the concentric approach, is a major challenge and beyond the region it remains a challenge, Latin America, United States of America and even beyond, so much so the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations have taken upon themselves to do work in order to address this global phenomenon.

I recently came across a speech delivered by the Hon. Prime Minister of *St Vincent and the Grenadines*, the Hon. Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, on the 6th of March, 2013 where he addressed the Fourth Regional Workshop on Negotiation for the United Nations Arms Trade Treaty. In that speech he pointed out that gun control is now in the forefront of the global agenda. He also referred to the conversation which the heads had in Haiti on this matter. I merely refer to these experiences in order to contextualise, from the international perspective, the challenge that countries are facing in respect of this phenomenon. Here at the local level, within Guyana, in 2012 the Guyana Police Force recovered one hundred and eleven firearms, these included revolvers, rifles, pistols, shot guns as well as ammunitions. The argument has consistently been made that we are not a producing nation of firearms and therefore the question is: Is it that the firearms are now so easily available so that persons who are engaging in criminal activities could either rent one, borrow one, loan one, steal one or is there a set of firearms in circulation that is easily accessible to persons who are bent on committing crimes in our country?

The Government has set up a specialised Firearm Investigation Unit to address this question as best as it could, but this unit is not a standalone unit. It is working together with other members of the joint services, because we feel that it is necessary to take a holistic approach rather than one agency trying to address a major problem. The argument has been made, from time to time, that since we are not a producing nation of firearms, and given the possibility that there is in circulation a reasonable amount of firearms, the question still remains, what is the source of these firearms?

One of the usual solutions, or I should not say solutions. One of the usual theories, which is floated, is that because our borders are so porous, firearms easily access our country. This has been said by many experts who have made studies in respect to the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of our country. This has been said by persons who worked day and night in the interior and there are a number of anecdotal reference points to this issue. One cannot deny that because of the extensive nature of our border and because there are countries on our border, neighbouring countries which produce firearms, it is quite possible that, indeed, due to the porous nature of our border that firearms do penetrate and enter our country.

If we believe that this is a major challenge for Guyana, which indeed it is, I think it is important for us to cast our minds to other CARICOM countries. This by no means meant to minimise the argument, because the borders, for example, of the Bahamas pose serious challenges to the governments of the Bahamas. The borders of many other countries in CARICOM pose serious challenges to the governments as well. I make this point, because we are not alone in respect to this particular challenge and that is why the governments felt it was necessary to cooperate and to collaborate, having regard to the fact that we all share the same common problem, to address the stem of illegal firearms into our respective jurisdictions. One of the ways to do so in our respective countries is to legislate, pass laws to make it illegal.

Having regard to the fact that when a perusal of the Firearms Act would show that there is some lacuna, there in the sense that trafficking in firearms is not unlawful. Also the question of importing components, which could be assembled and end up being a firearm, is also not in our statute books. As we find these gaps, it is important that we pass laws to address these loopholes. I am not arguing by any stretch of imagination. I would be the last to argue that this is the silver bullet or this is the panacea to solve this problem, but I will go so far to say that it would add value; it would bring additional to what we already have, in order to make our contribution and to make illegal, by law, trafficking in firearms as well as ammunition and important components of a firearm or ammunition that when fully assembly could eventually turn out to be a lethal weapon.

The simplicity but significance of this Bill, which is before this House, calls on the House to recognise that we Guyanese in making our contribution to the global fight against the trafficking in firearms, make our contribution to the negotiation that are now taking place at the

international level, we must make that contribution by example and the best way we could make that contribution is to pass laws, so that when delegations from the foreign ministries travel to participate in the negotiations or to participate at international gatherings to address this global fight against trafficking in firearms, and components of firearms, Guyana would be proud of the fact that its representatives would have put forward tangible evidence to show, to demonstrate, that it is not all about talk; it is about action. It is about legislating and showing to the world that small as our country is we can join with larger countries. It is not the size of the country in this case that matters. What matters is the principle; what matters is the commitment to stamping out this malady, and, in so doing, making our contribution, together with the million of voices around the world, to show in concrete terms that we are committed as a State, we are dedicated as a people and that the institutions of the State, parliamentary and non-parliamentary, governmental and non-governmental, to addressing the question of trafficking in firearms. Therefore I believe that this Bill would contribute significantly and positively to improving Guyana's image, but it is not only a question of imagery. It is a question of concreteness and working concretely to contribute to this struggle against trafficking in firearms, trafficking in the components in firearms and ammunition that could result in the death of so many people unnecessarily.

Mr. Speaker, I therefore wish to move the second reading of this Bill. [*Applause*]

Minister of Foreign Affairs [Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett]: I rise in support of the amendment before us and to make a few remarks thereon. The amendments will no doubt enhance protections and control at the national level. This is our first priority, and this was outlined by Minister Rohee. However, as mentioned by Minister Rohee, the fact is that the illegal trafficking in conventional arms is not only a national issue but a global menace. Whilst Guyana, as many other CARICOM countries, is neither a manufacturer nor a significant importer of firearms the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons have no doubt taken a toll on our collective society in the Caribbean and elsewhere.

It was said that the majority of gun crimes committed in CARICOM countries are with illegal guns. If we look at the story of Central America, it is similar there. According to a study done by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) seventy-seven per cent of all murders in the Central America regions are committed with a firearm. Some of them are left over from

the Civil Wars, but others, no doubt, are brought from nearby States. It is estimated that in the region an AK assault rifle can be obtained for as low as US\$200 and smaller arms are sold for less. The trouble is that firearms are durable goods, so they can remain in circulation for a very long time. For example, the modern assault rifle has not been enhanced since the Cold War days, yet it remains an effective killing machine.

It is further estimated by the UNODC that the Central America region has more than 2.8 million illicit arms. The security forces seize approximately sixteen thousand per year. This means it will take over one hundred and fifty years to remove them off the streets. I cite these statistics because in this globalised world, in which we live, it is far easier for people and goods to move and we have to be vigilant in our countries to ensure that the necessary controls and protections are in place. Our geographic proximity to the producers and consumers of illegal drugs puts us in the firing line, so to speak, for those bent on illegal activities where the firearm is central to these operations.

The problem of illicit trafficking in firearms, their parts and components, is not a new one, however, I submit that it is now a bigger problem. As a responsible player in the international community and a country which believes in multilateralism, Guyana is party to the United Nations Convention against transnational organised crime and its three protocols, which include the protocol against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition. Under article 5 of that protocol, which deals with criminalisation, state-parties are required among other things, and I quote:

“Adopt such legislative and other measures as may be necessary to establish as criminal offences the following conduct when committed intentionally illicit manufacturing of firearms, their parts and components and ammunition and illicit trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition.”

The passage of this amendment brought today by my colleague, Minister Rohee, will therefore directly address one of our treaty obligations and must be seen, apart from strengthening our national controls, as contributing to the efforts to strengthening the international regime governing the trade in conventional arms.

The Government of Guyana believes that the Conventions and protocol; which exist, must be lauded, but it also believes that it must go even further with respect to small arms and light weapons; the preferred firearm in the region of those bent on criminality. We believe, as I said, that this problem, of small arms and light weapons, is greater now. The adverse effects of the illegal use of these weapons on our society cannot be discounted. We are, therefore, of the view that to adequately address these needs there must be an Arms Trade Treaty to which Minister Rohee referred and this must include small arms and light weapons as well as ammunition, in addition to the seven categories of weapons covered under the United Nations register on conventional arms.

Guyana and CARICOM have been strong advocates for an Arms Trade Treaty and for the inclusion of small arms and light weapons. Of course, we have also advocated that the treaty must include categories of equipment, including parts and components. We were, therefore, pleased that the United Nations convened a conference in New York in July last year. Regrettably it was concluded, the conference that is, without an agreement. However, on the 18th of this month a meeting will be convened and we hope that progress will be made in this regard.

Guyana believes that there should be transparency in the legal trade of arms and measures must be taken to curb the illicit trade, as I mentioned, and we feel that an Arms Trade Treaty will address these concerns in a coordinated manner. As was expected, there is no unanimity on the proposed Arms Trade Treaty, especially from countries which stand to benefit economically. But we must continue with our advocacy in this regard.

I also want to indicate, and Minister Rohee briefly mentioned it, that we have also been seeking partners in our fight against crime and in this regard CARICOM has partnered with the United States of America for the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, an initiative that includes CARICOM and the Dominican Republic and provides training, provision of equipment among other things.

This amendment must, therefore, be seen simple, as it may seem to the eye, as Guyana putting in place the relevant legislation consistent with our treaty obligations, the partnerships in which we are involved and in what we have been advocating at the international level, both as a country and as a region. I therefore want to commend my colleague for bringing this amendment to the

National Assembly which, apart from improving controls at the local level, will strengthen our voice at the international level.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Rohee (replying): Mr. Speaker, I do not have anything more to add, simply to say that I appreciate the words of my colleague, the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, and I look forward with great expectation that the Bill will be passed. I therefore move that it be read a second time.

Question put.

Mr. Hinds: Division.

Bell rang.

4.07 p.m.

Assembly divided: Ayes 28, Noes 32, as follows:

Noes

Mr. T. Williams

Ms. Marcello

Dr. Ramayya

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe

Mrs. Hughes

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Ramjattan

Ms. Ferguson

Mr. Morian

Mr. Allen

Ayes

Mr. Jafarally

Mr. Damon

Dr. Persaud

Rev. Dr. Gilbert

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Neendkumar

Mr. Lumumba

Mr. Chand

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Jones	Ms. Teixeira
Mr. Adams	Bishop Edghill
Ms. Baveghems	Mr. Whittaker
Mr. Sharma	Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai
Mr. Bulkan	Ms. Webster
Mr. Bond	Mr. G. Persaud
Ms. Kissoon	Ms. Manickchand
Mr. Trotman	Mr. Benn
Ms. Selman	Mr. Ali
Mr. Allicock	Dr. Ramsarran
Ms. Wade	Dr. Westford
Mr. Felix	Mr. R. Persaud
Ms. Hastings	Dr. Singh
Mr. Scott	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon	Mr. Nandlall
Mrs. Backer	Dr. Ramsammy
Dr. Norton	Mr. Rohee
Mrs. Lawrence	Mr. Hinds
Mr. B. Williams	
Ms. Ally	
Dr. Roopnarine	

Brig. (Ret'd) Granger

Motion negatived.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

BILLS – Second Reading

THE FISCAL MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY (AMENDMENT) BILL 2013 – Bill No. 5 of 2013

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we come next to the Fiscal Management and Accountability Bill. This debate was, in fact, ensuing with the Hon. Member, Bishop Juan Edghill, the Hon. Member who was speaking when I rose. What is the wish of Members?

Ms. Ally: Mr. Speaker, because of the unavoidable absence of Mr. Carl Greenidge, I move that this motion be deferred to the next Sitting.

Mr. Speaker: Very well. Hon. Members, we have a motion left on the Order Paper, that is the motion for the Restoration of Georgetown in the name of the Hon. Members Mrs. Volda Lawrence. I propose that we start that motion, given the lateness that we started today and, perhaps, we can leave the Chamber a little earlier rather than later. I propose we start and, perhaps, take Mrs. Lawrence's contribution and then we will take the suspension.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I would crave your indulgence that we take the adjournment first and then come back.

Mr. Speaker: Very well. Hon. Members, we will take the suspension and we will resume perhaps at about twenty minutes after five o'clock. I will take the opportunity to attend a memorial service. I think it is important, at the state-level, that some of us be there.

Thank you.

Sitting suspended at 4.12 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 5.39 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, when we took the recess, we were about to commence the debate on the motion in the name of the Hon. Member, Mrs. Volda Lawrence. We will now do so. Please accept my apologies for the late start.

MOTIONS

RESTORATION OF GEORGETOWN

“WHEREAS Georgetown is the capital city of Guyana, commonly known as ‘Garden City of the Caribbean’;

AND WHEREAS the expanded boundaries of the city of Georgetown have placed severe strain and pressures on the drainage systems. In addition the heavy siltation of canals, the dumping of refuse and various other kinds of items which block drains, the lack of maintenance of the outfall channels have all led to poor drainage of the city;

AND WHEREAS refuse collection and disposal have reached a critical point where large amounts of garbage are being dumped on street corners, open spaces and canals, creating public nuisance and health hazards;

AND WHEREAS many construction sites continue to block drains and dispose of waste on city parapets and in many instances create stagnant pools of water that encourage the breeding of mosquitoes;

AND WHEREAS the Georgetown City Council is unable to carry out its mandate as prescribed in the Municipal and District Councils Act of 1969 and the Local Democratic Organs Act of 1980, due to the severe under-collection of taxes, rents and fees as well as the miserly subvention received from Central Government,

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly of the Parliament of Guyana commits its support towards the restoration of our Capital City, Georgetown;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly calls upon the Government to:

- (i) Utilize every machinery, work force, and agencies at its disposal and command in conjunction with the Georgetown City Council, Members of the National Assembly, the business and commercial sector, NGOs, Clubs and citizens in the removal of garbage, abandoned vehicles and builders waste as well as the de-siltation of canals and alleyways over the next three (3) months in an effort to “Restore Georgetown to the Garden City of the Caribbean”; and
- (ii) That the Government establishes a Committee consisting of Members of Parliament, Officials of the Georgetown City Council, Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development and the Ministry of Transport and Hydraulics to monitor the progress of the restoration of Georgetown and report to the National Assembly within four (4) months of the establishment of the Committee.” [Mrs. Lawrence]

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The motion titled, *Restoration of Georgetown* most aptly can be described in the words of one of Guyana’s outstanding writers, Mr. Martin Carter: “We are all involved; we are all consumed.” Let me first place on record that this motion in no way seeks to remove the mandate of the Georgetown City Council, the custodian of our city, the men and women who were elected by the residents of the city of Georgetown to which the motion speaks.

I will not detail for this honourable House the pleasurable memories of our Garden City, Georgetown, which many of us in this House have experienced and to which we can attest. However, permit me to mention the sadness I feel when I think that amongst our population there is a generation of young people who never had the joy of experiencing our city, Georgetown, in its former glory, thus meriting the name of Garden City of the Caribbean.

We must seek, today, as sons and daughters of this dear land to change this. As an elected body, we have a mandate to restore the splendour of our Garden City. Today, we must let our voices be jointly heard in support of this motion titled, *Restoration of Georgetown*.

The first WHEREAS Clause refers to the boundaries of Georgetown that have expanded over the last four decades. We have added to the southern section places like Banks Park, Shirley Field, Ridley Square, Rasville, Festival City, Stevedore Scheme, Telecommunication Scheme, Lamaha

Springs, Joint Services Scheme, to name a few. To the north we have added Lamaha Park, North and South Sophia, Hughani Park and University Garden. With these expansions listed, additional drainage canals would have been necessary. Refuse build-up would certainly have greatly been evident. Sadly, these new demands have not been adequately addressed.

Today, we are at a juncture where we can no longer continue sitting in this honourable House in this city and pretend that the present condition of our city, Georgetown, does not affect the citizenry, likewise us. Just a look at the parapet outside this honourable House gives a glimpse of the refuse problem which exists. A few steps to the west of this building and the stench of urine overwhelm you. A few steps more and you enter into an area which is known as 'Shite City'. We can no longer continue with the finger pointing and the politicking. We need to stop the blame game and stop it now and restore Georgetown to its former glory.

Today, I call on all in this honourable House and those outside of this House, who have this dear land of Guyana and its former beauty at heart, to help thwart the impending danger, for example a serious health outbreak, continuous flooding associated with water borne diseases... Cholera is a distinct possibility.

In addressing the fifth WHEREAS Clause, without any knowledge or expertise in the area of engineering, I submit that any clear-thinking citizen would admit that since Guyana lies five and a half feet below sea level, at high tide, drainage would be an important aspect of our survival. With this in mind, our primary focus ought to be on the constant maintenance of our outfall channels, our collector and subsidiary drains and our koker doors. No number of pumps or pumping of water could replace those systems. We have all witnessed flooding in several areas, with the least amount of rainfall.

As the world changes and citizens are finding it more convenient and cheaper to support fast food restaurants, we, in Guyana, have also joined the new wave. This has led to several new restaurant establishments in our city and environs. We must ensure that they do not place any added burdens on the city. We must insist that grease traps be put in place and be properly maintained. For without these devices, grease enters into our sanitary sewer system and creates economic safety and environmental hazards by clogging and damaging pipes, placing added burden on those who manually clean our drains.

The first Resolved Clause seeks to involve a small number of Members of Parliament in the planning, execution and reporting on the measures taken and progress made towards the restoration of our city, Georgetown.

The second Resolved Clause envisions the involvement of every citizen, every department, and both the private and public sectors. Let us begin to clear our outfall channels, collector and subsidiary drains and repair our kokers.

Flooding of the Kingston community last Tuesday due to the collapse of a koker door is testimony to the poor conditions in which many kokers can be found. Our alleyways, our secondary drainage in the various communities, are overgrown with trees, weed and other particles placed there by uncaring citizens. This condition has led to too many citizens having to vacate their lower flats or incur the cost of increasing the level of their bottom floors. Those who cannot afford this must face the consequence of a rotting foundation. Clogged alleyways have also led to many yards and roads being flooded at the smallest downpour of rain.

We are also all aware that these secondary drainage alleyways lead into primary drainage which provides drainage into our rivers and ocean. For those of us who traverse this city, we are aware of several such drainages, known to us as trenches, which appear to strangers as another empty plot of land. These trenches have been neglected for so long that one can walk across them. How can we prevent flooding when our infrastructure is neglected?

Someone said that attitudes become habits. We can say that this is so true given our garbage problem. So often one hears persons make comments such as, 'If I aint litter how people gon get wuk? I does pay me tax. Dey thieving de money so let dem spend it to clean de city.' Research has shown that littering is the result of people not feeling a sense of ownership for their surroundings. In my own estimation, I would concur that many Guyanese do feel that way.

What I also know is that there are many Guyanese and other persons, who reside here, who care. In this honourable House, I know that we can find persons who care. That is why this motion will have the support of this House. I pray I am not wrong.

Since the announcement of this motion titled, *Restoration of Georgetown*, I have received several letters and phone calls from persons and groups at home and abroad, indicating their commitment to the restoration of Georgetown.

We cannot sit back and do nothing when the City Council indicates that its fleet of garbage trucks is down to two trucks and one tractor or that, due to the heavy traffic on the East Bank Road and the distance from the city, we need to extend the hours of Haags Bosch. Neither can we continue to have our public conveniences closed at 5.30 p.m. and 5.00 p.m. each day while there is 24-hour vending at our markets, malls and roadside beverage shops, and, most of all, when we are appropriating large sums of money each year towards tourism. What are we doing - shooting ourselves in the head?

The second Resolved Clause also speaks to those involved in our education system. Our educators must embrace and include in their curriculum the subject of healthy environment, healthy nation, thus moulding our children in the process of preservation of cleanliness. Let us make an effort to change the two many negative headlines on Guyana and, more so, of our city, Georgetown. A unanimous vote on this motion to restore our city can be the beginning of showcasing Guyana and Guyanese in a more positive way.

In concluding, allow me to ask those who will speak to this motion to think of what our city would look like in another few months with the build-up of refuse which can be seen in all areas of the city, or the stagnant water left by those in the process of construction, or blocked canals and abandoned vehicles. Do you think that the words of Valerie Rodway, composer of our national song, will have any meaning? I speak of those words “O beautiful Guyana; O my lovely native land; More dear to me than all the world;” ending with the line, “I love thee, Oh I love thee”. The question is begged, will this generation repeat those words, “I love thee, Oh I love thee”?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

Minister within the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development [Mr. Whittaker]: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. For a moment I travelled the nostalgic journey with the Hon. Mover of the motion as I, myself, sought to reminisce the way the city of Georgetown looked some years ago as compared with its present condition in the year 2013.

While this motion seeks to underline the need for a number of positive changes and developments, including the need for better drainage systems within the Georgetown municipality, by collectively and continually addressing primarily the issues of garbage collection and disposal and de-silting of drains within the Georgetown municipality, and while the mover of the motion offers some recommendations on how this can be achieved, disappointingly the motion – I am speaking about the motion – excludes the responsible agency, the Georgetown municipality, which has statutory responsibility for managing the city. It is excluded from any of this accountability.

What the motion seeks to do, and I wish to draw attention to the WHEREAS Clause No. 4 which says, “And WHEREAS the Georgetown City Council is unable...” is it unable, unwilling or disinterested? I rather think it is the latter two. This omission is very material. The motion seeks to divert attention from those at the helm of the Council who must be held responsible for its continual failure to deliver the measure of quality and the frequency of services the municipality is mandated, by the existing legislation and by-laws, to deliver to the citizens whose rates and taxes they collect - not the Government; the City Council collects that.

The Resolved Clauses are premised, therefore, on some wrong assumptions, assumptions of miserly subventions. We are here talking about a body that is empowered by legislation to collect rates and taxes. We are talking about a body which, in spite of the rates and taxes it collects, is also empowered to collect additional revenues using other sources about which I shall speak.

The Resolved Clauses are premised, therefore, on some wrong assumptions of miserly subvention. What the motion would therefore have us resolve to do, I dare say, is inadequate and is misdirected. While I do not wish to belabour the issue of who is responsible, I do wish to posit that unless we determine the root or the proximate cause of the failings of the Georgetown City Council to maintain the Garden City image about which the Hon. Member refers and the aesthetic of the city, unless we determine the root proximate cause and deal with that, the curative measures we take will not bring the desired results. We would be swallowed up in the very garbage we are seeking to remove if we fail to see and to realise that the rundown state of our beautiful metropolis is rooted not in the inadequacy of resources, not in miserly subventions, but in other factors. I want to deal with those factors.

We need to examine these less we be merely placing plasters on wounds. My Friends, it is due primarily to a lack of political will at City Hall to deliver. That is the root cause of the problems that we face - the lack of political will at City Hall to deliver. Those who control the seat of power at City Hall are not concerned about the imperative to deliver. If you wish to return to office when Local Government Elections are held... Never mind the mountains; they came not about these elections. There is absolutely no interest at all on the part of many on the Council in remedying the many shortcomings and so improve the services they deliver. Their frequent outbursts about being starved for resources must be exposed for what they are; they are clever attempts at political posturing and machinations aimed at excusing themselves from culpability. That is what it is.

The Council, though it receives over 50% of collectables, is so satisfied that one can hardly find any evidence of any determined effort, programme or plan which sees them reaching out to the debtors. Captured here is \$11 billion worth of rates and taxes of debts owed to the City Council which it wishes not to collect, but it shelters under the umbrella of inadequate resources. Captured here is a further \$2 billion worth of debts owed by residential owners. **[Ms. Ally: What about the Government?]** The Government pays its debts every year. I ensure that that happens and Dr. Ashni Singh ensures that that happens. There is no debt recovery drive. There is no concerted effort to reach out to debtors. It is not like harkens in many NDCs and municipalities where councillors see their responsibility as being more than merely attending statutory meetings and where councillors reach out into the communities in small groups, not only to talk about debts, but to talk about works that they have done and works that they would wish to do if debtors will only pay. The Councillors do not have the confidence in the people. I guess that is the reason they prefer the shelter of the office.

There is little effort at re-classifying the many buildings that are still classified as being residential when, in fact, they should be commercial, whereas the City Council should be garnering more revenue. What I am emphasising here is that the *raison d'être* behind the City Council's inability to deliver is due, in large measure, to the lack of will to go out there and collect what is its so that it can deliver more services.

There is approximately \$13 billion on outstanding rates to be collected. Why is the City Council not collecting it? It wants the Government to take resources that should be doing other things,

which should be spread across the ten Regions, to deal with that. There is an obvious lack of interest for whatever reasons. Even that which is collected is poorly managed.

6.04 p.m.

Last year the City Council collected \$1.8 billion. Out of \$2.4 billion in collectables, it collected \$1.8 billion. What did the Council do with it? One would think that a significant amount of this would have been used to deal with the issue of garbage, the issue of drainage, the issue of the markets, rundown buildings, and the issue of security. But to the contrary, a significant amount of this money is spent on employment costs – some 829 employees. Did you know that? Did you know that the Mayor and City Council (M&CC) has on its payroll 829 employees? What do they do? That is the important thing.

There are 27 employees in a Roads Rehabilitation Division. Which roads do they build? Which roads do they rehabilitate? They are in a Road Rehabilitation Division. There are 78 of them in a Drainage Section. I did not write this. I did not print this. I can make copies available if you so need. There are 188 of them in the City Constabulary. Yet, many of the markets continue to be burglarised. There is a further 86 called Constabulary Security Guards. [Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: What is the source of your information?] It is the *Mayor and City Council Summary of Staff Position*. [Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: Who created it?] It came from City Hall. [Ms. Ally: Who wrote it?] It was the Town Clerk.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to go on. I am saying that a significant amount of the resources which the City Council garners, bearing in mind that it does not make enough effort to reach out there to collect more of, are spent in areas that do not provide the services that the people look forward to.

Expenditure controls are almost non-existent. Notwithstanding the recommendations of the Burrowes Inquiry, the Raymond Gaskin Report, the Auditor General's Report, controls... [Mr. Trotman: Is that not why you hired the new Town Clerk?] I will deal with you. Indeed, these Reports offer serious possibilities for improvement in the financial situation of the Council. Where there is a Council where the average attendance at meetings... Even that is a problem. The average attendance at statutory meetings for 2012 was 19 out of 30. These are the people responsible for managing the city and restoring it to the glorious days that we had.

Alas, nothing is encouraged or accepted by the Council unless the members have a personal vested interest. Of the ten groups into which the Georgetown Municipality is divided, eight of the groups that are managed by private contractors do not have the kind of problems that the other two that are managed by the City Council have. We have discussed with them and encouraged them to do likewise with groups 7 and 8. That is to contract the services of groups 7 and 8, take responsibility and put their resources into the market areas and the public spaces. But we have been *throwing water on duck's back*. They have refused to deal with that.

Where does the Council's interest lie? This is where it lies: we continue to see staff loans and advances. It operates as though it is a commercial bank. That is a significant amount of the people's money. There is the rental of trucks instead of fixing its own. Go to Princess Street. Take some time and go there and you will see over 50 trucks and other vehicles, many in the GLL and PNN series, are parked. They prefer to hire rather than to fix.

There is abuse of overtime. What is overtime spent doing? Councillors want to pay themselves 33.3% increase. Would you believe that? At a time when the Council is going through the financial crisis, which this motion would have us believe, when the Council is struggling, councillors want to pay themselves a 50% increase in stipends for 2013. I can assure you that that will not happen because we will not approve of it.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, I did not get the impression that this motion was a pro-City Council motion, but one that says that we all agree to clean up the city. It seems as if your argument is weighed in favour of being an anti-Council... I did not get the impression that the Hon. Member was saying that she is here standing in representation of the Georgetown Mayor and City Council. I think we all recognise that it has problems.

Mr. Whittaker: Mr. Speaker, our proposed amendments give a clear indication that the root cause of the garbage problem we face in this city has very little to do with resources that the Council is starved of; it has to do with mismanagement. So I am identifying specific areas of mismanagement and I am, in fact, positing to this body...

Mr. Speaker: That is accepted, but the Hon. Member also spoke about the perception and the view of citizens who feel that they have a right to litter. I think that has nothing to do with the City Council. It is just a malaise and a sense amongst the citizenry that they can throw anything

out of a car window. She used a word to describe an area near here. Again, these are not City Council problems. I think it has to do with a mindset that has become endemic and pervasive.

Mr. Whittaker: Mr. Speaker, my recommendations to the Council for downsizing and for merging...because at the Georgetown Mayor and City Council there is one employee for every 250 citizens. If you compare that ratio of employees to citizens in the New Amsterdam Municipality, in Linden Town and other municipalities, it is far lower.

Consulting with residents in the wards on annual subvention and budget estimates is something that we have been encouraging the Council to do. Again, for reasons unknown, this has proven very, very difficult for the Council. It is reflected, again, in its 2013 Estimates. What is happening at the level of the Council can best be described as haemorrhaging of scarce resources. That is what is happening there.

While this motion speaks about the mandate of the Georgetown Mayor and City Council as set out in the Municipal and District Council's Act, it limits this mandate to a few services such as refuse collection and disposal, and the concomitant consequences of poor delivery of these services. It blames it not on those who have responsibility for managing the affairs of the city, but it blames it on:

“...severe under-collection of taxes, rents, fees.”

Who is responsible for that? Who is responsible for severe under collection of taxes, rents and fees?

It also blames it on what is described as:

“...miserly subvention received from Central Government.”

The City Council gets the highest subvention of all municipalities. And quite apart from the subvention, there are additional resources that are made available in the form of trucks and enhancement programmes. There are lots of other forms of assistance.

The issue of increasing revenue base and making more resources available to the Council cannot be considered independent of the Council's performance. Let us examine what we have and how it is being used.

Allocation of resources must be based on service delivery and on performance. We cannot just simply take resources and give to a body that has been mismanaging these resources without, at some point, examining the *raison d'être* behind the lack of performance and lack of delivery in terms of the resources that we make available.

The Georgetown City Council has proven itself unable, unwilling, or disinterested in carrying out the mandate as prescribed in the Municipal and District Councils Act. This is due, in large measure, to poor management, as I said, of scarce resources.

Much of the interventions set out in the Resolved Clauses of this motion are already being implemented. The motion does not, in any way, refer to the several initiatives from the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, and the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development. There have been a number of initiatives which saw a collective effort in working with the Council to address this issue but there is no reference to that in the motion itself. The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, the Ministry of Agriculture through the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA), the Ministry of Public Works, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Health and the private sector are already on board in a joint effort with some private sector and the City Council to assist.

We have recognised and have moved well beyond mere lip service to give recognition to our belief in the need for partnership as we move forward. If revenue is the issue, let us talk about the resources we have provided the Council over the years, outside of subvention, and the rates of taxes we pay on Government property, and let us talk about the taxpayers' money used to deliver many rescue packages to the Council. How often have we come to the Council's aid and paid solid waste contractors? We have come to the Council's aid and helped to clean the cemetery which it talks about a lot. We have come to the Council's aid to provide trucks and garbage equipment.

Let us talk about available opportunities to the Council to realise additional revenue. It is not looking outside of that and we expect the Council to sustain all of these activities.

As a Government, Mr. Speaker, we have extended the support by way of a multisectoral stakeholders approach to garbage collection and disposal and to desilting of drains by providing

human and material support to free the streets, the alleyways, the blocked drains and the trenches of garbage, heavy vegetation, and other encumbrances. We will continue to provide resources to keep the city clean. We could not do differently. We have an obligation to the citizens of our country. But, as I said earlier, we could not continue to commit funds to City Hall without demanding accountability for those funds.

The Council's contracting process is not transparent. There is evidence of conflict of interest and due care is not exercised in securing the Council's assets and revenue. It does not even have an assets register that can identify and describe the assets that it has.

Deviation from established and approved operational procedures, principles and norms is an attitude entrenched in many at City Hall who have responsibility for managing the affairs of the city. Add to this private sector's reluctance to get directly involved. There is a lack of confidence and trust in the Council. The private sector is reluctant to get involved unless it is doing so through the Government. The private sector says that it pays its taxes and expects City Hall to use those taxes to deliver the services it is legally bound to deliver. It is willing to assist by getting its members who owe taxes to pay their debts. City Hall was asked to provide a list of the debtors. The private sector asked City Hall to do so about a month ago. It is yet to do so.

Mr. Speaker, it is my view that the present Council has outlived its usefulness. It has become an anachronism and is incapable of carrying out its duties. This mismanagement, incompetence and disinterest must not be allowed to continue. We must stop sheltering the leadership. The question is: how do we effect the required attitudinal changes? What corrective changes must be put in place?

The engagement of other stakeholders... As we expand our multisectoral stakeholders committee to provide oversight and to monitor the progress of our work and the restoration of the city of Georgetown, we must individually and collectively take responsibility for helping to realise the improvements we seek. We must reprimand those who persist in the old habits of dumping. We need to enhance public education and awareness in the homes, schools, churches, mandirs, mosques and public spaces. We include the councillors and staff at City Hall. We must intensify our united efforts to conclude and to bring tougher laws to effectively reduce the incidence of littering and dumping of garbage. An example is the new legislation, the Solid Waste

Management Bill. The expectation is that when this Bill comes here, Members will expeditiously support it so that it can be assented to by His Excellency to rescue and restore our capital to what it was three decades or more ago.

Mr. Speaker, whilst the intent of the motion is understood, I remind this House that unless we deal with the root of the problem, we are merely putting plasters on wounds and that is what the motion, as it is, is doing. Therefore, I would ask that the amendments, which are going to be proposed a little later on, are approved by you and accepted by the Opposition so that we can move forward.

Every one of us must pay more than lip service towards making our city a clean one in which to live – one that we can be proud of – but we need to address the root and the root is at City Hall.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before getting into my presentation, I wish to rebut some points which the previous speaker alluded to. What the previous speaker sought to do, in his presentation, was, more or less, castigate the M&CC. At this time, this motion is not about what is actually going at the M&CC, but what we can do from a political standpoint.

I wish to remind my fellow colleagues on the eastern side of this House that the Mayor, some years ago, made a proposal to this very Government on how the Council can garner additional funds. This proposal was for the Lottery Fund and this Government saw it fit to take it away from the Mayor and City Council.

The previous speaker referred to the management of the Mayor and City Council misusing the funds and, more or less, using it for what it should not be used for. Let me remind this very House that it has been reported time and time again that corruption does not only exist at the level of the M&CC, but it happens in all governmental Ministries.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to give support and to add my voice to the motion, Restoration of Georgetown, standing in the name of the Hon. Member, Mrs. Volda Lawrence. The current state of our capital city is under siege with the huge compilation of garbage, vagrants and junkies, even in our own surroundings at the Parliament Office, Public Buildings, which is unsightly. It is public knowledge that the deplorable state of Georgetown with respect to the garbage situation

cannot get much worse and, if decisive and drastic measures are not taken to deal with it, in a few years the city would become virtually covered with garbage.

In a recent letter written by Retired Major General Joe Singh and carried in the *Stabroek News* dated Saturday, 2nd February, 2013, on pages 6 and 7 respectively, he alluded to the fact that:

“Our collective citizenry, impacted by the violence meted out to the environment and the health of citizens by the dumping of garbage, particularly of the non-biodegradable kind, alongside our streets, pathways and trails, in our canals, rivers and on our seashore.”

The *Guyana Chronicle*, dated 2nd February, 2013, carried an article under the head, “Addressing the garbage problem”. Therein the writer made mention that it is a reality that we have to place less focus on how and why we arrived at this deplorable situation and concentrate our efforts on putting an end to it. The article begged to state the following: what solutions, strategies or systems we come up with must include a preventative component because, in the first place, if garbage was properly disposed of by individuals, we would not have arrived at such an acute situation.

Mr. Speaker, for too long the enforcing of littering laws have been neglected and so it has become the culture to dump our garbage through the minibus windows, into the drains and streets, et cetera. As such, this culture has become engrained and acceptable. Also, little attention has been placed on education and public awareness as regards littering and proper disposal of garbage. On this note, it would be useful if such topics are included in the curriculum of our school system. If we inculcate the right attitude in the young minds, it is most likely to remain with them when they become adults.

In an article carried in the 8th August, 2011, *Kaieteur News* headlined, “Garbage continues to take over central Georgetown”, this is what the writer said:

“Garbage continues to be dumped in the streets of Georgetown and mainly on Orange Walk in front of the entrance to the Bourda Market and stallholders at pains to continue operating as the Mayor and City Council continues to be hampered by a lack of funds. The Central Government when they see the garbage mounting in the streets... More and more stallholders have ceased operations since working in such an environment is being

considered a health hazard and the situation is also preventing customers from visiting the market. For those who cannot afford to close their stalls, they are forced to work in the midst of this pileup of refuse just to make the market rental payments.”

I will quote what one stallholder said:

“Yuh think this right? We can get sick walking and working here. People ain’t want buy from we at the back here. The garbage is a turnoff. Give it couple more days and people gonna think this is a next dumpsite like how Le Repentir was.”

Another disgruntled businessman who operates opposite the Bourda Market garbage pile complained that the current situation with the stench and build-up of flies is bad for his business.

“Customers are not coming around now. It isn’t appealing for them to have to walk in the garbage and breathe in this awful air. We are paying our rates and taxes and the stallholders here have to pay rental fees every month. This is not fair to us.”

I recall many comments from my elderly grandmother who told me and my siblings about how beautiful Georgetown was in comparison to what it is today. I reside within the Bourda district and my house is bounded by an alleyway. I can safely say here this evening that over a decade that alleyway has not been cleared. It is currently a forested site. I would like to say to you, Hon. Member, that I do clean my area on a daily basis.

The good Book talks about old men and old women again sitting in the streets of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of age. The streets of the city will be filed with boys and girls playing in it. This was how Georgetown was at one time. I can recall, vividly, that as a young teenager growing up in the Bourda district, I used to play in the alleyways; I used to play on the malls. Today, these areas are more or less taken over by debris.

6.34 p.m.

The only time we recognise that the massive cleanup exercise is being undertaken in this country, I can recall quite clearly the recent republic anniversary we had. Church Street, Bourda area, North Road and all the trenches were filled with garbage. I observed just two weeks before the Republic Anniversary big trucks with men with forks and spades coming to clear the trench

area and clean the malls. The malls I once used to play on have now become a garbage site. Since then I have not observed the Ministry of Public Works or whoever was mandated; maintaining these areas. As I said before, we all have to come together and get the city clear.

This motion is a simple one, all that this motion is seeking to address is that we come together as citizens and get the city clean. In a press release carried by the United States Embassy on 14th September, 2012 in celebration of Inter-American Cleanliness and Citizenship, I guess Hon. Members in this House would have remembered that the American Embassy along with its Ambassador went into a few areas in South Georgetown where they assisted citizens in getting their areas clean. The area that came out on top was Tucville and the citizens were awarded. They were awarded for their efforts. We as citizens of this nation and leaders of this nation can take the very pattern and ensure that our country is clean.

I strongly believe the best solution in getting this city clean is this: there are men, strong healthy men, who might be in prison for simple larceny, domestic violence or some other petty crime committed so rather than having them in the prison feeding them with tax payers money bring them out and get them involved in this whole clean up exercise. I trust that the Government would heed to my suggestion.

In concluding, I would like to strongly support and I am calling on this entire House to support the motion. Let us come together and restore Georgetown to its former glory.

Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

Mr. Hamilton: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. Let me just state for the public record that sometime between 1994 and 1997, like you, I served on the Mayor and City Council as a Councilor. [**Mrs. Backer:** As a member of the PNC?] As a member of the GGG; correction. If we look at the Be It Further Resolve clause (ii) 2 it states:

“That the Government establishes a committee consisting of Members of Parliament, Officials of the Georgetown City Council , Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, and Ministry of Transport and Hydraulics...”

The point is whilst the motion and the thought brought here by Hon. Member Volda Lawrence is commendable, the issue of dealing with the City Council and the City is not as simple as she

portrays it. The question to be asked is what will be the role of the Mayor and his Councilors. Does the Hon. Member have a mandate from the Council? Is the Council desirous of the intervention that we are attempting to put in place? Was the Council asked whether they would welcome such an intervention? Because we know from time to time that the Mayor has had cause to say that he has problems with intervention from external sources in the running of the Council. Therefore, whilst we can yap about it in some quarters in the National Assembly, the fact is what role will the Mayor and his Councilors play? Do they want such an intervention? That question should be asked because the exercise will be wasted if we pass a motion here to establish a committee and the Council which has the mandate to run the city, as indicated by the mover of the motion, takes the position that the intervention is not warranted, they do not welcome the intervention. So it is an important question to ask yourself before you seek to ask us to support the motion. Whilst, as I said, it is commendable, all of us want the city to be clean; it is not as simple as passing a motion and putting some *ad hoc* committee together. The issue is how do you sustain beyond the grand clean up? What is the role of the City Council after this motion and the grand clean up? What happens after that? What happens after the three months of the Parliament and whoever is looking at the clean up? The other issue is that Members on the Opposition side would want us to debate this motion without speaking to the deficiencies of the present Council. We cannot do that. You cannot debate the motion and suggest that I be restricted from paying attention to the people who have the mandate. Mr. Speaker, when the Hon. Minister got up to speak the Hon. Member Harmon spoke about the Burrowes Commission Report. This report is April 2009 and just for the public record I want to make some references to the Report. [***Interruption***] That is why I am saying you cannot talk about the motion unless you are paying attention to the issues that exist at the City Council. On page 230 of this Report the heading is “Governance”. This is what the Commissioner says:

“The Commission of Inquiry highlighted that there was a serious issue of how the City Council accounted for its moneys.”

That is the point that the Minister was making. What will be the role of the City Council during the period? What will the City Council do during the period with the moneys it is collecting?

Page 232 spoke to the fundamental issue the City Council is yet to address. The City Council some years ago hired a consultant, Sandra Jones and Associates, to advise them about

downsizing and restructuring. They paid millions of dollars to the Consultant and are yet to act on that Report. Listen to what the Deputy Mayor Robert Williams, now deceased, said about that matter on page 232:

“The Deputy Mayor pointed out that the wage bill in 2009 was 53% of the total budget with 434 existing vacancies. If the vacancies were to be filled the wage bill will be increased to 70% of the total budget.”

Anyone who runs a business knows that if your wage bill is 70% of what you are garnering, that is a dead business. Therefore, the issue of restructuring the City Council is an outstanding issue, for a decade that the City Council itself paid a consultant to address that is yet to be addressed. The Minister spoke to the issue. You do no roads... [Mr. Ramjattan: What is the Government ratio?] When you get up to speak you can speak about the issue of the Government ratio. I am speaking about the Burrowes Report about the City Council’s ratio. We are discussing the City Council. The City Council asked a consultant to advise them on how they re-organise and they accepted the report from the consultant saying they have to re-organise and downsize, take out all the manual labour. The Deputy Mayor went on to say:

“It is expected that reorganization will be completed to employ some persons and when necessary transfer employees interdepartmentally.”

He said a point to note- the now deceased Deputy Mayor Robert Williams - was that employees were promoted to supervisory level who were known idlers. I am allowing the Burrowes Report to speak for the public record. We cannot discuss, as I said, the motion to restore the City and seek to extricate the people who, as the mover of the motion says, have a mandate to run the city. That is the principle discussion when we are moving on and if we want to move on. The Hon. Hamilton Green, Mayor of Georgetown, is commenting here on page 253 in discussion with the Commission:

“The Major sated under his stewardship that the Council was very conscious of the inaction by the officers in carrying out their operations. Over time, the Council sought to have reports of consultants Sandra Jones and Lynch Associates limited implemented which cost millions of dollars.”

[Interruption] Yes, it will get us somewhere. You cannot move on to discuss, Mr. Ramjattan, establishing a committee without looking at the deficiencies and inefficiencies you will face. You cannot. If you do not understand how the Council operates or do not operate you would not be able to participate in restoring the city. That is the issue.

“In the former council, no one wanted change and it was maintain status quo.

This is the Mayor. He said”

“For example there was liaison with the communities, agencies and arms of the municipality.”

I am putting this on public record as we debate so we can understand what we are dealing with before we move off. **[Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Page what?]** Page 255 of the said Report Councilor Junior Garret, member of APNU/PNC speaking... **[Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: A good man.]** A very good man. Councilor Garret said that it was the first time in 28 years of private practice that he has seen the level of lack of financial management as was evident in the operations of the City Council.

Page 291 of the Report, the Commissioner said the bigger issue was governance and it was necessary that a change agent/manager be utilised following the recommendations of the Report.

These reports and recommendations were 2009 recommendations. As we debate Hon. Member Lawrence’s motion this evening, the City Council is worse off than it was in 2009 as regards governance and management. So we cannot discuss forming a committee and we are not discussing what role the City Council, the people who have the mandate as Hon Member Volda Lawrence said, will play? The question to ask is would the committee during the process be able to participate and oversee the issues of expenditure within the Council? If you are asking the committee and giving them responsibilities at the same time you have to give them the authority to pay attention to the source of funding within the municipality. Where would the moneys come from? I note that is very silent. The question is would the committee utilise City Council resources or do we have to go somewhere and bring a supplementary paper for resources to be utilised to do this. We have to answer that question. **[Mr. Ramjattan: NICIL and Lotto.]**

Well, then you should put it in the motion so we will know where the money will come from. That is the issue as I said.

Hon. Member Ferguson spoke to the issue with garbage and that is the problem we have that is why we are not getting a handle on the issue of garbage. The issue is not garbage; the issue is solid waste management. Garbage is only symptomatic of no policy of managing solid waste. You can go out tomorrow and clean up all the garbage, but I would say to you one fortnight after you will have all the garbage back out there and we will have to have another committee. That is not the issue. The issue is how we manage solid waste. What programme and policy do we have to manage solid waste? Garbage is just part of the issue. The Council should have been at the stage... and we spoke to it. These matters are not new. Hon. Speaker you remember since 1974 we spoke to the issue of solid waste management. [**Mrs. Backer:** 1974?] Since 1994. By now we should have had wards where there was separation of garbage and that is not rocket science. If the City Council wanted to do those things they had the capacity, they had the money to do it. I am saying that the City Council some 17 years ago discussed the issue of solid waste management via separation of garbage and it was to start as a pilot in wards. As we speak, 17 years after, the City Council is yet to implement to see if that can work, if it will work. So we can set up this committee. We can bring all the equipment as asked... [**Mr. Ramjattan:** I know about the bill?] What is being asked of the Hon. Member is not new. That was done in this City several times. Several times in this City... [**Mrs. Backer:** So why are you objecting now?] I am not objecting. You have to listen and learn. I have not objected to anything as yet. You never listen so you do not learn anything. We have done many times in the last 20 years in the city what the motion is seeking to do. The Government and the private sector mobilised resources – backhoes, tractors, trailers, and trucks – and have cleaned this town as regards moving garbage and days after there was the same situation because concomitant with the cleaning up we are not putting in place a solid waste management programme to start teaching our people to separate waste- degradable from biodegradable waste. [**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Where is the draft Bill?] Mr. Speaker, you do not have to wait on a Bill to do what is right. I do not know the City Council has to wait on a Bill. I am saying 17 years ago whilst I served as a Councilor, the issue of separation of garbage was discussed. It was to be implemented before we had the problem. Before the Hags Bosch land fill site, we should have already been at the stage of separation of garbage. The citizens of Georgetown, that has to be piloted by the municipality.

Check every country and every city that has enacted that operation; it was piloted by the councils. *[Interruption]* The Council here is in charge of their own taxes. According to Mr. Burrowes the Council is in charge of a \$2.5 billion economy. *[Interruption]* There is no division. I am saying you cannot discuss the motion and lay the City Council aside. That is the mistake. You have to discuss what we have at present. I am saying what we have at present is a City Council that is inefficient and deficient. We have to put that in the framework as we discuss the motion. **[Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** He did not even read the motion.] I read the motion.

The Minister spoke to one issue. Mr. Burrowes touched on the issue of the business where you have your employment cost outstripping... **[Mrs. Backer:** It is not a business.] That is the problem. The Deputy Mayor does not recognise that the Council is a business and maybe Mr. Hamilton Green does not understand it is a business. That is the reason why they are running into the ground. The City Council, any council you are running whether it is a public or private company it is a business you are running. **[Mrs. Backer:** Education is a business too.] Yes, it is. So it is a \$2.5 billion business and nothing is happening as regards that.

As I said when I started the motion is commendable and seeking to attempt to highlight the problem, but I am saying if we simplify it we will miss the boat. That is what I am attempting to do, to say that this is not as simple as saying, take some people together, form a committee and go and clean the city. It is not as simple as that. You have to engage firstly the Council as to whether the Council wants such an intervention. You have to ask the Council that question and I do not know we have asked them.

Mr. Speaker the other issue is, as I said, there are some amendments that were tabled under the hand of the Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment. We hope in the consideration of the motion and for us seeking to fashion a way to deal with the issue that faces the City because all of us want a clean city. I do not know anyone who does not want a clean city, but we must not simplify the remedy. We must take everything into consideration as we seek to find a remedy to clean our City up and how to sustain it. What are the concomitant things we have to do? As I said, if we focus on garbage we will miss the boat totally. We have to focus on how we manage solid waste. That will help us in the process we are attempting to do.

Thank you very much *[Applause]*

Dr. Roopnarine: Mr. Speaker I am a little surprised, although perhaps I ought not to be, that this motion that seeks to engage us all in what is essentially a national tragedy ... [Shouts of “firearm” and “no” from the Government side.]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members could we allow Dr. Roopnarine to even start.

Dr. Roopnarine: I was trying to say Mr. Speaker that I am a little surprised that this simple motion that seeks to engage us in what is a national tragedy has generated quite as much heat as it seems to have done. What is the thrust of the motion? The thrust of the motion is to confront the intolerable degradation of our capital city and to make practical proposals to address it. I have some sympathy for my colleague who just spoke in that what he wants to see is not a just and immediate solution but a sustainable solution. I have no quarrel with that; we need to devise a sustainable solution. We do not want a solution for next week or next month or the month after that. We want a solution that is actually going to last, to try to restore Georgetown and keep Georgetown in the kind of state we want to see it in.

Speakers on the other side, including the Minister who spoke, say that the motion ignores what he calls the root cause namely the responsibility of the city council and he made very heavy weather of this particular point.

7.04 p.m.

I do not think we need to, at this stage, use up the energy that we have on blaming the City Council or looking at its undoubtedly, well established, failings.

The motion seeks to go beyond that, it is really, I believe, an uncontroversial initiative that is long overdue and one, I believe, around which we can all unite. A number of amendments to the motion have been submitted and there are some of those amendments which we believe we can support.

Given the public health hazards to which persons have alluded and posed by the accumulation of garbage and I will come to the issue of solid waste disposal, resulting in the population explosion of vermin, rats, mosquitoes and the attendant raise of dengue, filaria and other dangerous diseases, it is a motion that could have been brought by the Hon. Minister of Health. The Minister of Tourism, I think, should, I believe, should support this motion with energy. He must

be consoled, I think, by the fact that the motion is seeking to overturn the discouragement that tourist must feel when they come and confront the less than salubrious sights and smells of the capital. This is not how we want to greet visitors to our country.

The Minister with responsibility for the environment, I know through his Urban Park and the Rehabilitation Plan and the *Pick it up Guyana* proposals have been making efforts, strenuous efforts, but how can we not feel utterly disgraced by the unkempt jungle that passes for a cemetery at Le Repentir reflecting a rather unseeingly and alien irreverence for our departed.

To state the obvious, we are and have been for many years in the midst of the severest of crisis in the area of Solid Waste Management; that is a fact. I was happy to hear this afternoon that there was a Bill in preparation that is going to bring the issue of Solid Waste Management to this Parliament and I for one look forward very much to the Bill. Of course, it is more evident here where we live in Georgetown and work, the crisis in Solid Waste Management is not restricted to the city. As far away as Kumaka, in Lethem, along the East Coast, the indiscriminate dumping of garbage is assumed really extraordinary proportions. Hopefully with the strengthening and empowerment of the National Democratic Councils (NDCs) intended by the Local Government Reform and what I hope are the impending Local Government Elections, the task of the management of Solid Waste will be undertaken in a more serious and systematic way, especially if it is going to be grounded in a new law on Solid Waste Management.

The new landfill at Haags Bosch is actually plagued with problems. We know, for instance that the Haags Bosch facility was designed to managed three hundred and fifty tonnes a day and the site is currently receiving four hundred and twenty tonnes. They have problems of compaction; the restriction of operations to day light hours is causing a great problem. In the city itself the lack of compacting equipment arrangements for the separation of garbage, the absence of transfer stations, where the garbage can be held for onwards transportation to Haags Bosch, the absence of tidy tip locations not far from residential areas, where waste can be sorted and separated before being collected by the Municipality and we can make a start with the hospitality industry – the hotels, restaurants, the need for more skips around the city.

I am a little bit perplexed to hear that these proposals, according to the former Councillor the Hon. Mr. Hamilton, in fact, were proposals that were put all these years ago and there has been

no implementation of it. That is a tragedy because if these problems were recognised as early as that and that there was a problem which people saw in relations to the separation of garbage and so on that nothing was done in this regard, I think partly accounts for where we are today.

We have immediate measures that can be considered by this National Assembly, for instance I for one, am completely in favour of the outright banning as it is happening in an increasing number of countries, of Styrofoam and plastic bags. Why are we taking so long to ban Styrofoam in this country? I was very pleased to be at the opening at SAPIL, when in fact they were making new degradable food containers. I hope that this effort is going to receive great support and become, in effect, an effective replacement for Styrofoam. In the meantime, we have an interest in getting the Styrofoam out of our system, out of our drains, across the seawalls and beaches; we should get them out of the place.

On the very vexed issue about which much has been made, in relations to the City Council's chronic lack of funds to execute its programmes, there is no doubt and I do not think we should have an argument about this, that the Central Government has not looked with favour on proposals that have come from the Council in relations to the garnering of revenue. Let us not fool ourselves on that that has actually happened. They have made proposals: they have made proposals for parking metres; they have made proposals about the rental of their parapets for Guyana Power and Light Inc. (GPL) poles. Then there is the issue of the under collection of Rates and Taxes. My friend, the Hon. Minister, I believe is perhaps overly sanguine to believe that going out and meeting with these defaulters and having a nice chat with them is going to improve the question of the payment of Rates and Taxes. I am not that sanguine myself. The fact of the matter is that in order to address the issue of delinquency, the efforts and there have been efforts to move to the Courts against defaulters, these efforts have been frustrated by the notoriously malarial case of our judicial system. Hence, the proposal sometime ago for a Municipal Court and this idea of a Municipal Court was supported in the past by the then Chancellor, Justice Desiree Bernard and the Chief Justice Carl Singh. Eventually, on the insistence of the City Council, a Magistrate was appointed only for him to be deployed to an outstation very soon after. There is the issue of revaluation, a matter of pressing importance, given the eminence of the enactment of the Fiscal Transfer legislation that will affect the NDCs and the Municipalities.

The law I believe requires that all properties be revaluated in five years and my friend the Hon. Minister of Finance can perhaps shed some light on the operations of the valuations division. You know that in relations to the Fiscal Transfers that are being contemplated in the Select Committee, the arrival at a formula that is going to be based on objective criteria for the transfer of funds to the Local Government organs, this is going to require, I believe, a revaluation of properties across the country, if we are going to make any sensible decision in relation to the formula.

This, I believe, is not an inappropriate place to raise the question of the issue of the waiving and granting of exemptions to select persons and business entities. This House, I believe, deserves to understand and to be given an explanation of the principles and criteria that are used in the granting of such waivers. As far as the motion is concerned, the two Resolve clauses, the first clause indicate the need for urgent and immediate actions. The second clause deals with the monitoring of progress. The intention here is for the most, broad-based inclusive participation, not unlike what the Hon. Minister of Natural Resources is attempting to do; to build a very strong coalition of concern citizens and organisations to move towards the solution of this Solid Waste crisis and other environmental disasters.

Like others I was very distressed by the collapse of the koker door at Cowan Street. Again it is not my interest to be pointing fingers, but I ask myself, what can be so difficult? All the nine kokers involved from Princess Street to Cowan Street, the size of the door is exactly. **[Mr. Benn:** It is not.] I am told that they are Hon. Minister. Because if they are indeed the same, it is difficult to understand why doors are not built, two or three doors, to be kept in reserve in the case of a disaster because if these doors, some of them as the Hon. Minister knows are very old and if they have to be raised and dropped four times a day, it is to be anticipated that the groves and so on will deteriorate and we are likely to have the kind of problem that arose at Cowan Street.

As far as the activities that we hope to undertake in relations to the seeking of relief for the Solid Waste Disposal issues, there is clearly a need for street and ward monitors, in addition to the proposals made by my Hon. Colleague, Ms. Ferguson that there is need for an intense public education campaign.

My own view is that the campaign headed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the “*Pick it up Guyana*” campaign, should not be seen as a rival activity, but a complementary operation. I think we need to combine our ideas and combine our energies in this regard and let us not spend as much time as we have already spent in this debate, quoting from reports and pointing out weakness with which, I believe, we are all well aware.

Let me point out for instance that there is a very old plan drafted in 2001, of which I am sure some Members are fully aware, which is a draft of the Greater Georgetown Development Plan – Planning Scheme 2001-2010. In there, as you would know, they pay a great deal of attention to the issue of waste disposal. One of the things we have not discussed here is the issue of sewerage disposal. We have talked about garbage, but the issue of sewerage disposal is very serious. I want to quote from the plan. This is the plan that was put out by the consultants who came in and presented to the Minister. The team was headed by Prof. Akhtar Khan, a chartered town planner, this is what it says at paragraph 13 (3):

“The master plan for the proposed sewerage disposal prepared by Engineering Services Limited in 1975, which was reiterated by Caribbean Development Bank consultant in 1978, is still valid. Later developments such as Kitty, Subryanville, Bel Air Gardens, Campbellville, et cetera, were not sewer. According to Housing and Urban Development Report prepared for Istanbul Conference in 1996, a master plan to rebuild the sewerage and water system in Georgetown, is in its first implementation stage.”

It would be useful to know what effectively has happened beyond the implementation stage. Because I do believe that the issue of sewerage disposal is something to which we need to turn our attention, if we are going to be talking about comprehensive waste management.

The other point I want to make very briefly, is that the failure to implement this plan, which in effect covers not simply the issue of Solid Waste Disposal, but issues of traffic control, issues of vendors, issues of squatting and regularisation, all of these issues are covered in this plan. What we know about this plan is that very little of it has actually been implemented.

In relations, for instance, to the Central Housing and Planning Authority (CHPA), which I know, my friend the Hon. Minister of Housing would be pleased to consider, in the chapter dealing with Housing at paragraph 23 (2.3), this is what the report has to say:

“There is neither a tradition of pro-active planning nor integrated planning by the CH&PA international plans, nor conducting feasibility studies for Urban Infrastructural Projects, nor of developing implementation programmes, in addition to the plans themselves.”

I do not believe there is much to be gained by pointing fingers at weakness that undoubtedly exists in many of our institutions, including the Ministry. What we need to do is to take full recognition of what these weaknesses are and attempt, I believe, not to be discouraged by them, we are not suggesting that they be overlooked, but we are suggesting that the present crisis requires from us in this National Assembly, a concerted effort, one to recognise the problem as it exist and attempt to forge a plan to address it. This is all this simple motion asks and I am urging that notwithstanding all of the diagnosis that we have heard in relations to the City Council that we not be deterred in relations to our determination to do something about this problem and to attempt to fix it. In fixing it, I would recommend that we think very strongly of the sustainability of the remedies that we are going to apply.

With those few words I end my contribution to this motion. [*Applause*]

Sitting suspended at 7.45 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 8.01 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, Mr. Robeson Benn, you may address the Assembly.

Minister of Public Works [Mr. Benn]: Thank you Mr. Speaker and Hon. Members. I think that the discussion this time on the restoration of the City of Georgetown is an important discussion. I think however, that the way the motion is presented, the information that is presented in it and the way that the mover of the motion and some of her supporters have been characterising the issues dealing with the City of Georgetown, presents an escapist position with respect to the City and its problems.

First off, I would like to apologise to the Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson, if somehow I gave her the impression that I was responsible for the cleanup of the City of Georgetown and for the management of the City of Georgetown. [**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** Not the city, the lot next to her house.] Even for the lot next to her house!

We cannot avoid discussing the problems of the City of Georgetown without going to the crux of the matter, the hub and periphery of the problems as was expressed by the Hon. Members, Mr. Joseph Hamilton and Mr. Norman Whittaker, the Minister within the Ministry of Local Government. The fact of the matter as was clearly represented by them is that we have a Mayor and City Council that have a clear revenue base, who have staff, an establishment, workers, management and others who are responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the City with respect to policing with respect to constabulary of course, garbage, the cleaning of drains and the cemeteries and all those things which were so lamented about in great details by the Hon. Members on our side.

It is strange too to have to point out that there are two different things going on in the City of Georgetown. On the one hand, for the first time in perhaps ten or fifteen years, in fact, for even a longer period, but over the last ten or fifteen years, the landscape of the City of Georgetown, its profile, architecturally, is being transformed. Much of this is attributed to the efforts of the ordinary citizens, the businessmen, the entrepreneurs and also to the Government - which has worked hard to create the environment so that there are successful businesses, housing development, professional development and business development through the Central Housing and Planning Authority and other agencies in the City.

No one can gainsay that on each major street in the City of Georgetown: Regent Street, Main Street or whatever street you want to call in respect of the main city, that significant building and development is taking place, something that has not happened in this city and also in the country at large for many years. A dramatic transformation is taking place!

While this development is taking place in the private spaces of the citizenry and the businesses, outside these environs - which are controlled by the Mayor and City Councillors - things are getting, as we all agree, from bad to worse; getting decidedly from bad to worse.

We cannot avoid speaking about the politics in this matter. The inescapable truth is and everyone knows this on the streets of Georgetown that the City is controlled by a Mayor and Councillors that is dominated and represented by APNU supporters and Members. This is an inescapable fact and the People's National Congress (PNC) with the Good and Green Party (GGG) and the APNU, sometimes joined by the AFC perversely, whenever in this country Guyana, they come

to a position of strength and of running things, things fall apart. In the City of Georgetown, in this Guyana there is no more prime example again of things falling apart. When they ran the country, things fell apart; the country fell apart and continually their running of the city, things fall apart to the risk of the citizenry and to the risk of visitors to the City.

Now the mover of the motion is perhaps crying tears, along with all of us too and saying how terrible it is. Somehow, by way of this motion and by its presentation suggesting that they too have nothing to do with it. That they have nothing to do with the fact that the City, its environment, the sewerage collection, the garbage and everything, they want to create an impression that they have had nothing to do with it. But they are the leaders, it is their men and women who are in charge in the City in Georgetown. It is their men and women, the relics who are in charge in the City of Georgetown. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I will ask that you temper your comments. I have heard perverse associations; relics. You made a reference of Mrs. Volda Lawrence crying tears, it bordered on suggesting that she was feigning an interest, but I understand your passion.

Mr. Benn: In any event I am saying the energy, the ideas, the motive force at City Hall; we know where it all emanates from. So the blame for things falling apart; the blame for the problems, the idea, the lack of energy for not doing things properly lies on that side of that House.

Let us speak about the koker since Mr. Harmon raised it and the Hon. Member Dr. Roopnarine spoke about the length or the width of the kokers; [**Mr. Ali:** The size.] the size of the kokers. The reason the koker failed; the reason it got smashed as was described was because of negligence. The koker door was not closed again, for the second time in the year because of negligence by the operators. It had nothing to do with the strength or age of the koker door. For the Hon. Member's benefit, the width of the koker door is eighteen feet seven inches. They are not all the same, many of them are twelve feet, but in fact when we discussed with the City Council in meetings last week with respect to the tides and the swellings we expected, we asked about the condition of the koker doors and the City Council and Town Clerk said that they were afraid of the Kingston Koker, that is the one further north of the one which failed and of the one at Riverview. But because they were not sure; first they did not have the wood to repair or to fit

and we said we would get the wood and asked well should we cut it. Then they said it was different widths, so we said well do not let us cut it, let us wait so as to be able to respond to any problem.

8.14 p.m.

It was thought that Ruimveldt and the one further to the north would have collapsed, but not out of negligence, rather out of the pressure of the swellings against the koker. The staff of the City Council, its general membership, its workers are beaten men and women. They are beaten. They are demoralised. They do not want to work. They speak and talk of things which are going on in City Council and then there are the reports. There are the various reports by Burrowes and others. There are in the reports, of what the goings on are. They are speaking of problems in the market with the constabulary. A little mafia is collecting money every week from the vendors and from the people on Regent Street and other places and pocketing it and sharing it around. They speak of these things and so the ordinary worker is demoralised and does not want to work so it does not matter how many people one has there. They would not work for more than one or two hours a day; make a pretence of work and so the problems of not getting to do effective work is that there is no belief in the leadership in the Mayor and the Town Council at the level of the workforce. One would not get it done. This is the reason the Government has persistently called for an Interim Management Committee (IMC) and I want to call for the IMC now! [**Mrs. Backer:** Headed by you.] No, I do not want to head it. I would put Mr. Granger to head it. We should have an IMC now.

The call in this motion should be for an IMC because if the APNU is prepared to have on Regent Street, at the entrance to the City Hall, themselves there since the last elections... If they advertise themselves at the entrance of the City Hall they should be prepared to take leadership there, properly. If there is failure in their leadership, in their men at the City Hall, they should be prepared to call and take the steps which would see change in City Hall. They hold Georgetown as their constituency and they should take leadership and action to help the situation since the citizens of Georgetown are all at risk.

There are a lot of attempts to denigrate the Government's efforts in the city of Georgetown. The Hon. Member, Mr. Irfaan Alli, I think, is spending \$1.4 billion to redo the sewerage in the city of

Georgetown on behalf of the Government, of course. He is the Minister. Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member and Minister, Mr. Irfaan Alli, through his Ministry for all citizens to see, is redoing the sewerage lines and the pump stations...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, could we have some order please?

Mr. Benn: ...doing the sewerage lines and pump stations...

Mr. Speaker: One second. Minister Benn, there is a Point of Order on the floor, I believe.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, there was a comment from the floor about a Minister putting all of the money into his back pocket.

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear it.

Ms. Teixeira: Well all of us at this end heard it, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, again let us refrain from making these comments.

Ms. Teixeira: It was said by no less than the Chief Whip, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: At the end of this night I can almost anticipate that the Georgetown City Council in block may very well want to write a reply to some of the things that have been said. Let us keep the debate at a certain level and avoid the...

Mr. Benn: Mr. Speaker, I am sure that you do not have to encourage the Georgetown City Council to write any letters.

Mr. Speaker: No.

Mr. Benn: They will write anyhow. They write all of the time but they do not do anything else but write.

Mr. Speaker: I do not know if they write. I do not read their writing.

Mr. Benn: Mr. Speaker, I have spoken about the restoration of the sewerage in the city of Georgetown; something that has not been done for over 60 years. We are aware that we have rehabilitated and closed the Le Repentir Dumpsite.

We have - the Government of Guyana that is - has purchased what is now the mall on Water Street. I think that it was at one time called Toolsie Land. There was a dispute between Toolsie Persaud and the Government as to what the true value of the land is. The Government of Guyana purchased the land and had a mall/minimart established there. It is not being properly used.

The Government of Guyana closed the dumpsite at La Repentir and established the new Haags Bosch Waste Management Site. Of course both Mr. Trotman and Mr. Harmon did say, while presentations were being made, that one is supposed to do it. [**Mrs. Backer:** You mean ‘the Speaker’, whom you are talking about.] Mr. Trotman who is on the benches on that side... Of course the Government will intervene and get involved in situations when they get dire. The fact of the matter is that the situation is always dire in Georgetown. The fact of the matter is that the Government has constantly, every three or four months, intervened in cleanups in the city of Georgetown. Many times when there are particular events coming on, as we just had with Mashramani, and many times when there are international events coming on, but generally when it gets unbearable to the point as it is again now where somebody has to do something. It is unfair to the citizenry that moneys are spent and people are employed and no proper work is being done.

There are problems with garbage disposal. There is a problem, perhaps, with the issue of recapitalization of the trucks used to go to the dumpsite. The cycle time could be a bit longer than it used to be but the fundamental fact of the matter is the lack of enforcement with respect to garbage dumping. There is a city constabulary and if action is taken with respect to the dumping of garbage at known illegal irregular guerrilla dumpsites action will be taken. “Guerrilla dumping” is a term with respect to garbage dumping. There are guerrilla dumpsites known all over the city and our Ministry had sat down with the Ministry of Local Government and the City Council. We have noted and have cleaned those sites from time to time but the people who are responsible for maintaining, enforcing and taking steps so that there is not a current or ongoing reoccurrence of this problem do not do their work. They do not do their work. They are distracted by other things.

Mention was made about the use of prisoners in the city for a cleaning up. The Ministry of Public Works has been using prisoners for about five years or more now. We pay them and we also feed them on Fridays and they have been a good labour force. They have worked well with

us with respect to helping with the cleaning along the declared public roads and also with respect to the cleaning at some of these sites where dumping is going on. There are times when they are not always available but they have been a significant resource with respect to cleaning up garbage in the city.

There is no way that we can continue to rely on the Mayor and City Councilors if they cannot keep their own house in order. The fact of the matter is that we could all point and see that this building is falling down around their ears.

The City Engineers have \$20 million that the Government gave them with respect to doing work to start preparing that building. They have hardly spent any money. They do not intend to fix anything and they would not fix anything and if it continues that building will fall down; the landscape of the city will be fundamentally changed when that building falls down as the building at the Palms fell down many years ago. [*Inaudible*] That is the question that I wanted to pose to Mr. Granger and at least he has left. [**Mrs. Backer:** You like Mr. Granger, “eh”?] Mr. Speaker, I want Granger to lead. [**Mrs. Backer:** There is not “Granger”, “Mr. Granger, Leader of the Opposition”.] I want Granger to lead. [**Mrs. Backer:** What is going on?]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Deputy Speaker, I heard you say, “You like Granger, eh?”, “You like Granger”. When he said “I want Granger [to do something]” you object to it.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Speaker, I am sitting.

Mr. Speaker: I know, but my sense is that he is responding to you.

Mrs. Backer: Then he has to sit down.

Mr. Speaker: With respect, you engaged the Member using the word “Granger”. He is on his feet responding to you. Both of you, in my opinion, are wrong.

Mrs. Backer: I accept that.

Mr. Speaker: You should have said, “You like the Hon. Member, Mr. Granger...” Indeed Members shall be referred to by their official titles. This is the Leader of the Opposition...

Mrs. Backer: He started it.

Mr. Speaker: ...and we shall keep it that way.

Mrs. Backer: He started it. He did.

Mr. Benn: You meant “The Hon. Member, Robeson Benn”. Mr. Speaker, I do not want to be the one to prolong this debate. I believe that the amendments which are suggested with respect to the motion proposed by the Hon. Minister Robert Persaud are apt. At a personal level again I believe that we should call now for the setting up of an IMC and that an IMC should be proposed that we adopt that because we are not sure when the Local Government Elections will be held and we cannot continue to live in hope, given the past experience so I am suggesting that it is in everyone’s interest in this House and in the city of Georgetown to call for an IMC. Let us have an IMC now!

The Ministry of Public Works, through its Urban Roads Programme financed by the Ministry of Finance and through its Miscellaneous Roads Programmes, does work every year at hundreds of millions of dollars repairing streets in the city of Georgetown, particularly. There is the cry emanating from the other side that there is never enough money. There will never be enough money if there is not production. There will never be enough money if the ways of doing things would not stand proper scrutiny.

There is a revenue base for the city. If there is only 50 percent collection who do we blame? If there is the recourse to the sale of properties for defaulters who do we blame for not selling the properties? We cannot have this complaint after all of these years of being in control of the city. We cannot have these complaints anymore. I would like to let us have a significant reality check.

We should not attempt to bring a motion like this to avoid the issue, to obfuscate the issue, to not state plainly what the facts are with respect to the city of Georgetown and so I want to support the amendments which are proposed. I have been saying that I am aware that the Committees of Local Government... There could be a joining of people who want to get involved in issues with that Committee. I believe that, by speaking with the Ministry of Local Government, we serve on that Committee as to how we could improve things in the city of Georgetown. With good will, with sincerity, we can have changes and a dramatic improvement in the city of Georgetown and I would like to join with my colleagues on this side in condemning the continuation of management of attitudes and personages which lead to the further degradation of the city of

Georgetown and I want to encourage Members on all sides of the House to adopt the amendments proposed and also, of course, to consider the matter of an IMC. Let us have an IMC now and save the city of Georgetown.

I am glad that the Hon. Member, Mr. Irfaan Alli, is working on this matter of the sewerage because we have severe problems where the sewage after all of these years and failure of the pump stations has gotten into the canals along Lamaha Street and some other canals. It emanates and “stanches” all of the time. The Hon. Member, Dr. Rupert Roopnarine, was talking about stench and we might note recently that there was an outbreak of cholera in Haiti and if we continue along this path... It does not matter how nice the houses that we are living in individually, how nice the space is within our own fences. The problem is outside on the road when we exit our gates and our yards so I am appealing to all Members in this House to confront the issue, problems and the personages at the City Hall so that we can have a change so that we can have a significant improvement in the way the city is run so that we do not just save the city but the citizenry and the visitors to the city, both national visitors and tourists. I am calling again for us to join up and to have a reality check here and have a frank and free admission so that we deal with this issue and so that we have progress and sustainable living in the city of Georgetown.

I thank you very much. [*Applause*]

Mrs. Hughes: Hon. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to rise to support this important and timely motion, The Restoration of Georgetown, on behalf of the Alliance For Change. I recognise each of us, Hon. Members, sitting in this House bring our individual communities and sometimes our own political positions on a range of issue that come before this House on behalf of the people of Guyana, whom we serve, but I am optimistic that when one closely examines the motion, the Restoration of Georgetown to its once pristine glory as the garden city of the Caribbean, this is an objective that we should all be committed to finding real solutions to once and for all. After all Georgetown is our capital city, the seat of our Government, home to our Parliament, historic law court, cathedrals, temples, mosques, churches and home to more than 60 percent of our population. We therefore have the responsibility to protect and preserve this great city that was handed to us and to ensure that we leave it intact to hand on to successive generations of Guyanese. I am confident that none of us would want to go down in history as ignoring,

destroying or failing to bring back from the precipice of destruction our city of Georgetown. This is therefore not a political issue but one that each and every Guyanese can and must rally around with a united commitment to taking responsibility for the role each of us plays in the unfolding tragedy that takes place today.

Let us be honest with ourselves. Clogged drains which once flowed freely have trees growing out of them. We now have generations which do not know that some of our drains in the city are, in fact, concrete drains and that in some areas drains are in fact drains and not reclaimed lands. The daily horror stories during the rainy season of schools being closed because of flooding, sections of the city under water after a few hours of rainfall and the incident of overflowing sewage in the business area are all events which we should bow our heads in shame over.

This motion attempts to highlight the major issues facing our city. I mentioned drainage and the other issues, including mounting garbage, contractors' and builders' waste left callously on the sides of streets which are all alluded to and considered in the motion with a plea for close examination and a resolution of the problem.

Several organisations over the last ten years have attempted to clean up and find solutions to the smothering of the city under mounting piles of garbage. In each attempt, the result has been limited and unsustainable.

I feel that with this motion this Parliament has the unique opportunity to declare to all of Guyana that this unfolding disaster is totally unacceptable and that each of us has the responsibility to stop it right now. This must be done for our continued good health and, most importantly, for our personal pride as Guyanese. I hold my head in shame when visitors to our country seek explanations as to why the city is so filthy for the dirt and filth are a reflection of each and every one of us, our children, our teenagers, our adults, pensioners. Each one of us contributes to this mammoth problem.

I recognise that the entity to deal with most of these challenges is the City Council. I also recognise that the city has an expanding population and that brings strain to an over-ageing infrastructure and dwindling revenues vis-à-vis rising costs and lower tax collection revenues all pose real and present dangers. Now is the time for us to implement the numerous suggestions put forward by so many over the years; things like increasing revenue based on parking meters, a

municipal lottery or revenue to be gained by the erection of billboards on acceptable sites. These are just some of the many suggestions. Not to mention revenues from the lotto fund and the \$1.8 billion collected so far for an environmental tax which can be used for the restoration of our city.

I am well aware the criticisms will be laid by many against the Council and by others against the Government with claims of them paying their taxes on time. Many would even suggest that the Hon. Minister Whittaker and, indeed, the Hon. Minister Benn have no moral authority to bellyache about the ills of the City Council and the mismanagement of the municipality when the Government that they are both a part of has failed to hold Local Government Elections in 19 years.

We in the AFC are critical of the way the City Council operates. We are also aware of mismanagement and the inefficiencies as well as the corruption but the Government cannot remove itself from blame. The cure is Local Government Elections which this PPP Government has refused to hold. Government MP, the Hon. Hamilton, said that the problem is not garbage but solid waste but he forgets that the Government benefited from a US\$20 million solid waste project and up to this day the Government has shelved the Draft Solid Waste Management Law and has refused to set up a solid Waste Management Authority with powers to prosecute. The Government has also failed to introduce legislation for the proper disposal of toxic medical waste and hazardous waste and has placed citizens' safety and health in jeopardy as we saw most recently in Red Village.

I say to all of us in this room 'Let us stop the "scapegoating"'. We in the AFC are not going to waste time debating where to lay the blame for a wise woman once said, in fact she is Hillary Clinton, "Every wasted moment looking back prevents us from moving forward." The current blame game leaves us all paralyzed, living in filth and fearing an outbreak of an epidemic at any time. As I said, every wasted moment looking back prevents us from moving forward. This, after all, is a 'to do' motion and I believe that we in this House have a great opportunity to work together and to change this.

The motion recognises the expanding boundaries of the city which has contributed to the strain. We in the AFC would like to suggest that we reconsider the subdividing of the city into wards as was done before. We consider and recognise that along the East Coast Corridor, between

Liliendaal and Turkeyen, we have a collection of high-profile institutions that make all of us proud. These include the CARICOM Headquarters, our International Conference Centre, the new Aquatic Centre, the University of Guyana. How can we accept piles of garbage in these areas or anywhere else in Guyana?

One of my most embarrassing moments as a Guyanese recently was to open our news papers a few months ago and to see photographs of our “A-B-C” Ambassadors encouraging us to clean up our mess. Although every appreciative of their assistance over the years to their current support of the Pick It Up Campaign, which we all support, I could not help but be overwhelmed with emotion that others have to come in to help us to clean up our own house. This highlights the need for strict enforcement of litter laws and the prosecution for dumping of commercial and industrial waste, not to mention the wanton disposal of every imaginable form of garbage that is thrown out of every vehicle including cars and minibuses and that we see on the seawall after Sunday evening and other places far too many to mention. More garbage bins emptied often and other creative initiatives must be implemented immediately and I think that all of us can contribute to the solution.

As a contrast to our situation, Suriname has some of the cleanest cemeteries maintained by offenders during community service and I am happy to hear that Minister Benn is using their services. These cemeteries, believe it or not, do in fact embody part of our history. This shows that, with creative approaches, solutions can be found.

The motion in its current form goes far beyond merely cleaning up the city but in fact talks about restoring Georgetown. Given this we would like to further suggest that an architectural landscape of Guyana be commissioned by our architects and engineers so that we can create a vision of what the city will look like in 50 years, with careful consideration for spaces that we should be allocating for parking and recreational activities. Let us put on the table the hundreds of plans and proposals gathering dust in so many offices all across Guyana that highlight innovative plans for the development of the seawall area and other prime locations, a proper and attractive vendors’ arcade for our creative craftsmen and all of these other opportunities bursting with potential.

Now to the greater tourism potential that the possible restoration of our city offers: A review of UNESCO's World Heritage Website reminds us that as far back as 1995, and later in 2005, locations in Guyana had been placed on a tentative list for possible acceptance as world heritage sites.

8.44 p.m.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site listing grants worldwide recognition to locations and historical monuments deemed to be of outstanding universal value. Today there are nine hundred and sixty-two such locations across the world. The Caribbean World Heritage Site includes the Barrier Reef Reserve System in Belize, the Piton Management Area in St. Lucia and in Suriname the Central Suriname Nature Reserve and the entire area called the Historic Inner City of Paramaribo.

We are fortunate that in Guyana we have five strong possibilities for World Heritage Site listing. Three of the five possibilities are, in fact, located in Georgetown. These five sites are the City Hall of Georgetown, Fort Zeelandia, including the Court of Policy in Essequibo, what is called Plantation Georgetown Structure and Historic Buildings, which is larger Georgetown area, Shell Beach on the Essequibo Coast and finally the St George's Cathedral.

Members of this House, the possibilities for increased tourism revenues and most importantly the success stories of listed locations, which have been restored with valuable assistance from UNESCO, are many. The process of restoring Georgetown, therefore, will assist in moving Guyana sites from a tentative listing to a recognised listing. Let us commit to examining new ways that our municipalities can be managed in the future, as a way of dealing with the current problems.

I have expressed, on many occasions, to my friend, the Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce my willingness to work with him on the development of the tourism sector. I see him smiling. The spirit of cooperation and working together, in our city, to make our city better for all Guyanese, I am convinced, is one area we can find consensus on.

With continuing public awareness and education, the implementation of sorting and recycling at homes of citizens and the implementation of solutions to the myriad of problems we have talked

about so far, today, we can restore this precious city. I am convinced that we can work together, so I say let this motion be an important start to the task ahead with public and private sectors, the city council, Government and Guyanese citizens of all ages on board, I am confident that we can succeed.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Mrs. Hughes. That was very refreshing. Hon. Members, we invite the Hon. Minister to follow in the same vein.

Mr. G. Persaud: I rise to make my contribution to this motion, but before I do so, Mr. Speaker, permit me please to clear up some misconceptions.

I think, maybe, information, which was shared, suggested that research was missing, for example the issue of holding of Local Government Elections. Just one month ago all of us here, in this Assembly, discussed and went through all of the reasons why Local Government Elections which were - I should correct - not nineteen years in waiting, because the last Local Government Elections were held in 1994,... and so it was constitutionally due in 1997. That is the first bit of math that we need to get right. [**Mr. Ramjattan:** You do not know to count.] Well, maybe.

The second bit is that the People's Progressive Party/ Civic (PPP/C) Government is willing and ready to hold Local Government Elections, but because of our belief in consensus, because of our belief in putting Guyana first we sought to make sure that the major players and their views are taken on board.

It bothers me that I have to use the House's time to repeat something that was said, and I think abundantly clear, only one month ago, that in 2010 the PPP/C Government was moving at a rapid pace in getting Local Government Elections to be held. It was the intervention of the Opposition political party that saw a process which consumed significant sums of Guyana dollars, taxpayers' dollars, already expended towards holding that elections and the claims and objections period was the end of that exercise. Sometimes standing up, here in this House, repeating some statements..., either we are not listening, or we are not hearing what each other is saying, or we are not reading the recordings here.

Another bit: This is news to me that sixty per cent of Guyana's population resides in the city of Georgetown. That is news; but these things, whether mistake or not, are irresponsible because they are going into the annals of our records in this country. We have to be responsible people.
[Interruption]

Mr. Speaker: Okay. What is a reasonable figure then?

Mr. G. Persaud: Well, it borders around twenty-five to twenty-eight per cent. Mr. Speaker, this House must not be a place for gaffe, we say whatever we want. We must be accurate in what we are saying here. We must bring empirical evidence to this House. That is what this place is for. This is not a street corner, Mr. Speaker. We have to make sure that we come here well armed and prepared with the facts. Mr. Speaker, thanks to your management and the support here. The nation has greater access to the information, which is shared in here, and so it beholds on each one of us here, as we inform this nation, that we do so with the highest degree of accuracy in mind.

The Solid Waste Management Authority Bill: Mr. Speaker, I wish to assure you that that Bill is presently at the Attorney General's Chambers. There is an Hon. Member in this House who worked on that Bill, but it has changed in texture and content over time. The reason being was that the Bill had a narrow focus when the Hon. Member Mr. Moses Nagamootoo worked on it. Now the Bill has been delayed because of the need to include all of the various environmental and health related agencies and their input into the Solid Waste Management Authority Bill. That will come. It is a work in progress and it will come.

If I may, now, focus on the motion in front of us, the fourth WHEREAS clause clearly states that the city of Georgetown, or the Municipality of Georgetown, has an elected body that is vested with statutory authority to manage the affairs of this city. It has a number of areas that fall under the responsibility of that city. I am not sure whether we need a motion, at this point in time, to really move the restoration of the city of Georgetown because we had started, in the PPP/C Government, this activity a number of years now. The problem is that because the council has this vested statutory authority it can determine its level of participation and non-participation in activities that we are seeking to do.

I will give you two examples, Mr. Speaker. In November of 2012, as of usual, it was the time for our Christmas clean-up, so myself and colleague Minister invited the other Ministries – Ministry of Public Works, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, Ministry of Agriculture - and we sat down... [Mr. Ali: ...and the private sector] ...the private sector and municipality of Georgetown, our city. There was one representative from the Mayor and City Council, Georgetown, because the Mayor found it important to summon a meeting of the major staff at the same time. We went through the bit of cleaning up the city and all that we got, as input from the city, was one tractor and trailer. An Hon. Member alluded to the cleaning up exercise for Mash in 2013. Here again, the city was invited and all that it could have brought to the table is a list of equipment and machinery which it has but those could not have helped in any process.

This WHEREAS clause states very clearly that the legal statutory authority for the management of this city rests with the Georgetown City Council. I have heard it being bantered around here, “What the Ministers of Local Government are doing?” We are conscious and law-abiding Ministers. We stick to the law. We do not meddle and interfere. We do not breach people’s authority. Maybe that is a reason why the city continues to slide. I am happy too that we can reminisce as to what this city looked like. It is unfortunate that the destructions started since the present council took over and it has continued, and it is accelerating. [Mrs. Backer: Of which Mr. Hamilton was a Member.] It is whoever it is. I must say that there are three political parties which are part of that council. The People’s National Congress (PNC) contested that election, the People’s Progress Party (PPP) and the Good, Green, Guyana (GGG). They are there. There are thirty seats on that council. Five of those seats are occupied by the PPP, another party occupies fourteen and another, I think, eight. I am not certain about that.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Speaker, on a Point of Order...

Mr. Speaker: One second Mr. Minister. There is a Point of Order on the floor and I need to take it.

Mrs. Backer: With configuration of the Georgetown City Council, it is twelve GGG Members, ten PNC Members and eight PPP Members. That is the configuration. It seems as though we are having another gaffe.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I uphold the Point of Order. In fact, Minister, for one who is so versed with all of the facts, I am surprised that you missed that vital fact, especially given that fact that it is under your Ministry, but the Hon. Deputy Speaker is correct. It is a twelve-ten-eight configuration.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I have not missed my facts because there are five seats presently that are occupied by... [**Mrs. Backer:** You have never said that.] That is what I said. Mr. Speaker, I said fourteen seats now are occupied by one party. I did not name the party. Let me now explain why it is fourteen. The elections in 1994, two of the leading players, who contested under the GGG, have actually, now, changed their slate and gone into the camp where we hear that there is a party called the PNC and there is a consolidated force that is called the APNU. What is happening is that the seats in themselves, as they were, the ten, the twelve and the eight, there is not that representation now in the council itself. As it stands, now, there are vacancies on the council, so there are not thirty persons on it.

The fourth WHEREAS clause states that there are severe under-collection of taxes. I do not know how severe is severe. I cannot quantify this here, but I can share with us to say that consistently the municipality of Georgetown has collection rates in excess of seventy-five per cent each year. How severe is this under-collection rate is another story.

We spoke about the miserly subvention and out of the subvention that is allocated to municipalities the city of Georgetown receives 30.8 per cent.

We also spoke about the Government owes the municipality. The PPP/C Government has no outstanding arrears for the municipality of Georgetown.

We have this proposal which states, “BE IT RESOLVED (i)...”, that the Government must utilise very machinery and all of the other workforce, and so on there. What this proposal has not said to us, this motion in itself, is: What will the city do with the rates and taxes that it would have collected from the citizens? I ask this question for the following reasons:

- The municipality of Georgetown is no longer doing anything with regards to road maintenance or road repairs. That is being done by the Ministry of Public Works.

- The clearing of the outfalls are no longer being done by the municipality of Georgetown, although it is its responsibilities. It is being done by the Ministry of Agriculture.
- The garbage collection: The city is divided into nine zones, seven of those zones are operated and serviced by private contractors; contracts that are awarded by the municipality. Two of those zones are the responsibility of the municipality itself, directly. Put together the number of garbage collecting equipment that the Georgetown City Council has, it is more than what the two private operators have to run the seven zones, but yet all of the problems that we have, in terms of removal the solid waste, are from those two zones that are controlled by the municipality.

If these are not mismanagement then, what is it?

- The sea wall cleaning and management: On weekends it is the assumed responsibility of the Ministry of Public Works.
- The traffic lights are the responsibility of the Ministry of Public Works.

All of these are Government's intervention to assist in performing what is under the task sheet of the municipality.

We heard the talks about additional revenue streams. There are some Members of this House who sat on the Local Government task force and agreed that in the Fiscal Transfers Bill all these additional revenue streams must be included and that we must not take a piecemeal approach to the bit of additional revenue streams. It is surprising to hear Members standing here and saying to us that we are denying the city from exploring alternative and other sources of revenues. It seems as if these decisions, which are taken by the key political players, are conveniently omitted from the discourse.

Solid Waste Management: The PPP/C Government of Guyana has signed an agreement with the IDB to establish the Haags Bosch landfill site. The city of Georgetown is not contributing one cent to the operation of that site. The city of Georgetown is not paying one cent tipping fee which it would have all signed on to. All of the revenues, which are generated from the solid waste stream, are detained by the city. All that the city is required to do is to collect and deposit and that seems to be a very difficult task.

[Interruption by Mr. Neendkumar]

Mr. Speaker: One second Minister. I do not know whether Mr. Neendkumar realises that he is disturbing you. I do not think it has dawned on him that it is really you that he is affecting, and it is not Mr. Nagamootoo that he is trying to get at, as it appears.

Mr. Neendkumar: *[Inaudible]*

Mr. Speaker: Whatever you are trying to say it has to pass your Minister and it is his speech that is being affected. Go ahead Minister.

Mr. G. Persaud: We have heard about the need to educate our citizens. We have also heard that there is indiscriminate dumping and disposal by our citizens but I will not join with those who would have sought to lay the blame squarely at the feet of the citizens of this city because if services are not provided and avenues for people to dispose of garbage are not provided, and waste in a timely manner, then people will seek alternative. That too is something that the Government has been addressing over a number of years. Early this year, through the very Government of Guyana (GoG)/IDB loan agreement, Guyenterprise was contracted, once again, to move ahead with another round of public awareness seeking to educate and to remind our citizens of our collective responsibilities with regard to our environment.

Coupled with that, Cabinet recently gave its no objection to solid waste management project to purchase a number of vehicles and receptacles, all to assist in waste collection and transportation. All of these efforts and interventions, when sum totalled, are huge investments and contributions that are being made by central Government in assisting the municipality.

What do we have? We have a tendency at the level of the municipality that once someone moves in to offer some form of assistance it moves off and then it relieves itself of its responsibilities. That has to change. If we really want to fix and restore this city we have to get to the core and source of this problem. The source of this problem is the management of this city. When it suits us the council wants to present a face as if it is powerless and toothless. That is not so. It is the council that makes and manages its budget. It is the council that collects the rates and taxes, the \$1.8 billion that was collected in 2012, and it expends that. It is the council that appoints its

staffs, save and except the category that houses eight or nine people, and so the eight hundred and plus persons are appointed and employed by the council of itself.

One Member spoke about the need to have persons monitoring the streets. The municipality has in its employ two hundred persons who form part of its constabulary. There are resources. The question is whether there is maximal utilisation of resources.

I am saying that the Government is willing and ready and it has a structure in place. That structure comprises a number of Ministries which sit on a steering committee and addresses issues with regard of providing services to the citizens of this city. We are willing to expand that committee to include any interest group which would like to work with us. We have in that grouping the private sector, the municipality itself and a number of Government agencies. If the mover of the motion and a team would like to join us, we will welcome them and we can sit together and continue to work our plan, and even include other plans, so that we can restore the city.

9.14 p.m.

Restoring the city is no doubt something we all agree to. All of us, I think, have a single commitment in that direction, but how we do it is an important aspect. We cannot say let the city collect the revenue; let the city collect the rates and taxes; let it spend it on things that are not in the interest of the citizens, the welfare and wellbeing of the citizens, and then we take taxpayers' dollars, which can spend for other aspects of development, and put it into the city. We have to balance this thing. We have to make sure that all of us do not seek to bring a temporary solution such as the one in which some foreign country would have made an intervention into a certain part of the city. What happened? As it sustains itself... Do we still need to go into Tucville or is it is all right now - well cleared, well cleaned? I am certain that the mover of this motion is not referring to anything such as that. The mover of this motion is seeking to have a sustained intervention, so that our city can gradually retain its former glory.

We in the PPP/Civic Government, we at the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, stand ready to offer the amendments to this motion and we are hoping that the amendments would be accepted. Once the amendments are accepted, then the paper trail is finished, we can sit down to serious business and start addressing the issue.

Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I rise to support the motion and some of the amendments that have been proposed by the other side in this motion. When the mover of the motion first came up with this idea of a motion in the National Assembly I believe it arose out of a genuine concern for the state of the city and the complaints that were made by citizens of the mess in which they found themselves in. I do not believe we came here tonight to be casting blames left, right and centre as to who is responsible for what but we thought that we are going to look forward to see what we need to do to take this city to a place where we want it to be. On this side we are getting forward-thinking ideas. We have heard the presentation of the mover of the motion, the presentation of Dr. Roopnarine, the presentation of Ms. Catherine Hughes, the presentation of Ms. Annette Ferguson, all forward-looking. On the other side the blame game started. What we are seeing here is exactly what is taking place out there. It is an attitude which this Government has to the governance of this city. That is a problem.

Let us look at what the Hon. Minister just said. First of all, what he said? “We have intervened in roads - they have taken over the roads; we intervened in the drains - cleaning of the drains; we have intervened in garbage collection; we have intervened in education of the citizens of their responsibilities - public awareness”. All of these are responsibilities of the city that were taken over by the Government. [*Interruption*] It is not saving. You took it over. This is the attitude, that you are taking away, piece by piece, and you leave the city council with absolutely nothing and you blame it. What we are seeing here is an attitude of a government that has taken on to itself the responsibility for running the city but leaving the obligations with the city councils. That is what it is doing.

I would like to look at this matter from the point of view of a citizen of Guyana. The Hon. Minister started off by trying to correct some of the statements that were made by the previous speaker, Ms. Catherine Hughes, about percentages, and so on. I am happy that in a tangential way he sought to correct the Hon. Minister Benn when he said that the collection rate in Georgetown was fifty per cent because the Minister knows that I sit, along with Mr. Basil Williams on the Special Select Committee on the Local Government (Amendment) Bill 2012 – Bill No. 12/2012; Local Government Commission Bill 2012 – Bill No. 13/2012; Municipal and District Councils (Amendment) Bill 2012 – Bill No. 19/2012; and the Fiscal Transfer Bill 2012 –

Bill No. 20/2012, and Ms. Shadick, and the Minister himself and he provided information to us which states that the collection rate was in the vicinity of seventy to eighty per cent. When we are correcting let us be correct across the board and set the records straight.

What we want to say is this: That the APNU always stood ready - we are not in the city council - to work with all interested parties to ensure that the city was cleaned; that it was restored to the position it held previously. In this regard on the 27th of November, 2012, I visited West Ruinveldt. I am going to get down to specifics; I am going to get down to how the citizens see. This is not a public relations (PR) exercise; this is a matter that affects the lives of the people of this city. I went to West Ruinveldt at the invitation of residents who had been preparing their homes for Christmas, the Christmas season, and they showed me, along with Member of Parliament Baveghems and Member of Parliament Christopher Jones, that their houses were inundated with water. They had to lift up the chairs, and everything, and put them on blocks. This had nothing to do with any flooding; it was just a bit of rain. **[Mr. Benn: My yard was flooded too.]** Your yard was flooded too. What happened was that, when they showed me, the drains behind them were all blocked up and there were snakes and all sorts of other things crawling in to their homes. All of that was happening right there in West Ruinveldt. What I said to the people is that this is a matter that we will have to take up at a very high level.

On the 3rd of December, 2012, APNU called on all citizens to come together to clean up the city. We called upon everyone and the citizens responded. This is the element that is lacking in the intervention of the Government in the work in this city - citizen intervention. The citizens came out on the 3rd of December, 2012 from all the wards of Georgetown, including the private sector, the diplomatic community, the same Georgetown City Council, in which the Government Members said that they do not want anybody to be involved in their work. They were all there. What happened was that, in the face of this, the Government decided that it is going to do it alone and it called it own exercise and brought four hundred workers from the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) to Georgetown and said, "Look, this is what you will do."

When we complain that people are not buying in to what is happening, it is the landlord attitude which the Government has, that says, "What I say and what I do you have to follow". It is a bad attitude. **[Mr. G. Persaud: Are you sure that we brought those people into the city?]** You brought them in from the East Coast. **[Mr. Benn: You did not want them to come and help.]**

We welcome it. Our citizens have always been concerned about the condition of this city. I was going through the newspapers... [An Hon. Member: Which of the newspapers?] I am not using *Kaieteur News* tonight ... and there was a column , in the *Stabroek News*, dated the 23rd of January, 2012, “What the people say”. They were asked about their thoughts of the buildup of garbage around the city and the role that citizens must play in rectifying that problem. This is what we are talking about: people who are concerned and they were going to say how they felt that they could be involved in it. Let me tell you what they said. I will call the names because it is a newspaper. There was a lady by the name of Carol Orna, public sector worker, she said this:

“I think they should sit and have a discussion with all persons who are involved with the disposal of garbage. The citizens need to know the rules about littering and if they do this they should be charged, but this current situation of the dumping Georgetown is not what it was years ago. The buildings are close and you do not really have anywhere to burn.”

This is what she said.

Michelle Abraham Ali, we know that is a popular media personality, said:

“As citizens we have to be a little more careful of how we dispose of our garbage, talking about everything from plastic wares even our personal disposals”

Kenisha Haley, a student, said:

“I think citizens should march for the problem to be fixed because there is no place for people to dispose of their garbage and that is why this problem exists. Burning as an alternative is not very sensible, as it is polluting the air and causing global warming.”

There were several other persons, Naomi Richards, a public sector employee, Dellon Peters, a Private sector employee, Shannon Greene, a student and Andre Lewis, a teacher.

What they were all saying is that, as citizens, they recognise that they have an obligation in all that is happening, so that while they are contributing to the garbage they believe that if they were given correct education and they are provided with the right facilities they can contribute to making Georgetown the place it used to be. This is information that is out there, within the public domain, saying to us all, as legislators, that the people want to do something about this

problem. This is why I commend my colleague Mrs. Volda Lawrence for the motion that has been brought here today.

The Hon. Minister spoke about the Georgetown Solid Waste Management Programme which was financed by the IDB and under this programme this Haags Bosch facility was constructed on the East Bank of Demerara, at Eccles. On the 17th of October, 2012 the contractor Mr. Tiwari of BK International said this about the facility: [**Mr. G. Persaud:** What date is that?] It was the 17th of October, 2012. You can go back and check that.

“BK International is contracted to build and operate the landfill in 2012 in accordance with a design provided by Government under an IDB financed Georgetown Solid Waste Management Programme. The contractor pointed out that Haags Bosch landfill was designed to accommodate two hundred and fifty thousand tons of garbage waste per day but it was already receiving as much as six hundred thousand tons per day.”

It is over double what the designed capacity was.

When we consider the Haags Bosch site... I went there myself. I visited and I saw some of the problems that exist there and I understand that two Ministers, Minister Whittaker and Minister Edghill, visited it sometime later and figured some of the way to deal with some of the problems there was to give the garbage pickers bicycles. That was their way of dealing with some of the huge problems that existed at that site. It was in the papers [*Interruption*] how did you get around doing it - to give them bicycles?

Minister within the Ministry of Finance [Bishop Edghill]: It is not true.

Mr. Speaker: If it is not true, you should say it because it does not sound too good.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Speaker, would the Hon. Member be advised that the giving out of bicycles had nothing to do with what he is talking about. It is part of the resettlement plan of moving the pickers from Mandela dump site to Haags Bosch landfill site. It has absolutely nothing to do with what he is talking about, and that should be corrected.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: What are you resettling? It is the same thing.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I am afraid to ask whether it is the garbage being resettled or would it be the people? But I would not ask it.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: That is the question. Why are you giving bicycles to them, Mr. Speaker? In any event, if they came from Georgetown, it is eight miles riding, with this bicycle, to get to where the landfill site is. The problem I believe is this, is that when there is development, which is not properly coordinated, there will be problems of this nature arising, because when the Le Repentir dump site was closed and the Haags Bosch was opened it was intended to take up not only Georgetown garbage. It was intended to take up the garbage from the East Bank Demerara, from the West Coast Demerara and on the East Coast Demerara - fifteen in all Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs) and the city of Georgetown. That is what it was meant to do.

What we are seeing here is that there is traffic coming from the East Bank Demerara, traffic coming from the East Coast Demerara, traffic coming from Georgetown all to get to this facility by five o'clock on a daily basis, from Mondays to Fridays, and by one o'clock on Saturdays. What we discovered was that instead of going there, they do not get there by five o'clock and the place is closed, they dropped the garbage on their way in. If you go in to Haags Bosch landfill site, Mr. Speaker, you will see what I am taking about. On both sides of the road, you see little piles of garbage there. That is what is happening. In addition to that, those people who could afford it and pay for their garbage to be collected, the people who they pay to collect this garbage dump it in any place, which is dark. That is why along Thomas Land and all of those places by the National Park, where people can exercise normally and breathe air freely, little piles of garbage are springing up all along there. You can go along Mandela Avenue, all the way to the East Bank Demerara, you will see garbage piles along the road there. This is the route that those trucks use to get to Haags Bosch landfill site and when they recognise that they cannot get there on time they will just dump it there and go back home.

What I am saying, please, is that we have to ensure that we have a holistic arrangement where all of these things are part of it. We must recognise that putting Haags Bosch landfill site where it is without having the necessary facilities in Georgetown, and in those other NDCs, to do some preliminary sorting before it gets there is a mistake and we have to fix it.

The Hon. Minister Mr. Benn earlier said that I have made this comment that the Government was not doing the city a favour. I stand by that. That is my position. It is no favour that the Government is doing the city. In 1997, in this very House, the Minister of Finance, Mr. Ali, at that time, in proposing the Custom (Amendment) Bill, imposed a tax of \$10 on containers for the purpose of an environmental tax. It was meant to be that. That was money to be spent on the environment. Therefore if the Minister is to count on how much money would have been collected from 1997 to today then we can see why I am saying that the Ministry has a duty to do what it is doing in the city. It has a duty because that is our money.

I do not know what has happened with that money, if there is in fact a separate account called the Environmental Tax Account, or whatever it is. I am not sure whether that money goes into the general melting pot and it is part of the overall budget of the Consolidated Fund. I do not know. What I am saying, please, Mr. Speaker, is that the citizens of Georgetown are entitled to a part of that money and that money must be applied to the situation here. To complain that the Georgetown City Council collects \$1.2 billion... [**Mr. G. Persaud:** \$1.8 billion]... or \$1.8 billion, whatever it is, is a part of the problem. We are saying that there is enough money in the system to deal with the restoration of the city. What we are saying is that we need to have, as the motion suggests, a broader based committee to deal with the matter of the restoration of this city. That narrow base of persons who are just connected to the Government, spoken about by the Hon Minister, not too long ago is too narrow, we want a broader base. This is what the motion speaks about.

The motion speaks to the establishment of a committee consisting of Member of Parliament, Officials of the Georgetown Mayor and City Council - it does not say to give them all the money; it says a committee with all these people - Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, Minister of Transport and Hydraulics, [**Mr. Benn:** There is no such Ministry.] Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce. I am reading what the motion states Comrades [**Mr. Benn:** Well, let me correct it.] Thanks for the correction. The purpose of this is to monitor the progress of the restoration of the city and to report back to the National Assembly, within four months, as to what is being done. I do not think this is an unreasonable position. I do not think that this is an unreasonable resolve clause.

It is my firm belief that if we are to harness all of the resources of the citizens of the city of Georgetown that we can restore it to the beauty which we speak about. I am convinced about that and it is for that reason that I support the motion in the name of the Hon. Member Mrs. Volda Lawrence. *[Applause]*

Minister of Natural Resources and Environment [Mr. R. Persaud]: Mr. Speaker, let me assure you that I intend to be brief, bearing in mind that we have a close off time of ten o'clock **[Mrs. Backer]:** Who says so?] I stand corrected by your deputy.

First of all, I think the citizens of Georgetown, in fact, all Guyanese, will certainly welcome any deliberation that we would have in the National Assembly that speaks and addresses their welfare, especially talking about having the issue of having a clean and healthy environment, but if they do not see sustained action, resolve and collective commitment, I think we would be disappointing them. What we have heard and the presentations made have certainly put some very interesting perspectives...The information and the analysis of my colleagues, Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, Minister of Public Works, and certainly also some of the perspectives, all, some not too accurate, some contradictory nonetheless, would have certainly shed some lights on a serious national problem that is not only isolated to the city of Georgetown, but we recognise the fact that this motion by the Hon. Member Volda Lawrence speaks to Georgetown and to the restoration of Georgetown.

This issue that we are seeking to address, or the problem, in Georgetown, and we do by extension it would lead to greater energy and efforts in other parts of the country, is certainly one that requires a holistic approach. I think over time, based on our own presentation and recognition here, in this National Assembly, we have recognised that the piecemeal, or the now and then types of intervention, and clearly the incompetence of City Hall, not only City Hall, there has been incompetent of the Local Government bodies in other parts of the country, has shown us that we need to have a renewed approach. What is proposed generally in the motion by the Hon. Member certainly will give some energy, will give some attention and in a way galvanise some sort of support, but we have to be prepared, not only as elected representative of the people here, but, we do hope, by our statements and our expected actions we would lead to greater sustained interest, participation and a level of discipline.

I want to speak to the issue of discipline, because, yes, our Local Government bodies and City Hall, and the different agencies responsible, all need to do a better job. If we stand here in the National Assembly and say that because some entity has not been able to come for the garbage or carry out its task it is all well and good for citizens to do what they feel like to do, we would be condoning lawlessness and indiscipline. Our projection from this National Assembly, this august body must, first and foremost, say that we need to insist that there is no excuse for indiscipline. Certainly, in that tone, and in that perspective, we must be careful, in terms of the type of analysis, as we seek to solve the problem, the diagnostic that we bring to the issue must also be reflect a sense of accuracy. I say so, because having listened more recently..., and particularly just now to the Hon. Member Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon. He spoke about the landlord attitude of the Government to the city of Georgetown and the citizens. Then he went on to accuse the Government of seeking to want to take over services, as if it is a bad thing. If City Hall is unable to fix roads and to provide other services and here it is the Government coming in to rescue the citizens of Georgetown it is now being accused of seeking to take over City Hall's functions; functions that the city administration has failed to perform, year after year, and it was in direct response to the cry, to the frustration and to the sufferings of the citizens that Central Government had to come in. That is what it is. It is not to take over. It is to come to rescue and save the situation.

Then the same Hon. Member, in his presentation, went on to contradict himself. He then went, on in a way, to accuse the Government of neglecting, of not coming in and not doing things to assist and aid City Hall. We have to make up our minds.

9.44 p.m.

If we are sincere about this issue, first and foremost, we have to be consistent. If your presentation is that the Government should do more and should aid the city, say that, but do not accuse the Government when it does that to have been a landlord and then 20 minutes later accuse the Government of not doing enough.

I say that because facts need to be known. First and foremost, the Government's direct investment in the city... No one on this side is suggesting that this Government is doing any citizen of Georgetown or any Guyanese a favour when it carries out developmental projects. We

are the servants of the people. It is our responsibility to do so. We are not doing anyone a favour. That is what we are elected here to do. We are not doing anyone a favour; that is the thrust that we give.

In so doing, and consistent with that thrust, every single year the Central Government spends in excess of \$600 million in terms of undertaking developmental work in different areas. I remember in my former portfolio of Minister of Agriculture, the Central Government, after the 2005-2006 floods, could not wait on City Hall's administration to repair the Liliendaal pump and the Kitty pump. Also, to supplement the outfalls out there, Central Government had to take resources which were allocated for agricultural communities that were appropriated under the Ministry of Agriculture and diverted them to the investment in drainage of the city of Georgetown. That is how we were able to have the new pumps at Liliendaal, Kitty and also a number of mobile pumps in addition to other support. This suggestion that there is some level of neglect or that the Government has not been giving due attention or perhaps – no one has used that word – being 'uncaring' to the sufferings of the city is certainly far from the reality. The opposite is true. This commitment remains strong.

We are not satisfied with that. The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development outlined other long-term interventions. It is through the instrumentality and the efforts of the Government that we are able to have the IDB Solid Waste Project, hence the Haags Bosch waste disposal facility financed by the Government of Guyana. If you go to Princess Street or the people who live in the southern part of Georgetown, who lived in pollution or lived under nightmare in terms of having that dumpsite or whatever it was called there, it was this Government's intervention that sought the closing of that and the opening of a modern waste disposal. It is because we care for the people of Georgetown that we did that. That gives the whole mandate and represents the whole thrust and commitment of the Government in this regard.

We have to move beyond what we have done. I spoke about the need for us to have a holistic solution. The issue was raised that we need to have a competent, committed and corrupt-free City Hall administration. The way we have to do that is through the vehicle of Local Government Elections. That is the solution and that is what we are committed to. Were it not for, in some instances, the stalling and, perhaps, also a concerted effort to frustrate the Local

Government process going back after the 1997 period, perhaps we would not be here bellyaching, singing and complaining, about the lack of Local Government Elections.

Perhaps at some point in time we need to set the record straight as to why it is we could not have Local Government Elections in 1997. When we went through with that post election period, we undertook the constitutional reform process. It could not be done eventually because the constitutional reform process generated and mandated that we develop a new Local Government system which required the full support of the two-thirds in some aspects. [**Members (Opposition):** Excuses.] Those are not excuses. Those are the facts. I want to say that even given what we have on the books today, and the President has made it quite clear that one of his commitments is to have early Local Government Elections... I want to say tonight that we stand by that commitment. Let us ensure that the work that is done by the Committee and the attitude and the posture of the Committee that is looking at the Local Government Bills is able to generate the type of output that can lead to consensus and ultimately for us to have Local Government Elections. That is the first point. We need to ensure that we have Local Government Elections and have a competent body to administer the affairs of Georgetown and, in fact, all other Local Government entities because we want our people to have the power and the representatives there and to also ensure that we can move this process forward.

The next issue in having the holistic approach is one which we have to have the level of the necessary legislation. We recognise that there are some areas that are lacking. Perhaps there has been the complaint that the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development has not been as quick as all of us want him to be in having the Solid Waste Authority Bill before the National Assembly. But it was because it was in search of having a holistic approach and ensuring that we do not have duplication with the various Local Government Acts, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Health Act and others, also to ensure that we have a consolidated legislation and authority that can do the job and get it done.

Also, within the Environmental Protection Agency, we are in the process of finalising the regulations that will deal with the issue, particularly across the country and including in the city, the issue of littering and having litter wardens appointed and even speaking to the Judiciary so that we can have an environmental code so that persons who are in breach can be dealt with and

dealt with some level of alacrity. We recognise also that we need to strengthen and reinforce the legislative framework.

The third area in the holistic approach has to be enforcement. That is where effective Local Government bodies are necessary. More so, we have to portray, in this National Assembly, a sense of citizen and civic responsibility. Every citizen has to be an enforcer because we would put the arrangements, in addition to what they have, to ensure that there are no violations, that people driving down the road do not throw garbage and people at nights do not just dump garbage anywhere, businesses do not contribute and so forth. Every single citizen must also be empowered and must feel that when they take their action that there will be due penalties or that those persons who are in breach would be dealt with according to the law. We have to move in the area of enforcement.

The other area is dealing with issues such as the matter of public education and public awareness. That has to continue and that has to be extended in many regards.

I have tried to touch on some key areas. There are other areas in terms of looking at biodegradable, type of material we allow and are being used. As the Hon. Member, Dr. Roopnarine, pointed out, we need to move as other countries have done in banning certain materials such as Styrofoam and plastic, restricting their use. In another Bill, we are seeking to address that as part of a wider solution. So, we have to look at some other approaches.

The presentation or suggestion made by the Hon. Member in terms of having greater and wider participation is a noble one. That is why, in the amendments that have been tabled in my name, I do not see them as deviating or doing any injury to the overall thrust of the original Motion. The first intention is to make sure that we understand what the key issues are. That is why the re-worked WHEREAS Clauses have sought to do that. It is also for us to be updated on some of the efforts that have already been made. If we do not recognise what activities and initiatives are there, it will be difficult for us to sensibly and in a sustained way support and in a way sustain this effort.

In the FURTHER RESOLVED Clause, the main element of it, we have maintained, that is, having the grouping. We have widened its participation and have it also come back to this National Assembly to provide periodic reports. We have also sought to even extend the point

whereby we have included that we must all collectively support efforts to improve the efficiency and the management of the City Hall in this regard. Certainly, we must all re-emphasise and put a lot of emphasis and also give some, as it were, teeth and encouragement for us to have not only in the city, but across the country, a multi-sectoral approach to this issue.

Certainly, while we may have differing perspectives of what the problems are and the causes, we certainly, at the end of tonight's deliberations, must agree on the solution. We must agree on the approaches, short-term, medium and long-term. If we are unable to do that, and I think if we leave here tonight divided on such an apolitical topic, one of which I think will put all parties in good political standing, that we are working hard and that we are working assiduously to lift the welfare... I think we will be doing justice and will also be carrying out our responsibilities to the people who have brought us to this National Assembly.

With those remarks, I wish to, in a general way, commend the motion, but also to emphasise the amendments that have been tabled in my name for the consideration of the full National Assembly.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Member. That was very interesting.

Hon. Members, it has been indicated to me that the Hon. Member, Mr. Basil Williams, wishes to have an intervention. Before he does, may I invite the Hon. Prime Minister to move the necessary motion for the suspension of Standing Order No. 10 (1) and (2)?

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I move the motion that Standing Order No. 10 (1) and (2) be suspended so that we can continue and conclude the debate on this motion this evening.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Members the motion is that we continue beyond 10.00 p.m. to complete this motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Mr. B. Williams: If it pleases you, Mr. Speaker. The motion before this honourable House is the ‘Restoration of Georgetown’ to those halcyon days under the People’s National Congress. Mr. Speaker, the word ‘restore’ suggests that there was earlier grandeur. The only time that this problem of restoring Georgetown to its erstwhile garden city state arose was under the PPP/C Government. The record must show, clearly, the situation. There was never a problem of beauty under the People’s National Congress Reform.

Allow me, from the outset, to disabuse the minds of the Members of this House because these records are there for posterity on the Hansard and we have our constituents listening to us outside this honourable House; some are inside. I do not know what motivated the Hon. Minister to try to confess that Ministers are not dishonourable and that they are law abiding. They are law abiding, yes. The Hon. Minister Ganga Persaud, I do not know what prompted him to say that because I had forgotten. When he said that, I remembered that there was a Minister by the name of Kellawan Lall. If you were to say that he is law abiding, you could feel free to say that, but Mr. Kellawan Lall was a former Minister of Local Government. When this city was under siege because no money was being given to it by Central Government, and Central Government was withholding the subventions and its taxes owed to the city, and the citizens cried out, what was the response of Minister Kellawan Lall? “Georgetown should have an epidemic.” That is what he said to this nation and to the citizens of Georgetown, that they should have an epidemic. That was the response of a Minister of the PPP/C. We need to clarify these matters.

I wish to concur with the earlier presentations of the Members on this side of the House in support of the motion of Hon. Member Mrs. Volda Lawrence. This motion is laudable. This motion speaks of providing a catalyst to speed up restoration. We need a sustained process to keep this country and the major city in this country beautiful. In other words, it cannot be by creating a pocket Interim Management Committee (IMC). The Hon. Minister, Ganga Persaud, said that they have a pocket IMC with the Ministries and agencies here.

This motion also suggests that we should have agencies work together collectively for four months and report but we need a sustained programme. With my panoramic view of the Local Government system over the years, this is what the situation is. The City Council has a mandate, as the motion suggests. This mandate had no difficulty when there was a coincidence of Central Government being with the same party and the city being with the same party. It was as a result

of the 1994 Municipal Elections... [Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Hoyte disbanded that and the IMC came into being under the PNC.] I see the brand new Member on the other side is very chirpy this evening, Mr. Speaker. He is operating with even more alacrity than the seasoned Members.

The results that the Hon. Member and Minister Ganga Persaud described meant that the control of the City Council was not in the hands of the party whose government was in office. What has happened over the years was that there was a conscious political effort to undermine the City Council for narrow political interest. That is what happened. The Government wants to have control of the Garden City. It wants to have control of the city of Georgetown. So, they impoverish the City Council and then they turn around saying that they rescued the City Council, hoping to get the citizens of Georgetown to turn against the duly and democratically elected members of the City Council.

The only solution to this problem is to have an entity that has the responsibility and is funded to carry out, perennially, these functions. There cannot be a group that comes up every three months and say that the city has to be rescued. We must have a sustained and viable City Council. What is the situation with the City Council? This Government has chipped away at the viability of the City Council. The Hon. Minister is being euphemistic to say that only nine employees are employed by the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development. Who are these employees? They are the City Engineer, the Town Clerk, the City Treasurer; all of these people are elected and are under the control of the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development. So the elected Councillors, the Mayor cannot give an instruction to them. If they refuse to carry out his instructions, he cannot do anything about them. He cannot dismiss them because he never hired them. It is the Minister who hires them and the Minister who fires them. That is what it is. As a result, it is a recipe for anarchy.

What do you have? This whole political arrangement is really designed to undermine the duly elected Councillors and give the Government the opportunity to extend patrimony which ought to have been within the domain of the City Council, but the Government extends the patrimony so that it can give its own supporters work to say that it cleaned up the city. The Government is not rescuing any city; all it is doing is putting contracts and finances into the hands of its supporters and prevent the legitimately elected Council from discharging that kind of

responsibility and obligation. It is no accident that the Government starved this Council of funds and then says that it came to rescue the City.

[inaudible] withhold the taxes and then salaries cannot be paid and then the Government came up with a big grand charge and is now saying it has to rescue the city workers and the city employees and pay salaries. It cannot work. The City Council has suggested over the years that it should be given the ability to garner revenue. It proposed a lottery. What happened to the lottery? The Central Government took the lottery. That was Mr. Hamilton Green's proposal, that the City would run a lottery. The Government stole his idea and they have been keeping the money for themselves because the money is not going into the Consolidated Fund. The mayor said they want to be able to put up parking metres. There was no approval from the Central Government. He said that he wanted to establish a container tax for all those large containers using the city streets, breaking up the roads. They told the Speaker, "No!" How could they, Mr. Speaker, come and tell you and tell the people of Guyana and the citizens of Georgetown that they have to come and rescue the City Council when they are impoverishing the City Council for narrow political interests. Why are they not allowing the City Council to garner funds? Even in the proposed Local Government Reform Bills...

Mr. Speaker: One second, Mr. Williams. Are Members trying to negotiate a consensus motion or do we wrap up?

Mr. B. Williams: We are getting there, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: That is what I was trying to figure out, whether we are going to get to a consensus tonight or we do not want...

Mr. B. Williams: We are getting there, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Are we heading towards consensus?

Mr. B. Williams: We are getting there, Sir, but we cannot leave on the record what have been said by the Members on the other side. We have to show... [**Mr. Benn:** The Speaker gave him a chance to speak.] The Speaker gave me a chance to speak? When you have the real ABC countries saying that they are coming to help the city you would understand what is happening. When you have the real ABC counties getting into our rubbish, picking up our litter, you could

understand what is happening. Let us hope we will get those from Argentina, Brazil and Chile to join in.

We are saying that the Government must act properly. They must act properly, must not interfere in the business of the City Council and must allow the City Council to flourish.

I have been a member of the Georgetown City Council. I have been a citizen of quality. I do not know what the Hon. Member Hamilton is jumping up and down in his new seat saying. I have been a citizen of quality.

Mr. Speaker: Government Chief Whip, as soon as you all give me the word... I do not know if you want to take some time to consider this or we go ahead. Do we have consensus or do we not?

Mr. B. Williams: On what? [*Laughter*] They could stop all of this by agreeing with us that the motion be passed.

Mr. Speaker: I think, Mr. Williams, there is an initiative, even as you are speaking, to have the House agree on something, which would be a fantastic achievement given the subject we are grappling with tonight. I was considering whether we should have a five-minute recess to allow those who are negotiating to bring it to...

Mr. B. Williams: Mr. Speaker, whatever you are doing, I will continue speaking and they can continue doing what they are doing there. We have to correct the record.

Mr. Speaker: Proceed.

Mr. B. Williams: Mr. Speaker, as a citizen of quality in the Georgetown City Council, we had such a beautiful Garden City. At that time, most of the Heads of State of the leading African nations came to Guyana and there was always this beautiful ceremony of handing the key. When you hear President Nyerere, President Kaunda, President Seretse Khama... As I said earlier, those were the halcyon days of the Georgetown City Council. I would hope that our Members on the other side would not try to emulate that period with the condition in which this city is in. I would be loped to give the key to any visiting Head of State with the state in which this country and the leading city in this country are in.

We want a sustained approach to keeping Georgetown clean. We do not want a Ministry which is paying a Ministry group in a corner and holding back resources from the city and then coming in to rescue us. We do not want that. So, this motion is a very important step. I see it as a catalyst, a basic starting point, to lead a sustained approach to beautifying this country. That is what we want, to restore Georgetown. Most of us live in Georgetown. A lot of the Members on the other side are visiting Georgetown. We live here and we want it to be as we knew it to be.

When we look at the motion, we would like to see the city of Georgetown and the Mayor and City Council, as the duly elected councillors, function and carry out their mandate in this city. We do not want the Government to take over garbage collection in one area and take over weeding in another area. The Hon. Member, Mr. Harmon, told you that as soon as they started their clean up, scab labour was brought in.

10.14 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we have to ask the Members on the other side: are they genuinely concerned with restoring the beauty of the city of Georgetown? That is the question that they have to answer.

I would like to say that I am 100 per cent in support of this motion by the Hon. Member, Volda Lawrence, and we hope that the Government will commit to allowing the City Council to garner revenue. The elections that are due, I am happy that certain noises are being made so the real ABC countries could hear that the Government intends to have Local Government Elections, even though the Chief Whip is saying that the Government already has the elections materials ready. We are happy to hear that.

As the supporter of the countries of Argentina, Brazil and Chile...asked me to say thanks. I would like to admonish the Members of this House to work with us on the motion, as the motion suggests, and let us restore Georgetown to its previous grandeur.

Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

Mrs. Lawrence (replying): Mr. Speaker, as I sat here, I remembered those faithful Catholics in St. Paul's Square as they waited to see that white smoke. For a portion of time during the debate, all I was seeing was black smoke and I was wondering whether any part of the motion spoke to some of the things which we heard here this evening.

I would like to ask some of the Members who spoke, in my own mind, on something else other than what the motion purports to ask, that we take a look at the *National Development Strategy*, Chapter 21 – Urban Development. In this particular chapter, Mr. Speaker, it highlights all of the deficiencies in the *National Development Strategy*. What Members were saying here was not anything new; it is public knowledge and this document was distributed in this very House many moons ago, Sir.

Despite this document being distributed and despite it highlighting all of the deficiencies which are within our City Council, Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs), and municipalities also, we heard, this evening, persons speaking as though the municipality of Georgetown was an isolated case.

The motion before the House in my name titled, “Restoration of Georgetown”, Mr. Speaker, in no way seeks to usurp the authority of any of the agencies which have responsibility for the various aspects, whether it be the drainage, the removal of garbage or the sewage system. What it basically seeks to do is ask this House, as the highest forum in this land, to deal with a matter that has been plaguing and continues to plague us in this land, and we seem to be going nowhere.

The very utterances this evening... We heard about what has already been put into the project of cleaning up Georgetown but I do not think we are anywhere close to where we ought to be.

I would like to read from a letter writer of 2nd February, 2013. I will not read it all; I will just read parts of what he has written.

“There are piles and piles of garbage to be seen at every turn, not to mention overgrown vegetation in our trenches and canals, clogged up drains and dilapidated building which all conspires to create a depressing scenario. Georgetown, once regarded as a Garden City, is now reduced to what some people refer to as the garbage city. With all its shortcomings, Georgetown is still a beautiful place.”

He went on to say:

“Sadly, our city has deteriorated over the years and has lost its former glory. There is need for a consorted effort to rescue it.”

I think that is what the motion is asking. It is asking for a concerted effort to rescue Georgetown. The letter writer went on to say that one of the first impressions that foreigners have is the cleanliness of a capital city. It leaves a lasting impression on them. That is why all government and municipal authorities all over the world practically go out of their way to ensure that their cities are kept clean and tidy.

Last December I had several of my relatives who came to spend Christmas in Guyana with me. [Mr. Ali: The best Christmas ever!] Of the lot, I had two eight-year-olds. I invited them to go with me to the market to get some fruits on Christmas Eve Day. [Mr. Ali: Which one of the markets?] Sir, while the Minister of Tourism is making jokes about it, he should listen to it because these are eight-year-olds and I can tell you that they are smart and on the ball. When we got to Bourda Market and I said, “Let us go”, they asked if that was the market. I said, “Yes, this is the market.” They said, “I am not going out there. It is dirty; it is filthy.” Sir, those eight-year-olds preferred to stay in the vehicle instead of going out and going around with me, like children would want to do, and do some shopping. Especially around Christmas time, we know that all children want to get out because they would see something that they want. Sir, this was their first visit to Guyana. What an impression that was and that will remain with them for some time.

I believe that there are several hundreds of persons – both Guyanese who live abroad and persons who come here to visit for one reason or the other – who would have made comments about the condition in which our city is.

Sir, I want to read, also, from an article titled, “Guyana Shines.” It states:

“Last year, the United States Embassy brought together several diplomatic and civic partners, including the British High Commission, the Canadian High Commission, the European Union Delegation in Guyana, Conservation International Guyana and Youth Challenge Guyana, to collaborate on a project to clean up several parts of our city.”

I heard mention made to it, Sir, but, as a Guyanese, I cringed inside. I cringed inside to know that here it is that we have our diplomatic community calling together a grouping to clean up garbage in our city. I am not proud of that as a Guyanese. I think it is our responsibility and that of any proud Guyanese to have an environment, especially their city, in which people would want to come and enjoy the beauty of this country, Guyana.

Right across the road from the Public Buildings there is a wonderful park. When you drive there from time to time, take a look and see how many persons are utilising that park and know the reason why. If I come to that park, Sir, with my family, then I may want to have something to drink. Where must I go? I must pass all the garbage and go across to that place which I spoke about to one of those side shops, where the garbage is overspilling onto the road and the stench is unbearable, to get some snack or refreshment and herein lies the point. We can talk all we want. We spent all of these moneys to beautify segments of our city but all around it is garbage. What are we doing? We all want to see a beautiful Georgetown. We all want to see a beautiful Guyana, but unless we start somewhere, we will end up nowhere.

I want to ask the Members of this House, persons whom the citizens have placed their interests in, to come together to ensure that the work that is needed is done to bring our city back to its former glory. Let us put Georgetown and Guyana on the map again.

Thank you very much, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we have had an excellent debate, I think. There were very good, worthwhile contributions and interventions. I believe that the principles are working on having a composite motion which meets the agreement of all sides. I am proposing that we take a five-minute recess because I am told that there are some changes being made and some typing being done. If it is so, I think it will be a good initiative that we can end the evening on. We will have a five-minute recess.

Sitting suspended at 10.26 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 10.55 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, during the brief suspension, I am informed that Members were able to work out an acceptable motion, with amendments, to both sides of the House.

Mrs. Lawrence, with your permission, particularly, and with the permission of all, I would like to put the entire amended document.

Mrs. Lawrence: Certainly, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the amendments as they are, I will try to go through them as quickly as possible. The first Whereas Clause remains intact. The first And Whereas Clause has one amendment and it is to the second line. The words “have placed severe strain and pressures on the drainage systems” have been deleted by agreement and consent.

Mr. Ramjattan: Those words have been replaced by “underlined the need for better drainage.”

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, what is written in bold letters is the replacement.

Mr. Speaker: My document does not have anything written in bold letters. I would need a document that has the bold writing.

Perhaps, someone can read the amendments and I will just put them to the House.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, in the second Whereas Clause the words “have placed severe strain and pressures on the drainage system” are to be removed and replaced by the words “have underlined the need for better drainage systems.”

Amendment put and agreed to.

Mrs. Lawrence: In the second And Whereas Clause, the words “for citizens and visitors” have been added.

Amendment put and agreed to.

Mrs. Lawrence: The third And Whereas Clause is a new And Whereas Clause. It reads:

“AND WHEREAS the national environmental enhancement initiative of the government, the Pick It Up Guyana Campaign, spearheaded by the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment in collaboration with the Ministries of Local Government and Regional Development, Health, and Public Works, the private sector, religious community, NGOs, among others, to promote greater environmental management through enforcement against littering; public awareness; engagement of stakeholders; and mechanisms to reduce, reuse and recycle waste;”

Amendment put and agreed to.

Mrs. Lawrence: The fourth And Whereas Clause reads:

“AND WHEREAS Government has extended this support, by way of a multi-sectoral stakeholders’ approach to garbage collection and disposal and desilting of drains as well as over the years, centrally providing human and material support to free the streets, the alleyways, the blocked canals and trenches of garbage and heavy vegetation;”

Amendment put and agreed to.

Mrs. Lawrence: The Fifth And Whereas Clause reads:

“AND WHEREAS the Georgetown City Council is unable to carry out its mandate as prescribed in the Municipal and District Councils Act of 1969 and the Local Democratic Organs Act of 1980, due to the severe under-collection of taxes, rents and fees as well as the miserly subvention received from Central Government,”

Mrs. Lawrence: The first Be It Resolved Clause reads:

“That this National Assembly of the Parliament of Guyana commits its support towards the restoration of our Capital City, Georgetown;

Mrs. Lawrence: The second Be It Resolved Clause reads:

“That the Government expands its multi-stakeholders committee to include Members of Parliament (MPs), officials of the Georgetown City Council and relevant government ministries to develop an action plan, allocate resources and to monitor the progress of the restoration of Georgetown. The Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment will, on behalf of the Committee, report to the National Assembly within four months.”

Amendment put and agreed to.

Mr. R. Persaud: If we can go back to the fifth And Whereas Clause and end the paragraph at the word “fees”, it will end the effort in a less contentious way, rather than talk about “miserly subvention”.

Mr. Ramjattan: The description of subvention is “miserly”. We are agreeing to have that word deleted from the Clause.

Mr. Speaker: I think that it is befitting of what was achieved this evening. It does not read well if it states that the Council is unable to function because of its under-collection of taxes, rents and ‘fees’ as well as the subvention.

Mr. R. Persaud: Or, alternatively, perhaps, the paragraph can be ended at “1980” rather than ascribe blame.

Mr. Speaker: It is proposed that the last And Whereas Clause reads:

“AND WHEREAS the Georgetown City Council is unable to carry out its mandate as prescribed in the Municipal and District Councils Act of 1969 and the Local Democratic Organs Act of 1980,”

Amendment put and agreed to.

Mrs. Lawrence: Sir, on the first page, there was an error. It has, “In the Be It Resolved Clause” after the words, “Capital City, Georgetown.” We have to take out the words, “Be It Resolved”...

Ms. Teixeira: If I could just help Mrs. Lawrence out. The And Whereas Clause which ends with “recycling waste” is the correct one. The Be It Resolved Clause is duplication. That should be taken out.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, for the sake of correctness, I ask that there be a seconder to the motion. Hon. Minister, are you seconding the amended motion?

Mr. R. Persaud: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Duly noted.

Ms. Teixeira: In the last And Whereas Clause on page one, it should state ‘recycle waste’ instead of “recycling waste.”

Mr. Speaker: That is a correction that we will make, Mr. Isaacs, under the slip rule.

Motion, as amended, carried.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Speaker: I wish to commend the Hon. Member, Mrs. Lawrence, for bringing this motion. I think all of Guyana thanks you. I wish to commend the Government and, particularly, Minister Persaud for his amendments and his astuteness in getting us to this stage. As I said, the debate was of a very high standard this evening.

Thank you all very much.

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

Mr. Speaker: I hope it is in this month.

Assembly adjourned accordingly at 11.11 p.m.