

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2015-2016) OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

42ND Sitting

Monday, 8th August, 2016

The Assembly convened at 2.13 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Leave from Sitting

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, leave has been granted from today's Sitting to the Hon. Member, Mr. Zulfikar Mustapha.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following papers and reports were laid:

1. The Mid-Year Report for the year 2016.

[Minister of Finance]

2. Annual Report of the Ministry of the Natural Resources for the year 2015.
3. Annual Report of the Guyana Forestry Commission for the year 2015.
4. Annual Report of the Environmental Protection Agency for the year 2015.
5. Annual Report of the Protected Areas Commission for the year 2015.

[*Minister of Natural Resources*]

Minister of Natural Resources [Mr. Trotman]: Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I am asking that the reports be distributed on CD-Rom rather than have the printed copies. The printed copies are available and would be with the Clerk of the National Assembly to be placed in the Parliamentary Library, if need be. Thank you.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS

MOTIONS

CONSIDERATION OF FINANCIAL PAPER NO. 1/2016 – CURRENT AND CAPITAL ESTIMATES

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly approves of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 1/2016 – Schedule of Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) – Advances made from the Contingencies Fund totalling \$931,018,292 for the period 1st January, 2016 to 28th July, 2016.”

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Minister of Finance [Mr. Jordan]: Mr. Chairman, in accordance with Article 171(2) of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended, for consideration by the National Assembly, the motion for the approval of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 1/2016 – Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) – Advances made from the Contingencies Fund totalling \$931,018,312 for the period 1st January, 2016 to 28th July, 2016 and I now move the motion.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, the records suggests that there is a slight error in presentation. You have stated that the total is \$931,018,312. My records suggest that the total is \$931,018,292. Hon. Minister, you may want to confirm that that is correct.

Mr. Jordan: Yes, Mr. Speaker, the total is \$931,018,292.

Motion proposed.

Mr. Chairman: The items will be taken from both Current and Capital Estimates in the order for which the Minister is responsible.

CURRENT ESTIMATES

Item 1 21-211 - Ministry of Agriculture – Ministry Administration - \$234,716,110

Mr. Seeraj: This is, indeed, a very significant amount being sought. In the remarks column, I notice that over \$8 million was spent for the operation of tractor pumps. Could the Minister inform us as to the amount of tractor pumps that were involved in this operation and where they were located?

Minister of Agriculture [Mr. Holder]: Mr. Chairman, six or seven pumps were involved in the operation.

Mr. Seeraj: Mr. Chairman, the question was twofold. I asked for the amount and the locations of the pumps.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister there is a question as to the location of the pumps.

Mr. Holder: The pumps were located mainly at Trafalgar, Union and Tempe during the extra rainfall we had recently.

Mr. Seeraj: Mr. Chairman, you would notice that the answers are very vague. The Minister is asking for a substantial amount of money from the Contingencies Fund and even with the accompaniment of the technical officers, we would have been very appreciative of more direct and concise answers. I mean, to say that six or seven pumps were located in several areas is too vague for us to really have an appreciation of where the pumps were located and the kind of impact that they would have had. I know for certain that, in one region, rice cultivation fell by 20,000 acres from last season to this season. It would appear that the impacts of these interventions are not being felt by the rice sector, in particular.

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

Mr. Seeraj: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I understood your question to be concerning the number and location of the pumps. Am I correct?

Mr. Seeraj: Yes, Cde. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: You are saying that those answers, as given by the Minister, are not adequate.

Mr. Seeraj: They are not satisfactory. These are matters of a financial nature and it has been a long time and I expect that the Minister would have been very much prepared to answer some of these questions.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, let us not go there. The questions that you asked, I thought that those were the ones that you wanted answers for. Are you saying to the House that you are asking another question, a different question?

Mr. Seeraj: Cde. Chairman, I am saying that the answers provided are not adequate.

Mr. Chairman: Could I suggest that you asked the questions to which you have not been given answers. That would prove helpful.

Mr. Seeraj: Thank you very much Cde. Chairman. Could the Minister inform this House about the number of pumps involved in the operation and their location?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I am going to ask you to answer the questions. Perhaps, I did not hear the answers clearly. I thought that the Hon. Minister gave that answers. I am just trying for us to not repeat questions and answers and then have a speech in relation to the repetition.

Mr. Holder: Perhaps, I could be helpful here and give an overview of what we are talking about.

The National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) requested the sum, as you would have seen, of \$234,716,110 from the Contingencies Fund. This was in order to address urgent problems arising from unexpected weather conditions in Guyana. This had to be addressed in a twofold manner; the first being the prolonged *El Niño* problem which had affected Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10. The total of \$193,283,360 was expended to alleviate further loses, damages and breakdown. The breakdown was: Fuel and lubricants, \$139,833,360; equipment maintenance, \$36 million; and transportation of equipment, \$7,450,000.

Subsequent to that, there were increased rainfalls which resulted in flooding in several areas within Region 5. This required urgent interventions, being a farming communities, totalling the sum \$41,432,750. The following was a breakdown of that: fuel and lubricants, \$16,643,750; provision of operation of tractor pumps, \$8,140,000; contracted excavation works, \$4,489,000; and the procurement of fuel drums, stop logs, *et cetera*.

Mr. Chairman, what had essentially happened in Region 5 was that because two of the pumps at Trafalgar had been vandalised during the previous Administration and they were not fixed for two years, they were not operational to help with the flow of water to drain Region 5. While there was drainage and Profit and De Edward Villages, the pump at Trafalgar was not functioning. The result of this was that because there was increased precipitation, certain villages, such as Trafalgar, Union and Tempe were flooded. The rainfalls had the main irrigation canal filled, so it was difficult to pump water into that canal because it would have overflowed. Therefore, all pumps available had to be transported to that location. It is in this context that these sums were spent.

Mr. Seeraj: Mr. Chairman, all that the Minister has said is actually in the remarks column.

2.28 p.m.

All I was asking for is what is not in the remarks column? I was seeking clarification on how many pumps were involved and where were they sited? This is so that we could have an appreciation for where the interventions were made. All of this information that the Minister told us is there.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, do you have another question? I asked that because it seems to me as if you did ask a question at the beginning. It seem to me, perhaps quite incorrectly, that the Minister did attempt to answer those questions and then it seem to me that you then introduced the issue of impact which took it somewhat beyond the question you asked at first. I am sure that you would have read all that is in the document. So is there another question?

Mr. Seeraj: Sir, the questions were not answered and I spoke about impact because of the inadequacy of the answers. The Minister is skirting the question; he is not giving answers. I

asked questions where the information is not in the remarks column and the Minister gave me what is in the remarks column.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Seeraj, are you through with your questions?

Mr. Seeraj: Sir, I have no further questions because it would appear that the answers are not forthcoming.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much Mr. Seeraj. Mr. Neendkumar.

Mr. Neendkumar: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Agency code no. 21/211 – Chart of Account 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: I noticed that from the Contingencies Fund the sum of \$234,760,000 is now being sought. I would like to know how many pumps were bought and where were they located?

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, no pumps were bought. I am not sure where the Hon. Member is getting this. I answered the first question. The villages were Trafalgar, Tempe and Union. I answered the question that they were approximately eight pumps and how the money was spent. Apparently, the problem is that I am not adequately answering the question. So I am at a lost.

Mr. Neendkumar: A follow-up Mr. Chairman. If the Hon. Minister is speaking about eight pumps, then let him tell us what work was done for us to spend this money on the eight pumps and in which specific locations.

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, I am sorry to sound like a *stuck record*. There were eight pumps, located at Trafalgar, Tempe and Union. They were pumping at various times because of flooding and they had to pump constantly. So the funds were spent at Trafalgar....

Mr. Neendkumar: Where were the locations?

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

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

Mr. Holder: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you Hon. Minister.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, in all fairness, I am asking if you could please help me. Can the Hon. Minister tell me the specific locations where the moneys were spent? What was done to these pumps and where were the locations?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, the questions awaits your answer.

Mr. Holder: Does the Hon. Member wants geographic coordinates? What exactly does the Hon. Member wants in terms of location? Does the Hon. Member want the Global Positioning System (GPS) locations?

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, could he tell me if one is in Mahaicony...

Mr. Chairman: “Could the Hon. Minister tell me” not “he”. Please let us try to keep today very high. ‘Could the Hon. Minister tell me’ rather than “could he tell me” or soon we would have ‘could she tell me’.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister tell us in which villages could the GPS locate these pumps? Let the Hon. Minister tell us that.

Mr. Chairman: Let us deal with it one at a time. Could the Hon. Minister please answer the question?

Mr. Holder: The fuel for the pumps was for the areas of Pine Ground, Trafalgar, Bush Lot and Union – lubricants. Then we have transportation of equipment. I do not know how to answer the question. I told the Hon. Member the villages and the number of pumps. So I am not sure.

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Seeraj, I have am thinking that we should give other Hon. Members a chance to also ask questions. But you seem to be the man with the questions. So please proceed.

Mr. Seeraj: Yes, Sir. I am willing to give way if the other Colleagues would like to ask questions, but I do not see any indication, Sir.

Cde. Chairman, I am going with the answer of the Hon. Minister – eight pumps are apparently just over \$8 million. Could the Hon. Minister inform us as to the payments that were made for the individual pumps? Whether it was just \$1 million across the board for the eight pumps,

\$1million each or whether there was some formula that was used to calculate payments for the individual pumps? These were the tractor pumps that were hired for the relief of different villages – the names which we have not received.

Mr. Holder: Would informing the Hon. Member that they were tractor powered pumps rented at \$5000 an hour, help, in terms of multiplying that by the number weeks, days and hours that they worked? This is so that the Hon. Member could then determine the amount of money spent. The pumps were at: Golden Grove – South; Trafalgar – North, East and West; Trafalgar – South, East and West; Union – South and North; and Tempe – South. Mr. Chairman, does that help? It cost \$5000 per hour, plus fuel and lubricant.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister said that the money was spent for Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10. Could the Hon. Minister tell us how much money was spent in Region 10 and where?

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, the money was spent in West Watooka.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, what was the money spent for in West Watooka.? Could the Minister state how much money was spent in Watooka, and for what?

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, it was because of the *El Niño* effect. Irrigation pumps were used there to relieve the community so that they could have gotten the necessary water facilities.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, I know Region 10 well and the Hon. Minister is telling us that an irrigation pump was in Region 10. Is that what he is selling us?

Mr. Holder: A mobile pump was taken there to give water during *El Niño*.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Neendkumar, was your question answered?

Mr. Neendkumar: No, Mr. Chairman. But I would ask another question. I noticed that a \$139,803,360 was utilised for Fuel and Lubricants, \$36,000,000 was for Maintenance of Equipment and \$17,000,000 for Transportation of Equipment. Could the Hon. Minister tell us, during this *El Niño* period, how much of this money was spent to transport persons to the Jubilee celebrations? Did that take place?

Mr. Holder: No funds were spent to transport members to the Jubilee celebrations. I am trying to give the Hon. Member as much details as possible. Under transportation: We transported pumps from Blankenburg to Arimai – \$2 million; we transported pumps from Hope to Arimai – \$3 million; we transported pumps from Hope to Maduni – \$700,000; we transported pumps from Buxton to Maduni – \$800,000; we transported pumps from Whims to Nancy – \$2 million; we transported pumps from Enmore to Big Baiabu in the Mahaica Creek – \$800,000; we transported pumps from Maduni to Enmore, \$400,000; we transported pumps from Herstelling to West Watooka, Linden – \$1 million; we transported pumps from Lusignan to Maduni – \$1 million; we transported pumps from Lusignan to Mora Point, Mahaicony Creek – \$1.2 million; we transported pumps from Whims to Kataraba in the Mahaicony Creek – \$2 million; we transported pumps from Mc Doom to Windsor Forest – \$200,000; we transported an excavator from Mc Doom to Mon Repos – \$200,000; we transported an excavator from Mc Doom to Hope Canal – \$300,000; we transported an excavator from Mc Doom to Mackenzie, Linden – \$430,000; we transported an excavator from Mackenzie Linden to Kwakwani – \$600,000; we transported, by boat, from Lusignan to the Mahaica Creek – \$100,000; we transported, by boat, from Lusignan to the East Demerara Water Conservancy – \$100,000; and we transported, by boat, from Leguan to Boerasirie Water Conservancy – \$150,000. Did that help Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, one last question. The Hon. Minister said that he transported pumps from Mc Doom to several places. Could he tell us from where in Mc Doom were these pumps moved from?

Mr. Holder: Those were new excavators we had bought from Farm Supplies Limited, so they went from the place of purchase to where I told the Hon. Member they were.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, \$234,000,000 plus is being sought under this line item. The question is, the general nature of the work of the NDIA deals with flooding and changing weather patterns, if the Minister, could give a report to this House of what was extra ordinary about this year's weather pattern, as compared to last year that necessitated this expenditure? This is because I would have anticipated that the NDIA would have already factored in into its work plan possibilities of excessive rainfall and drought like conditions and what would be needed. So what was so unusual or outrageous that demanded this indication? Let us get the figures.

2.43 p.m.

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, I am sure that the Hon. Member is aware of the fact that we did experience *El Niño* conditions last year. The result of that is the short rains which normally come starting around the middle of November to the end of January. That did not appear. This caused a number of problems. As a matter of fact some of these problems could not have been anticipated. For example, the movement of salt water up the Mahaica Creek. It went very far, for nine miles plus, and we virtually had to divert water from Kusabaru Creek, which is after Mahaica and dig a canal four miles long to get water to the farmers in the Mahaica area. This was not something that we could have anticipated. These were extraordinary conditions. So, this is the rationale for it. It was not normal conditions and could not have been anticipated.

Mr. Damon: Mr. Chairman, I am seeing here that \$234,716,110 is being asked for to offset new expenditures. What I want to know is, when this sum of \$12,488,688,000 was allocated, did the Hon. Minister and his experts not cater for unforeseen circumstances? Do they not know that we usually have excessive rainfall sometimes and sometimes we have long dry periods? They did not cater for that? How is the Ministry of Agriculture budgeting like that, Hon Minister?

Second question: I have seen here...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, it may be helpful if the questions are taken seriatim, so that you would allow the Minister to answer your first question and then you would raise the other question. Thank you.

Mr. Damon: Mr. Chairman, instead of you speaking for the Minister, I wonder if the Minister would prefer to have all the questions and then rise to answer them.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, would you please answer the first question given?

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, this was virtually the worst *El Niño* that the country has experienced. The only one bordering on that was the one in 1997. On the question of budgeting for these sorts of things, if we budget for these sorts of things in advance, I am not sure what the Minister of Finance would do. If everyone had to budget for contingencies way over and above what is normal. Mr. Chairman, the question has been asked and answered previously.

Mr. Damon: What the Hon. Minister said here, has convinced me that poor planning was responsible for those things. Let me say this, we have here, *El Niño*, the dry spell, Hon. Minister, the Ministry of Agriculture had to get pumps to pump water, and then in the same breath, there were the rains and then the Ministry of Agriculture had to get pumps to pump out the water. If it is so, could you tell me, Hon. Minister, how many pumps were sent to Region 2 to pump the water into the land and how many were sent to pump it out?

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, in Region 2, I am sure the Hon. Member is aware that there are the big Dawa Pumps that pump from Tapakuma River. They are extremely expensive pumps to handle. They gobble up a lot of fuel. So, they were not that many pumps to be moved, it is a question of spending money and activating things such as the Dawa Pumps.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, I wish to draw the Hon. Minister's attention to Article 222 of the *Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana*. [Mr. Williams: What is the question?] I am coming to the question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Ali, I will allow you this time, but, please, we are dealing with questions in the supplementary.

Mr. Ali: It is a question pertaining to the expenditure.

Mr. Chairman: I am allowing you this time.

Mr. Ali: I wish to draw the Hon. Minister's attention to Article 220 (1) of the *Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana*, which outlines the condition that would allow one to spend from the Contingencies Fund. I would like to draw the Hon. Minister's attention to Article 218 (3) (a), which outlines the condition that would allow you to spend from the Consolidated Fund. Listening to the explanation by the Hon. Minister, it is obvious that these expenditures cannot come from the Contingencies Fund but must be from the Consolidated Fund. I am asking the Hon. Minister whether he is aware that he is in breach of the Constitution in relation to these expenditures.

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, I maintain that I am not in breach of the Articles of the Constitution.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, may I ask the Hon. Minister, what are the conditions...

Mr. Chairman: No, Mr. Ali, this was inevitable. While I allowed you, I will not allow us to go on an excursion outside the ambit of what we are doing. You know what the outer limits are and I think you know that you are stepping out of them now. Let us try to go back to provide...

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, I have full regards for your guidance, however...

Mr. Chairman: Well, be guided.

Mr. Ali: However, there is just one issue that we have to sort out here. That is whether the expenditure is properly before us. The expenditure is here from the Contingencies Fund. I am presenting, based on the Constitution, that these are expenditures for the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Member would know that the question that he wants to have asked that is what he should ask. I do not know that any statement by the Hon. Member here could provide the conclusive answer to that particular question. What I would suggest that the Hon. Member does is this: If you have a question in relation to this question please ask it; if you do not have a question then yield the floor to someone else.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, just for my education and clarification, could I redirect this question to the Hon. Minister of Finance?

Mr. Chairman: When the Hon. Minister of Finance's turn comes then that would be quite appropriate.

Mr. Ali: If the Attorney General is willing to answer as he has said I do not mind redirecting it to him.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we are wasting time. Now, either you put the question or allow someone else to do so. Thank you.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, the NDIA received a subsidy of \$1,750,000,000 for the year. Based upon this advance that was made from the Contingencies Fund, an additional \$193 million was expended. My question to the Hon. Minister is Sir, could he give us a breakdown of the expenditure or tell us if the \$1,750,000,000 has been used and exhausted and why did we have to have...

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Bishop Edghill: Should I start over Sir?

Mr. Chairman: It may be useful to start again so that the Minister gets the full benefit of your question.

Bishop Edghill: One billion, seven hundred and fifty million was approved and appropriated for the NDIA as Subsidies to Local Organisations in the 2016 Estimates. Out of this, \$234 million has been advanced from the Contingencies Fund. The Minister has indicated to this House that \$193 million is for the NDIA. The question to the Minister, the \$1,750,000,000 that was appropriated, has that amount been exhausted and that is why we are having an additional \$193 million? If it has been exhausted and we have to have \$193 million which was advanced, how do we plan to run the NDIA for the rest of the year?

Mr. Holder: The straight answer is that the appropriated funds have not been exhausted. These are contingency matters for things that were not and could not have been budgeted for.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Mahaica-Mahaicony-Abary/Agricultural Development Authority (MMA/ADA) 2016 Budget was \$237 million; the recurring Budget was \$135 million of which only \$78.9 million was received; Capital Expenditure was \$102 million of which \$95.2 million was received. Could the Hon. Minister assure this honourable House that part of the expenditure incurred by the MMA/ADA during the period 1st January to 28th July, 2016 was not already budgeted for in the 2016 Budget?

Mr. Holder: It was not Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Gill: A follow-up, Mr. Chairman. Could the Hon. Minister explain why we are being asked to approve additional funding in the amount of \$41.4 million for Region 5, while the MMA/ADA has been short changed, \$62,900,000 from the current Budget? These are for moneys that have been budgeted for but have not been received by the MMA/ADA to date?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member I thank you for the question, but I say that I do not know because I understand what you have said just now about short changing in your question. So the answer

then includes both of those. I do not know whether we are assisting the matters along if we do that.

Mr. Holder: I am not sure I quite understand the question, Mr. Chairman, but you see the funds that we had for MMA/ADA had to be used because of emergency works. Therefore, we need to have the funds replaced. Does that answer the question? I was not sure I fully understood the question.

Mr. Gill: Mr. Chairman, the MMA/ADA has not received its entire budget for the year. The MMA/ADA still have another \$62,900,000 outstanding, of which, I am sure if they had that money they would have been able to put projects in place to avoid all the flooding that we have incurred during the past few months. This why I am asking the Minister if he could explain why we are asked to make another allocation here for the MMA/ADA, when they have not yet received their full allocation.

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, the MMA/ADA is not only run by funds received from the Central Government. The MMA/ADA receives funds from rates and taxes, drainage and irrigation, *et cetera*. What was budgeted for was the shortfall between what their anticipated income was and its needs to run the authority for the year.

2.58 p.m.

When that was budgeted for we certainly did not anticipate the *El Niño* situation, but we have funds to use. There are funds that are coming in and I can assure you we will use those funds first before we burden the Ministry of Finance with additional funds. There is a cash flow that we operate with. I can assure you that the funds that are budgeted for will be utilised before the end of the year, if we need it.

Mr. Damon: Hon. Minister, I have seen that you have here Region 2, Region 3, Region 4, Region 5, Region 6 and Region 10 being the regions that were affected during *La Niña* and *El Niño*. I want to know and I am putting this question to you, Hon. Minister: Were you able to reach out in any one of these regions to see first-hand what were the problems?

Mr. Holder: Yes Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Damon: If so, follow-up question, could you state which regions you visited during the problems?

Mr. Holder: Regions 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 plus Region 10, plus Region 9 were the areas affected by *El Niño*.

Mr. Damon: Maybe you were invisible.

Dr. Mahadeo: Minister, I see here that Region 6 is included in the regions where moneys were spent out of the approximately \$234, 716,110. Could you tell me how much money was spent and in which areas, if there was maintenance of equipment?

Mr. Holder: I did not hear the question. He spoke very softly.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, could you assist us by repeating the question?

Dr. Mahadeo: Minister, I am saying that out of the over \$234 million that was spent, Region 6 was included. Listed are fuel and lubricants, equipment, maintenance and transportation of equipment. Could you please indicate for Region 6, moneys which were spent, which equipment was repaired and how much money was spent for fuel and lubricants and transportation?

Mr. Holder: I knew that there was a pump at Crabwood Creek, at the back, during the *El Niño* situation, but the kind of detail required here I certainly could supply the Hon. Member with chapters, verse and daily breakdowns. I really have not walked with it here, the volumes of it.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the Minister has undertaken to give you, to quote his words, “chapter and verse” which he is unable to do from his present position.

Dr. Mahadeo: I will take your word that it will be provided to me.

Mr. Chairman: I beg your pardon.

Dr. Mahadeo: I take your word that it will be provided.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I do not understand what you said. I think the word of every Hon. Member in this House is a word to be relied on. There can be no other way.

I believe that Hon. Members if they are promised a document by another Hon. Member and that Hon. Member, for whatever reason, does not receive it, then that Hon. Member might well think that he should let the Clerk know or the Speaker know.

Dr. Mahadeo: Thank you Mr. Chairman. I will do that.

Mr. Chairman: I am unwilling to accept any suggestion that an Hon. Member would fall below the standard of that term by which he is referred to here.

Mr. Seeraj: The Hon. Minister informed us of a number of transportation contracts that were awarded, and various amounts that were spent on transportation. Could he further inform us of what process was used to award these contracts to transport various pieces of equipment?

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, we were in an *El Niño* emergency situation, pumps had to be moved at a moment's notice, and excavators had to be moved from one place to another. There really was not time to put out three tenders and send it to Guyana National Tender and Procurement Administration Board (NPTAB), and so on. We used what was available at reasonable prices.

Item 1 21-211 Ministry of Agriculture - Ministry Administration – \$234,716,110 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

CAPITAL ESTIMATE

Item 1 32-322 Ministry of Public Infrastructure - Public Works - Infrastructural Development - \$406,758, 312.

Bishop Edghill: According to the Legend: “Provision for completion of D’Urban Park Development Project...”

Hon. Member: That is under agency code 322.

Bishop Edghill: That is where we were guided to.

Ms. Teixeira: We are still on Financial Paper No.1/2016 on the second item. You jumped to capital estimate, Sir. We have not finished the current on Paper No. 1/2016 one. The next item would be agency 434 - Regional & Clinical Services. We have not finished the current estimates to go to capital estimates, which is on the page after.

Mr. Chairman: I am sure that there is something I am overlooking here.

Ms. Teixeira: It is on page 1 of Financial Paper No.1/2016.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I crave your indulgence for a few minutes so that we can be sure that we are all on the same page, so to speak.

[Mr. Speaker in aside with the Clerk of the National Assembly.]

3.13 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I thank you for your forbearance and assistance. I want to ensure that, on each occasion, we are all together in relation to this. The next item we will consider is Ministry of Public Health – Regional and Clinical Services. Hon. Members would have that agency mentioned immediately after the Ministry of Agriculture.

Item 2 43 – 434 – Ministry of Public Health – Regional and Clinical Services – \$63,541,250

Mr. Chairman: Everyone has that which I just read.

Hon. Mr. Nandlall, you have the floor.

Mr. Nandlall: Yes, Sir.

May I ask the Hon. Minister how it is moneys for rental of buildings are being accessed from the Contingency Fund, having regard to article 220, which speaks to the contingency fund only to be accessed when there is an urgent need for expenditure for which no other provision exists? The ledger itself tells that there has been a provision voted already and, apparently, there has been a shortfall. Article 218 (3) of the Constitution provides very clearly that, in that eventuality, you have to go to the Consolidated Fund, if you have used the money already, by way of a statement of excesses or, if you want it before, then by a supplementary provision. I am asking, respectfully, Sir, for the Hon. Minister to explain, having regard to the clear language and conditionalities imposed by the Constitution in relation to the Contingency Fund, how such an expenditure can be accessed from the Contingency Fund.

Minister of Public Health [Dr. Norton]: Mr. Chairman, this has never been paid before because we only during this year were asked to pay for rental of a particular storage facility.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, a follow-up. Perhaps I was not clear enough, Sir. There is a voted provision...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, if you allow...

Mr. Nandlall: Yes, Sir.

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

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, would you yield?

Mr. Nandlall: Sorry, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Minister. Are you through with the question?

Dr. Norton: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, I heard the Hon. Minister saying that it is a new expenditure. I appreciate that but the fact is that there is an existing provision which we voted on earlier this year when the national expenditures were presented. Therefore, there is an existing provision. The Constitution clearly states that it is for an urgent need for an expenditure for which no other provision exists. So, it is a completely new, unanticipated expenditure. You have already provided for rental. I am respectfully asking, why is it that you are coming under the Contingency Fund when provisions are clearly provided for in the Constitution for you to access the money that you require from the Consolidated Fund?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much but I have answered that question already.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us the location of the Linden Holding Company and who are the principals of that Company?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, the Linden Holding Company is the Company that we deal with and not an individual.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, did I hear correctly that we are dealing with a company and not an individual? I asked where the location of this building is and who the principals of this

Company are? If this Company is a registered company, there must be a registered principal somewhere located.

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, that information can be had very easily.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I believe the question is being addressed now so Hon. Members would have a right to expect a reply in relation to their question.

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, the Linden Holding Company has a business that is located in 176 Middle Street, Cummingsburg, Georgetown.

Bishop Edghill: I thank the Hon. Minister for partly answering the question, Sir. The next part of the question is, who are the principals of this Company and when was the Company registered?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, I undertake to provide this information to the Hon. Members.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I have a number of other questions on this particular matter but this one is very important. Now, \$63 million has already been spent.

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

Bishop Edghill: Yes, Sir. Sixty-three million dollars has already been spent on this particular matter from the Contingency Fund. Could the Hon. Minister tell us what the monthly rental is that is being paid by the Ministry of Public Health to the Linden Holding Company?

Dr. Norton: The monthly rental is \$12,500,000.

Bishop Edghill: Is this facility a specialised storage bond for pharmaceuticals?

Dr. Norton: Yes. This building is to the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) standard and it is for the storage of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House what process was used for the procurement of this facility?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, the Government of Guyana was paying the New Guyana Pharmaceutical Corporation (New GPC) \$19,270,000 per month for rental of its storage. So, we had to find another means of storage.

Bishop Edghill: I am going to the legend, Sir, and please bear with me because I would just like to have something sorted out. Thirty-one million dollars was the voted provision; \$63 million came from the Contingency Fund as an advance. The legend states:

“Provision for rental to New GPC for the storage of pharmaceuticals for period March - June 2016 –\$38,541,250.”

So, if we are paying for four months, I cannot see how it is going to be \$19 million per month.

Secondly, if the payment for rental to Linden Holding Company, as per Cabinet decision, per month for July, which is \$12.5 million, security deposit \$25,000, which suggests two months security deposit, that is \$37.5 million that went to Linden Holding Company and \$38 million to the New GPC. So, I would like for him to give us the explanation of these figures that he is quoting.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, where are we going?

Bishop Edghill: I am seeking a clarification, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, this procedure is one where Members ask questions.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I put the question.

3.28 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: We are making speeches; we are drawing conclusions and we are doing additions, all of that in the guise of a question which, at the end of the day, is not a question. I am just simply asking the cooperation of Members. I would not want to be in a position to have to ask Members to take their seats. Please, I must have your cooperation. We cannot, under the guise of asking questions, have speeches which, at the end of the day, do not add to the question. I am saying to you, whatever you require, try to couch it in a question, please.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, my question is simple. There is a voted provision of \$31 million for the year. There is an additional...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I am prepared to let you come back with the question. I will not let you repeat all of that. What is the question to the Minister?

Bishop Edghill: Sir, the question is a simple one and I have been seeking to get it answered. The Minister said that \$19 million was being spent per month to New GPC. If \$19 million was being spent to new GPC, why was the voted provision \$31 million for the year?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, this is the first time we are paying this rent only from March of this year. The cost is shared between the Ministry of Public Health and the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, in this provision, \$38,541,250 was being paid to the New GPC between March and June. Could the Minister say how much is being spent per month as rental?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, we, at the Ministry of Public Health, pay only 50% of the rental to New GPC.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Minister, would you agree with me that the Ministry of Public Health, Government of Guyana, built a storage pharmaceutical facility at Diamond to bring an end to off-site storing at any place? That was the intention. The question is why, even though we have the Diamond pharmaceutical storage facility, the best in the country, are we still storing pharmaceuticals at other facilities?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, we inherited two storage facilities. Now, we are using only one and we hope that it will not be for too long.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, could I ask the Minister which month in which year would be the last month we would store drugs and medical supplies at private facilities off-site of the Ministry of Public Health's facility which was built for that purpose?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, we would not be able to answer that question.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister tell this House if the \$12,500,000 being paid by the Ministry of Public Health per month for the rental of Linden Holding Company is the sum total of what needs to be paid for that facility or is the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation paying another sum?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, it is the sum total.

Ms. Teixeira: The address, 176 Middle Street, Cummingsburg, is that the same address as the Sidewalk Café and Mr. Larry Singh - the Linden Holding Company? I have a corollary question once he answers that, Sir.

Dr. Norton: I would not be able to say that, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister say whether the Ministry is now going to be using Linden Holding Company to store drugs in addition to the Diamond facility and, if so, where? Where is the warehouse? Could anyone say where the warehouse is?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, it is a facility in Sussex Street, Charlestown.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, could the Minister please tell us what the size of the bond that is being used is, the square metres of the bond, and the square metres of the bond that they were renting from New GPC?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, I would not be able to give that answer now.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, we heard, from the Minister, that the bond has been certified by PAHO to be able to store medication. Could the Minister be kind enough to lay over to Parliament the certificate stating that PAHO had certified the bond for the storage of medicines and reagents?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, PAHO/WHO is not a certifying agent in Guyana.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, if PAHO is not the certifying agent, then which agency is the certifying agent in Guyana and how are we assured that we are compliant with international standards for the storage of medicines? Are there any certificates available?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, in a department of the Ministry of Public Health, we are the certifying agent for storage of pharmaceuticals.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Dr. Anthony, are you through with your questions?

Dr. Anthony: I have a few more questions, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Please.

Dr. Anthony: I will just like to enquire from the Minister whether the New GPC had certification and from which agency. Was New GPC compliant with international standards and which agency certified New GPC?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, we did not go into any arrangement with the New GPC and we are not in a position to say whether it was certified or not.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, as a requirement for the United States (US) President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) funding and where medications were stored at the New GPC, can the Minister say whether the US Government had certified the New GPC to indicate that it was compliant with international standards?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, we would not be able to answer that question.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, could the Minister say whether or not there was a bid for the procurement of storage space and, if so, when was that bid issued? Was it a public bid? Who were the persons who bid to provide bond space to the Ministry?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, with the exorbitant price called for by New GPC, we had an urgent need to find another storage facility.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, I would like to know whether there was public tender by the Ministry of Public Health and, if no, why not?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, that question was answered before.

3.43 p.m.

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

Dr. Anthony: It is whether there a public tendering for storage space. If there was, who were the bidders? If there was not, what was the reason why there was not a public tendering?

Mr. Chairman: Are these additional questions or is it the same question?

Dr. Anthony: I had asked that before.

Dr. Norton: There was no public tendering because it was an emergency.

Mr. Ramson: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to share the duration of the contract with Linden Holding Company? In the interest of transparency and accountability, would the Hon. Minister be willing to share with this honourable Assembly the contract between the Government and the Linden Holding Company?

Dr. Norton: We would hope that, as early as possible, the Ministry of Public Health would be in a position to not be renting any kind of storage facility.

Mr. Ramson: I think I may have been somewhat Delphic in my question. Allow me to rephrase, Mr. Chairman, so that the Hon. Minister is clear about my question. It is a two-part question. The first part: What is the duration of the contract between the Government and the Linden Holding Company? The second part: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough, in the interest of transparency and accountability, as His Excellency David Granger has principled his Government on, to share with this honourable Assembly the very contract between the Government and the Linden Holding Company?

Dr. Norton: The contract is for three years. With regard to whether we would make this contract available to the public, it would depend on both parties. The Ministry of Public Health cannot make that decision alone.

Mr. Ramson: It is just a follow-up question. I want to be clear to know if the Hon. Minister is aware that the reason why the questions are being asked is because public moneys are being spent. Accordingly, it is only right, fair and proper, upon the principles that I previously outlined, that the public is not my some degree of privilege to know of a contract. The public entitled to know.

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

Mr. Ramson: The question is: Is the Minister aware of that?

Dr. Norton: This is a Government that is very transparent. We are committed to do all that is possible and necessary so that all of our transactions could be as transparent as possible.

Mr. Ramson: That being so, and having had that commitment from the Hon. Minister, which I am very happy to have had, would the honourable Assembly be able to have that contract within the next week?

Dr. Norton: I think I have answered that question already.

Mr. Nandlall: I am still not clear as to whether we would get the contract laid in the National Assembly. I am asking the Hon. Minister specifically and simply: Would you be laying the contract that is under review, the rental contract with Linden Holding Company, in the National Assembly? We are being asked to approve moneys and we are entitled to the document. I am asking respectfully whether the Minister would oblige us.

Dr. Norton: In reality, we do not have a problem doing that, providing the other partner is in agreement.

Mr. Nandlall: I am still confused. Is the Hon. Member saying that his obligation to provide us with that contract is contingent upon the consent of the landlord?

Dr. Norton: I have given the best answer that is available at this moment.

Mr. Dharamlall: Could the Hon. Minister please state the date on which this contract was signed and who signed on behalf of the Government of Guyana (GoG)? I have a follow-up question.

Dr. Norton: Those details are not available at this moment.

Mr. Dharamlall: Could I therefore ask the Hon. Minister if there is a signed contract?

Dr. Norton: All of this information would be supplied to this honourable Assembly in due time?

Mr. Dharamlall: We are expending tens of millions. In three years, it will be hundreds of millions. Could I ask the Hon. Minister whether there is a contract signed – yes or no?
[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: I think Hon. Members know that some remarks in this House fall outside the realm of acceptability and can render the person uttering those remarks out of order. I thought that I should remind all Hon. Members of their duty to this Assembly.

Dr. Norton: We would never intend to present a contract before this Assembly that is unsigned.

Bishop Edghill: This is money that has already been spent. We are seeking to clarify and we would like to have a commitment from this Minister. That is money already spent. It is not to be spent. It is a security deposit of \$25 million and a one-month rent of \$12.5 million. Is there a signed contract or not?

Dr. Norton: That contract would be presented to this Assembly.

Bishop Edghill: I do not think that we need to have controversy. The question is simple. Is there a signed contract? It is either yes or no. Has the Government started using that facility for the storage of pharmaceuticals? What has been stored there so far? That is money already being spent.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, is this a new question?

Bishop Edghill: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: I know that the Hon. Member would want to observe the propriety in answer to the Chairman.

Dr. Norton: We rent that facility to store pharmaceuticals and that is what we are paying for.

Bishop Edghill: I would not like to prolong this, but as a representative of the people of Guyana, the Minister needs to tell us if there is a signed contract or not. It is a simple question. It is not a complicated issue. This paper suggests that it is a Contingencies Fund advance. This money has already been expended.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you have asked a question. Let us see if you can get an answer.

Dr. Norton: Yes. We would provide that contract.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, could I ask that you repeat the answer?

Dr. Norton: Yes. We would provide the honourable Assembly with a copy of that contract.

Dr. Mahadeo: I would like to ask the Minister whether that bond has been cleared to store all kinds of pharmaceuticals, whether they being injections, gauze, and other, that we use in Guyana. Since the evaluation was done by the Ministry of Public Health, could this House be provided with the tool that was used and how it would be graded?

3.58 p.m.

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, certainly all pharmaceuticals and medical supplies would be stored there. We would use the instrument that is available to the Ministry of Public Health under the Food and Drug Department.

Dr. Mahadeo: Would the tool be made available to this House? How was it evaluated? What scores were given for which area? How were the questions answered?

Dr. Norton: That evaluation was done in accordance with the instrument that is available to the Food and Drug Department.

Dr. Mahadeo: Mr. Chairman, my question is very simple. Could it be made available to this House? If so, when would we get it?

Dr. Norton: That is public knowledge; it is available to the public. I would assure that, as early as possible, we would make it available to the House.

Mr. Dharamlall: The Hon. Minister mentioned that this contract was sourced through sole sourcing. Could the Hon. Minister please, therefore, state when the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) was approached for approval and when did Cabinet grant its no-objection to this contract?

Dr. Norton: Cabinet approved of this on 1st July, 2016.

Mr. Dharamlall: The first part of the question was: When was the NPTAB approached and approval granted to proceed with sole sourcing?

Dr. Norton: I could provide that information at a later date.

Mr. Nandlall: Hon. Minister, this matter has occupied our attention for a while. There is one final question. Could you give us the address of this facility at Sussex Street? I want the lot number. We would send somebody to visit it now. We have to ask questions on it on Financial Paper No. 2 of 2016. Could you assist us?

Dr. Norton: I could provide that information at a later date.

Item 2 43-434 Ministry of Public Health – Regional and Clinical Services - \$63,541,250 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 3 53-531 Guyana Defence Force – Defence and Security Support - \$20,000,000; \$35,000,000; \$46,000,000; \$30,000,000; \$54,000,000.

Office Material & Supplies

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, there is a provision for \$20 million. Could the Hon. Minister tell the House more about these orders and related documents that amounted to \$20 million? In addition, could the Hon. Minister tell us about Operation Dagnet in relation to Operation Greenheart?

Minister of State [Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon]: The difference between Operation Greenheart and Operation Dagnet is that Operation Greenheart is a field exercise and Operation Dagnet is an operation. They are two different operations altogether.

Operation Dagnet was a response to the security situation which had been developed based on the assessment of the threat posed by the deployment of troops and the security situation in Venezuela which had deteriorated. This had required Guyana to have additional presence at its borders. This was in addition to the fact that we were catering for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Heads of Government Conference which Guyana did not anticipate. Dominica had experienced a problem and Guyana stepped in to co-host the conference. Therefore, that was a sum of money that was not contemplated. For the hosting of the conference, it required

additional deployment from the Guyana Defence Force (GDF) and the Guyana Police Force (GPF). Therefore, these sums of moneys were expended for that purpose.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, the reference is made to the 46th Anniversary Celebration which does not resonate with what the Hon. Minister said in his response to the questions I asked about the security situation in Venezuela and the conference of the CARICOM Heads of Government Meeting. I would like to seek further clarification by asking how does the 46th Anniversary Celebration fits in with the CARICOM Heads of Government Conference and the security situation in Venezuela.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, it was an assessment of the threat at a particular point in time which covered the 46th Republic Anniversary Celebration of Guyana, the 50th Independence Anniversary Celebration and the CARICOM Heads of Government Conference.

Vehicle Spares & Services

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, I would like to query the amount that is being requested here to the tune of \$35 million. In June of this year, \$60 million was sought through the Contingencies Fund to address the same problem or issue of maximum serviceability. Why was the Ministry of the Presidency not aware that maximum serviceability would have required, at that time in June apart from the \$60 million, more money, so as to prevent them from coming to the House, less than three months after, to request an additional \$35 million for the same issue in respect of maximum serviceability?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: This sum is basically for the maintenance of close to 200 vehicles that are involved in these operations. The sum sought in June had to do with last year. The sum now being sought is for the 2016. I must say that the sum of \$35,000,000 was because of prudent management of the transport fleet that we were able to keep it to this sum of \$35,000,000.

4.13 p.m.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, I find that answer rather circumfluous because under the next chart of account 6265, maintenance is referred to. There is nothing in this request for this allocation of \$35,000,000 that speaks to the question, in anyway whatsoever, of maintenance.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, this set deal with maintenance. The other head to which the Hon. Member refers has to actually do with the hiring of transport. They are two different matters altogether – transport, aircraft, hiring and so on.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister give us in greater detail more information of what was described as the heightened period of Operation Dragnet?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I am quite baffled by that request. I do not know whether the Member could specify particularly what is it that is required of assessing a heightened period? What does it mean by heightened? Heightened means in the view of the security forces, an increase in the level of preparedness to deal with the threat situation that is being analysed. That is how the security forces deal with heightened period and that is our understanding of it.

Other Transport, Travel & Postage

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, once again, in June of this year a supplementary provision of \$120,000,000 was requested for exactly the same as the request that is being made here – “provision of hired aircraft to satisfy routine maintenance”. My understanding of routine maintenance means that they must have been budgeted for this in 2015. This is not out of routine maintenance. So provision for hired aircraft to satisfy routine maintenance issues and operational requirements, exactly word for word, as was in the case of the supplementary provision in June last year – \$120,000,000. Now, a request is being made for \$46,000,000, bringing the total to \$166,000,000 for exactly the same issues that were required for last year.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Yes, Sir. Having regard to the explanation about heightened, I wish to further enlightened that this \$46,000,000 had to do with the hiring of an aircraft because the Y-12 and the Sky Van aircraft were both unserviceable for periods during the time of Operation Dragnet. Additionally, we were required to do an increase level of aerial surveillance along the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) to guarantee our fisher folks security from the air and to ensure that we had a presence so as to deal with piracy also.

So we had an increased level of activities, and I believe that the nation would have seen photographs of the aircraft taking up our officers of the Army, the Maritime Administration (MARAD) and those agencies that basically deal with piracy.

In addition to the deployment on our borders and in addition to the serviceability issues, we took on an additional amount of patrolling in the EEZ to ensure we could give our fisher folks the assurance that their security was well looked after.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, for three months in 2015, just after the 2015 budget was passed, where \$200 billion was allocated to the GDF which was an additional \$1 billion, a request was made for \$120,000,000. That is a lot of money. Now we are being asked to approve an additional \$46,000,000. One was in the case of Operation Greenheart, now this provision is being sought for in relation to Operation Dragnet. It appears that, for every operation, huge sums of money are being allocated. Could the Hon. Minister tell us what is the value that we are getting in return for these huge expenditures for military purposes?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, the security of the State, the peace, honour and happiness of the citizens of this country are matters for which one could hardly put a price tag on. While the Hon. Member spoke about Operation Greenheart, yes that was last year, this is Operation Dragnet. The exercises are reactions to a situation which have created new exercises and troops for that purpose. But as far as the operation is concerned, we were reacting to live situation. So this is really what was occurring here and we had to actually hire aircraft for that purpose.

As I said, we have actually publicised all of this and these matters are all in the media. Some of it, of course, which have caused some amount of angst in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela when our troops were exercising.

Other Services

Mr. Rohee: Could the Hon. Minister tell the House precisely how much money did Operation Dragnet actually cost the nation? I am not asking about the welfare of citizens and peace of the nation and so forth. I am asking for specific figures. How much, in numbers, did Operation Dragnet cost the nation?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I cannot give the Hon. Member a precise figure. Operation Dragnet, as the House would recall was an operation done in phases. In fact, we are still in a certain phase of Operation Dragnet but it is at a reduced level of deployment. Therefore, I cannot give the Hon. Member a precise figure as to what Operation Dragnet is going to cost, but I suppose that we could do so in a few days or weeks.

Ms. Teixeira: Minister Harmon, the expenses for laundering of uniforms – are these the uniforms used at the ceremonial parades? This is because I do not think that the normal uniforms are laundered. Are they? I am talking about the ceremonial uniforms that would be worn for parades. Is this sum for the laundering of the uniforms that the Guyana Defence Force is speaking about under this line item 6284?

I would just like to know because it is a total of \$30,000,000 which includes uniforms, rental of tents and other equipment in support of Operation Dragnet for the 46th Republic Day Anniversary and the 50th Independence Day Anniversary. I am just trying to get an idea as if this is the laundering of the ceremonial uniforms or the uniforms used by the GDF for Operation Dragnet.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: This has to do with ceremonial uniforms. It has to do with the ceremonial parades that took place for the 46th Anniversary of our Republic and the 50th Anniversary of the Independence. The increase had to do with the actual number of soldiers that were involved. Usually, for parades of that type we would have about a 100 soldiers or so on parade. On this occasion, we had close to 600 ranks on parade and that is why there was an increase in the numbers.

Other

Bishop Edghill: As part of the legend, I note that there is a funeral expense of \$3,772,700. Could the Hon. Minister indicate who that funeral expense is related to or to which incident?

4.28 p.m.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, this sum was for the funeral of eight ranks of the Army that had died during the course of this period.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I am hearing that this sum involved eight ranks that had died during the particular period. Was this related to Operation Dragnet?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, they occurred during the period of Operation Dragnet.

Bishop Edghill: Could I be more specific Sir? Does this relate to the funeral expenditure of the rank that died in the Special Organised Crime Unit (SOCU) operation?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I do not know why we need to be so specific. These were soldiers who died. Whether one had died under SOCU or by what means, these are ranks who had died while they were in service. This sum is catering for the decent burial of those persons. That is it, whatever the reason is.

Bishop Edghill: I do not intend to have the ire of the Hon. Minister but this is a Contingencies Fund advance. For normal budgeting, the Army has sums set apart for these kinds of expenses. These are additional moneys that are being sought and all that we are seeking to do is to have clarification.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are you asking another question or you are not asking?

Bishop Edghill: Yes, I am asking a question.

Mr. Chairman: Please proceed with your question.

Bishop Edghill: The question I am asking is that we are now having an expenditure of \$3,772,000. We heard that that sum was for eight ranks. The specific question has to do with whether these were the ranks that had died during Operation Dragnet or was this expenditure that dealt with the ranks who died during the SOCU operation? I do not think that we have had the answers.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I did provide the answer. I said that the sum was for ranks that had died during the period of Operation Dragnet and, yes, the two ranks that had died during the SOCU operation, during that period are, in fact, catered for under this sum.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, we are all supportive of these decent burials for ranks of the Guyana Defence Force. Could the Hon. Minister say whether Mr. Pyle was given a decent burial among those who were given a decent burial?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, the answer is yes.

Item 3 53-531 Guyana Defence Force - Defence and Security Support – \$20,000,000, \$35,000,000; \$46,000,000; \$30,000,000; \$54,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 4 76-762 Region 6: East Berbice/Corentyne – Agriculture - \$41,002,620.

Dr. Mahadeo: Could the Hon. Minister give us a detailed breakdown, as he said in paragraph and sentence, as to what is the extent for which all these excavation works were done in Region 6 and the cost that is attached to each one of them? Thank you.

Minister of Communities [Mr. Bulkan]: Member, there are nine locations, which are stated under the remarks columns. The scope of the works entails excavation of irrigation canals, with a total of approximately 9,400 rods to provide irrigation to approximately 19,000 acres, to benefit approximately 1,800 plus farmers, during the period mid-February to the end of March. The respective contracts would vary between \$2.2 million and a maximum of \$8.7 million for a total of \$41 million.

Dr. Mahadeo: Could I ask the Hon. Minister if he could, maybe not now, provide us with the details of these works that were done. For example, what length of work was done at the No. 72 Village intake canal and the Chinese cross canal, which contractor and how much was expended?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, in the case of the excavation works at No. 72 Village that was for a total of 1,500 rods, the contract sum was \$8.7 million and the contractor was K.P. Jagdeo.

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

Dr. Mahadeo: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I would like to know the details for all these works that were done. That is what I was asking for from the beginning. I was just using the No. 72 Village

intake canal and the Chinese cross canal as examples. I am asking for the details for all these works because I am representing Region 6.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, the request is for the details for all the works mentioned.

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, Mr. Chairman: I would be pleased to provide the Hon. Member with the details and the breakdown.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the Minister has undertaken to provide you with the details.

Dr. Mahadeo: By when Mr. Chairman, if I may ask?

Mr. Bulkan: By the time the Hon. Member has his lunch, Mr. Chairman, by the suspension.

Mr. Chairman: You will provide it today?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Most grateful. Thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Minister state if these works were tendered for and if they were tendered and awarded, were they posted on the NPTAB website?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, these were emergency works, given the nature of the situation. These contracts were awarded by the Regional Tender Board. They were under the three quotes system and for the lowest of the three quotes the award would have been made to that contractor.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, could I just get some clarification to ensure that I heard the Minister correctly. Were these contracts awarded through the regional democratic system? Is that what you are saying?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, Hon. Member, the Regional Tender Board.

Ms. Teixeira: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, I come back to the question I asked another Minister some time ago. Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation works is a long standing provision in the financial architecture of our country. I am asking again, why were moneys accessed from the

Contingencies Fund when there is an existing provision for that? The Constitution is very clear that there is a requirement or a condition and that only when that condition exist we would you go to the Contingencies Fund. If there is a shortfall we would go to the Consolidated Fund. May I ask the Hon. Minister why the Contingencies Fund was used in contravention of the Constitution?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, under the remarks column and indeed the paper is quite specific. It specifies that it was an emergency work under the Contingencies Fund. This was to provide irrigation, in response to, the extreme *El Niño* effects which the country was in a grip during that period of February to March. It was the decision of the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) to be able to provide these emergency works, as I said, to benefit over 1,800 farmers and 19,000 acres of rice lands which were in jeopardy. This was actually urgent and unforeseen, and the Central Government was happy to accede to the request of the RDC of Region 6 to provide emergency relief to our farmers.

Mr. Nandlall: I do not dispute that the works were urgent. The Constitution states that once there is an urgent need for expenditure for which no other provision exist, then we go to the Contingencies Fund. All I am saying is that provision already existed, though rendered inadequate because of the emergency nature of the work that came subsequent to the budget. But it cannot apply in a situation where there is an existing provision. In this case, Article 218 states that we could spend the money and then lay over a statement of excess and that is what should have been done.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister is there...?

Mr. Bulkan: No, Mr. Chairman, I have already sought to provide the best answer that I could.
[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Item 4 76-762 Region 6: East Berbice/Corentyne – Agriculture - \$41,002,620 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

CAPITAL ESTIMATE

Item 1 32-322 Ministry of Public Infrastructure - Public Works - \$406,758, 312

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, chart of account 1214900: Could the Hon. Minister tell us whether this work was tendered for?

Minister of Public Infrastructure [Mr. Patterson]: Sorry, Mr. Chairman, I did not hear the last part of the Hon. Member's question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Neendkumar, could you repeat the question please.

Mr. Neendkumar: I am asking the Hon. Minister to tell the House whether these works were tendered out or how they were done.

4.43 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and the answer to that is yes. They were tendered out under the selective tendering system. We applied to NPTAB, I have that letter here, and we pre-qualified 16 contractors. I will list them just in case, because I am trying to shorten my time on my feet.

The 16 contractors are Bassoo and Sons, Home Design Engineers and Associates, Paragi Developers Inc. – my apologies if I bastardised anybody's name – Samaroo Sukhai, Rowando Brothers, Ivor Allen, Aaron Lall, Adamantium Holdings, Colin Talbot, Handel Garnett, S.A. Nabi and Sons, S. Jagmohan Hardware Supplies and Construction Services, Andre Howard, N & L Construction Inc. and S.C. Contractors Inc. We wrote to the national tender board, we received permission and successful tenders executed the work.

Mr. Neendkumar: Could the Hon. Minister supply us with a list of each contractor and how much they were given? I am asking whether all these contractors are being paid.

Mr. Patterson: Pardon.

Mr. Neendkumar: I am asking whether all these contractors are being paid fully.

Mr. Patterson: Yes Sir. The answer is yes.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister tell this Assembly what was unforeseen, unavoidable and urgent about this expenditure for D'Urban Park?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, on behalf of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, while the 50th Anniversary was not unforeseen, it was not budgeted to be done by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure. On Wednesday, April 20th, 2016 by public announcement the Ministry of Public Infrastructure was asked to execute the work and we did. While I am on my feet I want to congratulate my staff for the hard work they were able to do within the month. There is no provision under the Ministry of Public Infrastructure which I am answering for.

Bishop Edghill: Follow-up question. Did I hear the Minister say that there was no provision under his Ministry for this?

Mr. Patterson: With the Ministry of Public Infrastructure's capital work, Sir, there was no provision. I can repeat that for you. There is no provision there for that work.

Bishop Edghill: According to the legend, which we have here, this money was provided under the project 1214900 with \$72,889,000 was provided for and an additional \$406,758,312 was advanced from the Contingencies Fund. I do not know how this will be explained. He said there was no provision but under the project code there is a provision of \$72 million. Could he explain that?

Mr. Patterson: That is a strange question coming from someone who once acted as the Junior Minister of Finance. The agency code 32-322, project 1214900 as listed in the Estimates and is for Infrastructure Development. The \$72 million there previously was for the 2015 rollover installation of highway lights on Burnham Drive, construction of a sidewalk in Corriverton – which I must say is ongoing – and highway lighting in Corentyne, Adventure, Philippi, highway lighting at Ogle access road which came up to \$72,899,000. The additional work at D'Urban Park was charged under this line item. If the former Junior Minister of Finance, the Hon. Bishop Edghill, could refer to the Estimates, he would confirm what I am saying.

Bishop Edghill: I hope I will be given the same latitude to lecture the Minister the way that he wants to lecture me.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I am going to ask everyone not to be gratuitous in their comments. Hon. Member, just be advised. Please proceed.

Bishop Edghill: The issue here is whether this money should have been accessed from the Consolidated Fund or from the Contingencies Fund which is the case that is being made. The issue that the Minister referred, by public announcement, and let us go to the public announcement that he introduced...

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

Bishop Edghill: I am asking the question. By the public announcement, that was being made Sir. One hundred and fifty million dollars was the figure that was announced in that public announcement and when questions were asked of the Minister...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Bishop Edghill, I am suggesting to you that you ask the question or resume your seat.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I am asking the question.

Mr. Chairman: I cannot permit you to make your speech. Ask the question of the Minister.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, my question is being framed in a particular context. I know that this is a sensitive matter, Sir, but the question is being framed in a particular context. I am seeking to find out, Sir...

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

Bishop Edghill: You know, we are overdoing it in this Assembly now.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are you standing on a Point of Order?

Ms. Teixeira: No Sir. I was going to help my colleague out with his language.

Mr. Chairman: Let us give Bishop Edghill his opportunity to speak.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, my question to the Hon. Minister: Could you indicate to this Assembly, of the \$406,758,312 that was expended, if sum pertains to the \$150 million that was made by public announcement that he referred to when this project was handed to his Ministry?

Mr. Patterson: I could surely answer, not explain. There was a Contingencies Fund advance of \$150 million and then there is Contingencies Fund advance at \$256,758,321, and when they are added together there is \$406,758, 312, which adds up to the sum requested to be cleared now.

Bishop Edghill: I yield to Ms. Teixeira.

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Minister say whether this Contingencies Fund covers the period ending 21st July, 2016? Does the Minister anticipate that there will be more requests from the Contingencies Fund for D'Urban Park between now and year end? If so, could he give us inkling?

Mr. Patterson: I do not so anticipate, Madam Teixeira. I cannot give an inkling if I have no such anticipation whatsoever.

Ms. Teixeira: Just to reemphasise that the Minister is telling this House that the cost of D'Urban Park, as of April when he took it over, is \$406,758, 312, and not a cent more.

Mr. Patterson: This Contingencies Fund that we are about to clear is the cost to the Public Ministry of Public Infrastructure. I will say again. We took over in April. As I am on my feet I may as well announce why I am so sure. It is that this project will be handed over to the Ministry of Communities. Obviously that is a far better place to look after the open space. I build things and break things. [Mr. Williams: You build more than break.] I build things and occasionally I have to break them. I can in a matter for full clarity and declaration, as I see where the Hon. Member is heading, say that yes it is widely publically known that there was a private company previously dealing with the D'Urban Park. This Ministry took over on 20th April, 2016 and obviously it was completed successfully on time. That is my response.

Bishop Edghill: The Minister indicated that when he took over the project the anticipated expenditure was \$150 million and then there was additional that had to be expended. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this Assembly what led to the excess that was spent, bearing in mind that a full assessment would have been made at the time when the \$150 million was announced?

Mr. Patterson: I do thank the Hon. Member Bishop Edghill for that question. There is no devil and there is no mystery in this, Sir. When we took over, of course, we did an assessment. Thankfully, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure can only operate at certain guidelines and

specifications. In those cases we did an assessment of the soil conditions of the tarmac, of the sand of the loom. Obviously it was recommended that we do and hand over a proper job, which I do think we have done and we increased the scope of the work, in the sense of stabilising the area and things such as that. I cannot in good faith hand over something that is not properly done. I do hope the Hon. Member appreciates that.

Mr. Neendkumar: Could the Hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure tell us when this project will be handed over to the Ministry of Communities?

Mr. Patterson: That is probably the best question here. In all fairness, it was actually supposed to be handed over on the 31st July, 2016, eight days ago. We took off some lights, as you probably would know, for safekeeping and I felt it better that we put then lights in the stand. We want to make sure that we put back at least some of those things to hand over back to the Ministry. Imminently as soon as that is completed, I do hope it is this week, I will hand it over. My apologies if you expected it earlier.

4.58 p.m.

Mr. Neendkumar: In this year 2016, this project was under the Ministry of Presidency and then the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and now it is going under the Ministry of Communities. I suppose that more money will be spent on this project to continue the development. Can you give us a projection or tell us what you think?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I do not know about the question of the Ministry of Presidency. I do not know how the Hon. Member arrived at that. Maybe you want to direct this House to where that is listed. However, Sir, I know it was handed over to me in April; I am repeating this. It will be handed over to the Ministry of Communities and, obviously, there will be maintenance, upkeep and security costs most likely in the future but the capital works will be handed over and completed.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, so this project will now be handed over to the Ministry of Communities. It will be carrying a budget cost for security, lights, maintenance and wood ants.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I think that is what the Hon. Member, Mr. Edghill, was referring to because that is an abuse of the opportunity to ask a question.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, in all fairness...

Mr. Chairman: Please take your seat now, Mr. Neendkumar. I thank you.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, just for clarity - because I do understand that we are going live - operation and maintenance costs will be utilities and security. Those are what can be contemplated. All the other stuff I cannot respond to and I do not think I should. Thank you very much.

Item 1 32 – 322 – Ministry of Public Infrastructure – Public Works – \$406,758,312 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I would have wished that we complete the Supplementary Appropriation Bill before we take our break but I would agree that we consider that at this time. This completes consideration of all the items.

I will now put the motion, which is that the Committee of Supply approve of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 1 of 2016 Supplementary Estimates – Current and Capital \$931,018,292 for the period ending 1st January to 28th July, 2016.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Speaker, I beg to report that the Committee of Supply has approved of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 1 of 2016 and I now move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee in the said resolution.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we will take the recess now and we will return at 5.30 p.m.

Sitting Suspended at 5.04 p.m.

Sitting Resumed at 6.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we will continue consideration. We are referring to Supplementary Appropriation Bill (No.1 for 2016), Bill 2016, Bill No.18 of 2016.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS NOS. 13(N) AND 54

First Vice-President and Prime Minister [Mr. Nagamootoo]: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Orders 13 (N) and 54 be suspended to enable the Supplementary Appropriation Bill (No.1 for 2016), Bill 2016, Bill No.18 of 2016 to be introduced at this stage.

Question put, and agreed to.

Standing Orders suspended.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with paragraph two of article 171 of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended the Supplementary Appropriation Bill (No.1 for 2016), Bill 2016, Bill No.18 of 2016 for consideration by the National Assembly and I now present the Bill to the Assembly and move that it be read for the first time.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILL AND FIRST READING

The following Bill was introduced and read for the first time:

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL (NO.1 FOR 2016) – BILL NO.18 OF 2016

A Bill intituled:

“AN ACT to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2016 estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.” [*Minister of Finance*]

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the first time.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Supplementary Appropriation No.1 for 2016, Bill 2016, Bill No.18 of 2016 be read a second time.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BILLS – SECOND AND THIRD READINGS

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL (NO.1 FOR 2016) – BILL NO.18 OF 2016

A Bill Intituled:

“AN ACT to provide for the issue FROM THE Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2016 estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.” [*Minister of Finance*]

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read for the second time.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Supplementary Appropriation No.1 for 2016, Bill 2016, Bill No.18 of 2016 be read a third time and pass as printed.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read for the third time and passed as printed.

CONSIDERATION OF FINANCIAL PAPER NO. 2/2016 – CURRENT AND CAPITAL ESTIMATES

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly approves of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 2 of 2016 – Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling \$2,089,699,085 for the period 1st January, 2016 to 31st December, 2016.” [*Minister of Finance*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we will now consider Financial Paper No. 2 of 2016.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, in accordance with article 171 (2) of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended for consideration by the National Assembly the Motion for the approval of the proposal set out in the Financial Paper No. 2 of 2016 – Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling \$2,089,699,085 for the period 1st January, 2016 to 31st December, 2016 and I now move the motion.

Motion proposed.

Mr. Chairman: We will consider the paper as usual. The items will be taken from both current and capital estimates in the order for which the Minister is responsible. Hon. Members, we will turn to Financial Paper No. 2.

6.19 p.m.

Item 1 07-071 - Parliament Office – National Assembly – \$69,500,000

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, it is a little odd asking questions on a constitutional agency, and there are two listed on Financial Paper No. 2, the document before us. However, as it has been included, in relation to the Parliament Office, I will ask a few questions, in particular on telephone charges. The remarks column reads:

“...costs of telephone bills inclusive of roaming charges for all Members of Parliament as a result of Parliament purchasing cell phones for Ministers - \$3,000,000.”

The sentence is rather funny because the issues of roaming charges and the purchasing of cell phones for Ministers seem to be two distinct things. Could we just ask a couple of questions?

The Members of Parliament (MPs) are able to get reimbursement of \$10,000 for internet and \$4,000 deduction for cell phone. I understand the Ministers are able to access the platinum plan of the Guyana Telephone and Telegraph Company (GT&T). The issue is that these have escalated the costs for MPs. Could the Hon. Prime Minister clarify the issue of the internet ceiling that Parliament gives to Ministers and MPs? Are the roaming charges for all MPs roaming charges just to do with internet data services or is it when persons travel overseas they are reimbursed for roaming internationally?

Mr. Nagamootoo: Thank you very much for the question. I am informed like Hon. Member Gail Teixeira that one does not usually expect that constitutional agencies would be interrogated. But the question you asked requires an answer. I am informed that the charges being sought are roaming charges when MPs as well as Ministers are out of the jurisdiction, because MPs also go to conferences and official visits overseas. That is the answer. It is not for regular charges. I take it from the comments I am hearing from the benches that this ought to be explained to Members of the House that, in so far as they travel on official business, their roaming charges will be covered.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, this is a surprise to us because a number of our Members have travelled overseas and we are not aware that the roaming charges are covered by Parliament Office. However, I did ask the question to do with the internet data service that the Ministers are on. I understand that they are on one of the highest plans. I understand there was a circular by the Government or Cabinet to the effect that all Ministers would be on the platinum plan, I think it is called. I may have it wrong. Could that be clarified, please?

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Chairman, I am informed that bills for Ministers, who have cell phones purchased from GT&T, are sent to the Parliament Office and the Parliament Office would pay. As regards the platinum plan, all those who received phones from Parliament, I am told, the charges are sent to the Parliament Office.

Ms. Teixeira: From the Legend, it is clear that there is a change. In the past, Ministers used to have their telephone bills paid under the Ministry which was their portfolio. I appreciate there is a shift to Parliament and, therefore, I assume that Ministers' cell phones are not being covered by

their Ministries but by Parliament. Is that correct? Therefore, are the Ministers on a higher plan than the \$10,000 for which all MPs are entitled to have deductions for their internet services?

Mr. Nagamootoo: I am told that all MPs and Ministers are paid \$10,000 per month for the internet and they are all on the same plan. There is no different plan for Ministers and MPs.

Ms. Teixeira: Okay. Is there a plan in the Parliament Office for MPs, like Ministers, to acquire cell phones at the behest of the Parliament Office? Will that be in the 2017 budget?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are you asking about a matter we are not discussing here?

Ms. Teixeira: I am just trying a thing, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Nagamootoo: It is like an advocacy. I wish I could give you a comforting answer. Let us start with Ministers first and work along to see where that will take us. I am looking at Minister Jordan and maybe you should be looking at him too for the 2017 budget but it is not an answer I am competent to give.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, not 2017 again.

Ms. Teixeira: No. I got my two bits in to hopefully twig the ear of the Clerk and yourself. The next is:

“Other Goods and Services - to pay for the costs of all overseas Conferences and Seminars for Members of Parliament and Staff - \$20,000,000.”

Again, this is additional to the \$1.3 billion that was passed in this House. Could the Hon. Prime Minister advise the House if the Ministers are required to return unspent money to the Parliament Office which they do not use or has the policy been changed that Ministers do not need to return money.

Mr. Nagamootoo: I am advised that there is a practice in the Parliament Office that all unspent moneys ought to be returned to Parliament Office.

Ms. Teixeira: I would just advised, Mr. Chairman, that, when a delegation went to Suriname, the delegation on our side was advised that the Ministers were not required to submit returns; only the MPs who were not Ministers, and that included backbenchers on the Government side

and on this side, were required to submit. The Ministers did not have to bring back receipts or returns. I think Mr. Felix headed the delegation at that time to Suriname. That is when we got the impression that the policy had changed. For me, this explained why your cost has gone up by \$20 million more.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I thank you. Is it the same delegation which I headed to Suriname?

Ms. Teixeira: Sorry, Mr. Chairman. I said Minister Felix. I beg your pardon. It was you.

Mr. Chairman: There is a great deal to be done for the rest of the night so we have to keep our spirits up.

Mr. Nagamootoo: It appears as if the extension of the constitutional status of the Parliament Office might be the mischief here. Before that, a Minister who would travel overseas would submit his or her memoranda to Cabinet and he or she would be accounted to the Cabinet for expended sums. Now, the Minister has to account to the Parliament as the system has changed.

As regards the specific occasion, when it might have been said as different from what I am told the procedure is, no one is exempt from returning unspent moneys disbursed by Parliament. I am not sure if they are supposed to be submitting accounts but they do have to return the unexpended sum to Parliament.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I think a point of correction needs to be done here. Indeed, what Hon. Member Teixeira said was the practice under her Administration was true. That has been changed since this Administration has come into power. There has been a revised method of accounting for allowances granted from the Treasury, essentially. There are four categories of travel officers. Category A is for the President and Prime Minister and Spouses; Category B is for Ministers and I think the Chancellor of the Judiciary but he has been removed because no constitutional agency comes to Cabinet for its matters; Category C is for Permanent Secretaries and Category D for other officers. Categories A and B officers do not account for their travel anymore. When they get an advance, it is a final sum. All other categories of officers account for their disbursements. There is further differentiation in terms of expenses and how those are accounted for. The whole business about signing honour certificate has been completely

scrapped. If one does not have a bill, then certain amounts of expense would be written off and the others would have to be accounted for. There is a Cabinet decision on this which can be made available, if people so wish. I do not want the records to reflect that we may have inadvertently given wrong information to the House.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I wish to thank the Hon. Minister of Finance for clarifying that because I got a little worried that my information may have been wrong. I am glad he has been able to substantiate it. I would really appreciate if he would make available the new policy of Government to us. Thank you very much.

Item 1 07 - 071 - Parliament Office – National Assembly - \$69,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 2 17 - 171 – Ministry of Indigenous Peoples’ Affairs – Policy Development and Administration - \$72,865,000

6.34 p.m.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Could the Hon. Minister tell this Assembly whether of the \$118,350,000, voted provision, recorded in the Financial Paper No. 2 of 2016 for National and Other Event, catered for expenditures associated with heritage celebration?

Minister of Indigenous Peoples’ Affairs [Mr. Allicock]: The amount, which was voted for this event, initially was \$16,350,000.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: It seems quite unusual for the Hon. Minister to be seeking approval for the sum of \$72,865,000 to fund expenditures for heritage celebration when those events are just weeks away from today. What I noted, Mr. Chairman....

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, it may have slipped you, but you should be asking a question.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I will be asking the question. This amount for which approval is being requested speaks to a supplementary provision being requested for the period ending 26th July, 2016. This is why I had a preamble. Could the Minister explain to this Assembly if he would be coming to this National Assembly for an additional supplemental, since this \$72,865,000 should already have been spent as at 26th July, 2016?

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I rise on a point of clarification. There is a slight error at the top of the paper. It should read “2016-12-31”. These amounts, which are being sought now, have not been spent. There has to be an approval before the amounts can be spent. It should read “2016-12-31”. I am sorry about that.

Mr. Chairman: Is the Minister proposing a correction?

Mr. Jordan: Yes. The paper states “2016-07-26”. It should be “2016-12-31”.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Am I to understand from the Hon. Minister Sydney Allicock that, in addition to the \$72,865,000, the \$16,350,000 is an additional sum designated for expenditure on Amerindian heritage activities?

Mr. Allicock: The answer is yes.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Could the Hon. Minister provide the details of the goods and services which would be procured to the sum of \$72,865,000?

Mr. Allicock: I could give the Hon. Member that document.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, if it is the case that you would hope to present it sometime later, then I am sure that the Hon. Member and the honourable Assembly would allow you the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Allicock: Yes Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, this information would be made available.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I notice, in the legend that it speaks to an additional sum which would go towards payment for accommodating participants from the hinterland for hinterland heritage activities. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this Assembly which locations would these accommodations be acquired from?

Mr. Allicock: These accommodations would be hotels across Georgetown area.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Could the Hon. Minister inform this Assembly what process of procurement would be used with respect to expending this sum?

Mr. Allicock: We would be using a three-quotation system.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I would like to ask the Minister whether, in his deliberation and planning for the 2016 budget, he adequately budget for the heritage celebrations. I find it quite unusual for him to come at this point in time, a couple of weeks away from the heritage celebrations,...I know the coordination, which has to take place and planning, which has to take place, with respect to these activities.

Mr. Allicock: There have been a great number of requests from the various communities across Guyana which want to be a part of this exercise. It is because of the drive to bring the people together. They have been divided for so long.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I have a supplemental question based on the answer which I just received. The legend speaks to 212 villages and communities which would be benefit. Could the Minister inform this Assembly of the dollar amount from which each of these communities would benefit?

Mr. Allicock: This would depend on the communities' request. They know what they need.

Ms. Teixeira: Are there any funds in this \$72.8 million for the National Toshaos Council (NTC) Conference or is there sufficient money already in the Ministry's budget for the NTC Conference?

Mr. Allicock: We do have funding for that exercise separately.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Since \$118,350,000 was voted for National and Other Events, could the Hon. Minister tell us the national and other events that this money was spent on, and is this fund exhausted?

Mr. Allicock: Those activities have not been completed as yet. There is \$65 million for the NTC; there is \$5 million for the Rupununi Music Festival; there is \$18 million for North Pakaraima Expo. There is also the rodeo that was just completed.

Mr. Charlie: I have listened very carefully to the Hon. Minister's answer in relation to the 212 communities across Guyana which would be participating in the annual Indigenous peoples heritage activities. Of the requested sum of \$72,865,000, an amount of \$63,620,000 would be

allotted to the 212 communities. In my simple mathematics calculation, it comes up to \$394,000 for each community. I would like to ask the Minister if this would be a fixed amount for each community.

Mr. Allicock: An amount of \$10 million is allocated to assist the communities.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to the Assembly if, in his 2016 budget, a budgeted sum was sought for Indigenous Heritage Month activities? If it is in that budget, how much was sought?

6.49 p.m.

Mr. Allicock: Mr. Chairman, an initial amount of \$16,350,000 was sought.

Bishop Edghill: Follow up: Could the Minister explain to this House the amplified programme for heritage month which would necessitate expenditure from \$16 million to an addition of \$63 million more?

Mr. Allicock: It is the very document that I promised, not too long ago, to distribute to the House.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, there is, beginning tomorrow, the North Pakaraimas Summer Fiesta sponsored by Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon, BK Tiwari, the Community Development Council (CDC), the National Sports Council, *et cetera*. Could you state, Hon. Minister, whether the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs would be participating using funds from National and Other Events? This is because I noticed on the poster that yourself and Minister Garrido-Lowe would also be there.

Mr. Allicock: Mr. Chairman, I do not think that the question is related to this head.

Mr. Dharamlall: Follow-up: I am asking whether the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs will be participating in the North Pakaraima Summer Fiesta, which is part sponsored by Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon?

Mr. Allicock: Mr. Chairman, I thought that I had given the answer.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, it is obvious that the Hon. Minister...

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

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, Sir. It is obvious that the Hon. Minister is refusing to answer us. Could the Hon. Minister please state whether at the recent Moruka Day Expo resources from under this line item were expended for the Ministerial team to visit and participate?

Mr. Allicock: Mr. Chairman, funding for that event came from the ministerial travel budget.

Mr. Dharamlall: Follow-up: This is of national importance. I received...

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Dharamlall, every single intervention is of national importance. Can we avoid the gratuitous comments that are intended to provoke or to encourage other than decorum in this Chamber?

Mr. Dharamlall: I just want to emphasise the importance of what I want to ask.

Mr. Chairman: I would not want to rule you out of order.

Mr. Dharamlall: Okay Sir, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Please assist me in that regard.

Mr. Dharamlall: Sure Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, could you state whether moneys were paid from the additional resources being sought for participation in the Moruka Day Expo, where drugs with one month's shelf-life were distributed to our Amerindian brothers and sisters?

Mr. Allicock: Mr. Chairman, I am wondering whether what the Hon. Member asked was a question or did he make a statement.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, could I clarify the question? Mr. Chairman, I received a report from Moruka that...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you have boxed yourself into a corner and so you now have to play by the rules. A follow-up question is a follow-up question and not an opportunity for peroration, so please.

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Could the Hon. Minister state whether resources from this request would be used to cover the trip to Moruka, where drugs with one month self-life were distributed?

Mr. Allicock: Mr. Chairman, I am not aware of the event.

Mr. Dharamlall: Could the Hon. Minister state whether he attended the Moruka Day Expo?

Mr. Allicock: Mr. Chairman, I have attended two of expos which were held in Moruka. So, yes I have visited Moruka twice.

Item 2 17-171 Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs – Policy Development and Administration - \$72,865,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 3 21-211 Ministry of Agriculture – Ministry Administration - \$ 72,000,000

Mr. Seeraj: Could the Hon. Minister, for the purpose of informing the House, provide information as it relates to the allocations for the MMA/ADA for the sum of \$42.7 million and for the Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA) an amount of \$29.2 million. This is because the explanation in the Legend is rather bland?

Mr. Holder: Subsequent to the *El Niño* and later the *La Niña* weather conditions, the Ministry of Agriculture was forced to divert funds either to meet the cost of pumping water to rice and cattle farmers or to alleviate various issues in residential areas. The result of that is that the MMA/ADA is not in a position to complete a number of capital projects for 2016, if further funds are not made available. Therefore, we are now requesting a supplementary allocation to complete a number of capital projects, including: The Abary conservancy and control structures to seal breaches, heighten elevation along areas leading to the dams costing \$4 million; re-weed the borough ...*[Inaudible]*, \$3 million; rehabilitation of training bonds, \$2 million; primary drainage and irrigation - de-silting of drains in West Berbice area, \$6.5 million; road access – rehabilitation of fair-weather road to grade and shape dams so that paddies can be harvested, \$7.5 million; construction and development at Little Abary Sluice, \$5 million; construction of heavy duty bridge at Strath-Campbell, Mahaicony, \$2.3 million; construction of secondary canal, two and a half miles, to supply water to the cattle on the right bank of the Abary river, \$4.2 million and also, from the point of view of the agriculture development activities, to carry out

occupational surveys, \$1.6 million; cadastral surveys, \$3 million; engineering surveys, \$1.1 million; and excavation works \$2.6 million. There is also [*Inaudible*] administration: purchase of office furniture, \$1.2 million; acquisition of motor cycle \$0.75 million. Those are basically for the MMA/ADA.

In terms of the GLDA, the sum is largely for salaries for personnel and some technicians who were on contact with the Ministry of Agriculture and had ended their contracts and have been transferred permanently to the GLDA. These costs now have to be absorbed. There are some additional persons who were employed as well which amount to \$29 million.

Mr. Seeraj: Could I, though you Sir, request that the Minister submit a copy of the list he just read for our records?

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, I would certainly make a copy available.

Mr. Gill: The Hon. Minister, I am sure, is aware that \$62.9 million from this year's budget for the MMA/ADA has not been given to them. I am asking why is it necessary for this House to approve an additional \$42,777,000 on a budget that was approved earlier this year and has not yet been fulfilled. Whether it has been spent, that is a different issue.

The question is why is it that the MMA/ADA has not yet been given the balance of \$62.9 million on the current budget that, I am sure, could be used to fulfil a lot of the projects that the Minister has just mentioned?

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, what we are seeing here is the work programme for one year. We knew that we needed a certain amount of money. Some of that money had to be diverted elsewhere and now we want that sum back so that the work programme, in addition to what were in the pipelines before, could be completed. The Ministry needs the \$52 million plus this sum. This is supplementary to what we need.

Mr. Ramson: I just wanted to be clear that I heard the Hon. Minister's statement a moment ago, when he said that the Ministry had diverted moneys and if he is aware that under the Standard Accounting Practices and Laws of Guyana...

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

Mr. Ramson: If the Hon. Chairman would give a moment, the question would come in that statement.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the Chairman would give you a moment once he is assured that you are going to ask a question and will not follow the usual practice that seem to be obtaining here right now.

Mr. Ramson: I started off by saying, if the Hon. Minister is aware, so that is the usual interrogatory statement. Is the Hon. Minister aware that there is no provision for diverting funds and that is the basis upon which the Contingencies Fund has been created and any additional spending for other line items need to come by the way of supplementary. That is the first question.

7.04 p.m.

Mr. Holder: I am not sure what the question is or whether the Hon. Member made a statement. Could the Hon. Member ask his second question?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Ramson, your second question, please?

Mr. Ramson: I am going to rephrase my first question because the Hon. Minister said he is not sure what the question is? I am asking the Hon. Minister if he is aware that there is no provision under the Laws of Guyana for the diverting of funds, as he so mentioned a moment ago, and that any such requirement for exigency purposes comes under a contingency provision? That is the question.

Mr. Holder: Perhaps, I should not have used the word “divert”, I should have said “utilised”. So please *rub out* “divert” and insert ‘utilised’.

Mr. Ramson: If I may follow-up... I do not why the Hon. Minister Catherine Hughes is fanning her hand like a bird. If she wants to be... [*Inaudible*] she could go to the Botanical Gardens. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are not going to have this. Hon. Mr. Ramson will withdraw that remark that has no relevance to what we are doing here. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Ramson, you would withdraw that remark.

Mr. Ramson: [*Inaudible*] ...my remark.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Ramson, you will withdraw that remark.

Mr. Ramson: I did withdraw my remark.

Mr. Chairman: Very well.

Mr. Ramson: The follow-up question to the Minister as it relates to “utilised”, if the Hon. Minister is saying to this honourable House that he has utilised the funds for a particular purpose, then there is no need for a supplementary provision. Is that correct?

Mr. Chairman: That is a statement? Hon. Minister?

Mr. Holder: I am not sure what the question really is? What I am saying is that there was an *El Niña* situation. We had to work in an emergency situation and we did so. The MMA/ADA is an organisation that makes its own money, but needed some extra funds to complete its work this year.

These are all capital funds, but there is no capital operating in this situation, as far as the Treasury is concerned. Because of the emergencies, there were things that had to be done, which were done. This led to a shortfall in terms of the annual programme. So we are asking for a supplementary to complete the annual programme. It has nothing to do with the Contingencies or...

Bishop Edghill: Yes, Sir. I would like to refer the House to Appendix ‘T’ page 807, of the Capital Estimates, Volume 1 of the 2016 budget, as it relates to the question that I am about to ask. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to the House under which of these provisions he has over expended and where he intends to allocate the moneys being sought?

Mr. Holder: I thought that I had explained how the funds were to be expended for the rest of the year.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I did not hear the answer to the question.

Mr. Holder: I thought it was explained when I explained how the money was earmarked to be spent. So I do not have the benefit here of what the Hon. Member is looking at. So I really cannot easily transfer what the Hon. Member is saying into what I presented.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister indicated that the Ministry had to meet the shortfall of the MMA/ADA for the \$42,777,000. Could the Hon. Minister please state what are the reasons for the shortfall of the MMA/ADA resources?

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, the question was asked and it was answered.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, as a follow-up, could the Hon. Minister please state what arrangements are in place to negate future shortfalls?

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure how to answer that question. The emergency expenditure was made because of an *El Niño* phenomenon which resulted in the absence of the short rainy season. I am not sure what I can put in place to make sure the short rainy season comes. I think it needs a hint from a higher source than I could possibly be.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Dharamlall, I think this must be your 10th question and final question.

Mr. Dharamlall: I was seeking your protection there. It sounded very condescending. I was stating to the Hon. Minister that the MMA/ADA has resources of its own. I am asking if there was a shortfall and it could not meet these emergency expenses, what arrangements are in place for the MMA/ADA to negate against shortfalls in its revenue?

Mr. Holder: Do the Hon. Member mean shortfall caused by phenomenon such as the *El Niño* one, which was an act of God. Could the Hon. Member, explain what exactly he means?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, you have answered that question about three times, unless, there is something entirely new. I do not know if I am right in thinking that inertia is beginning to step in.

Item 3 21-211 Ministry of Agriculture – Ministry Administration - \$72,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 4 33-332 Ministry of Public Telecommunications – Public Telecommunications – \$300,000, \$2,000,000, \$3,000,000, \$450,000, \$7,109,000, \$37,700,000, \$450,000, \$1,720,000, \$5,557,000, \$100,000, \$3,150,000, \$88,776,000, \$55,936,000, \$1,908,000, \$72,759,000, \$10,186,184, \$4,632,000, \$22,350,000 and \$1,983,000.

Drugs & Medical Supplies

Dr. Ramsaran: The implication here is that this is to be used for field work. Therefore, field teams would be using the kits. How many kits would be bought with this sum and for how many field teams?

Minister of Public Telecommunications [Ms. Hughes]: We have a team in each region. So it would be for each of those.

Rental of Buildings

Ms. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, part of the sum sought, \$27 million, is for the rental of the head office. Could the Hon. Minister state where is this head office going to be located or where is it located?

Ms. Hughes: The head office is located at 267 Forshaw Street, Queenstown.

7.19 p.m.

Telephone Charges

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Minister advise us, based on these figures that are presented, whether the Ministry would now be using the Long Term Evolution (LTE), which was normally used for relay and not the internet? Will we now be paying the Guyana Telephone and Telegraph Company (GT&T) for the internet so that this is a change? In other words, are you not dealing with fibre optic cable anymore because you are reverting to the internet relay on the LTE? Could you please advise us because it is astronomically expensive?

Ms. Hughes: The internet is the service that we are offering on the LTE Network. We are not offering a service on the failed cable.

Ms. Teixeira: With GT&T, it used to be that one paid for the relay but not the internet. You are now including paying GT&T for the internet. Is that correct?

Ms. Hughes: Yes, that is correct.

Ms. Teixeira: So, this is a figure that is now \$57 million from August to December, plus, \$9 million for March to July. Do you believe that this is sustainable on a yearly basis or is there consideration that a fibre optic cable, at some point, would be on the horizon?

Ms. Hughes: I think it is sustainable because the hope is that all the Government agencies are going to be encouraged to move to this facility.

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Minister advise what are the services that are provided for the remote communities via satellite?

Ms. Hughes: Mainly internet access and access to Government websites.

Ms. Teixeira: As you are well aware Hon. Minister that internet connectivity is not accessible in many areas of the interior, so what are we paying the \$18 million for?

Ms. Hughes: This is part of a pilot project and it is our hope that, once we get good results from this pilot project, we could start to provide internet access to more parts of Guyana, especially, the Hinterland.

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Minister advice what is the “closed user group Digicel”? This fee of \$2 million, is it for the rest of the year, is it monthly or is it just a one off payment?

Ms. Hughes: Those are for telephone calls within a closed group, which is a cheaper way to go and that would be for all the staff at the E-Government Unit.

Electricity Charges

Ms. Teixeira: Hon. Minister, originally the National Frequency Management Unit’s (NFMU), under the Ministry of Presidency, figures were extra budgetary. Now they are being absorbed, it

seems, into the Ministry of Public Telecommunications. Is this the policy of the Government now, that the NFMU and the cost of running the NFMU would instead of being treated as statutory budgeting would then be on the Ministry of Public Telecommunications' budget, annually?

Ms. Hughes: Yes, that would be the cost that would go to the Ministry of Public Telecommunications. So, the NFMU would be incorporated in there.

Ms. Teixeira: The NFMU also brings in revenue. So, the revenue stream of the NFMU will not then be contributing to some of the cost of maintaining the 54 LTE sites, *et cetera*. So, where will this money go?

Ms. Hughes: The money would go to the Consolidated Fund.

Security Charges

Ms. Teixeira: The Security charges here are what appear to be 20 LTE sites but there are 54. Could the Hon. Minister say how are the 54 LTE sites, which is the total, being covered by security or is it only for those that are mentioned here?

Ms. Hughes: Some of the LTE sites are actually located in police stations, so no security cost would be required there.

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Minister say how many LTE sites are in areas, such as police stations, where they are protected and, therefore, do not require security?

Ms. Hughes: Mr. Chairman, if I could I provide that list after?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Ms Teixeira, The Minister is proposing that you have that information.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to the security firm that is providing this service and the method of tendering used to arrive at the contract?

Ms. Hughes: The security companies are RK's Security Service, Neal and Massey (NM) Security and Amazon Security. It was done through a public tender at the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board.

Bishop Edghill: Has the contract been awarded already Sir? I am just checking.

Mr. Chairman: Are you asking a question sir?

Bishop Edghill: Yes, Sir. If the contract has been awarded already?

Ms. Hughes: Yes, there was a recommendation by NPTAB for the award.

7.34 p.m.

Other Goods & Services Purchased

Ms. Teixeira: The legend states “To cater for the payment of 3 Ministerial Advisers and 1 Consultant”. Could the Hon. Minister please advise who are the Advisers and the Consultant, when were they hired or when were they brought on to work with her Ministry?

Ms. Hughes: The consultants are a Consultant in the area of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) policy and communication and that individual is Mr. Lance Hinds. The other Consultant is in the area of Frequency Management and Licensing is Mr. Enrico Woodford. The third Consultant is one in telecommunications and that is an attorney-at-law, Ms. Gita Raghbir. The first two started in June and Ms. Raghbir started in July.

Ms. Teixeira: Minister, the legend says three Ministerial Advisors and one Consultant. You have named two consultants and one lawyer. Is the legend wrong or was there a reconfiguration of the designations since this was printed?

Ms. Hughes: Let me clarify. The three names are in fact the three Ministerial Advisers. The one consultant negotiator has not been hired yet but that is the individual that we want to bring on board that will negotiate the terms and conditions of the agreement with Guyana Telephone and Telegraph (GT&T). That person has not been hired yet. The two administrative staff also have not been hired yet.

Ms. Teixeira: We had noticed that the newspapers state that Mr. Enrico Woolford was an adviser to you. Does he have a new designation as an Adviser or is he still an Adviser to you or is he a Consultant? The newspaper states that he was an Adviser to you on telecommunications.

Ms. Hughes: All three of them are Ministerial Advisers. I think I said specifically the areas of interest or expertise.

Ms. Teixeira: Maybe the Minister might then have recognised that when the question was asked by the Opposition of the number of Advisers to Ministries, none of these three persons were mentioned in the submission by the Hon. Minister Harmon to this Assembly. I do not know if you noticed that the three Advisers were left out.

Mr. Seeraj: Could the Minister please advise us as to the salary and benefits of these Advisers?

Ms. Hughes: The salary scale is \$530,000. I do not have the list of benefits with me, but it is a regular list of benefits that they get – 35 days of vacation. These contracts are for a one-year period. I can submit if they are any more details on the specific benefits.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, is there someone in the second row who...? That light has been on for some time. Hon. Ms. Teixeira, is your light about to go off?

Ms. Teixeira: My light is not about to go off, Sir. I hope to be a very long living woman around this place. I am just ceding to my comrade if he wished to speak. I am sorry. Hon. Minister, in relation to the National Frequency Management Unit (NFMU), there is now an Adviser who is dealing with frequency management – Mr. Hinds.

Ms. Hughes: No. It is Enrico Woolford.

Ms. Teixeira: It is Enrico Woolford. Sorry. Are you still retaining the present Head of the NFMU or will he be replaced by this person, Mr. Woolford?

Ms. Hughes: If I could clarify, the legislation, which we passed last week, mandates that there is going to be a telecommunications agency. That is outlined clearly in the legislation. Eventually the NFMU is subsumed under the telecommunications agency. Currently the NFMU does exist but once the legislation is centred to and operationalised and we start the process of outfitting the agency, then it goes under the agency.

Ms. Teixeira: One final question Madam Minister. You said that one of the consultants is outstanding, this is, the person to negotiate with GT&T. As you refer to the Telecommunications Act, which we recently passed, I thought that once the date was appointed for the legislation to

come into operation then the present licence holders would retain what they have already. I am a bit confused about what you are negotiating with GT&T about, again, now that the Bill has been passed. I am sure that the President will assent to it with alacrity.

Ms. Hughes: The negotiation with GT&T is the negotiation to end its monopoly. As you know a couple of years ago, the Opposition actually extended the agreement with GT&T. The landscape has now changed. Additional entities are going to be invited into the new liberalised telecommunications landscape. Therefore the negotiations that the Government of Guyana will need to have with GT&T and Atlantic Tele-Network (ATN) are the ones that I am referring to.

Ms. Teixeira: I just want to say that I am a bit confused again because the Telecommunications Act, once assented to, brings an end to the monopoly. Basically what you are talking about is compliance with the various licence holders including GT&T. I am not quite sure what we are negotiating but anyway. I take your word for it.

Item 4 33-332 Ministry of Public Telecommunications – Public Telecommunications - \$3000,000, \$2,000,000, \$3,000,0000, \$450,000, \$7,109,000, \$37, 700,000 \$450, 000, \$1, 720,000, \$5,557,000, \$100,000, \$3,150,00, \$88,776,000, \$55,936,000, \$1,908,000, \$72, 759,000, \$10, 186,184, \$4, 632,000, \$22,350,000 and \$1, 983,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 5 40-406 Ministry of Education – Post Secondary/Tertiary Education - \$109, 683,000

Minister of Education [Dr. Roopnaraine]: This amount being sought here is for basically the visit of the team that is coming to here at the end of November to deal with the reaccreditation of the School of Medicine at the University of Guyana. The team will be arriving and we will be anticipating that by the end of November the team will complete its work. As I think, Members would appreciate, it is very important that we get the accreditation and all its details right. This is for the School of Medicine. We will be putting out about 1,600 graduates at the end of the year. What is being sought here is to cover the cost of travel, accommodation and so on for the team coming to deal with the reaccreditation of the School of Medicine.

Item 5 40-406 Ministry of Education – Post Secondary/Tertiary Education - \$109, 683,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 6 42-422 Ministry of Communities - Sustainable Communities Development - \$501,000,000

Mr. Nandlall: Could the Hon. Minister provide us with the name of the contractor or contractor with whom this settlement was entered into? What are the terms of the settlement?

Mr. Bulkan: That would be BK International and Puran Brothers. It is a joint venture. The terms of the settlement is a settlement sum of \$5.7 million which is expected to be paid in three instalments. The remarks have stated that an instalment has already been made. The \$481 million of the \$501 million being sought here now will be the second payment and the remainder to bring us to the sum of \$1,177,000,000 will be catered for in the 2017 budget.

7.49 p.m.

Mr. Nandlall: So, the total settlement sum is \$1.177 billion. Is that the total figure?

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

Mr. Nandlall: The Hon. Minister mentioned the names of two contractors – Puran Brothers Disposal Inc. and BK International. Could the Hon. Minister provide us with the sum that is to be paid to BK International and Puran Brothers Disposal Inc.?

Mr. Bulkan: It is a sole entity, Mr. Chairman - BK International/Puran Brothers Disposal Inc.

Mr. Nandlall: So, two companies are going to be paid together. So you are unable to say how much will be paid to BK International and how much would be paid to Puran Brothers Disposal Inc.?

Mr. Bulkan: It is a joint venture so it is one company.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, might I ask of the Hon. Minister what the terms of the settlement were?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the settlement was for the payment of a sum of \$1.177 billion. Those are the terms of the settlement.

Mr. Nandlall: It is the payment by the Government to these contractors of \$1.177 billion. That is the Government's obligation. Why is the Government paying this money?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, essentially, the bulk of that sum was for waste delivered or processed to the Haags Bosch Sanitary Landfill site, namely 250 tons of waste at a sum of US\$3.95 million. There were retention payments, two components operations - US\$182,000; retention for construction and these were arrears or rather outstanding - US\$386,000. There were outstanding construction costs for 2013 at the sum of \$1.058 million and there were some other components which totalled a claim of over \$10 million but which the settlement was a reduced sum of the equivalent of US\$5.7 million.

Mr. Nandlall: What was the length of the contract between these contractors and the Government of Guyana?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the Government entered in the year 2009, a contract for the construction and operation of the Haags Bosch Sanitary Landfill site. The construction period was for 21 months and the operations commenced 1st February, 2011. So, the duration of the contract would have taken us to February, 2021 but the contract was brought to an end at the end of January, 2016 as a result of this settlement and agreement that arose from it.

Mr. Nandlall: Thank you, Sir. Could the Hon. Member tell us why the contract was brought to an end, Sir?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, from the period June, 2014, the contractor was not being paid but he was managing the operations at the site. So, by the time of May, 2015, that situation was already one year old. The previous Administration had, in the end of February, 2015, sought to terminate the contract and issued a termination notice to the operator, BK International in association with Puran Brothers Disposal Inc. The company moved to the courts and, in early March, 2015, obtained what I believe the lawyers would call prerogative release which, among other things, the court quashed that termination notice of 27th February and issued an order preventing the Ministry from acting on that termination notice; ordered the Ministry not to interfere with the applicants – either the construction of the operation. The Government was ordered to make interim payments in accordance with a memorandum of understanding (MoU) that was signed on the 7th August, 2013 at rates specified in that MoU and in an addendum that was subsequently entered into on the 19th November, 2019.

So that is a brief history of the court proceedings following the attempt by the Administration to terminate that contract.

Mr. Nandlall: Might I enquire of the Hon. Minister whether that decision of the court that he is referring to was appealed and, if it was not appealed, why?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes, Mr. Chairman, that decision was appealed.

Mr. Nandlall: Might I ask, Sir, that, since the decision was appealed, would it not have been prudent to await the determination of the appeal rather than pay \$1.177 billion as compensation without a court order? You have appealed.

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Williams]: Sir, like so many matters this new Government inherited from the last Government, this was one of them. In fact, this contract began in 2009 under the last Government. It was in February, 2015 - I do not know if they smelt the defeat coming – that was when they decided enough is enough and they purported to terminate the agreement. And when they did that, BK International then took them to court. He filed a prerogative writ and the then Chief Justice Chang made an order preventing them from removing BK International off the site. During that period, a lot of breaches were occasioned that the last Government did not bring BK International to task with. And so that is why BK International was not being paid by them and he claimed his money. So that was the state of play that we inherited this matter. And it was I who instructed that an appeal be filed. In the interim, the fires and the debilitated smoke had a deleterious effect on the surrounding communities.

In addition to that, the International Development Bank (IDB) had asked the last Government to get BK International off the site and it did not do that. So, what we inherited was a burning project and a decision by the IDB that it was not putting any more funds into the project unless and until the Government had the contractor off the site. And that is what we inherited and what we solved. And so, we had to cut the losses of the State, bearing in mind we had to pay \$6 billion to Rudisa Motor Company Guyana Inc., a judgement that was obtained against the former Government that it did not pay. And then we have another judgement against them during their time that they have not paid with Emile Elias and that is about \$7 billion. So, I do not know why Mr. Nandlall comes to this honourable House playing he is *Pontius Pilate*.

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Attorney General, I do not believe that we have come to that item yet on the Financial Paper. The present item is dealing with and I believe the question that the Hon. Nandlall asked is something relevant to the issue.

Mr. Williams: As it pleases you, Mr. Chairman. But it is important that this honourable House, yourself, and the nation be apprised as to the history of this matter and that it was inherited by the new Government.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Attorney General but it would be very helpful if he can go back to the original intention to the question.

Hon. Nandlall, are you finished asking your questions?

Mr. Nandlall: I do not know why my Friend is regaling us. My question is simple. I do not know whose interest he is representing, whether it is the State or BK International because I am not clear anymore. My learned Friend said that he filed an appeal challenging the Chief Justice's ruling that quashed a termination notice...

Mr. Chairman: Are you asking a question?

Mr. Nandlall: Yes, Sir. I am asking rather than wait and await the determination of the appeal filed by the Attorney General, why did they enter into a settlement, paying \$1.177 billion to BK International? That is all I am asking.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Attorney General, are you feeling this question?

Mr. Williams: I am answering this question, please.

Mr. Chairman: Please proceed.

Mr. Williams: Sir, because of the experience we had with the Rudisa Motor Company Guyana Inc. matter, which should have been settled early at the High Court level but there were appeals that had nowhere to go being filed to the Court of Appeal and then to the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), which the CCJ only took five minutes to dispatch...

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, objection.

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Nandlall, you are very kind but I am the Chairman. I cannot entertain an objection.

Mr. Nandlall: I know, Sir.

The Rudisa Motor Company Guyana Inc. matter started at the CCJ in the Court's original treaty jurisdiction. It never went to the High Court and the Court of Appeal. I am shocked that the Attorney General does not know that.

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I thank you for your observations and entry into this matter...

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Attorney General, are you going to provide another answer?

Mr. Williams: Yes, please. It is because I had stood up that the confessions had been made that yes we have knowledge of these cases and, equally, he has the knowledge with Rudisa Motor Company Guyana Inc.; he has the knowledge of Haags Bosch Sanitary Landfill site and he ought not to come here pretending as though he has no knowledge and is asking all kinds of questions.

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

8.04 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I am going to disallow any further comment or mention on any Bosch, Haags Bosch or any other one. Let us try to stay within the context of what we are trying to discuss.

Mr. Nandlall: I am going to repeat my question for the third time. The Attorney General, having filed an appeal against the judgement of Justice Ian Chang, in which Justice Chang quashed the termination notice of this contract, why did the Government proceed to settle the matter without the hearing and determination of its own appeal?

Mr. Chairman: I will permit an answer to that question.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, I answered the question before but what we are saying is this: because of the mess that was left by the last Government...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Attorney General, I am sure you are going to answer the question. But if it is proving difficult, perhaps the Minister of Communities might wish to deal with it.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I will like to add to what the Attorney General (AG) has said. There are two among the reasons why the Administration chose to go the route of settlement and not wait on the appeal. One, it was felt that had we gone the latter, the sum that would have to be paid would have been greater than the settlement sum agreed upon. Two, I believe it is a question foremost in the mind of the public as to why the Administration has gone down this route. Largely, it was to free the site of, if you will, the encumbrance that was there, which was the contract that was in place up to 2021. As long as that contract was in place, the Administration could not pursue other initiatives or a fresh approach, which it has, to allow for waste energy initiatives to be pursued there so that there would be no Government subventions or no allocations from central Government for the management of that site but the site would be the responsibility of a waste energy operator. That was one of the main considerations in addition to the cost savings it was felt would accrue as a result of the settlement; it was to free the Government of that contract which would have been in place until the year 2021.

Mr. Nandlall: One final follow-up, Sir...

Mr. Chairman: It is the final point. Please proceed.

Mr. Nandlall: The Hon. Minister described the contractor as an encumbrance and that it was the desire of your Government to get rid of the encumbrance. Was your Government satisfied with the work done by BK International on the site?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the encumbrance referred to was the contract that was in place up until the year 2021.

Mr Nandall: Sir, the gravamen of my question was: was your Government satisfied with the work executed by BK International so that you were prepared to pay him \$1.77 billion in compensation rather than sue him?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I believe the AG has already adequately expressed that that is, if you will, a botched arrangement that this Administration has inherited which we have sought to clean up and clear up. It joins a list of others, including Rudisa, Demerara Distilleries Limited (DDL), Mr. Emil Elias and others which we are seeking to bring closure to.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, as I understand it, this contract was a civil works contract as well as an operations contract. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us what percentage of the civil works were completed and at what cost? What was the balance on the civil works and to what cost?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I believe I have already provided the information in relation to the settlement sum. The bulk of it was for operations, for the processing of 250 tonnes of waste; there were two retention payments; there were interest costs for the sum of money that was not paid for the last two years; there was construction cost in the year 2013 and a few other costs which brought the figure up to the sum of \$10 million.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, the Hon. Minister is giving an undertaking to provide the information requested at a later date. Am I understanding that, Sir? Is that the undertaking that is being made? I did not get that. I am trying to find out.

Mr. Chairman: Please repeat.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, the question was: what percentage of the civil works was completed and to what cost, what was remaining and what was the cost of the remaining works? We need to know that.

The Minister indicated that 250 tonnes of waste was taken to the site and had to be paid for. Could the Hon. Minister indicate at what rate this was calculated for the settlement?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, 158,000 tonnes of that total was paid for at a rate of US\$17.03 per tonne and 92,000 tonnes at a rate of US\$13.63 per tonne.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House if these rates that were paid were based upon the contract with BK International?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, it is based on a document I have here to which I referred earlier. It is Addendum 1 dated 19th November, 2013 where the very rates I just referred to are specified. This document bears the signature of an Hon. Member of this House, Mr. Colin Croal, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, as well as other signatures on behalf of the contractor.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, a follow-up: I am learning that the Minister is referring to a document signed by some Member of this House. [Mr. Bulkan: The Permanent Secretary.] As I am aware, the contracted sum per tonne of waste was US\$8.37.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Edghill, I believe all the information you are putting out is information already provided. Could you ask your question?

Bishop Edghill: No, Sir. We are talking here about the calculation of the terms for the 250,000 tonnes. I am enquiring about the sums of moneys paid for the settlement of the 250,000 tonnes. I asked how much per tonne. The contracted sum that was to be paid per tonne was US\$8.37. If we paid higher amounts of US\$17 and US\$13.03, were the conditions for the payment of the higher rate met, including the compaction level?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the compaction component would have allowed for a higher sum, namely US\$20.27 per tonne instead of the US\$17.03 without the compaction. That is on the Addendum I just referred to that was signed by the then Permanent Secretary.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, I just want a clarification. First of all, could the Hon. Minister indicate who will be the payee for this payment? He made reference to BK International and Puran Brothers Disposal Inc. There is a reason I am asking who will be the payee.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister of Communities had answered before but let me answer it legally. The Members on the other side ought to know that and they know that. This contract was entered into by Puran Brothers Disposal Inc. and BK International via a deed of joint venture and they know that. [Mr. Nandlall: Who is the payee?] Listen and you will learn. In addition to that, there was a provision in the contract that empowered one of the

two to execute a power of attorney for the order to act on the part of the joint venture. Let me say this: the last Government miserably failed the Guyanese people under this contract. As they are talking to me, my memory is coming back.

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Attorney General, I take it that you have answered the question.

Mr. Williams: No, Mr. Chairman. I am answering the question. My memory is coming back.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Attorney General, I will ask...

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, I am answering the question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Attorney General, I would request you to answer the question you rose to answer and avoid comments which can lead us away from the question.

Mr. Williams: No; it is not, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, if you bear with me...

Mr. Chairman: The Attorney General is advised to speak to the issue before us. Anything else will take the Attorney General away from the path he should follow. I will strongly urge that you simply answer the question.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Chairman, the parties to the joint venture are the payee and that is why I was going to elucidate on it but I have answered the question.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, just a follow-up as well as a clarification. Let me start with the clarification, if you will allow me. The Hon. Minister is correct that there was a joint venture entered... [*Interruption*] Mr. Chairman, in this case, you will have to allow me because it will provide clarity to the people of Guyana as to what was the arrangement with the contract. Let me ask the question clearly again. May I ask the question, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Croal...

Mr. Croal: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: When the Chairman addresses you, you stand. [*Interruption*]

8.19 p.m.

Hon. Members, we are getting to the stage where, perhaps, we should take a break because I find it wholly unacceptable, the conduct of Hon. Members on both sides of this Assembly. If this is to continue, so many Members would be deemed out of order. We may be lucky if we have a quorum. We cannot continue in this manner. Mr. Croal, the Chairman determines what you do and that applies to every other Member in this Assembly.

Mr. Croal: At this point, what should I do, Mr. Chairman? May I go ahead and ask the question?

Mr. Chairman: You have asked for the floor and you have the floor.

Mr. Croal: Let me repeat. I asked the question: Who would be the payee? We were provided an introductory answer about the arrangement of a joint venture that was entered into. However, the introduction was correct, but there are some additional information that the Hon. Minister...

Mr. Chairman: I understand what you are saying Mr. Croal, but we cannot use this opportunity... If it was wrong for someone else to do it, it cannot be right for you to do it. Ask your question.

Mr. Croal: Would the payee be BK International or Puran Brothers Disposal Inc.?

Mr. Bulkan: No. This matter is a legal settlement and so the payment is being effected via the Ministry of Legal Affairs.

Mr. Ali rose to his feet.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Ali, please resume your seat.

Is the Minister of Communities saying that he is unable to answer the question?

Mr. Bulkan: The joint venture party would be the payee.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Ali, do you have a question? I had asked you to take your seat. Let me hear the question.

Mr. Ali: I am referring to the answer by the Minister and remind him...

Mr. Chairman: We have gone beyond that now.

Mr. Ali: No. I want to remind him that the allocation is under the Ministry of Communities and the Minister of Communities has a duty to this Assembly to provide a precise answer to the question.

Mr. Chairman: Thanks to your intervention. Everyone would be held on a very short leash. Please take your seat, unless you have a question to ask.

Ms. Teixeira: Since this is the second payment being sought from the Consolidated Fund, who was paid with the first instalment?

Mr. Bulkan: It was the contracted entity which was the joint venture partnership.

Bishop Edghill: Could we have the date when the first payment for the settlement was made? Could we have the date when BK International was removed from the site? Could we have the date when the emergency contractor was placed at the site? Could we have the name of the emergency contractor that was placed at the site?

Mr. Bulkan: Save and except to say that the sum being considered before us has nothing to do with the current contractor, but rather with the previous contractor, which is the joint venture partner – BK International in association with Puran Brothers Disposal Inc.

Bishop Edghill: The follow-up question has to do with the name of the emergency contractor that was on site when this contract was terminated. It is because that was disclosed to the House during the consideration of the last supplementary paper. The answer, which was given then, was that it was Puran Brothers Disposal Inc. If the joint venture was between BK International and Puran Brothers Disposal Inc., a contract cannot be terminated with BK International and Puran Brothers Disposal Inc. and then put Puran Brothers Disposal Inc. as the emergency contractor.

Mr. Bulkan: The consideration before the Assembly relates to a joint venture contractor. The current operator of the site is a single entity and not the joint venture contractor.

Bishop Edghill: Would the Minister of Communities indicate to this Assembly if, during the time of the concluding of negotiations with the joint venture, a party of the joint venture was appointed as the emergency operator at the site?

Mr. Bulkan: When the previous contractor vacated the site, the site was managed, on an emergency arrangement, by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure with equipment, at the time, from the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA). Subsequent to that, a public tender was issued and the successful entity under that arrangement is currently managing the site.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I would allow two more questions on this matter and I would move on.

Mr. Hamilton: The Hon. Minister just indicated that from the time of the vacating of BK International from the site to the time of public tender the NDIA along with the Ministry of Communities was managing the site. I am challenging the Minister...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Hamilton...

Mr. Hamilton: I withdraw the word "challenging".

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Hamilton, you have risen to ask a question. You may do that now, please.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Minister, is it true to say that before a public tender to manage the Haags Bosch site Puran Brothers Disposal Inc. was managing it before it became the contractor after the public tender?

Mr. Patterson rose to his feet.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure, you have risen.

Mr. Patterson: I accept the question and I would like to respond.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, do you rise to answer the question that is to be answered by the Minister of Communities?

Mr. Patterson: Yes Sir. There was a fire which had affected 50,000 households all the way to South Ruimveldt and to Diamond. There was a state of emergency. My Ministry along with the Ministry of Communities played the lead role in extinguishing the fire. On completion of extinguishing the fire, we stayed on to maintain the site. During that period, there were negotiations. Excavators from my Ministry and several excavators from the NDIA were operating at the site. With the advent of *El Niño*... [*Interruption*]

Mr. Patterson: Sir, could I have your protection?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, you cannot hear the answer if you have conversations going. Hon. Minister, would you please complete the answer you were providing?

Mr. Patterson: It is because we had to deploy excavators around the country since the NDIA had requested its excavators, that was when the process which the honourable gentlemen is trying to say. We were in possession of the site.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman...

Mr. Chairman: Do you have another question?

Mr. Hamilton: No. I asked a question that was not answered. I asked the Hon. Minister of Communities this question: Is it true to say that before the advertising of a public tender and the selection of Puran Brothers Disposal Inc., Puran Brothers Disposal Inc. was managing the Haags Bosch site?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, with your leave, I rise once again to restate my answer.

Mr. Chairman: Are you answering this question?

Mr. Patterson: I answered it before but maybe the Hon. Member did not understand. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure, the Ministry of Communities and the NDIA were in possession of the site until the period for which the gentleman is asking about. [*Interruption*] Sir, I am being accused of lying.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, you must speak to the Chairman about this. Let the Chairman hear your reply.

Mr. Patterson: My reply is as it was before, but the honourable gentleman is free to explore any further. We were in possession of the site. Just to expand a bit, we had to go twice because the fire had rekindled.

Mr. Dharamlall: Could the Hon. Minister of Communities state when the Assembly could be provided with the joint venture payment request for the \$427 million and a copy of the payment voucher in the name of the joint venture?

Mr. Bulkan: I am not in a position to answer that.

Item 6 42-422 Ministry of Communities – Sustainable Communities Development - \$501,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 7 43-434 Ministry of Public Health – Regional and Clinical Services - \$62,500,000

Ms. Teixeira: I hope that the Hon. Minister has had a chance to locate this place as we certainly have not. Before I reveal, maybe the Minister could say whether he has been able to find the place where the warehouse is located.

8.34 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, did you ask a question?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, Sir. I am asking whether the Minister has been able to ascertain the location of the warehouse on Sussex Street because he could not give us the location on the last occasion.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much Madam.

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, if the Hon. Member is asking for the exact lot number then the answer is no. I am not in a position to say at this moment.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, we have a photograph of the warehouse. It is not in good condition and it is a private residence. It is located between... Could the Minister say...

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Ms. Ally: Did you not just say that you know the place so how come [*Inaudible*]

Ms. Teixeira: I have it here but I am...

Mr. Chairman: Please ask the question Ms. Teixeira.

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Minister state if the location of the warehouse is on Sussex Street between Hill and Albouys Streets since he does not know the lot number of the warehouse?

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, going south along the East Bank of Demerara Public road, turning left into Sussex Street, before the first corner which is on the left hand side going east, the building that I am referring to, for which I cannot remember the lot number, is located there.

[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, after being told to turn the first corner and second corner, one would think that there are no roads in Georgetown. Could the Minister say what the colour of the building is that he is referring to?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, did you ask a question of the Minister?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes. The Minister has told me to turn left and turn right.

Mr. Chairman: I am asking whether you have asked a question.

Ms. Teixeira: I am asking what the colour of the building is.

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, I am kindly asking the Hon. Member to repeat her question.

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

Ms. Teixeira: Having tried to follow the Hon. Minister's directions and now that I am on the road, could the Hon. Minister tell me what the colour of the building is that I am looking for?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I am bound to point out that, while there is freedom to ask any question, we are running a serious risk of reducing our efforts here for less than the seriousness which it deserves.

Mr. Nandlall: The Minister indicated that he had signed a contract and he does not know...
[Inaudible]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Nandlall, I thank you for your efforts, but allow me to deal with this. We will have to do better than we are doing Hon. Members. I am prepared to disallow questions if we are going to continue in this manner. We cannot continue like this. I am sure that the questions asked contribute greatly to the knowledge of everyone, as to the colour of a building, as to left or right and down the road and backwards. In this House, we all have an obligation to treat its proceedings with greater respect. We are failing in that regard right now.

Hon. Ms. Teixeira, do you have a question?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Is the question other than the colour of the warehouse?

Ms. Teixeira: Clearly the Minister does not know where the warehouse is located or what colour it is or it is a case where he will not tell us.

The problem is that \$62.5 million have been approved by the Cabinet, according to this Legend, for the building of which, when one sees a photograph of it, is not a building appropriate for the housing of pharmaceuticals for the people of our country. There is garbage in front of the building, it is not appropriate, it has no proper windows, it has no proper security, it is a private residence and the Hon. Minister is not informing this House. [Mr. Williams: You went into the wrong street.] I took the left and the right, according to the Minister.

This is a building that is costing taxpayers \$12.5 million per month, when we were going to get the New Guyana Pharmaceutical Corporation (GPC) Inc. building for free for four years. We have a right to ask about the quality of the venue that \$12.5 million is being paid as rental for a private residence that is not appropriate to store drugs and medical supplies for the people of this country. I am sorry if I am being difficult, but this is a very important issue and the Minister has been very cavalier and trivial in telling me that I should turn left and right when I come off the East Bank of Demerara Public Road, but this is Georgetown.

The venue, which is lot 176 Middle Street, the company's headquarters is as many people know the old Sidewalk Café building. When one goes there, there is no sign or anything. So we have a right to challenge these issues.

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Teixeira, you have a right to challenge in accordance with the rules of the House. When we step out, we do not have that right.

Ms. Hughes: Mr. Chairman, I stand on a Point of Order, Standing Order 40. This is second occasion that the Member on the other side has mentioned information that is totally inaccurate. I do not know if the Hon. Member is not aware that the Sidewalk Café does not exist and has not existed for more than five years, so please. I thank you.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, my comment was that it is in the old building that was once the Sidewalk Café. I did not say that it belonged to anyone.

Dr. Ramsaran: Would the Minister say if he has personally visited the site and if his technical officers such as the Chief Medical Officer and the Director of Standards and Technical Services have also visited?

Further, could the Minister say whether the Head of the Food and Drug Department had visited this building; whether the building is appropriately qualified to be a pharmaceutical grade facility for a warehouse with controlled temperature and various attributes of a pharmaceutical grade facility?

Finally, could the Minister tell us on which street is the warehouse located?

Dr. Norton: I beg to remind the Hon. Member of what I said in my introduction, which was that the building is to the specification of Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO). This was accepted by the Ministry of Public Health and its technical team, which includes the Food and Drug Department, the Standards and Technical Department. Of course, as I have done in so many other instances, I have visited that location on very many occasions.

Mr. Chairman: I will permit one last question on this matter.

Mr. Seeraj: Can the Hon. Minister tell the House what is being stored in this warehouse presently? We are into the second month and we were told that this was not advertised because of the emergency status to provide storage for pharmaceuticals.

Dr. Norton: Pharmaceuticals and medical supplies.

Item 7 43-434 Ministry of Public Health - Regional and Clinical Services - \$62,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 8 52-523 Ministry of Legal Affairs – Attorney General’s Chambers – \$ 17,900,000

Mr. Nandlall: Could the Hon. Attorney General explain to us what is the tuition fee, per year, for one student at the Hugh Wooding Law School?

Mr. Williams: The cost for one Guyanese law student at the Hugh Wooding Law School, per year, is \$2,830,130.

Mr. Nandlall: Could the Hon. Minister tell us how much of that is the economic cost?

Mr. Williams: The amount of \$17 million is equivalent to 25% of that figure per year. That would translate to 25 students at a cost of \$716,000 per student.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, the allocation speaks to 50 students, so my Learned Friend has only given half of the picture.

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

Mr. Nandlall: My question is for the Hon. Member to explain what is the economic cost per student?

Mr. Williams: The Economic cost in relation to what because I just answered and said that the economic cost was \$2,830,130 per student.

Mr. Nandlall: The tuition fee is what the Minister explained. I want to know what part of that sum is the economic cost per student.

Mr. Williams: For 50 students the economic cost would be \$358,000 per student.

Mr. Nandlall: If you are saying that it is \$358,000 per student then that is not correct.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, if you ask a question and you get an answer, if that answer is incorrect then it would be incorrect - if you could proffer something that is different. I suspect that this is not the place to do it. We are going through with this and so we must go through. There cannot be debate as to who is correct and who is not, unless one has credible information on which this House can rely.

8.49 p.m.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, what I would like to ask the Hon. Attorney General is by what sum would the money that he is asking this House to approve reduce the students' fees by?

Mr. Williams: The students would be required to pay \$2,472,130 each.

Mr. Nandlall: I asked how much this allocation would reduce the student fees by.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Attorney General, I wonder whether it is possible that, if you do not have the information, you could provide it.

Mr. Williams: As it pleases you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: If you have the information available then, by all means, provide it.

Mr. Williams: I have said it already. If my Hon. Friend does not understand what I am saying to him...I am saying that what this figure represents is 25 % of the total economic cost for the students of the Hugh Wooding Law School. I have said that already.

Mr. Nandlall: Assuming that is correct, my Learned Friend is making a statement, purporting to be a statement of fact, that this \$18 million represents 25% of the total economic cost. I am asking him, when this money is sent to the Hugh Wooding Law School, by what sum would it reduce each student's tuition fee by, not their economic cost?

Mr. Williams: How would I know that?

Mr. Nandlall: Economic cost and tuition fees are not the same thing.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I apprehend that requires some calculation and perhaps this cannot be readily done at this time or at this moment. So what I would suggest is, if the Hon. Attorney General would undertake to make that information available to the question of the Hon. Nandlall, then we could proceed. I certainly would wish to proceed.

The Attorney General, is undertaking to let the Hon. Mr Nandlall have the information that he is seeking?

Mr. Williams: I certainly will have to. I would never be in possession of that information as to how it would affect the fees of the students. I would have to get that information. I would try and send it to the Hon. Member in a couple of days.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Nandlall, the Attorney General has undertaken to send the information to you.

Mr. Nandlall: Very well, Sir.

Item 8 52-523 Ministry of Legal Affairs – Attorney General’s Chambers – \$ 17,900,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I would wish your cooperation to complete the consideration of Financial Paper No.2 before we take our break.

Item 9 53–531 Guyana Defence Force – Defence and Security Support - \$655,000, \$500,000, \$2,500,000, \$750,000, \$1,400,000, \$504,000, \$4,300,000, \$5,300,000, \$14,600,000, \$1,500,000 & \$23,700,000

Office Materials & Supplies

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister state whether the Civil Defence Commission (CDC), which is a civilian organisation, would now be transferred to the Guyana Defence Force?

Lt. Col. (Ret’d) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, there is no such intention to transfer the Civil Defence Commission to the Guyana Defence Force.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, if that is the case, could the Hon. Minister explain why the Civil Defence Commission is now under the Agency - Guyana Defence Force for security support?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, these are sums for which there had been no provision for the Civil Defence Commission previously. So it is convenient that these matters be placed under these heads for the purpose of the administration of the Civil Defence Commission. We would recognise that these are sums that cater to the outreach of the Civil Defence Commission. They are basically under the Ministry of the Presidency, as in fact it is the Guyana Defence Force, as the Minister responsible to answer to these agencies would be the Minister in the Ministry of the Presidency, which is the Minister of State.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, recognising that the Civil Defence Commission was setup as a civilian organisation, under the then Office of the President, and the budget for the Civil Defence Commission was situated under civilian authority with the Ministry of the Presidency. I am seeking clarification as to why this body is now being moved from the Ministry of the Presidency to allow for money to be provided under the Guyana Defence Force.

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, as I did indicate, there is no intention to move the body. These are for emergencies and, therefore, the sums had to be provided under some specific heads. There were no sums under these heads for the Civil Defence Commission. In fact, in the budget for 2016, sums were allocated to the Civil Defence Commission under the Ministry of the Presidency. But for these particular items/heads it was convenient to place them here because it was an emergency and there was no heads of this nature for the Ministry of the Presidency.

There is no intention of transferring the Civil Defence Commission to the GDF. As we know, the Civil Defence Commission, from its inception, has always been headed by an officer from the Army and it continues to be headed by an officer from the Army. The Army provides a certain type of support to the Civil Defence Commission, but it is, in fact, a civilian organisation and it so functions as a civilian organisation.

Mr. Rohee: Could the Hon. Minister explain what is the financial tool or regulation that is being used to transfer the financial arrangements from a civilian office at the Ministry of the Presidency to a military institution of the office Guyana Defence Force? Under which financial regulation and what tools are being used to facilitate this?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, it is a warrant. The sums are warranted from the Guyana Defence Force to the Civil Defence Commission.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman that is precisely the point that I sought to make at the beginning, that the Civil Defence Commission, as a civilian body, ought to have been financed from the Ministry of the Presidency. Now, we are seeing here that the Civil Defence Commission is being financed under the agency, the Guyana Defence Force. It is clear and I am not getting a definitive answer, with due respect, from the subject Minister.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I can provide no further elucidation on this matter for the Hon. Member.

Mr. Rohee: Could the Hon. Minister state who the Secretary of the Defence Board is?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, the Secretary of the Defence Board is the Minister of State and that person is me.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, according to the Defence Act, the Secretary of the Defence Board cannot be a Minister of Government or a Member of Parliament, this is unconstitutional. Could the Minister explain how is it that a Minister and a Member of Parliament (MP) is at the same time a Secretary of the Defence Board?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, my appointment and responsibilities have been gazetted in the *Official Gazette* and I think it is clear to the nation that this is really what it is. I can see no unconstitutionality about the appointment of a Minister as the Secretary to the Defence Board. But if my Learned Friend wants to challenge that, certainly there is a forum for that.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, before going to the step which the Minister seems to be directing me. I would prefer to utilise my presence as a Member of Parliament to raise this question and to seek clarification and not to go in that direction. The Defence Act states:

“The Secretary of the Defence Board shall be....”

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Rohee, is that a preamble to a question or is this a statement?

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, let me frame the question. Would the Minister agree that his position as Secretary of the Defence Board collides with Section 11 of the Defence Act? Thank you.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I disagree. I have been appointed by His Excellency the President and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Guyana.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, with your permission I have never questioned...

Mr. Chairman: I will allow two other questions on this matter.

Mr. Rohee: Thank you Sir. I never sought to question by whose hand the Minister was appointed? My question is... *[Interruption]* **[An Hon. Member of the Government:** Direct the question to the President.] Excuse me? Mr. Chairman, are you hearing this?

Mr. Chairman: I did not hear.

Mr. Rohee: Are you prepared to hear me?

Mr. Chairman: I am prepared to hear you every time.

9.04 p.m.

Mr. Rohee: Thank you very much, Sir. I am asking the Hon Minister...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you rise on a Point of Order?

Minister of Public Security [Mr. Ramjattan]: Where is the relevance of this line of questioning that we are heading to in the Committee of Supply? This is totally irrelevant.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member. Hon. Member, Mr. Rohee, please continue.

Mr. Rohee: I cannot help the Hon. Member if he does not see the relevance.

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

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman you said that I had two more questions. I will proceed with the first of the two which is a reiteration of the previous question. That, notwithstanding, the fact that the Minister had been appointed under the hand of the Commander-in-Chief, does he agree that that

responsibility clashes with the Defence Act, with respect to the person that should fulfil the responsibilities of the Secretary of the Defence Board?

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Chairman, I rise on a Point of Order. It is under Standing Order 41(8). The Vice-President, the Hon. Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan, has raised this issue as to irrelevance and I am raising this matter, under Standing Order 41(8), that the explanation given is that the President makes appointments. Any question in this House that inquire into the conduct of the President, under Standing Order 41(8), shall be done by way of motion. So, I believe that if Your Honour would like me to quote the section, I will just paraphrase it:

“The conduct of the President or any other person performing the function of President... shall not be raised except upon a substantive motion moved for the purpose.”

So, I think we are going into an excursion here, away from the matter that is before us, which is an inquiry into the supplementary estimates and not the conduct of a sitting President.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, the Civil Defence Commission now falls under the Guyana Defence Force. The Commander-in-Chief of the Guyana Defence Force is the President of the country. The Constitution and the Laws of Guyana give general direction as to how the Secretary of the Defence Board, chaired by the President, is appointed. Irrespective of how he is appointed, I am questioning, whether the present Secretary of the Defence Board, as a sitting Minister and as a Member of Parliament, is a fit and proper person to hold that position. That is my question.

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Rohee, I think that I must make it clear that what we are doing here are questions relating to this matter. Everyone seems to have gone off on a tangent and that particular remark bears no relevance to our discussions here this evening, none whatsoever. It belongs in another place at another time.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, may I seek clarification on which remark I am being referred to.

Mr. Chairman: The last remark the Hon. Member made is not appropriate for our discussions. The Hon. Member is aware of the rules that guide us all in our conduct in relation to matters of

this nature. What the Hon. Member made use of just now, is not provided for in our present circumstances. Hon. Member, you have one other question, please use it.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, it appears as though the Civil Defence Commission, which now falls under the Guyana Defence Force, will be hiring a number of persons for training, which appears to be in capacity building. Could the Hon. Minister state how many persons they intend to employ within the Civil Defence Commission under this new dispensation to be trained? Where will they be hired from and whether there are any criteria for the hiring of such persons to be trained under this new dispensation?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, could I be guided by the Hon. Member as to what line item he is referring to in the question?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Rohee, would you wish to repeat your question?

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, there is no specific line item, but under each of the specific line item there are allocations for the employment and recruitment of persons to fulfil specific responsibilities. This amounts to over 300 persons. My questions are: How are these persons to be hired; what are the criteria for hiring these persons and if there is an indication as to where these persons will be hired?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, let me please clarify this matter. The Civil Defence Commission trains persons in the regions. They are not members of the Guyana Defence Force. They do not add to the strength of the Guyana Defence Force. These are civilians and persons who live in the regions and the Civil Defence Commission's staff would go out there and train them as what we might call first responders. In the event of an emergency they are there as volunteers. So, that is in fact what this training is all about and that is the answer.

Bishop Edghill: The Minister indicated that the reason why the moneys are being sought and the way that it was being sought through the Guyana Defence Force was because of the urgency of the expenditure to be met, and that the Civil Defence Commission was budgeted for under the Ministry of the Presidency in 2016. I have searched my document and there is no budgeted allocation under the Ministry of the Presidency for the Civil Defence Commission. Secondly, this is a supplementary or moneys to be spent, so, urgency is not the issue here.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I thought you said you had a question.

Bishop Edghill: Yes, Sir. Could the Hon. Minister explain to this House those two issues that I have raised because they are issues of concern. There is no budgetary allocation under the Ministry of the Presidency, and the issue of urgency for it to be expended through a warrant to the Guyana Defence Force does not arise because it is not a contingency that is being spent. It is money to be appropriated to be spent.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I thank you. Hon. Minister, could you answer the question?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I could provide no further clarity, but what I could say is that, for 2016, there is an allocation of funds under the Ministry of the Presidency for the Civil Defence Commission. In fact, there was not a large amount actually allocated. The major expenditure had to do with the purchase of a vehicle for the Civil Defence Commission and there are other small sums. **[Bishop Edghill: Where is it provided for?]** Pardon me? I cannot provide any further information to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Chairman: I am sorry Hon. Member, Mr. Rohee. We are taking the question now.

Rental of Buildings

Mr. Rohee: The alternate National Emergency Centre at Timehri, could the Hon. Minister say specifically where this building is located?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, it is a building that is located on the East Bank. It is obliquely opposite the Officer's Mess at Timehri. As one approaches the Cheddie Jagan International Airport, it is the last turn off, it is the building that is second to last, on the left hand side. It is a flat building that had actually been donated by the United States of America, and which has an alternate set up for the National Emergency Centre. The facilities have been there for sort of what we call, "a step up headquarters" in the event that Georgetown becomes flooded or untenable, the Civil Defence Commission could move to that facility and still provide the services that it provides to the country.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Member say whether this property constitutes part of the estate of the Defence Board?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, that property is part of the Government of Guyana. It is owned by the Government of Guyana and it is administered solely by the Civil Defence Commission.

Vehicle Spares & Service

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, with respect to the vehicles, could the Hon. Minister say whether these vehicles would be tendered for?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: This sum is for repairs to these vehicles. There is an existing arrangement under which these vehicles are repaired on behalf of the Civil Defence Commission. They are not new vehicles.

9.19 p.m.

Mr. Rohee: Could the Hon. Minister say whether the repairs to the vehicles are done by the Guyana Defence Force (GDF)?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: They are not done by the Guyana Defence Force.

Mr. Rohee: Could the Hon. Minister tell us which security service is to provide the three guards, who they are and whether they are on a contract?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: This is a proposal. In fact, where the building is, it is in a fenced part of the compound, the GDF provided security at some point but it has indicated clearly that this is not a function that it can perform and therefore we are now looking at hiring a private security service to deal with that matter.

Additionally, because of the fact that it is now a step up headquarters and the fact that we are manning what is called a National Emergency Management System (NEMS) which provides for a call-in in the case of any emergency in which there are persons who are actually working 24 hours around the clock. This here is the step up headquarters for that. We have had to actually

put some additional equipment in there for that purpose. This is why we are asking for this additional sum of money to cater for our own security arrangements.

Mr. Rohee: Could the Hon. Member tell us whether a security service will be sole sourced or whether it will go to public tender?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: We will go to public tender but certainly we will have to exercise a greater level of scrutiny over the awardees in this contract because of the sensitive nature of the equipment in that building and the fact that this is basically our alternate national emergency centre.

Dr. Ramsaran: Would the Minister say having recognised that this request caters for the provision of meals for persons working 12-hour shifts on weekends? One, how many persons will be working? Secondly, having recognised the significant increase from the \$985,000, why is there a significant increase?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: It is for two reasons. One, it has to do with the fact that we are as I said, having a 24-hour operation at the National Emergency Monitoring System and that we have at least eight persons on the weekend that are working there. Additionally, we had to set up a Venue Operations Centre (VOC) for the purpose of 50th Anniversary celebrations. What we sought to do there was to establish some clear procedures in the event that there were large crowds at any venue. We have set up clearly procedures for emergency evacuation, casualty management and search and rescue. This sum here catered for that. It catered for the fact that we are actually bringing people in from various emergency services such as the Red Cross and other agencies, and bringing them under one management for the event.

What we have done is that we have been able to fine-tune our procedures for the management of large events and for the security arrangements and emergency arrangements that are to be put in place in such events. We used this as sort of a dry run and I think it went very well as all of the agencies that were connected the operation performed very well. We were able to award them with certificates of participation and I think that it augers well for the future of Guyana, so far as the management of large events are concerned. That is what this sum was for.

Dr. Ramsaran: Mr. Chairman, I thank you for your indulgence. I welcome the expansive answer by the Minister, but he seemed to have gone beyond what I asked. The question was: The sum, in this line item, states that the request caters for the provision of meals of personnel working on the 12-hour shifts on weekends. Giving certificates and doing those other things are laudable, but it went beyond and probably missed the essence of my question. The request caters for provision of meals for personnel working 12-hour shifts on weekends. It is a significant increase too as you noted. How many persons are on this specific activity which caters for the provision of meals for personnel working on the 12-hour shifts? It is not about the mass migration of persons that you so well trained.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I did in fact give you the numbers. I did provide the numbers earlier.

Mr. Rohee: Regarding the items that are listed here to be purchased, could the Hon. Minister say how he is going to go about making these purchases?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I think these are items that are purchased. I do not understand how it goes about making the purchases. There are certain suppliers who are noted for supplying the items that are required by the Civil Defence Commission (CDC) and because of the emergency nature of these matters we will certainly go to some of the known and trusted suppliers who have been supplying the Civil Defence Commission for many years gone back.

Mr. Rohee: Under line item 6294, Dietary, provision is made for personnel working 12-hour shifts on weekends. We are told by the Hon. Minister that eight persons are envisaged working these 12-hour shifts on weekends. Under this line item there are six volunteers working eight-hour shifts due to the extended mandate of the Civil Defence Commission. First of all, the six volunteers, could the Hon. Minister state what specific responsibilities and tasks they have as distinct from the eight persons who are working 12-hour shifts? That was the first question. The second question: Could the Hon. Minister be somewhat expansive in respect of the extended mandate which these volunteers will be receiving a stipend for?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The extended mandate goes to the Civil Defence Commission and that is in the establishment of the VOC which I pointed out earlier, and the setting up of the National Emergency Management Centre and Services at both venues. Previously it was not done and so this is an expanded mandate. The volunteers are paid a stipend of \$2,500 per 12-

hour session. That is really what accounts for this. They are of two levels. There are some persons who are actually the shift supervisors, the persons who supervise the shifts, and there are persons who take reports, log the reports, mark maps and matters of that nature. There are two levels one is supervisory and the other level are the persons who take the reports that come into the centre.

Mr. Rohee: Could the Hon. Minister say, of the eight persons who work the 12-hour shifts and the six volunteers who work the eight-hour shifts, how many of them are either ex-soldiers, or active soldiers?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: These are all civilians. If in fact they are ex-soldiers, they are also civilians. As ex-soldiers, they are civilians as well. In fact they are all civilians; there are no active military duty officers who are part of this.

9.34 p.m.

Training (Including Scholarships)

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Rohee, you have the floor.

Mr. Rohee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, we are told that this particular provision will see 120 persons benefiting directly and 2,000 persons benefiting indirectly from training, including scholarships. In the legend, we are told that these will be community response teams. But could the Hon. Minister answer some questions on this subject? Who will conduct the training? Where will the training be conducted? Would any members of the Guyana Defence Force (GDF) be involved in the training?

Scholarships: What are the criteria for being a recipient of a scholarship, qualifying for a scholarship? Will these scholarships be awarded based on the mandate of the Civil Defence Commission and will they be advertised?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, there are no scholarships awarded. This is just the generic head – training and scholarships. There are no scholarships awarded by the Civil Defence Commission. What I can say is that the persons who are trained, in fact, it is in the legend... Yes, the Guyana Defence Force provides part of that training. The Coast Guard

provides training in search and rescue and, of course, the GDF Medical Core also provides some of the training in first aid and matters of that nature. But the bulk of the trainers are from the Civil Defence Commission and from various courses which the Civil Defence Commission attends all across the region and, in some cases, outside of the region. It is a well-trained unit headed by Colonel Ramsaroop and it provides, in my view, excellent training for the persons who it comes into contact with.

Dr. Ramsaran: Could the Minister say, in relation to the community response team, what he might have described as first responders sometime back, how they are selected? What are the criteria for the selection of these 2,000 odd persons who should benefit directly or indirectly from the training?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, this is largely voluntary. In fact, we start by asking for volunteers – for persons to come - and once they volunteer, they go through a period of testing based on their capacity to undergo the training but it is a voluntary thing. We do not discriminate in anyway against anybody. Once you are fit and you are capable of undergoing the training, we train you. Was that the question, Hon. Member?

Dr. Ramsaran: Mr. Chairman, if you will indulge me, I just need a little clarity. I did not speak of discrimination. I did not expect that; I know that will not happen. What I am asking is, how will these people be mobilised? How does it happen? How do they volunteer? I know it is voluntary but what is the mechanism for mobilisation so that people know there is this training available to protect the communities against disaster?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, this is done through the Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs) and in the communities where we do recruiting and we operate.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, with the movement of the Civil Defence Commission from the Ministry of the Presidency to the Guyana Defence Force in terms of its financial and other arrangements, could the Hon. Minister say whether the staffing will be located at the Office of the Presidency or would it be located at a location within the precincts of the Guyana Defence Force?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, the Civil Defence Commission is not under the GDF and I want to ensure that this is made very clear because the Hon. Member is tending to keep harping on this all the time. I just want to clarify that; it is not there.

Mr. Chairman, the location of the Civil Defence Commission is – I think the Hon. Member was a member of the Defence Board and would have visited the Civil Defence Commission Headquarters - on Thomas Road just next to the National Park. It is still there and we have basically done work to improve the capacity of that place. In fact, the entire Cabinet had a briefing in the Civil Defence Commission Headquarters on at least two occasions when there were instances of national disasters. So, we are building capacity in the Civil Defence Commission to respond to emergencies and disasters in this country. And it is important for all of us to understand that this is a civil organisation. It is a civilian organisation. It is headed by a retired colonel but it is well-organised and well-trained, and those of us who have actually come into contact with the Civil Defence Commission will attest to that fact.

Item 9 53–531 Guyana Defence Force – Defence and Security Support - \$655,000, \$500,000, \$2,500,000, \$750,000, \$1,400,000, \$504,000, \$4,300,000, \$5,300,000, \$14,600,000, \$1,500,000 & \$23,700,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 10 54-541 Ministry of Public Security – Policy Development and Administration – \$20,360,900

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, under this particular line item, could the Hon. Minister say whether the Special Organised Crime Unit (SOCU) is now entirely a police outfit?

Mr. Ramjattan: It was always a part of the police and it is indeed a police outfit.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister inform this House whether SOCU, as originally set up to deal with the deficiencies under the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) and that it is no longer addressing the issues with respect to money laundering...

Mr. Ramjattan: Mr. Chairman, it is addressing issues of money laundering and other financial crimes.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister explained in what way SOCU will be addressing money laundering *vis-à-vis* the deficiencies of CFATF and, at the same time, be investigating financial crimes as a police outfit?

Mr. Ramjattan: It will be by virtue of the standard operating procedures that SOCU has now come under with an amendment, recently, to the police standing orders.

Mr. Rohee: Could the Hon. Minister say which outfit is now addressing the question of investigating money laundering?

Mr. Ramjattan: It is SOCU, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister say whether SOCU was part of Operation Dagnet?

Mr. Ramjattan: SOCU was not part of Operation Dagnet.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, if SOCU was not part of Operation Dagnet, how does the Minister explain the involvement of SOCU operatives in an operation that caused the life of one of its operatives?

Mr. Ramjattan: I think the nexus is not there in relation to that question, Mr. Chairman. Operation Dagnet had its specific purpose and the SOCU activity that led to certain deaths – unfortunate as they may be - had nothing to do with Operation Dagnet.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister tell us where the operational and employment costs of SOCU are covered?

Mr. Ramjattan: They are covered under the Ministry of Public Security and Police Force. A portion of it used to be by Cabinet decision of June, 2014, under the Office of the President. That has now been regularised and all salaries will now come under the Ministry of Public Security and the Police Force.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, my final question is the Minister of Public Security is confirming in this honourable House ...

Mr. Chairman: Is that a question, Sir?

Mr. Rohee: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Please, proceed.

Mr. Rohee: ...that the Minister is confirming in this House that SOCU is fulfilling dual responsibility as a police outfit directed by the Commissioner of Police to whom the Minister of Public Security gives general orders and direction.

Mr. Chairman: Is this a question?

Mr. Rohee: Yes, Mr. Chairman. A question does not necessarily have to be ...

Mr. Chairman: Is that the question?

Mr. Rohee: No, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: You are developing the question.

Mr. Rohee: I have just posed one part of the question. The question has three parts and this is not unusual, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: I am noticing that.

Mr. Rohee: Thank you very much, Sir.

The Hon. Minister, therefore, is confirming to this honourable House that SOCU is directed by a Minister of Government who then directs the Commissioner of Police who then directs SOCU on the operations. And the same SOCU is under CFATF investigating money laundering activities directed by the Minister of Public Security.

Mr. Ramjattan: I repeat, Sir, SOCU comes under the Police Commissioner and it is a Special Organised Crime Unit under the Police Force. The Police Force answers to the Minister of Public Security.

9.49 p.m.

In relation to matters of financial crimes which emanate out of the money laundering regime, indeed they direct whether at any point in time there are investigations to be conducted and this Unit carries out the investigation.

Mr. Nandlall: When the Hon. Minister, during the Budget presentation earlier this year, asked for appropriation sums for SOCU, he said to this House that he would make public certain protocols by which SOCU is expected to operate. Might I ask the Hon. Minister whether those protocols have been made public from February to now?

Mr. Ramjattan: I would take responsibility for not making it public. I would do so within the week. It is a Unit that comes - I repeat - under the Police Force. Standing Order 62 of the Police Force Standing Orders has been amended and I can make that public by the end of the week.

Mr. Nandlall: Might I enquire of the Minister whether SOCU's officers are subject to the jurisdiction of the Police Service Commission since he keeps insisting that they fall under the superintendence of the Police Commissioner and are part of the Guyana Police Force. I am asking whether they are subject to the disciplinary procedures of the Police Service Commission.

Mr. Ramjattan: Yes, Mr. Chairman, all those officers of a rank that comes under the jurisdiction of the Police Service Commission are subject to that, and below that the Commissioner.

Mr. Nandlall: What rank does the highest officer in SOCU hold, in terms of the police ranking system?

Mr. Ramjattan: The highest rank is Assistant Commissioner of Police and there are some three Superintendents.

Mr. Nandlall: Originally conceived, SOCU is supposed to have financial analysts, accountants, lawyers and persons who are trained in the field of finance and to interpret data of that type. Is there any lawyer employed by SOCU? Is there any financial analyst employed by SOCU? Is there an accountant employed by SOCU?

Mr. Ramjattan: There is no accountant; there are no lawyers up to this time, although we are trying to get one for the Unit; there is one financial analyst and there are three police investigators, the regular police investigators.

Mr. Nandlall: Might I ask the name of the financial analyst and the qualifications?

Mr. Ramjattan: The name of that financial analyst is Ms. Althea Padmore.

I do not have the qualifications here but that could be provided to you. She was appointed during Mr. Rohee's time, if I may add.

Mr. Ramson: Might I enquire from the Hon. Minister whether, in this additional sum of \$20 million, a sum is allocated for an inquiry into the death of Mr. Robert Pyle and the attempted detention of the two individuals on that same night along with any payments to the civilian that also died in that event?

Mr. Ramjattan: Mr. Chairman, no.

Mr. Ramson: And you feel proud of that. You are smiling.

Mr. Ramjattan: Do you want me to cry?

Mr. Ramson: I want you to more than cry.

Item 10 54-541 – Ministry of Public Security – Policy Development and Administration – \$20,360,900 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 11 55-551 - Supreme Court - Supreme Court of Judicature – \$180,000,000

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, I see moneys requested for persons to fill 68 positions. Could the Hon. Minister explain to us what these positions are?

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Chairman, again, I wish to remind the learned Member of the Opposition that this is a constitutional agency and it is not usual to interrogate the request.

Mr. Ali: Answer the question.

Mr. Nagamootoo: I can only answer the question if I am provided the answer by the Chancellor. I will try to direct an answer as regards the request for the sum of \$63,704,997 for employment costs for 68 persons. The Judiciary or more specifically the Chancellor would be recruiting a number of part-time magistrates and staff to sit in various parts of Guyana to address the number of persons constituting overcrowding in the prisons and, more particularly, prisoners on remand. This is the sum that has been requested for the magistrates and support staff.

Mr. Nandlall: Could the Prime Minister assist us with the number of magistrates who are likely to be appointed.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Pardon me, Mr. Chairman; I have not seen anyone from the Supreme Court but the information I received is that there would be six to eight temporary magistrates.

Mr. Nandlall: We are given the number six to eight magistrates but we are speaking about 68 positions. The 62 positions that are now outstanding, subtracting the six to eight magistrates, are they all supporting staff for the six to eight magistrates?

Mr. Nagamootoo: These would be for what has been described as night courts. The staff that would be employed would be attached to several night courts as well as security and other employees who would be taking over on the night shift. I can assure this House and the Hon. Member that I can provide this House with a full report of all the positions that are likely to be catered for within this vote for the functioning of night courts and temporary magistrates to clear the overcrowding that we inherited which existed for many years in the prison system.

Mr. Nandlall: The Attorney General, in both of his Budget presentations, spoke to bringing into operation the voice recording equipment which have already been purchased. That has not been forthcoming. I am enquiring of the Hon. Prime Minister whether any of these persons would constitute that unit of persons to operate and man the voice recording equipment in the courts.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Chairman, I am unable to give an answer because I am not aware that, at the time when the Judiciary and the Executive met to discuss the overcrowding of the prisons, recorders had been a matter that was discussed within the context of clearing the overcrowding of the prisons.

Mr. Nandlall: There is a request here for \$56,809,253 for the Sparendam Magistrate's Court. In 2014, as part of the Appropriation Act, this House appropriated \$75 million for the construction of that Magistrate's Court. Is this an additional sum of \$56 million to the \$75 million which was appropriated?

Mr. Nagamootoo: The answer is yes.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, this is almost an 80% variation. Could the Hon. Prime Minister give us some explanation as to this massive variation in cost? As far as I am aware, the contract is ongoing.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Chairman, I undertake to contact the Chancellor because the request from a constitutional agency is followed by the details provided in the legend, but I will provide such answers as have been requested by the Hon. Member.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO. 10 (1)

Mr. Chairman: I would like to draw attention, Hon. Members, to the fact that we are at the 10 o'clock hour. The Hon. Prime Minister may wish to seek an extension for us to continue our work.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Your Honour, if I may, I have not seen the mace but I move that this House meet continuously until the completion of the business before us.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Prime Minister.

Hon. Members, I must make one observation in relation to the questions which were being raised in relation to the Judiciary. We are not singular in the position where the Judiciary is treated in a particular manner. Perhaps we should give some thought to, and I am sure that we will by the time we have cause to consider such a provision again, finding a way in which we could deal with it in a manner as befits a constitutional agency such as the judiciary. I believe that that is the most desirable course of action. I say only that. Please let us proceed.

10.04 p.m.

Mr. Ramson: I just want to clarify something. I think the observation that the Hon. Chairman has made as it relates to questions being properly put for constitutional agencies is the correct one. However, I would rather suspect that for capital...

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Ramson, this is question time. Could I ask you to ask your question, please?

Mr. Ramson: Would it not be correct to say that the items listed under this line item are for capital expenditure and not current expenditure? There are furniture and equipment, an amount for the magistrate's court and an expansion initiative. These are capital expenditure.

Item 11 55-551 Supreme Court - Supreme Court of Judicature - \$180,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 12 78-781 Region 8: Potato/Siparuni – Regional Administration and Finance - \$1,800,000, \$1,500,000

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Could the Hon. Minister provide to this Assembly the details of the projects that are currently ongoing and the locations which need to be monitored? Secondly, could the Minister share with the honourable Assembly the number of personnel designated to travel on the monitoring team conducting the monitoring visits and the associated costs for each trip?

Mr. Bulkan: There is a total of 41 projects in the North Pakaraima or subregion 1. I do not have the details of each of these 41 projects but they vary from Monkey Mountain in the south to Maikwak and Kaibarupai in the north. A total of six visits are scheduled from now to the remainder of the year. As the Hon. Member would know, the administrative centre is located in Mahdia, but the monitoring and evaluation of the projects, which would require the sum of \$1.8 million, which is the provision now being sought, are mainly for projects in subregion 1 or North Pakaraima.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I would like a response to the question of how many members would comprise the team visiting to conduct the monitoring for each project.

Mr. Bulkan: Ordinarily, these would include the Regional Executive Officer (REO), the Deputy Regional Executive Officer (DREO) or the head of the programme as well as the technical persons from the respective programmes.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Could the Hon. Minister lay before this Assembly the list of the 41 projects and their status?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer to that is yes.

Mr. Croal: Could the Hon. Minister, first of all, indicate whether the budgeted sum of \$4.7 million has been exhausted?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer is no. There is a balance.

Mr. Croal: It has not been exhausted but we are asking futuristically for \$1.8 million when there would be an opportunity – the Hon. Minister would know – later in the year for him to come for additional Contingencies Fund supplementary provision as may be required. Why are we asking for additional money when he has not exhausted the allocation?

Mr. Bulkan: It is considered to be appropriate. It is timely now to seek this supplementary provision to ensure that there is adequate funding to allow for the monitoring and evaluation of these projects. Though there is a current balance, it is inadequate and insufficient to fund the timetable of visits that is currently programmed.

Mr. Croal: Could the Hon. Minister indicate what the electricity charge rate per kilowatt is?

Mr. Bulkan: It is \$100 per kilowatt hour.

Mr. Croal: Could the Hon. Minister confirm whether it is per meter or there is a flat rate that which is the being paid for power at Mahdia?

Mr. Bulkan: In Mahdia, a flat rate is being used.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Could the Hon. Minister tell this Assembly where the 11 additional air conditioning units will be installed?

Mr. Bulkan: These units have been installed recently and they are in the living quarters of the accountant, two are in the Accounts Department, one is in the Sub Treasury Department, four are installed in the guest house, two are in the boardroom and the DREO's residence.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Could the Minister tell this Assembly whether all of these units were installed in buildings in subregion 1 or subregion 2?

Mr. Bulkan: These are all in subregion 2.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Could the Minister say if any of the buildings in subregion 1 would be addressed from this amount?

Mr. Bulkan: The answer is no.

Item 12 78-781 Region 8: Potaro/Siparuni – Regional Administration and Finance - \$1,800,000, \$1,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

78-783 Region 8: Potaro/Siparuni – Education Delivery - \$4,500,000

78-783 Region 8: Potaro/Siparuni – Education Delivery - \$4,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

78-784 Region 8: Potaro/Siparuni – Health Services - \$3,500,000

78-784 Region 8: Potaro/Siparuni – Health Services - \$3,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

CAPITAL ESTIMATES

Item 1 05-051 Ministry of the Presidency – Policy Development and Administration - \$71,500,000

Item 1 05-051 Ministry of the Presidency – Policy Development and Administration - \$71,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

10.19 p.m.

Item 2 32-322 Ministry of Public Infrastructure – Public Works - \$174,585,701; \$194,292,000

Urban Roads/Drainage

Mr. Croal: Could the Hon. Minister provide for us the locations and the individual cost for these roads? If it is too detailed, he can submit it in writing?

Mr. Patterson: Of course I can. In Region 4, it is the Sophia road network: Dennis Street completion - \$50,250,000; in Region 6, in Corriverton it is Harris Street - \$20 million, Main street - \$14,000,500 and King street - \$25,000,500; in Linden, Region 10, the first access road North Amelias Ward - \$18,650,000, second access road North Amelias Ward -\$21 million, Kara Kara main road - \$16,230,300 and Richmond Hill main access road - \$8,755,155.

Reconditioning and Ferry Vessels

Mr. Croal: I have three questions. Firstly, just to reconfirm, which route does the M.V. Kimbia intends to ply when fixed?

Minister within the Ministry of Public Infrastructure [Ms. Ferguson]: Hon. Member, once the M.V. Kimbia is in operation it will service the Region 1 District.

Mr. Croal: Having said that, has the procurement process started and what is the timeline for the completion of fixing the engine?

Ms. Ferguson: Yes, the procurement process has commenced and a timeline of approximately five months is being looked at.

Item 2 32-322 Ministry of Public Infrastructure – Public Works - \$174,585,701; \$194,292,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

32-323 – Ministry of Public Infrastructure –Transport - \$110,000,000

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Minister explain why the Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development (IIC) Fairview airstrip would be extended to 4,200 feet which is comparable to the Eugene F. Correia International Airport airstrip and in fact, would be longer than the airstrip at Lethem, which is used more often?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, as briefly as I can, the maintenance of the Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development used to be funded by the Commonwealth and that is no longer there. That funding is now the responsibility of the Government of Guyana and we are actively seeking several international partners. One of the recommendations from the report for the Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development was to increase tourism. With the increase in tourism it would require an improved airstrip because of the type of aircraft that would be landed there [*Inaudible*] and so that necessitated the extension.

As I am on my feet, I want to make mention of the primary reason for the supplementary now being sought. As Members would know, last month the Secretary General (SG) of the Commonwealth, Baroness Scotland, visited the Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development. In February 2017, when Guyana will be hosting the Intercessional Heads of Governments Missions, the Heads of Government would be spending some of their time and some of the sessions will be held at the Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development. Obviously, we would like to have better aircraft landing there so that the Heads of Government could be transported to that area. That was the genesis behind the decision to seek this supplementary.

Mr. Charlie: Mr. Chairman, does the Hon. Minister know that the village of Fairview is located in Region 8 and not in Region 9? I ask that that be corrected.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman my error; I stand rebuked. It will be reflected correctly as the Hon. Member mentioned.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: I would like to enquire from the Minister whether, from the \$241,586,000 which was the voted provision for works on the Paramakatoi, Kurupung, Kato, Kopinang and Monkey Mountain airstrips are currently on-going or whether they have been completed thus far?

Mr. Patterson: I am pleased to say that the proposals for the works on the Eteringbang, Annai, Paramakatoi, Kurupung and Kato airstrips are all at the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board being assessed and obviously when completed the works will commence.

Ms. Teixeira: Again, I want to return to the issue of the Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development Fairview airstrip. Does the Minister believe that \$110 million being spent for the extension of the runway to 4,200 feet is a worthwhile investment when the airstrip at Lethem is used more often and is required to be in top shape all of the time, as well as the airstrip at Eugene F. Correia International Airport? From my point of view, this is not a good use of money. The Hon. Member has justified the extension because of the Intercessional Heads of Government Mission...

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Ms. Teixeira, please ask your question.

Ms. Teixeira: I have to warn Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Chairman: Just ask your question please.

Ms. Teixeira: Hon. Minister, the extension of the airstrip to 4,200 feet, you do accept would be one of the most expensive airstrip rehabilitation work that we have done in last couple of years, excluding the Eugene F. Correia International Airport? Would you accept that?

Mr. Patterson: No Madam, I would not accept that.

Ms. Teixeira: Could you point out for which airstrip we would have paid \$110 million for?

Mr. Patterson: I could remember that one of the first airstrips completed by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure did amount to more money than that being sought here. It was an airstrip done in 2015. Let me explain that this is not just an airstrip, obviously, there will be a road. This will be taken to a category 1A. There will be a road around the airstrip and a fence for security purposes. There will also a waiting area.

Ms. Teixeira: Hon. Member, I appreciate that because it is not in the Legend and, therefore, we could only refer to what is stated in the Legend.

Could the Hon. Minister provide the breakdown for the \$110 million allotted for the airstrip, the road, the fence and the waiting area?

Mr. Patterson: If Mdm. Teixeira would allow me. The rehabilitation extension is \$83, 827,000; the ring road is \$19,342,000; and the fence is \$6,831,000. The question the Hon. Member raised is a valid question and yes the airstrip at Lethem is important to us and it is a priority. That is why Hon. Members could recall that under the United Kingdom (UK) Community Improvement Fund (CIF) I think there is \$2 million or \$2.5 million US dollars or Euros earmarked in the 2017 budget to upgrade the Lethem Airport.

10.34 p.m.

Obviously, that would be way more expense; it would be an estimated \$600 million. That amount would construct the port, the entry, the lighting system and a new terminal building, *et cetera*. It would be to ensure that it is comparable with the Eugene F. Correia International Airport, Ogle and other areas as well. It is the same for the Annai airstrip because this year the Annai airstrip would be done as well, as Members would recall. So we are not overlooking any of those things.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, it appears as though a decision has already been taken to expand the Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development Fairview Airstrip. Could the Minister inform this House whether there was an opportunity for the village of Fairview and the village council of Fairview to be consulted or whether free, prior and informed consent was exercised with respect to this project? If so, could the House also be informed of the discussions and the decisions with regard to the consultation?

Mr. Patterson: I would like to say, yes. The Hon. Member would be well aware that Fairview community is within the Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development area. The consultations were led and facilitated by the executive management of the Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development and several comments and interventions were made. As we would probably know, the Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development Fairview airstrip was always plagued with a rock bar, which would have shortened the runway. We were able, with the help of the Army, to remove that rock bar. We had consultations with the members of the community on the fence. Obviously, it is a village that if a fence is put there would be separation for persons having to traverse the airstrip freely. We had consultations with them on the location of the gates

on the fence. It was a full and fruitful discussion with the community and I am pleased to report that to the Hon. Member.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister be so kind as to lay over the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Social Impact Assessment (SIA) reports to this House with regards to the studies and the consultations.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I do not recall any EIA studies being done. All the regulatory agencies would have inspected. For example, the Guyana Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) in particular, Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development and the Ministry of Public Infrastructure would have inspected and conducted the surveys and preliminary works and everybody was satisfied. So, unfortunately I cannot lay over the information the Member wants.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman am I to understand that because Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development is a protected area that the oversight of these reports or studies could be as loose as this? This is particularly so that international standards dictates or supports that whenever a project of this magnitude is taking place, close to Indigenous communities, that these matter should be carefully and sensitively dealt with.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I do hope that the Hon. Member is well aware that Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development is a well-studied and well-documented area. Everything that the Ministry of Public Infrastructure is doing now would have been studied and documented for quite a while, for example, whether we are talking about the tourism, the lengths of airstrips, sustainable forestry, the nature walks or the educational purposes. These have all been well-studied and well-documented. So therefore, this would be just executing one of the well-studied plans. The impact would have been catered for and everything.

Let me be very clear, the extension of the airstrip is as a request of the management of the Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development. It was the Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development that led the discussion. I am simply the facilitator and as I always say, I build and break things. The GCAA was consulted immediately, Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and

Development was consulted and the communities were consulted. This is the result of us coming for the supplementary to actually start and finish the work in time for February, 2017.

32–323 Ministry of Public Infrastructure – Transport - \$110,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 3 33–332 Ministry of Public Telecommunications – Public Telecommunications - \$35,987,300.

Ms. Teixeira: To the Hon. Minister of Public Telecommunications, could the Minister advise me if the Information and Technology (IT) Centre of Excellence is receiving a loan or grant from the Government of India or China on the bilateral agreements? Is there any proposal or bilateral agreement on that?

Ms. Hughes: It is receiving a grant from the Government of India and this has been in the press for the last couple of months.

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Minister, say whether this \$35,900,000 is Guyana's support for the project and what is the grant that we are receiving from the Government of India? Could the Hon. Minister please remind me if this is Guyana's local contribution?

Ms. Hughes: Yes it is. The grant was for US\$1 million.

Ms. Teixeira: Okay. Thank you.

Item 3 33–332 Ministry of Public Telecommunications – Public Telecommunications \$35,987,300 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 4 80–802 Region 10: Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice - \$10,450,000

Mr. Croal: Hon. Minister, I welcome the procurement of a grader for Region 10. But may I also ask because there are some additional regions with the terrain, *et cetera*, even in Region 1 which has been in the news recently. What consideration has been given for the procurement of the grader for Region 10 alone, when there is a necessity for other regions too?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I thank the Hon. Member for the question and it would be given due consideration.

Item 04 80–802 Region 10: Upper Demerara / Upper Berbice - \$10,450,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members this completes consideration of all the items on Financial Paper No. 2.

Question

“That this Committee of Supply approves of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 2 of 2016 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$2,089,699,085 for the period 1st January, 2016 to 31st December, 2016.”

put, and agreed to.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Speaker, I beg to report that the Committee of Supply has approved of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 2 of 2016 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$2,089,699,085, and I now move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee in the said Resolution.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS NO. 13 (N) & 54

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members we will now consider the Supplementary Appropriation Bill 2016 – Bill No. 19/2016. Hon. Vice – President and Prime Minister.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Orders No.13 (N) and 54 be suspended to enable the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 2 for 2016), Bill 2016, Bill No. 19 of 2016 to be introduced at this stage.

Question put, and agreed to.

Standing Orders suspended.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with paragraph 2, of Article 171 of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet had recommended the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 2 for 2016), Bill 2016, Bill No. 19 of 2016 for consideration by the National Assembly. I now present the Bill to the Assembly, and move that it be read for the first time.

INTRODUCTION OF BILL AND FIRST READING

The following Bill was introduced and read for the first time:

10.49 p.m.

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2 FOR 2016) BILL 2016 – BILL NO. 19 OF 2016

A Bill intituled:

“An ACT to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2016, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.” [*Minister of Finance*]

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read for the first time.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT’S BUSINESS

BILL – SECOND AND THIRD READINGS

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2 FOR 2016) BILL 2016 – BILL NO. 19 OF 2016

A Bill intituled:

“An ACT to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2016, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.” *[Minister of Finance]*

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read for the second time.

Mr. Jordan: I move that the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 2 for 2016), Bill 2016, Bill No. 19 of 2016 be read the third time and passed as printed.

Question put, agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed as printed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we will now take a short break and we will reassemble at 11.15 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 10.50 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 11.02 p.m.

MOTION

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE COOPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA AND THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SURINAME

WHEREAS the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Suriname visited the National Assembly of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, from 24th October, 2013 to 26th October, 2013;

AND WHEREAS arising out of discussions during the visit of the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Suriname to Guyana, the idea of the National Assembly of the

Republic of Suriname and the National Assembly of Cooperative Republic of Guyana entering into an agreement to be referred to as “the Parliamentary Contact Plan Suriname-Guyana and the Parliamentary Contact Plan Guyana-Suriname”, *inter-alia*, to foster friendly relations, to exchange experiences and good practices and to discuss matters of mutual interest;

AND WHEREAS during the visit of the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to Suriname, from 14th October, 2015 to 18th October, 2015, the matter was further discussed and an agreement containing the rationale for the Plan was drafted;

AND WHEREAS the draft Agreement was referred by the Speaker of the National Assembly to the Parliamentary Management Committee for consideration and recommendation;

AND WHEREAS the Parliamentary Management Committee at its 4th Meeting on 30th June, 2016, considered the draft Agreement and recommended that the National Assembly of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana should enter into the Agreement,

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves that the National Assembly of the

Cooperative Republic of Guyana enters into the attached draft Agreement with the National Assembly of the Republic of Suriname. [*First-Vice President and Prime Minister*]

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, the motion concerns an agreement between the National Assembly of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and the National Assembly of the Republic of Suriname. The motion reads:

“WHEREAS, the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Suriname visited the National Assembly of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for 24th October, 2013 to 26th October, 2013;

AND WHEREAS, arising out of discussions during the visit of the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Suriname to Guyana, the idea of the National Assembly of the Republic of Suriname and the National Assembly of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana entering into an agreement to be referred to as the Parliamentary Contact Plan the Suriname-Guyana and the Parliamentary Contact Plan Guyana-

Suriname, *inter-alia*, to foster friendly relations, to exchange experiences and good practices and to discuss matters of mutual interest;

AND WHEREAS during the visit of the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to Suriname, from 14th October, 2015 to 18th October, 2015, the matter was further discussed and an agreement containing the rationale for the Plan was drafted;

AND WHEREAS the draft Agreement was referred by the Speaker of the National Assembly to the Parliamentary Management Committee for consideration and recommendation;

AND WHEREAS the Parliamentary Management Committee at its 4th Meeting on 30th June, 2016, considered the draft Agreement and recommended that the National Assembly of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana should enter into the Agreement,

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves that the National Assembly of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana enters into the attached draft Agreement with the National Assembly of the Republic of Suriname.”

The draft Agreement has been circulated and I move this motion and commend it to the House for its unanimous approval. *[Applause]*

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Speaker, the recommendation before this august body, seeks the approval of the National Assembly for the Guyana/Suriname Parliamentary contact plan, thus, formalising the existing friendly relationship between the two Parliaments.

Guyana and Suriname’s initial engagements have, thus far, informally manifested itself in exchange visits between the two Parliaments. The encounters, by both sides, have determined that there is much to be gained by establishing a formal agreement between the two Parliaments. The initiative, as the motion record, is for a formal contact plan between the two Parliaments. This was initiated in 2013, following an exchange visit by a Surinamese Parliamentary delegation to Guyana led by the Speaker and subsequently discussed by the two Parliaments

during a return visit of Guyanese Parliamentarians led by the Speaker, to the neighbouring country. This yielded a draft contact plan for consideration by both Parliaments.

The Parliamentary Management Committee (PMC) advanced further consideration on the Draft Agreement, and the matter pursuing a formal agreement was deemed desirable. It is an opportune time, for the Guyana's Parliament to formalise the relationship based on a framework, that underscores simple objectives, and as such, the contact plan embraces the following as already outlined in the motion: To foster friendly relations, to exchange experiences and good practices and to discuss matters of mutual interest.

This Agreement is not the first among the many Parliaments around the world, however, the Agreement establishes the basis for strengthening the relationships between the two Assemblies, Parliamentarians, the Parliament staff and, by extension, could focus on unity and not divisiveness. It could also complement the existing relationship between the two States, as it is obvious that Guyana and Suriname, *vice versa*, have maintained good neighbourly relations which continue to be strengthened over the years and which I would want to expect into the future.

I, therefore, on this side of the House, offer support to the recommendation for formalising the blossoming relationship between the Parliament of Guyana and the Parliament of Suriname.

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

Mr. Nagamootoo (replying): I have read the motion and I think that the motion is very straight forward. It is part of the effort of the Parliamentary Management Committee and I want to thank and congratulate the Members of the Parliamentary Management Committee, who have all arrived at a consensus with regards to this motion. I also thank the Hon. Member of the Opposition, Ms. Pauline Sukhai-Campbell, who rose in support of the motion and to ask that the motion be put.

Motion put, and carried.

**PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE
COOPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA AND THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA**

WHEREAS the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia is desirous of entering into a Partnership Agreement with the National Assembly of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to foster development of inter-parliamentary cooperation between both Legislatures;

AND WHEREAS during the visit of the Members of Parliament and the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia to the National Assembly of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana on the 11th February, 2016, the proposal was discussed with the Speaker and Clerk of the National Assembly of Cooperative Republic of Guyana;

AND WHEREAS British Columbia's proposal was referred by the Speaker of the National Assembly to the Parliamentary Management Committee for consideration and recommendation;

AND WHEREAS the Parliamentary Management Committee at its 4th Meeting on 30th June, 2016, recommended that the National Assembly of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana should enter into the Agreement with the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia,

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves that the National Assembly of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana enters into the attached draft Partnership Agreement with the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. *[First Vice-President and Prime Minister]*

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, I will be honoured to move this motion which states:

“Partnership Agreement between the National Assembly of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.

WHEREAS the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia is desirous of entering into a Partnership Agreement with the National Assembly of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to foster development of inter-parliamentary cooperation between both Legislatures;

AND WHEREAS during the visit of the Members of Parliament and the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia to the National Assembly of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana on the 11th February, 2016, the proposal was discussed with the Speaker and Clerk of the National Assembly of Cooperative Republic of Guyana;

AND WHEREAS British Columbia's proposal was referred by the Speaker of the National Assembly to the Parliamentary Management Committee for consideration and recommendation;

AND WHEREAS the Parliamentary Management Committee at its 4th Meeting on 30th June, 2016, recommended that the National Assembly of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana should enter into the Agreement with the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia,

BE IT RESOLVED: That this National Assembly approves that the National Assembly of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana enters into the attached draft Partnership Agreement with the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.”

The draft has been circulated. I, therefore, move the motion in my name. [*Applause*]

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members, I rise to support this motion. We had a thorough discussion in the Parliamentary Management Committee and we all agreed that this motion would be mutually beneficial, to both, ourselves and the British Columbia Legislature.

This motion is also probably a very historic one. And that is, if we go back to our history we would know that Mr. James Douglas, who was born in Mahaica and later on went to the United Kingdom (UK), eventually was hired by the Hudson Bay Company and basically founded British Columbia for the Canadians. So, in fact, British Columbia was really founded by a Guyanese. So, there is a historic contact, in terms of, having such an agreement with the Legislature of British Columbia.

I think it is good that we have started out this way and we hope that, this also would lay the basis for this Parliament to also have similar agreements with other Legislature. We feel that it allows for the staff of this Parliament to benefit from capacity building workshops and exposure, and also for Parliamentarians to go on various exchanges, so that we could learn the best practices of other jurisdictions.

11.45 p.m.

Again, we commend this motion and, as I said, we were all in agreement at the Committee and we expect that the House would support it.

Mr. Nagamootoo (replying): I certainly wish to thank the Hon. Member of the Opposition Dr. Frank Anthony for his elucidation of history which makes the matter even simple, that Mr. Douglas has helped to found British Columbia. That is great news for us and it is a vindication of the decision that we have made that we have more than mutual interests to pursue by having this relationship between our two parliaments, that is, our country and British Columbia. I ask therefore that the motion be put to the vote.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

AFFIRMATION OF THE PETROLEUM (EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION) (TAX LAWS) (ESSO EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION LIMITED, CNOOCNEXEN PETROLEUM GUYANA LIMITED AND HESS GUYANA EXPLORATION LIMITED) ORDER 2016 –NO. 10 OF 2016

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly, in accordance with Section 51 of the Petroleum (Exploration and Production) Act, Chapter 65:04, affirms the Petroleum (Exploration and Production) (Tax Laws) (Esso Exploration and Production Limited, CNOOCNexen Petroleum Guyana Limited and Hess Guyana

Exploration Limited) Order 2016 – No. 10 of 2016 which was made on 2nd August, 2016, under Section 51 of the Petroleum (Exploration and Production) Act, Chapter 65:04 and published in an Extra Ordinary copy of the Official Gazette dated 2nd August, 2016. [*Minister of Finance*]

Mr. Jordan: The motion in my name reads as follows:

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly, in accordance with Section 51 of the Petroleum (Exploration and Production) Act, Chapter 65:04, affirms the Petroleum

(Exploration and Production) (Tax Laws) (Esso Exploration and Production Limited, CNOOCNexen Petroleum Guyana Limited and Hess Guyana Exploration Limited) Order 2016 – No. 10 of 2016 which was made on 2nd August, 2016, under Section 51 of the Petroleum (Exploration and Production) Act, Chapter 65:04 and published in an Extra Ordinary copy of the Official Gazette dated 2nd August, 2016.”

I should like to remind this honourable House that, as with similar Orders brought by the former Minister of Finance - in the cases of YPF Guyana Ltd., Order No.9/2010; CGX Resources Inc., Order No. 10/2010; and Canacol Energy (Guyana) Inc., Order No. 11/2010 - this Order has its origins in the Petroleum Exploration and Production Act, which was promulgated in 1986. By way of explanation, this Act governs petroleum exploration and production in the territory of Guyana. It is as visionary in its conception as it is comprehensive in scope, covering various aspects of this emerging sector of our economy, including licensing, exploration and production and granting fiscal concessions.

It will be recalled that on the Thursday, 30th June, 2016 ExxonMobil announced a big find at its new well offshore Guyana, called Liza-2. This was built on the success of Liza-1, which was announced in 2015, and which was the biggest oil discovery in 2015. The Lizas are estimated to hold more than 1.4 billion barrels of recoverable high quality oil. ExxonMobil owns 45 % of the LIZA prospect, Hess Corporation 30% and China’s CNOOCNexen 25%. Early last month, drilling started on a third well known as the Skipjack, which is 25 miles to the northeast of the Liza. I should indicate that Hess is also partnered with Chevron and Kosmos Energy in a nearby block. In addition, Tullow Oil is planning its own seismic survey on the Orinduik block, just off of Liza.

These discoveries have not only confirmed what was previously being speculated about Guyana’s oil potential, but they have also sparked renewed interest by other oil companies in the industry. In the past, several companies made significant investments, both onshore and offshore, in the pursuit of the black gold. To encourage these companies to invest in such high risk activities, substantial concessions were granted by the Government of Guyana. A few of the companies got promising results from their drilling activities and, in the case of Home Oil which undertook drilling in the Rupununi, in the south of the country, in the early 1980s, there was

actually a short-lived flow of oil from the well. In the main, our hopes of ever finding oil were always lifted by the continued interest shown whenever companies sought to invest in exploration activities, but dashed whenever they came up short. That is, until now! I am sure that my colleague, the Hon. Raphael Trotman, who will speak on this motion, I think, will be telling you a bit more on this.

ExxonMobil's discoveries have created excitement at home and abroad, as everyone recognises that once managed with the utmost care, prudence and due diligence the financial windfall, which is expected to accrue to the country, will create the fiscal space that we crave for the rapid transformation and development of our country, bridging the divide between the coast and hinterland among other objectives. Though ExxonMobil estimates that actual oil production could be anywhere between five and seven years away, depending on a number of variables that impinge on the final decision, a conservative estimate of the revenues and other benefits, which are expected to accrue to the country, would likely catapult Guyana among the oil majors and give real meaning to our recently graduated status of an upper middle-income country. It will definitely help us and all Guyanese to realise the dream of the "good life".

We come to today's activity which is the confirmation of this Order. In January of this year, Esso Exploration and Production (Guyana) and its joint venture partners approached the Government to seek an extension on the period of time within which to complete exploration operations under the current petroleum prospecting licence, which ends in June 2018. The Government, through the Ministry of Natural Resources, took the opportunity to have the 1999 Agreement reviewed, with a view of strengthening the terms and benefits for Guyana, bearing in mind the new realities of the oil discovery. The review entailed hard bargaining and tough negotiations to ensure that Guyana gets its fair share from the exploitation of its oil wealth. At the end of those negotiations, the Government agreed to permit the investors to maintain exploratory control and production rights over the Stabroek block without alterations or variations. On Wednesday, 29th June, 2016, the Government and the joint venture partner signed a production share agreement. As stated at the beginning:

“It has been the custom and practice of the Government to execute an Order made under the provisions of section 51 of the Petroleum Act to waive the application

of certain laws in favour of licensees with whom the Government has entered into production share agreements”.

Section 51 of the Petroleum Exploration Production Act prescribes as follows:

“(1) The Minister assigned responsibility for finance may, by Order, which shall be subject to affirmative resolution of the National Assembly, direct that any or all of the written laws mentioned in subsection (2) shall not apply to, or in relation to, a licensee where the licensee has entered into a production sharing agreement with the Government of Guyana.

(2) The written laws referred to in subsection (1) are —

- (a) the Income Tax Act;
- (b) the Income Tax (In Aid of Industry) Act;
- (c) the Corporation Tax Act; and
- (d) the Property Tax Act. ”

Thus, as indicated in subsection (3) of the order before the House today:

“For the purpose of giving effect to the relevant provisions of the agreement, if so required by those provisions, any or all as appropriate of the written laws set out in Section 51 of the Act shall not apply to or in relation to the licensee or, as the case may be, shall so apply to licensee with all adaptations, exceptions, modifications and qualities to those laws”.

The Order thus provides the investors with the necessary comfort and assurances required by their boards of directors and shareholders that the agreement will be respected in its entirety, that it will not be varied by the whimsical fancies of anyone during its life. This is absolutely vital for the raising of capital for the next phase of petroleum activities. It also signals Guyana’s readiness to provide a conducive environment within which investors will operate. Oil is a risky business, requiring vast sums to be invested before a return on the investment is received.

As a responsible Government therefore, which promotes private investment as an important vehicle for development of our country, we will continue to do our part to improve the business climate, revise laws where appropriate and strengthen or reinforce them where necessary. It is for all of these reasons that this Order is being brought to this House for affirmation.

Mr. Lumumba: Mr. Speaker, Members of this National Assembly, Hon. Minister, indeed this motion represents a unique and important step in the development of Guyana, but I am a bit disappointed. I am disappointed in that we could have been told about this motion on Friday or at least today at 2 o' clock so that we also could have been prepared to do our research and most likely say positive things about this motion.

I am the Chairman of the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Natural Resources and I was not informed about this motion here tonight. We cannot carry on like this in this country. We cannot carry on like this. 'Big oil' is important, but 'big oil' has also shaken up the roots of many countries, whether it be Nigeria, whether it be Ghana, whether it be Venezuela. We have to be careful. Therefore we have to work together.

Informing us early about this motion cannot and will not allow us to say no. How can we? First of all, you have a one-seat majority. Secondly, we have been supportive of oil exploration and our development for a number of years. What is the problem? Why is there this secrecy? It makes us feel funny; it makes us feel that there is a hidden agenda. It is not a laughing matter; it is a question of nationalism. [*Laughter from Government Members.*] It is not a laughing matter. We cannot embrace the future of our country in secrecy, in darkness. We have to do it in the light. What are we afraid of? Minister Jordan has said that the current [*inaudible*] in the past have benefited from this process. How can we say no? That is not the issue.

12.00 a.m.

We recognise that oil is important to the development of our country but, at the same time, if we do not work as one and if we do not do our work properly and seriously, it can also lead to confusion. It can also lead to destruction. Oil has destroyed several counties and we hope it does not destroy Guyana. Therefore, it is important that we work together. If you notify us, what can we say?

Mr. Speaker, when I speak of you, I speak of a good old-time headmaster, a headmaster who would have said to the senior mistress or senior master, how can you do this? I see a Speaker who should have said to the Minister, did you notify the Opposition in a timely manner?

[Hon. Member: Are you lecturing to the headmaster?] I am not lecturing to the headmaster. I am giving my observation and I think I have the right to make observations. They do it in England and the United States Congress and no one can deny me that right.

All I am saying, Mr. Speaker, and I am saying it to the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Natural Resources, my Friend Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon – the Minister in the Ministry of the Presidency - let us say to the Prime Minister that let us hope that, in dealing with oil, and we are dealing with natural resources and with the development of our country, we need to work together. Let us not get carried away with a one-seat majority because things can change.

I support this but I also have reservations about the process and the fact that we were not told in advance and I hope you will do your best in the future to protect us in other instances when these things may occur. Thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the motion brought by the Minister of Finance. I am pleased to support it. It was not our intention tonight, at midnight, to surprise Members but the order was laid last week and it was the expectation that it would have been on the Order Paper. No hidden motive was afoot, Mr. Speaker. And so we wish to assure Members of the House and in the Opposition that no disrespect was meant to Members here or to the public in general.

Mr. Speaker, may I quickly say though that, for the benefit of Members of the House - and I think there is an entitlement indeed to know some of what is happening - with your permission, Sir, I would just like to, over the next two minutes, give the House an idea of what is happening.

We are, at the present time, deepening our bilateral engagement with the United States (US) Government through the Energy Governance Capacity Initiative. The European Union is providing training for negotiating contracts. The Canadian Government is offering assistance with the creation of a sovereign wealth fund or any other derivative of a fund. The Mexican Government has sent a team to Guyana six weeks ago from the Petroleum Institute of Mexico. They have already offered some scholarships which we intend to speak to the Ministry of

Education about – tenable later this year - and are going to supply three White Papers on possible bilateral support in building capacities. The Government of Norway has also been approached and has shown an interest in extending its Oil for Development Programme to Guyana and that is under active consideration.

We are also working with the Commonwealth Secretariat to review and revise the laws, in particular the Petroleum (Exploration and Production) Act, to focus more on production and we have developed, at the same time, a draft body of laws to hopefully establish a new petroleum regulatory agency. It has not been named but that is coming, and subsidiary regulations to address occupational health and safety, environmental protection, local content development and protection. While we speak as well, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has offered support and so has Chatham House out of the United Kingdom, which has been gladly received.

We are in the process of reviewing Guyana's petroleum acreage and potential for development and a plan for its management will be presented to the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Natural Resources on our return from recess.

We are, as well, working with the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, looking at the infrastructural plans, including establishing a logistics or facilities base to support offshore exploration and production. We have just completed, over the last two weeks, a rapid assessment review completed by two experts: a Trinidadian but currently advising the Government of Ghana but has advised many governments, Mr. Anthony Paul; and our very own Guyanese, Dr. Mangal, who has just left, and, in fact, only today sent their preliminary report.

We have formed a Ministerial Committee comprising of the Ministries of Finance, Public Infrastructure, Agriculture, Business, Communities, Social Protection, Education and Citizenship.

Until December, we will be working in conjunction with the other Ministries to strengthen this framework. We are, later in the week, receiving a visit from the University of the West Indies; Professor Jupiter will be arriving. I believe he has meetings also scheduled with Hon. Member Mr. Lumumba on training and scholarships at the University of the West Indies. We are intending to hold, through the Chatham House facilities, a seminar in November and to provide

training to local persons and we are formalising and finalising plans for nationwide public consultation which will ensue later this year.

Tomorrow, the newspapers are likely to show that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will be inviting persons to public consultations. So, there is much happening and, as the Minister of Finance has said, this order takes us in the direction of bringing us into alignment with what is the norm and what is required by law. What is interesting is that, whether by oversight or inadvertence, section 51's application was never brought before this House since 1999 when ExxonMobil first signed its agreement. Now, we are moving quickly to correct that omission which is many years old.

So, with that said, Mr. Speaker, I commend this motion and ask that this House approves it. Thank you. [*Applause*]

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, we have before us the Order No. 10 of 2016 which states:

“...Agreement between the Government of Guyana of the one part and Esso Exploration and Production Limited, CNOOC Nexen Petroleum Guyana Limited and Hess Guyana Exploration Limited of the other part dated 27 June 2016 concerning the Stabroek Block, Offshore Guyana, which is a production sharing agreement;”

The affirmative motion as before us regards adopting the implementation of section 51(2) of the Petroleum (Exploration and Production) Act. The problem with this is twofold. We all want to see petroleum go forward but we also want to make sure that we are all well informed, and we are all going on a new venture which is a learning curve for all of us. The problems with this motion are several: one, it was circulated at 7.55 p.m. today in the midst of the Sitting and, therefore, we had little time to do research and to find ourselves; two, the agreement, according to the Order which was gazetted on the 2nd day of August, signed by Minister Jordan, says that the agreement was 27th June, 2016.

And that is why I do not quite accept the issue of the length of time. This agreement was the 27th June, 2016. We had a Sitting on the 30th June, 18th July and 4th August. Therefore, this could have been gazetted earlier - because we know about extraordinary and special gazetting of the

Official Gazette - and, therefore, would have allowed us to have proper time to be able to be prepared.

In addition to that, there was no circulation although the motion states that this was published on 5th August. It was not published on 5th August. The first time we saw it on this side of the House was 7.55 p.m. tonight. This is not good enough on a matter that is of national importance.

Last week, there was a meeting of the Statutory Instruments Committee which we are very pleased that it had its first full meeting other than before where the Chairman of it is the Speaker himself. However, the Statutory Instruments Committee deals with subsidiary legislation that requires affirmative and negative resolution of the House. And the Statutory Instruments Committee deals with Standing Order 92 (2) (a), which involves the expenditure of public moneys or imposes or fixes fees for licences or for services. And also (3) deals with affirmative resolution. Therefore, the proper place for this should have been the Statutory Instruments Committee.

However, the concern to do with the actual motion which requires debate and consideration - regrettably this will not be able to take place tonight... Section 51(1) talks about the Minister assigned responsibility for finance being able to make an Order which shall be subject to affirmative resolution to the National Assembly and directs at any or all of the written laws mentioned in subsection 2, shall not apply in relation to a licensee where the licensee has entered in a production sharing agreement with the Government of Guyana.

The written laws referred to are the Income Tax Act, the Income Tax (In Aid of Industry) Act, the Corporation Tax Act, and the Property Tax Act. In other words, we are being asked, in this House, by the motion to support the Order which talks about an agreement between the companies and the Government of Guyana waiving or removing the requirements of paying tax - income tax in the aid of industry, corporation and property tax - based on the agreement with the Government of Guyana.

However, what I seem to have missed in the Minister's presentation was for how long this will take place. I would ask the Minister to be patient with me because I think he said June, 2018, but I may have missed it. So, if this is the agreement, how long will 51(2) not apply to the production sharing agreement with these companies? Is it one, two, three, five or 10 years? We have not

been educated about this or informed about this in the House, except if I am right in what I thought I heard that the agreement comes to end in June, 2018.

I am glad to hear Minister Trotman talk about all of the help that we are getting with Commonwealth and all the other people and I congratulate the Government for that. It is good. However, when we are talking about production sharing agreements, in which the coffers of Guyana will be lessened or we are giving concessions - obviously, we want people to come here - we also have to say under what conditions this agreement will hold. Is it for, as I said, a honeymoon period – just until oil starts spouting out? Is it five or 10 years? I understand from the media - and my Colleague Odinga Lumumba could correct me – and the presentation of ExxonMobil and so on in the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Natural Resources that they talked about five to 10 years. So, is this agreement going to last for five to 10 years? This is the question. If you ask us to debate a motion of such importance to Guyana that is circulated at 7.55 p.m. in the midst of a Sitting, then it is regrettable. And no apologies will really make it go away because the agreement was signed on the 27th June, a full six weeks ago. And that is what makes this unacceptable.

We are not comfortable with this agreement.

12.15 a.m.

We feel that there are issues that we would still like to know about the production sharing agreement: what concessions, what would be the revenue - if you want to call it that - in what way Guyana will benefit in the interim, prior to production of oil and post production. We have no idea whatsoever.

One last comment is that the Hon. Minister Jordan mentioned previous affirmative motions on petroleum and he is right. There were previous affirmative motions in regards to the same Petroleum Bill and others in relation to the electricity and energy sectors brought by former Prime Minister Samuel Hinds. I will say this: not one time were those motions brought for affirmation by this House with a suspension motion of a motion circulated the very day. It would never have been allowed. It was never allowed by the then Opposition. I do not believe that Colleagues on that side must expect this Opposition to condone such actions. All the motions that were affirmations to do with the extractive industries were all brought with the six-day

notice to allow the Opposition to have time and to be extraordinarily inquisitive about demanding information on this sector. We do not accept that there was not enough time between the signing of the Order and the matter coming to this House. I repeat that we are well aware that the Government has, in the past and up to recently, brought extraordinary Gazettes which they can produce in one day and print. It is regrettable that this is the way this matter has come to this House, on the last day of the Sittings before the recess.

Thank you. *[Applause]*

Mr. Jordan (replying): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Hon. Members of the Opposition who spoke on the motion and my Colleague, Hon. Member Trotman, who also spoke in support of the motion.

I would like to reassure Hon. Member Lumumba, all the Members of the Opposition and all the stakeholders out there who are listening that there was no intent to sandbag or ambush the Opposition as it relates to the debating of this motion today. I think it is not necessarily true to say, as said by Hon. Member Lumumba, that it is the first time that he would have been seeing the motion.

This order was put on the notice paper of the National Assembly on 4th August, as referenced by Hon. Member Trotman. I would like to reassure that, indeed, I agree with Hon. Member Lumumba, that both sides have to work together in this, not only on this aspect but on everything we do in this country. Perhaps, in recognition of this, our Ministry of Social Cohesion has been established. We recognise that we have to work together in unity in many of these things, and oil is just one of the activities where that togetherness must be shown.

There is also no secrecy or hidden agenda, as mentioned by Hon. Member Trotman. Every instance of agreements, concessions given and so on we would bring to this House. We do not have anything to be afraid of and we do not have anything to hide.

Before I wrap up quickly, I would just like to quote a particular section of the Standing Orders for the benefit of Hon. Member Teixeira who was indicating that both negative and affirmative resolutions have to go to the Statutory Instruments Committee. Standing Order 92 (3) on page 50 states:

“The Statutory Instruments Committee or a Special Select Committee shall consider all Regulations or Instruments subject to an affirmative resolution for the purpose set out in the aforesaid paragraph two (2) as may be referred to it by the Assembly.”

It is the Assembly that has to refer affirmative resolutions to the Statutory Instruments Committee. There is no automaticity of such resolutions going to the Statutory Instruments Committee. With that, Mr. Speaker, I would request that the motion be put.

Thank you, Sir. *[Applause]*

Question put and agreed to.

Motion carried.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE ON THE APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT COMMISSION

WHEREAS Article 212X(2) of the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana states:

“The President shall appoint the members of the Commission after such members have been nominated by the Public Accounts Committee and approved by not less than two-thirds of the elected members of the National Assembly.”

AND WHEREAS in keeping with article 212X(2) the Public Accounts Committee established a Sub-Committee for the purpose of shortlisting applicants to the Public Procurement Commission;

AND WHEREAS the Sub-Committee shortlisted the following applicants:

- 1) **Ms. Emily Dodson**
- 2) **Mr. Balwant Persaud**
- 3) **Mr. Devan Khemraj**
- 4) **Mr. Bridley Horatio Robeson Benn**
- 5) **Mr. Cecil Jerrard Jacques**

- 6) **Mr. E. Lance Carberry**
- 7) **Ms. Carol Corbin**
- 8) **Dr. Anand Goolsarran**
- 9) **Mr. Lallbachan Christopher Ram**
- 10) **Mr. Sukrishnalall Pasha**
- 11) **Dr. Nanda K. Gopaul**
- 12) **Mr. Ivor B. English**

AND WHEREAS the Public Accounts Committee, after deliberations, recommended, from among the applicants shortlisted by the Sub- Committee, the following persons as the suitable candidates to be appointed to the Public Procurement Commission:

- 1) **Ms. Emily Dodson**
- 2) **Ms. Carol Corbin**
- 3) **Mr. Sukrishnalall Pasha**
- 4) **Mr. Ivor B. English**
- 5) **Dr. Nanda K. Gopaul**

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly adopts the Report of the Public Accounts Committee to address matters relating to the Appointment of Members to the Public Procurement Commission and signifies to the President that the following persons have been recommended in accordance with Article 212X(2) of the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana:

- 1) **Ms. Emily Dodson**
- 2) **Ms. Carol Corbin**
- 3) **Mr. Sukrishnalall Pasha**

4) Mr. Ivor B. English

5) Dr. Nanda K. Gopaul' [*Mr. Ali - Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.*]

Mr. Ali: Mr. Speaker, in these very early hours of a new morning, I am pleased to present this very important motion to the National Assembly. I think we owe it to past members of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), present Members of the PAC and Members from both sides of these Halls for the accomplishment of the Public Procurement Commission and subsequently this motion today. I want to take this opportunity to thank all those Members who worked tirelessly over the years in trying to come to a consensus on this very important issue.

Sometimes we are caught in our own web in this country. Sometimes, in Guyana, we fail to recognise and acknowledge our own work. We fail to acknowledge and recognise our own accomplishments. In so doing, we sometimes *shoot ourselves in our own legs* without understanding the implications of our actions.

I think much of what happens in the media, much of the sensational outlook that comes out in the media, is as a result of our own weaknesses at the highest level; our own weaknesses in acknowledging where we go right; our own weaknesses in acknowledging where we would have provided leadership in this region. In the area of public procurement, we may have had many challenges, we still have many challenges and we will always have challenges, but I think we owe it to ourselves to acknowledge and congratulate ourselves on the legislations, in the laws that govern public procurement in this country.

As a matter of fact, Guyana is the first Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member state which undertook comprehensive procurement reform by amending its Constitution in 2003. These reforms were based on the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law. Our procurement law was developed and formed part of the Constitution with the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law as its basis. Guyana is one of the few countries in the Caribbean with the public procurement system that is well coordinated and guided by modern legislation dedicated to public procurement. Unlike other CARICOM member states, public procurement in Guyana is specifically addressed in the Constitution.

There are many developed states which may want to argue and to put forward points in relation to the Public Procurement Commission and the way we administer our tender process, but I have a series of examples with which I do not want to regale this House at this hour. Starting with Singapore, which is pointed out as one of the best examples in public procurement, Australia, Canada and the United States, all give extensive power in the hands of one individual in relation to public procurement. So sometimes when we have these elaborate lectures on public procurement and issues relating to public procurement, we must be able to stand up as a country and say, “Look at our legislation. Look at our Constitution and you will see that we have made tremendous gain in relation to public procurement.”

The issue of the Public Procurement Commission is one that the PPP/C Government was committed to. It is one that I think the National Assembly was committed to. The challenge was finding a consensus. As I said, the previous Public Accounts Committee would have outlined a process which would have seen public advertisement for expressions of interest, nominations, *et cetera*, all of which have allowed us, today, to bring to this National Assembly a motion which will nominate five individuals to serve on this Public Procurement Commission (PPC).

12.30 a.m.

Today is not a day to point fingers. I think that the People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) has a proud record when it comes to the issue of public procurement and the whole issue of tendering. Looking at the legislative framework and looking at the reforms of the financial architecture of the country, we have one of the most modern financial landscape laws governing our financial system here in Guyana. What we have to do is to continuously build on what we have. I think this occasion gives us that opportunity to build on the solid foundation that is there in relation to public procurement and in relation to the general financial architecture of this country.

Tonight, as it is set out in article 212AA (1) (a) to (h) of the Constitution which outlines the responsibility of the Public Procurement Commission, we are going to move in this new phase of public procurement where the no-objection role of Cabinet would now be shifted away and there will be the NPTAB as the awarding entity and the Public Procurement Commission as an appeal

board. This allows us, as I said, to make that final transition in ensuring that our procurement system is further developed.

However, as is the case in the Public Procurement Commission, we have to ensure that the awarding board is not one that is prejudiced in any way. We have to work on a mechanism that would see a more integrated approach, that would see greater consultation in the National Assembly on in the selection of candidates to function on the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board. That is the board in which the authority of award is vested. I think it is much more important for us to have consensus on who makes up that board and to agree to have the best possible team to make up the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board.

When the Government was in Opposition, one of the criticisms was that the board fell under the Minister of Finance and that the Minister of Finance had a policy prerogative over that board. With the advent of the Public Procurement Commission that seeks to remove that Cabinet layer, I think we have to take this additional step of looking at how we could develop the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board into one that has greater consultation and one that has greater representation of independence.

It gives me great honour and privilege tonight to bring before this House the motion nominating the five members for the Public Procurement Commission. As I do this, I wish to thank all of the Members of the existing Public Accounts Committee (PAC) for their tireless work. **[Mr.**

Greenidge: What about the previous?] I said the previous when I started, Mr. Greenidge. I just want to thank specifically the Members of the current PAC, especially the support staff. I do not know if they are here. I think that we have an excellent Clerk of Committee and support team that helped the PAC. I want to say that they did a diligent job in managing the process – in getting advertisements out, putting together matrix, doing analysis for us – and we must recognise their work at this historic moment.

I want to recognise the work of all our previous Ministers of Finance and Presidents who would have laid this solid foundation in relation to our financial architecture and the laws governing our procurement entity. This includes, of course...*[inaudible]*. We cannot avoid former President Jagdeo. I want to say also advisers, such as Mr. Jordan, who is now Minister of Finance, and Mr.

Greenidge, who would have all worked at various times in their career in modernising the financial architecture.

I said that tonight is an occasion for us to celebrate together. At the end of the day we have to get a two-thirds majority in this National Assembly to pass this motion. The mere fact that we have to get a two-thirds majority and we worked in such a consensual manner in the Committee show that we all recognise the fact that we are on the right road and that we have laid the right foundation in relation to procurement and the financial architecture of this country.

It is with great honour and privilege that I put this motion to the House tonight.

Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

Minister of Social Protection [Ms. Lawrence]: As I rise to speak to the motion before the honourable House this evening, please allow me to give a short overview of the genesis of the Public Procurement Commission and the work of the Public Accounts Committee.

It was 2003 when the Public Procurement Commission Act was passed in this honourable House during the Eighth Parliament. Immediately the Public Accounts Committee, under the chairmanship of the late Winston Murray, established a subcommittee to examine the nominees of the political parties in the National Assembly. The subcommittee Members were Messrs Donald Ramotar and E. Lance Carberry, Members of Parliament (MPs). During the deliberation, 10 nominees were considered, namely G. Broomes, Dr. C. James, L. Seeram, S. Tross and W. Tyrell, nominees of the People's National Congress (PNC), and W. Fries, Dr. Budhoo, M. Duke, H. Nawbatt and I. Nathoo, nominees of the People's Progressive Party/Civic. This Committee deliberated for almost three years until the dissolution of the Eighth Parliament.

In the Ninth Parliament, the Public Accounts Committee, under its new chairperson, yours truly, appointed Messrs Winston Murray and Komal Chand to commence discussion on identifying nominees for the Public Procurement Commission. It was during the tenure of this subcommittee that Ms. Emily Dodson's name was submitted by the People's National Congress/Reform - 1 Guyana (PNC/R - 1G) to replace Mr. Winston Tyrell who had passed on. It must be noted that the Public Procurement Commission was placed on the notices of the Public Accounts Committee as an item for discussion at each of its meeting, despite the fact that the then

Government did not present any nominees during those meetings. After 92 meetings by the Public Accounts Committee, during that Ninth Parliament, this matter regarding nominees for the Public Procurement Commission was left as unfinished business at the end of the life of the Ninth Parliament.

In the Tenth Parliament, in the year 2012, Mr. Carl B. Greenidge, Member of Parliament, assumed the Chair of Public Accounts Committee. The Public Accounts Committee wrote to political parties to provide nominees and a public advertisement in the media was placed to allow members of the public to submit nominees for the PPC.

Further, the Committee agreed to establish a subcommittee with a view to examining the criteria to be used for selecting the nominees for the PPC. The Members were Hon. Member Gail Teixeira, Manzoor Nadir, Trevor Williams and myself. It was during the deliberations of this subcommittee that the issue of gender was discussed. Due to the prorogation and subsequent dissolution of Parliament, the work of the Committee came to an end.

With the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) assuming office in 2015, at the beginning of the Eleventh Parliament, Hon. Member Mr. Irfaan Ali was elected Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. It was during the month of November, 2015 that the Members of the Public Accounts Committee agreed to the following:

- to re-advertise for submission of nominees to the Public Procurement Commission
- to seek advice from its technical advisers with regard to understanding the mechanisms of the Public Procurement Commission in conjunction with the Constitution.

This was done due to the large number of new Members who were on the Public Accounts Committee.

- Lastly, the Committee agreed to understand the role of the Public Accounts Committee in the appointment of the nominees to the Public Procurement Commission.

Further, a subcommittee was established comprising the Chairman, Hon. Member Mr. Irfaan Ali, and myself. Some 29 submissions were received by 30th June, 2016 and due diligence exercises were sought for 12 persons of the 29 submissions.

Today, the Report of the Public Accounts Committee is before this honourable House, giving a clear outline of the deliberations which produced the nominees to the Public Procurement Commission, namely Emily Dodson, Carol Corbin, Nanda Gopaul, Ivor English and Sukrishnalall Pasha.

In concluding, the APNU/AFC Government is proud, even though a few months late, to fulfil another of its manifesto promise. Hence, the anxiety, as was seen at the last sitting, of our Hon. Prime Minister and First Vice-President is understood. For while many of us in this honourable House are asked about the coming into being of the Public Procurement Commission, I am sure that he receives the most calls as the Leader of Government business in this honourable House.

All of Guyana wants to see transparency. All of Guyana want accountability and, more so, a level playing field in the tender process. Today, this new day, we, all of us, Government and Opposition, have brought an end to a journey which began some 13 years ago.

12.45 p.m.

I wish to thank the Hon. Prime Minister, I also wish to thank the Chairman of the Committee, Mr, Irfaan Ali, and all of the Members of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) including the staff of the National Assembly who are assigned to the PAC, whom Mr. Ali spoke so well of.

It is with pride that I commend to this honourable House, for adoption, the five nominees of the Public Accounts Committee for the Public Procurement Commission (PPC). I would like to do so in the memory of the late Winston Shripal Murray who fought valiantly for the coming into being of the Public Procurement Commission. It is with pride that I support this motion.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Ali (replying): At this time I wish, as I would have said, to congratulate all those who would have worked tremendously hard and to ask your intervention, Mr. Speaker, in putting this motion to the House for a hopeful unanimous conclusion to a consensus position.

Motion put and carried

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, in view of the peculiar requirement for the appointment of this Commission, we would need to ascertain and the House would need to be satisfied that we have

the required numbers to satisfy the appointment. I am sure that some Members would think that a call for division would enable us to satisfy that requirement.

Mr. Ramjattan: Division Sir.

Division bell rung.

Assembly divided: Ayes: 62 as follows:

Ayes

Ms. Veerasammy

Mr. Gill

Mr. Ramson

Mr. Anamayah

Mr. Dharamlall

Mr. Charlie

Mr. Damon

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Neendkumar

Ms. Pearson –Fredericks

Mr. G. Persaud

Ms. Selman

Dr. Westford

Dr. Ramsaran

Ms. Persaud

Mr. Croal
Mr. Hamilton
Ms. Chandarpal
Dr. Persaud
Mr. Seeraj
Bishop Edghill
Mr. Lumumba
Ms. Campbell – Sukhai
Dr. Anthony
Mr. Nandlall
Mr. Ali
Ms. Teixeira
Mr. Rohee
Mr. Jagdeo
Mr. Rutherford
Mr. RajKumar
Mr. C. Persaud
Mr. Figueira
Mr. Carrington
Mr. Allen
Mr. Adams

Ms. Bancroft

Ms. Wade

Ms. Adams-Patterson

Ms. Henry

Ms. Charles-Broomes

Dr. Cummings

Mr. Sharma

Ms. Garrido- Lowe

Ms. Ferguson

Ms. Hastings- Williams

Mr. Holder

Mr. Gaskin

Ms. Hughes

Mr. Patterson

Ms. Lawrence

Mr. Trotman

Mr. Jordan

Dr. Norton

Mr. Bulkan

Dr. Roopnaraine

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon

Ms. Ally

Mr. Williams

Mr. Ramjattan

Mr. Greenidge

Mr. Nagamootoo

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I would be allowed a departure from the norm to announce my first experience at seeing and experiencing the House voting altogether, as one. There are 62 votes on the same side, all voting for the motion. [*Applause*]

BILLS – Second Reading

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT BILL 2016 – Bill No. 14/2016

A BILL intituled:

“AN ACT to provide for the protection, conservation, management, sustainable use and internal and external trade of Guyana’s wildlife.” [*Minister of Natural Resources*]

Mr. Trotman: I am most grateful to you Mr. Speaker on this good morning which we hope not to spoil. I would be brief and, to use a phrase which has become popular recently, short-circuit my presentation. In no way, in doing so, am I diminishing the significance of a very important Bill for Guyana. The Bill has its origins in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and, in fact, can be traced back to several Parliaments or several years ago. This is the Bill’s third attempt at being passed; its third incarnation. There have been some changes made to the Bill. I wish to recognise, therefore, that this is not a new Bill but one which has passed this way before, even though it never made it to this stage where there is a great likelihood that it would have been passed into law.

Before proceeding, I believe that it is apposite to note that the Wildlife Conservation and Management Bill, including birds... I was reminded earlier by Dr. Anthony that there is a

particular species, the sandpiper, which travels on a migratory route every winter to Guyana for the warmth and then returns. In fact, it migrates from British Columbia, a place where this Parliament just voted, less than an hour ago, to have Parliament to Parliament relations with. Our step, today, in ratifying a motion to bring the two Parliaments together is the third point of connection between British Columbia and Guyana and I thought that I should mention that.

Guyana is a party to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). This membership devolves on us certain responsibilities, including having appropriate laws and regulations to safeguard that flora and fauna, to curb the illegal trade of wildlife and to provide for the safe and regulated breeding, movement and trade of wildlife within and without of state parties.

For the most part, though being a state party to the convention, Guyana has not been fully compliant, even though every effort has been made to do so. One such requirement for compliance is for there to be adequate legal provisions that not only incorporate the requirements of the convention but also provide adequate safeguards for the flora and fauna we have in our biodiversity. We have been using, for a number of years, regulations published under the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) and these have since been deemed inadequate, hence, the presence of this Bill. We, therefore, cannot go on without the adequate legal framework and laws being in place without facing sanctions for non-implementation.

This Bill, among other things, is an attempt to remedy that jeopardy which has arisen. The jeopardy which I speak of is this: That if Guyana misses the CITES Conference, which is held triennially, and the next conference will be held in September 2016 in South Africa, our next attempt to have this legislation presented to that conference would be in 2019, and by which time Guyana risks being sanctioned for noncompliance.

As stated before, during the tenure of the Tenth Parliament, two attempts were made to pass legislation to satisfy CITES requirements. The first being the Wildlife Import and Export Bill No. 20/2013 and the second attempt was the Wildlife Import and Export Bill No. 8/2014. Unfortunately, for diverse reasons culminating in the calamitous event of the Tenth Parliament, neither Bills were enacted into law. I say time is of the essence and we must seize the opportunity that presents itself.

I will move on to say that, at the last conference held in Bangkok, Thailand, in 2013, Guyana was recognised as being a Category II country. There are three categories: Category I countries are those countries which have legislation which are believed, generally, to meet the requirements for implementation to the convention: Category II are countries like Guyana which have legislation believed, generally, not to meet all of the requirements for implementation to the convention: Category III are countries with legislation which are believed, generally, not to meet the requirements, which put them at risk of being blacklisted.

It is time for Guyana to move from a Category II status to a Category I. I should add that, in Bangkok, Thailand at the last conference in 2013, Guyana was cautioned very strongly that it would be shortlisted for possible sanctions if it did not have legislation in place by 2016.

I am pleased to announce that, just a few weeks ago, CITES did, in fact, send a note to Guyana saying that it was satisfied that the Bill that is before it met the requirements, having gone through that Bill.

1.00 a.m.

If I may quote an email sent from the CITES Secretariat to Ms. Sankar who is Head of the Wildlife Division and I quote from it, it is dated the 20th, July, and it states:

“Overall the Secretariat would like to commend Guyana for making good progress in its legislative process. The submitted Bill seems to fulfil the minimum requirements as establish by the resolution...”

That I referred to which was passed in Bangkok.

So I would not wish to take us through all of the various parts of this Bill. My Colleagues who will speak after me will do so. The Bill has 85 clauses, it is divided into 15 parts and it makes provision for many aspects of the work of CITES. I see my Learned Friend having a moment of merriment – perhaps it is the morning

What is significant is that this Bill has been in the House since 14th May, of this year. It has had a long curing period and, as I have said, it is not new to the House. It has been here twice before, but we admit and accept that there have been some changes, though minimal. Of importance is

the fact is that the CITES Secretariat has approved the draft that is before us and we have been urged to avoid being sanctioned by having it passed before September of 2016.

So the Bill, as we know, it has 85 clauses. In the explanatory note, the objectives are set out and I may wish, with your leave Sir, to go through them quickly.

The key objectives are:

- (a) “to create a supportive mechanism cognisant of the national goals for wildlife protection, conservation, management and sustainable use;
- (b) to create a national framework and mechanisms governing the local and international trade in all species of Guyana’s wildlife;
- (c) to implement the primary provisions of the Convention (this is required by Article VIII of the Convention); and
- (d) to provide a framework of licensing and decisions which support core principles of transparency, certainty, natural justice and fairness.”

A Bill of this magnitude has gone through several layers and filters of consultations with stakeholders. My predecessor, in office, held a number of consultations with over two dozen groups, including wildlife traders, trappers and exporters. The Ministry of Natural Resources, under my guidance, held another consultation last year and has received from the Wildlife Export Organisation, the body representing the members of that organisation, the go ahead to proceed with the Bill. That is that they have no objection to the Bill.

I know that there may be a lament that we should have gone to consultations. But as I have said, this is not a new Bill. Government is simply bringing into law what the convention states that we should be doing. The Bill has gone through several series of consultations and we have received the CITES Secretariat’s blessing to enact it.

I wish only to say, in closing, that attempts have been made to solicit the views of the Opposition and every opportunity was afforded for them to share their concerns, if any. I would not be surprised if there are some concerns, but I believe that the Bill can be kept under constant review and if there are fundamental changes that need to be made, we could make them.

I close by just recognising the many persons who worked on this Bill. I wish to commend the staff of the Ministry of Natural Resources, both present and past; Ms. Alona Sankar and her staff of the Wildlife Division; the Members of the Wildlife Scientific Committee; the Legal Consultant Mr. Teni Housty; the trappers, traders, breeders and exporters of wildlife who attended various consultations; the Chief Parliamentary Counsel (CPC), I do not know if he is still here, thank you and your staff; and all those other persons who remained hidden and behind the scenes.

I have submitted a number of amendments and, at the appropriate time, I will move them and reserve further comments for my rebuttal.

Thank you very much Sir. [*Applause*]

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, I have listened carefully to the Hon. Minister reciting the importance of this Bill and I have no doubt that it is important. It is one of the Bills that we have international obligations to pass under various treaties. I was reminded of a bitter experience I have had, as the Hon. Minister was speaking, about the many times I came this House with the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) Bill in a previous Parliament. Like the Minister, I spent a great length of time outlining the sanctions that would have flowed, were we not to pass the Bill. The National Assembly then had refused to pass the Bill. I think that it was twice. Then I had another experience with the amendments to the Customs Act.

We heard earlier about the Rudisa Beverages & Juice NV and Caribbean International Distribution Inc. case, which was pending at the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ). The case was adjourned for me to bring that Bill here to pass it in the Parliament and the applicant in the Rudisa Beverages & Juice NV and Caribbean International Distribution Inc. matter would have withdrawn the case. I brought the Bill here and I regale this Parliament about the sanctions which were going to be imposed upon us and I was ignored. Today, the Attorney General is quarrelling about paying US\$600,000,000. So Sir, I appreciate the importance of these international obligations, which we have to discharge. It is those who do not appreciate it have us in the problems that we are in, in relation to the AML/CFT, as well as the Rudisa Beverages & Juice NV and Caribbean International Distribution Inc. judgement.

Having said all of that, this Bill is a huge Bill and I do not think any one expects any of us to speak on it clause by clause. I have heard the Minister say that his Colleague after him would speak on the various clauses – I do not know who that Colleague is. But there are some quick observations that I would like to make.

In terms of the composition of the Wildlife Commission which is being established under this Bill. It is contained in the Seventh Schedule. It lists the persons who shall constitute the Commission. There is the Chairperson and then the Commissioner; there also nominees from the Ministries of Finance and Agriculture; the Leader of the Opposition has a nominee; there are nominees from the University of Guyana, the Private Sector and not more than four other persons appointed by the Minister, one of whom shall be the Secretary.

In my respectful view, among the persons listed here, there should be a person from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). I see Ms. Sankar here, who has been heading the Wildlife Committee for a number of years perhaps under ‘(h)’ where it states:

“no more than four other persons appointed by the Minister.”

Perhaps that is the umbrella or the avenue through which a nominee from the EPA would be installed. I believe that the EPA should have been a substantive body mentioned among the organisations nominating persons to serve. There are also organisations that represent the interest of dealers and traders in wildlife. There are also not included among the organisations from which nominees come. I believe those organisations should have also been included as organisations that are to send or nominate persons to sit on the Commission.

The other comment I wish to make is in relation to clause five of the Bill. Among the things that clause five addresses is the power of the Minister to give directions to the Commission under this section. It is stated:

“The power of the Minister to give directions to the Commission under this section shall extend to giving to the Commission directions as to –

(a) the disposal of capital assets;

(b) the application of the proceeds of such disposals.”

Sir, I recall, distinctly, and I see the distinguish Minister of Foreign Affairs here, in the Tenth Parliament, Mr. Greenidge had created great furore with Ministers being granted the power to direct how State funds are to be applied, spent and disposed of, outside of the Consolidated Fund. Here we have a Minister being given the very power to dispose of proceeds, capital assets, *et cetera*.

Then there is a requirement, at the end, for the moneys to go into the Consolidated Fund. Mr. Ramjattan is awake. I could remember him distinctly preferring the mode whereby it goes into the Consolidated Fund first, outside of any Ministerial direction or discretion, and then from the Consolidated Fund it comes out back and comes here for Parliamentary approval. That is the model advocated by Mr. Ramjattan and Mr. Greenidge throughout the Tenth Parliament. We see a variation here with an executive Minister having the power to direct how moneys are going to be spent and how properties are going to be disposed of and then leaving the remainder to the Consolidated Fund. So the *cart is place before the horse*. Mr. Jordan is sleeping and I do not want to disturb him.

Then there is a worrying provision. Clause 14, deals with accounts and audits of the Commission by marginal note. In accordance with the Constitution, it provides that the Commission shall keep proper accounts, *et cetera*, and those financial records shall be audited by the Auditor General. Then there is a curious provision after that:

(b) "The Minister may, at any time, appoint an auditor to examine the accounts of the Commission and to report on it to the Minister."

The Constitution resides with the Auditor General's Office, the exclusive responsibility to audit public accounts and accounts in relation to the state of Guyana. That is the problem with the forensic auditors. They are all appointed to audit public accounts without the authorisation of the Auditor General. Obviously, it does not come from the Audit Office of Guyana. The Auditor General - the Constitution states that and the Attorney General does not know apparently, I am telling him.

Article 223 of the Constitution states that resides, in the Auditor General, the power and the exclusive functional responsibility of auditing the public accounts. Only the Auditor General could authorise another auditor to audit Government's moneys and public funds, but here we

have the Minister, who may, at any time, appoint an auditor to examine the accounts of the Commission and to report on it to the Minister. This defeats the purpose.

1.15 a.m.

We spent great resources establishing the Auditor General's Office of Guyana. It has functional and financial autonomy; it is like the Judiciary. That is the kind of insulation that it enjoys from Executive interference. Its reports go straight to this Parliament, onwards to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), where it is examined by a Chairman who is from the Opposition. There is a very clear line of insulation from the Executive. Here we find that it is being undermined by an executive Minister, being given the power to appoint his own auditor to audit. So, Sir that is something that I find objectionable, in my humble view, it may border on being unconstitutional. This is because it undermines the constitutional provisions which provide for the Auditor General to be doing these audits.

The remainder of the Bill consists of the parts of the convention that is being incorporated here and it is highly technical and I really cannot make any other contribution. There is an obligation of the Minister to bring regulations. This is a very complex Bill and I am sure that the regulations would be necessary for the effective discharge of the functions of this Bill and I hope that the regulations would be forthcoming.

Sir, with those few observations, I wish to register my support and our support for the Bill.

Thank you very much, Sir. *[Applause]*

Mr. Holder: Mr. Speaker, the night is far spent and dawn is almost upon us, so I will not try to delay the House for too long. I do have a few explanatory things that I want to mention, if only for the record, so that, at least, this honourable House would have a general idea of what is trying to be achieved by this Bill.

The Wildlife Conservation and Management Bill brings a new dimension to wildlife management in Guyana. As such, Government is bringing to the National Assembly, a Bill which aims at having effective, conservation and management of the country's wildlife. The main functions include: taking necessary steps to protect local wildlife from over exploitation through importation and exportation; to develop strategies; and to advise the Minister, generally,

on matters relating to the conservation, management and the sustainable use of species of wildlife and the protection of endangered species.

As the Minister of Agriculture, I fully support and endorse the Wildlife Conservation and Management Bill. We recognise that wildlife exploitation exists and it is a legitimate issue. The Bill allows for the rescue, rehabilitation and return of wildlife to the wild, through the establishment of facilities and the development of programmes to conduct these activities.

The Bill establishes and incorporates a Guyana Wildlife Conservation and Management Commission, which is also designated as the CITES Management Authority for Guyana.

This Bill brings Guyana on *par* with international best practices for the licensing and establishment of zoos. A key area of importance in this Bill is the recognition of the need to regulate, through licensing and by prescription, the captive breeding of animals; the artificial propagation of plants; and wildlife ranching; which are all tools of wildlife conservation. The Bill brings into effect these two new provisions: one, captive breeding and two, wildlife ranching.

Captive breeding is the breeding of certain species of endangered animals in captivity under specified conditions, where their offspring could either be reintroduced to the wild or exported. Wildlife ranching is another area that, once managed properly, can reduce the wanton killing of animals through hunting.

The Bill will support communities and private citizens who wish to create wildlife conservancies and would allow the benefits to flow in order to encourage wildlife management that provides a real livelihood opportunity. The principles endorse the philosophy of sustainable utilisation in the conservation and management of wildlife.

The Government recognises the importance of wildlife as a treasured natural resource, which, if managed properly, could provide the income for numerous families. It will strengthen community involvement and benefits and create enhanced protection for wildlife. The Ministry of Agriculture will support the implementation of the provisions of this Bill, through the merging of the health status of the animals that are held in various facilities, such as zoos, export holding and quarantine stations, captive breeding and wildlife ranches.

Through the Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA), the Government will be conducting disease surveillance activities, monitoring health status and issuing international health certificates in keeping with the requirements of the World Animal Health Organisations. The Guyana Livestock Development Authority will be involved in the protection of human health by providing surveillance against zoonotic diseases that could pose a threat to human lives.

The Ministry of Agriculture will be tabling an Animal Welfare Bill which will support the provisions of this Bill for meeting the requirements of the World Animal Health Organisation in relation to the welfare of wild animals caught during capture, transport, quarantine and while displayed in zoos and circuses. These Regulations would cover all aspects of animal welfare, which would include: handling; species related housing; space and nutritional needs; and the packing and transport requirements for the movement of these animals, whether for local movement or international transport.

The regulation of the trade in wildlife is important as it protects the livelihoods of the many Guyanese involved and provides for an internationally acceptable platform for the conduct of such activities. I have full confidence that our Colleagues in the Ministry of Natural Resources would be unwaveringly committed to ensuring the full operationalization and mobilisation of this Bill and to engaging in continuous efforts to improve the sustainable management of the wildlife resources in Guyana.

It is my wish that the deliberations of this House will see a favourable outcome of the new Wildlife Conservation and Management Bill because of the benefits that we hope this Bill would bring to both the people and wildlife in Guyana.

Additionally, just as important as the outcome, this Bill signifies the willingness by the Government to protect the country's resources. I recommend the Wildlife Conservation and Management Bill for favourable consideration by this honourable House.

Thank you. *[Applause]*

Mr. Seeraj: Comrade Speaker, like my Colleague, the Hon. Member, Mr. Anil Nandlall, I would also want to take this opportunity from the onset, to register our support for the Bill.

Noting, as the Hon. Minister said earlier, that this is also not the first attempt to lay a Bill in this National Assembly of this nature.

Long before the laying of this Bill and even Bills like the Environmental Protection Agency Bill and various other Bills, two of them which are being repealed by this Bill, that seeks to address the protection of our flora and fauna, Guyanese have been exercising, unofficially, methods of conservation, management and preservation of our flora and fauna.

Indeed in other jurisdictions and long before the first National Park was established in 1872 which looks at protecting nature, people in other jurisdictions have had this interactive and inter-dependent relationship with our natural resources. Some of our more advanced pioneers in the area of conservation, wildlife management and preservation have been promoting, not only the sustainable use of our resources, but also to take it a step further for the preservation of our natural resources.

So, there has always been this interaction and human beings have recognised the importance of protecting the sustainable use for future generation. The fact that we have international conventions of the type that the Minister sited, one being the CITES, the world recognises the importance of harmonising legislation so that we could all be on the same footing as we address various issues of wildlife conservation, wildlife management and, indeed, wildlife preservation. I recall during my school days reading about the efforts to protect the Arapaima in Region 9, in the Rupununi Savannah. It is the largest fresh water fish and was recognised as being endangered by over hunting because that could happen when we commercialise the exploitation of natural resources without having in place a method to ensure sustainable harvesting.

The subsistence of harvesting, farming or hunting does not pose much danger to our natural resources. It is when we seek to commercialise the use of our natural resources in a form that is not managed and in a way that was not intended for sustainability that is when we run the danger of over harvesting, over hunting and then creating an imbalance in our ecological system. In areas where we have had this taking place, different organisations, different parts, and different bodies have even taken steps to reintroduce species that would have gone through stress, that would have been on the brink of extinction and, indeed, we have lost opportunities in a number of cases of not being able to recover species that actually went extinct.

So, Guyana is playing its part and it is regrettable that we were not able to do this before, in terms of, joining CITES and to ensure that we are complying. The expanding human demands on land, sea and fresh water, along with the impact of climate change, make it even more important for us to address wildlife conservation, management and preservation.

1.30 a.m.

I think our Low Carbon Development Strategy is also a strategy that seeks to address sustainable management of our resources so that we can ensure the use for future generations whilst at the same time provide for the economic well-being of current generations. I might even go so far to say that New Global Human Order has elements of sustainable interaction by mankind with nature so as to ensure the use by future generations. We have to find this balance to accommodate our continuous interaction with our natural resources for our own benefit, for the benefit of those resources and the benefit for future generations.

As we strive in this current day situation to put forward legislation to govern these components of conservation, management and preservation, laws can indeed become necessary to bring in line those who would only want to look at profit and profitability in addressing the harvesting of our natural resources.

Having looked at this quite voluminous Bill, I want to make a similar observation to the Hon. Member Nandlall, but it is not to refer to clause 5 because he has already done that, but also clause 6 – I think it occupies about four pages and most of it also has to do with the power of the Minister – and to make a similar observation that the cry has been before to reduce the power of the Minister in this piece of legislation which does not differ much from which was presented in this House before save and except in those areas where the power of the Minister seemed to have been increased. I refer specifically to a number of paragraphs in clause 6.

Clause 52 also deals with the movement, whether for import, export or re-export of wildlife. I would have liked to see more being done in this Bill to address conditions of movement of wildlife, not too much as it relates to export, import and re-export, but also trade internally. I am certain, Mr. Speaker, going up to the airport, time and again, you would have noticed alongside the roadways vendors of wildlife especially the iguana or *guana* as we call it. They have them stuck on a piece of stick, five or six of them, hog tied in very deplorable conditions, which I

think must be very much painful. I would have liked to see our piece of legislation also addressing the movement within our borders of our wildlife in such a manner that will not cause undue harassment, pain and other forms of punishment to our wildlife.

With those short words I just want to say yes, that it is time that we pass such a piece of legislation. I am certain that our side of the House, having initiated the presentation of such legislation in the past, would not have any difficulty with giving their support here.

Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

Minister within the Ministry of Natural Resources [Ms. Charles-Broomes]: I rise in support of this Bill. Mr. Speaker, colleagues, on both sides of the House, this debate is a landmark in Guyana's journey towards a national understanding of what development really means. For so many years and many decades we have discussed and debated the value that the hinterland can add to our country. We have discussed the value of our mineral resources and the tourism potential of the interior regions of our country. These discourses frequently overlook our wildlife, our flora and our fauna that inhabits the various parts of our country. There are those of us who when we think about wildlife think only about wild meat, those delicacies that so many of our animals, birds and reptiles represent. This discourse will change all that. Mr. Speaker, once you become intimate with the interior of our country you will come to appreciate the real value of the gift of wildlife and the way in which we can benefit from this gift.

The Wildlife Conservation and Management Bill 2016 seeks to provide for the protection, conservation, management, sustainable use and internal and external trade of Guyana's wildlife. Mr. Speaker, honourable House, it is a form of words that seeks to capture the intent of this Bill that is before this House. Its significance goes far deeper. Perhaps more than anything else, it is the timing of this Bill that is significant.

It comes at a time where the habitat of most of our wildlife has become a focus of national economic attention. The extractive industries are creating changes in an area of our country that has been undisturbed for centuries. There is now increased contact between man and wildlife and it is wildlife that is required to give way. The contact involves the creation of man-made infrastructure that disturbs the pattern of existence of our wildlife. What this Bill seeks to do is to help us assemble the tools that are necessary for our coexistence with our wildlife. Effective

implementation of the kind of legislation requires the creation of infrastructure to manage our wildlife resources. Fine words, regulations and procedures are frequently not translated into action. As far as oversight in the gold mining sector is concerned, for example, we are far from where we ought to be. Our official oversight mechanism is weak and inefficient. Often these mechanisms are manipulated for personal gains. For many years, many decades, the management of our natural resources has been lacking the adequate protection of our wildlife. More than ever before miners and loggers must coexist with wildlife. They have to learn to do so. What we need and what this Bill will provide is a body of strong and enforceable rules to bring a condition of order to that coexistence.

Countries often create legislation as a signal of intent only to quickly toss that legislation out of the window shortly thereafter. Some in this House are aware of the passage of legislation on wildlife conservation in some countries that has not prevented the indiscriminate poaching and slaughter of wild animals, the destruction of their habitats and the threat of extinction of endangered species. For us, therefore, it is not simply a question of eventually passing a Bill into law, it is about creating the historical understanding of the significance of our wildlife, about coming to appreciate wildlife as more than pets or a part of the food chain.

What I have noticed in this Bill is that the Bill makes provision for a Management Commission as well as a Wildlife Scientific Committee. In that regard, I want to say that if this legislation is to be effective the supporting institution has to be given the means to enable effective enforcement. This is a problem that we have faced with the management of our hinterland resources. Our seriousness on conservation legislation must be reflected in the resources that we invest in the enforcement in the provision of that legislation.

The Bill also identifies several stakeholders in the wildlife management process. Apart from the subject Minister of the environment, there is the Commissioner, the technicians of the scientific committee and the public servant who will staff that commission. We have the business in the wildlife trade, the wildlife trappers and the extractive industry. Each category of stakeholders has his own particular role to play in the successful application of the legislation. In other words, the effective application of the provision contained in this Bill is a collective responsibility. There is need for a national conversation on wildlife conservation. The stakeholder group extends into several sectors. Collectively, there poses a body of knowledge that far exceeds that of this House

and we must continue to engage them. There is too the need for an education process that seeks to undo that lopsided understanding of wildlife and its significance. Sometimes the expansion of our mining and forestry sector might cause us to lose focus on the significance of the gift of our wildlife.

This Bill hopefully will serve as a reality check. Legislation will only have real meaning if we can effectively enforce regulations that require us to coexist with nature. This Bill is only worthy of deliberation in this House if it brings about a collective awareness of what is at stake, because my own experience tells me that all the laws, all the rules and regulations are not worth the paper they are written on unless we arrive at an understanding of the magnitude of the real undertaking and commit ourselves to meaningful action. As this debate unfolds, we must remain aware of that fact.

I support the passage of this Bill.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: I rise to make my contribution to the debate of the Wildlife Conservation and Management Bill 2016. Listening to the Hon. Minister Trotman speaking of the urgency of the passage of this Bill and the wide consultation that was done with regard to this Bill, it leaves me to wonder. However, I do agree with the Hon. Minister Ms. Simona Charles-Broomes who just said that we must seek the involvement of all stakeholders. Truly that is correct. In this regard, in my discussion with many stakeholders out in the fields, particularly in the area where they depend on wildlife for their income, most of the persons I spoke with have no memory or do not have any knowledge of the Bill on wildlife. In this regard, I ask that this Bill be brought to the attention of the National Toshias Council (NTC) and the Indigenous Peoples' Commission (IPC) so that they can scrutinise, have consultation and bring recommendation to this House.

Why do I say the National Toshias Council? The National Toshias Council is an elected body, elected by the people themselves. Every toshao throughout the length and breadth of Guyana in the ten administrative regions are members of the National Toshias Council, so there can be no greater participation other than the National Toshias Council. The Indigenous Peoples' Commission is a constitutionally recognised body.

1.45 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, just permit me to read article 212T (f), one of the functions of the Indigenous People's Commission, which states:

“promote consultation and cooperation with indigenous peoples especially with regard to their participation in national decision-making and other decisions that affect their lives;”

And, of course, the Wildlife Conservation and Management Bill of 2016 has implications for the Indigenous peoples.

I call on the Government's side of the House to ensure full participation of Indigenous peoples and I ask that adequate time be given so that the people can exercise their rights to free, prior and informed consent.

There is no doubt that this legislation is important. This legislation will have some effect on the Indigenous peoples; we are talking about wildlife. I also agree with Minister Charles-Broomes who said wildlife is not only wild meat and sometimes we tend to forget what wildlife really is – the flora and the fauna. Flora and fauna are found in the forest and we cannot separate wildlife from the forest. We cannot separate the forest from the lands and we cannot separate the lands from Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous peoples are involved in harvesting, gathering, hunting and trapping of wildlife for our cultural sustenance and commercial purposes. These activities have been ongoing for many years in our titled lands, in our proposed extension and in State lands, and those lands, as we mentioned, we refer to them as our ancestral or traditional lands.

The Wildlife Conservation and Management Bill of 2016 fails to guarantee the protection of the rights of Indigenous peoples.

There is a rush to pass this Bill and I wish to say, again, that there has been lack of consultation with the people concerned – the local people, the trappers and the Indigenous peoples. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask the Hon. Minister Sydney Allicock, what action was taken to have the full and effective participation of the Indigenous peoples, thus upholding the principles of free, prior and informed consent? If my memory serves me right, the Hon. Minister was a firm

believer of free, prior and informed consent. What is happening now, Hon. Minister? Why am I saying these things? Why am I calling for more consultation? Why am I saying that I am asking the Government's side of the House to ensure the full participation of the Indigenous peoples? Wildlife, flora and fauna are not found in Georgetown. It is in the forest; the forest is a home of our Indigenous peoples. Therefore, it is important that we be part of what is happening.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to turn my attention to the Bill and I wish to say why it is important that the Indigenous peoples, the local people and the people concerned understand what is in this document.

Part I, clause 2, marginal note "Interpretation", I just want to single out this one word "specimen".

For this Act,

"specimen means a single item of wildlife (living or non-living) specified in the First, Second and Third Schedules or any other wildlife and any part or derivative of it;"

Why I singled out this word "specimen" is because, if we look at the Bill, it is important. Mention is made of the First, Second and Third Schedules that I have clipped together here.

What do the First, Second and Third Schedules state? They speak about some animals, birds, plants – a name we do not know about, and that we do not recognise. It speaks about the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). How many of our ordinary local Indigenous peoples who are involved in hunting or trapping of wildlife for commercial business understand this? And that is why it is important that time be given so that we can have a full consultation and come to the understanding of this legislation that will come into force.

Part XIII of this Bill, and I am talking about Clauses 66, 67, 68 and 69... I would like to single out Clause 68. Clause 68 speaks about unlawful trade and mention is made again of the Sixth Schedule. I wish to quote, Mr. Speaker, what Clause 68 states:

"A person commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to the penalties prescribed under paragraph D of the Sixth Schedule if the person –

(b) deals in any specimen by way of a transaction of any description whatsoever contrary to the provisions of this Act; or

(c) harvests wildlife in any area, including protected areas, without the authorisation of the Commission or other competent authority.”

Here again, the word “specimen” comes in. So we need to understand what this word really means. Subclause (c) speaks about harvesting of wildlife, including protected areas, without the authorisation of the Commission or other competent authority. What does paragraph D of the Sixth Schedule state? I will say it in a little while. However, my concern is that, when we speak about protected areas, as I said earlier in my presentation, Indigenous peoples harvest wildlife within our titled land, proposed extension areas, State lands or what we call ancestral or traditional lands. And maybe, sometimes, we might step into protected areas not knowing where the boundaries of the protected areas are located and so this can cause a problem for us. And I am concerned because paragraph D speaks about penalties and I wish to read what the penalties are for protected areas, which can be a problem to our people not knowing where the boundaries are located.

Sixth Schedule, paragraph D states:

“a fine of not less than seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars nor more than two million dollars and imprisonment for not more than three years”

This is truly frightening for our people. There is a lot more in this Bill but this is what I wish to highlight now. Not knowing what is in the Bill; not knowing if we have to have licence to harvest because it does not mention; not knowing where the boundaries of protected areas are located; not knowing if our extension will be granted...and so there are implications for our people. I do not think any of us on this side of the House would want our Indigenous peoples to go to jail because, of course, we cannot find \$750,000. Where will we get that money from? After all, we are poor people and many of our people are depending on the trapping, harvesting and gathering of wildlife and are involved in commercial activities.

The rush to pass this Bill: We are rushing to pass a Bill that would have some implications for our people. I listened to the presentation of Hon. Minister Mr. Trotman and I think he said that

we are trying to meet international obligations. I wish to remind this House that we also have international obligations to Indigenous peoples. Guyana is signatory to several international instruments. These include the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and I wish to quote to remind the Government's side of the House. Article 19 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states:

“States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.”

Mr. Speaker, I wish to say, again, that this Wildlife Conservation and Management Bill of 2016 has implications for our Indigenous peoples. Again, I wish to say that it does not guarantee the protection of the rights of our Indigenous peoples.

2.00 p.m.

I also wish to bring to the attention of this House the Amerindian Act, Part III, Governance, and Powers of the Village Council to Make Rules, Section 14(e). One of the functions of the Village Council is:

“the protection and sustainable management of wildlife including restrictions on hunting, fishing, trapping, poisoning, setting fires and other interference with wildlife;”

Even our Amerindian Act gives us the right to make rules governing wildlife. It is, therefore, only fitting to ask that the Indigenous peoples fully participate in this process and bring recommendations for this Bill.

I also wish to remind my Colleagues on the other side of the House that, in their Manifesto - it is time for a change and so on - on page 19, it states:

“APNU+AFC in government will:

- Uphold all International Treaty obligations.”

Therefore, I wish to remind the Colleagues on the other side of the House to live up to the expectations of the people.

There were times when the Indigenous peoples of this country were left out, sidelined, many years ago; we were marginalised. However, after 1992, there has been a tremendous change. Today, we are more empowered; today, we can speak for ourselves; today, the Constitution guarantees protection to our rights. There are international instruments which refer to Indigenous peoples which Guyana has signed on to. I wish to quote from the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 1. 1., which states:

“All peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.”

All peoples refer to Indigenous peoples also. So the Government has obligations. I wish to say, in closing, that I call on the Hon. Minister, Sydney Allicock, to ensure that our people, the Indigenous peoples, have a say. Hon. Minister, remember when you used to preach the gospel of free, prior and informed consent.

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

Mr. Lumumba: Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that we understand what wildlife management is. I think, once we have a good idea of what it is, there will be better appreciation from both sides of the House as to what steps we should take to ensure that wildlife management is safe and sound in our country.

I stumbled on a newsletter from Clemson University Cooperative Extension under Wildlife Management, authored by Professor Greg Yarrow, a wildlife specialist. These are some of his views. He said:

“It is important to identify and define what we mean by the term “wildlife” before we can answer the question, “What is wildlife management and conservation?”

He further stated:

“Early definitions of wildlife focused on wild animals (undomesticated free-ranging animals) that could be hunted for sport or food...therefore, the early definitions restricted the term wildlife to vertebrates (animals with a backbone). From that time forward, the message has been clear: there is a separation of those organisms termed wildlife, not only from other vertebrates, but most certainly from other groups of lower animals and plants.

A definition of wildlife should include all living organisms out of direct control of man, including undomesticated or cultivated plants and animals.”

My sister and Comrade, Member of Parliament Pearson, spoke at length about the fauna. Wildlife management should include:

- “1) efforts directed toward wild animal populations,
- 2) relationship of habitat to those wild animal populations, and
- 3) manipulations of habitats or populations that are done to meet some specific human goal.

Early wildlife biologists viewed wildlife management as the art of making land produce adequate game for recreational use (hunting, fishing, or trapping). Later definitions emphasized wildlife management as the science of manipulating wild animal populations and their habitats for specific human goals. Current definitions stress wildlife management as applied animal ecology that benefits the habitat and both wildlife and human populations.”

He further went on to state:

“Any discussion of wildlife resources must begin by recognizing the potential for managing for a variety of wildlife species. These include game and nongame species, threatened and endangered species, and even nuisance species. Managing the wildlife resource as the primary objective requires, in some instances, that other resources be managed differently.”

My Comrade Pearson spoke about timber harvest.

“For example, timber harvest would be designed primarily to improve wildlife habitat, with maximum wood production being a secondary benefit. In this case management strategies could include or accomplish the following:

- create, enhance or improve sufficient habitat to support suitable populations of desired wildlife species;
- maintain healthy game populations in a manner consistent with habitat carrying capacity;
- provide diverse and abundant populations of desired nongame wildlife species, particularly those that are dependent on mature timber; and
- manage habitat and populations to protect flora and fauna listed as threatened or endangered.”

In general terms, I support this Bill but the specifics are problematic. This can only be resolved by means of participation in a select committee. We are all Guyanese. This Bill is critical and it is important that we do not attempt to bypass the views of many. The views of many are always better than the views of a few. We must not only believe in one side of the House. Earlier today, both sides of the House spoke on the Procurement Commission. Wildlife management is 100 times more important than the Procurement Commission. Therefore, we must again attempt to have both sides agree on the way forward. We must remember that the Government is only functioning on a one-seat majority; that the Government is in power because of 5,000 votes. [Ms. Ally: What is the meaning of that?] The meaning is that, on the issue of life and livelihood, we must find common ground. We must always search for common ground.

This Bill must ensure that we raise awareness of the public on the environment and wildlife issues. This Bill must seek to protect our environment; it must bring a sense of order to our environment. This Bill must put in place regulations that are acceptable to our Indigenous peoples, environmentalists and the international communities. At the end of the day, this Bill must put us in a position to access our wildlife and our variety of species so as to get a sense of quality and quantity. We must have a Bill to give us a sense of pride and one that will inspire us, one that we can be part of.

Let us look at our neighbour in Brazil. Brazil has what is called wildlife management with a section that deals with the Indigenous peoples, called the extractors' reserve. A large aspect of that strategy was to find a structure and a system to satisfy the Indigenous peoples. If you allow me, Mr. Speaker, let me focus on this a little. I have not noticed, in the amendments to this Bill, any attempts or specific amendments which will focus on our Indigenous peoples, and I think that was wrong. Therefore, let me add this and speak a little about benefits provided by wildlife, seen by the eyes of the Brazilians, in particular as it seeks to preserve some aspects of the culture of Indigenous peoples. In Brazil, the overall benefits provided by the wildlife management seeks protection and conservation of the species studied with their natural habitat; conservation of an ecosystem in equilibrium; maintenance of species in their natural environment, conserving their seed and disbursing role for the habitat; low cost animal protein production due to the low cost of necessary production infrastructure maintenance; systematic meat production for the community (the community of Indigenous peoples); practical implementation of effective function of an extractivist within a Resex, in other words, actual survival, generation of work and income as opposed to small-scale agriculture.

We, on this side of this House, are particularly concerned about governance on this matter. One of the harshest criticisms of the PPP/C was on the issue of the powers of the Ministers, in particular as it relates to boards and commissions. The then Opposition, APNU/AFC, has always condemned us because of our proactive approach to boards and commissions when it was felt that the Members went astray. What I find with the proposed amendments of the Wildlife Conservation and Management Bill 2016 is the enormous power that will be given to the Minister should these amendments pass. It would represent the legal irrelevance of the Commission and set the stage for future Government intervention on various agencies. For example, under Part III, Administration, Clause 5 - and I can quote about 25 references in relation to the proposed power of the Minister. I would just name a few because it is late at night and we all need to go home.

2.15 a.m.

“The Minister may give to the Commission directions –

(a) as to the policy to be followed by the Commission...

(b) for the organization of the Commission to enable it to discharge its functions....

(2) In carrying out such measures of reorganization or such works of development as to involve a substantial outlay on the capital account, the Commission shall act in accordance with a programme approved, from time to time, by the Minister.

(3) In the exercise of its function in relation to training, education and research, the Commission shall act in accordance with a programme approved by the Minister.

(4) The Commission shall afford to the Minister information requested by the Minister in respect of the functions and business of the Commission and shall furnish the Minister with annual estimates, and such returns as the Minister may require.

(5) The Commission shall provide the Minister with such facilities as will enable the verification of information furnished in pursuance of this section.

(6) The power of the Minister to give directions to the Commission under this section shall extend to giving to the Commission direction as to –

(a) the disposal of capital assets;

(b) the application of the proceeds of such disposals.”

Clause 6 (1):

“(j) on the written approval of the Minister, implement the advice of the Wildlife Scientific Committee...

(k) attach such terms and conditions to the grant to licences, permits and certificates as are approved by the Minister;

(u) with the written approval of the Minister, designate ports of exit and entry through which species listed in the First, Second and Third Schedules or any other wildlife shall be imported, exported or re-exported;

(w) with the written approval of the Minister charge fees for such services as it provides as well for such licences, permits, certificates and other permission that it may grant;”

This, I can go on and on. It is about the Minister.

Mr. Speaker, I would tell you what I find interesting and what is fascinating. The proposed new arrangement in these amendments could be termed mildly as dictatorship. I do not think my friend Mr. Trotman is a dictator, but I think the power reposed in the Minister may turn him into one. I do not want him to become one. It is dangerous. I want him to remain as a nice person. It is important that the Minister does not take these criticisms personally.

This one is fascinating. As I speak, I notice that Minister Roopnarine has raised his head. He is an old Working People’s Alliance (WPA) member and an old socialist. The Prime Minister Nagamootoo is an old socialist and one who believed in equality and was against oppression.

In the Seventh Schedule, section 1, the proposed changes state:

“(1) The Commission shall consist of –

(a) the Chairperson who shall be appointed by the Minister, but if no person is so appointed, the Minister shall be the Chairperson of the Commission;”

Who is going to police the police? Who is going to bodyguard the bodyguard? This is one of the basic reasons we need to send this Bill to the Special Select Committee. The Government and the Minister cannot be serious. If the Bill dictates that the Minister can be Chairman of the Commission, who would police the Commission if the Minister becomes the Commissioner?

Let me go further. Let me expose this contradiction. In the *Kaieteur News* of Saturday, 9th July, 2016, the Minister within the Ministry of Finance, Mr. Jaipaul Sharma, spoke about state boards’ independence and stated that they should not be micromanaged. On page 12, in an interview with the Government Information News Agency (GINA), Mr. Sharma made it clear that boards must be independent.

“We don’t want it to be a political thing, so you’ll see many of them are not linked to, or in the government system. In the previous government, you had members of the

government system such as Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Department sitting on the Board. Here we have persons from outside sitting on the Boards.”

He cited many examples. I totally agree with Mr. Sharma. I think that there is a serious attempt to make the necessary amendments to make this Bill more productive and make it more representative of what it should be for all of the Guyanese people. I think, Mr. Minister, that there is a danger of you overwhelming the Commission and the boards. I think there should be a hands-off policy.

In those areas where it is stated that “the Minister shall” and “the Minister must”, I understand that you said to me that it is in most of the Bills. Even if it is, that does not make it right. The world could change. It is like slavery. A man came and saw slavery and asked why the slaves were working for free. The response was that it has always been like that. It is about change. Life is about change. Life cannot be about how it always used to be. There are intelligent people in Guyana, especially our younger generation. Put them on these boards and commissions and allow them to function. If they do not function, remove them.

I believe that the way forward is to send this Bill to the Special Select Committee. I think one day or two days maximum in the Special Select Committee can work out all of these disagreements. I think that these disagreements are fundamental. I understand the Minister’s concern about meeting the deadline in September, 2016, but I believe if the Minister advises the organisation that in the first week in October, 2016 we will meet and resolve these issues and we can get both sides to agree on such a historical and powerful Bill and send a powerful message to our Guyanese population. Why can the majority of us not agree to something twice in one night? I think it is important for this country to move forward.

Thank you Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

Mr. Trotman (replying): I would just like to offer some brief comments in rebuttal. I would like to start by thanking all those who spoke on the Bill. Despite comments made, and some of them were mildly critical, the underlying theme was one of support. It is because I believe we accept that this is not a Raphael Trotman Bill and neither is it an APNU/AFC Bill but it is a people of Guyana Bill. That came through quite clearly and so I would like to thank all those who spoke, particularly those on the Opposition, and I would like to thank the Hon. Minister for

a very fine speech. Well done. To my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, thank you very much for your comments.

I believe that it is important, despite the lateness of the hour, that some misconceptions be cleared up. The first is that this Bill is not new to this House. It came here in 2013. Three years later we are making a third attempt to pass it. Yes, there have been some changes but they have not been fundamental changes. The Bill remains, for all intents and purposes, the same Bill that came twice before. This is its third incarnation. To hear the comments about disappointments and so forth, I am surprised. When it came here in 2013 and 2014, the Member Ms. Pearson-Fredericks was a Member of this House. **[Hon. Members (Opposition): No.]** Sorry. I withdraw that. I was advised that Member Pearson-Fredericks had an opinion on the Bill, which was not averse to the Bill. When it was brought by my predecessor Mr. Robert Persaud the objections that I am hearing now about the powers of the Minister, I am surprised at. I do not know if when it was brought by a Member of the previous Government, it was okay, but now that it has been brought by a successor Government, it is not okay. That is not the kind of politics we want to practise, Hon. Member Lumumba.

Let me quickly go through some. There were the many references to the power of the Minister. What we sought to do is make this Bill consistent with similar legislation within the natural resources and extractive industries sector. There was no attempt to create fashion or carve out any new powers that were not in existence anywhere else before. You would note, Mr. Speaker, that I have the purple volume of the laws of Guyana, under the hand of the former Attorney General Mr. Nandlall. He ought to have known that, in this volume...I should add that the numbering and the sequencing are all wrong. We would have to do this over. Where is the Attorney General? Minister Harmon and Minister of Finance, we are going to have to spend a lot of money – millions – to do these back.

If I am to refer to the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission Act, section 21:

“The Commission shall keep account of its transactions to the satisfaction of the Minister and such accounts shall be audited annually by an auditor appointed by the Minister.”

There is nothing new. That was Act No. 6 of 1997. That was a criticism that came earlier about the right of the Minister to appoint an auditor. It came by an Act of Parliament, which is in

existence, and which was introduced into this House by the PPP/C administration. I have not changed a single word from what existed before. The people of Guyana have a right to know where it originated from. [Mr. Ramson: That was 20 years ago, Minister.] Yes, but do not accuse me of creating powers to myself where they did not exist before. That I find to be very wrong. That is the point I want to make. If we want to sit together and say that what we had agreed to 20 years ago no longer applies, that is a different argument. For me to sit here and be accused of creating for myself a dictatorship, that is false. All of those references made to the Minister may or shall exist in laws prior to this and I would like to make that point. [Ms. Teixeira: ...[inaudible]... that we were referring to.] You did not speak. You had an opportunity to but you did not. Mr. Speaker, I crave your indulgence at 3 o'clock in the morning for some protection.

Much was made, and rightly so, about the inadequacy with regard to consultation with the Indigenous people. This Bill was a Bill and is a Bill to address the trade in wildlife and it did pass through, as I said, layers of consultations. I was informed, maybe not correctly so, that some consultations had taken place with members of the National Toshias Council.

The Bill is being passed but regulations are to come and those regulations, I give this House the assurance, would be taken either to the Statutory Instruments Committee or to a special select committee and in addition, I am sure, would be reviewed by the Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

Permit me to say, Mr. Speaker, that there was widespread consultation. To hear that people say they have never heard of it, again, I repeat, that this is the third time it has come to this House. It is not the first. We have a list.

2.30 a.m.

The Environmental Protection Agency, the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA), the Gold and Diamond Miners Association (GMA), the Private Animal Farms, the Wildlife Division of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs and its predecessor the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC), the Guyana Women Miners Organisation, the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, the University of Guyana, the South American Unlimited Inc. which is a firm that exports, the World

Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Protected Areas Commission, the Wildlife Exporters, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Guyana Aquarium and Pet Company, the Embassy of the United States and the Guyana Fauna Exportation Association Inc. Before and after I became Minister, I sat with all of these agencies, consulted and reviewed all of the clauses of the Bill with the consultant, Mr. Teni Housty. So there were consultations.

Just as my Learned and Hon. Friend could whip out copies of newspapers, I too have a copy of a newspaper. The *Guyana Chronicle* dated Wednesday 20th July, 2016 “Animal Activist urges passing of Wildlife Bill”. We are being urged to pass the Bill. The animal activist, Ms. Manbodh, is a woman, who I believe was given a national award. She urged the Government, just last month, to ensure that the Wildlife Conservation and Management Bill is passed.

We come to the reference about the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Bill. The difference of what was said then is that we have proof that sanctions would be applied. Prior, we were told that if Guyana did not then it would be sanctioned, but I actually have the resolutions, passed by CITES, naming Guyana for sanctions if it failed to comply. Before, we were told that if Guyana did not comply sanctions were likely to happen, but little proof was forthcoming, but that was neither here nor there.

The Wildlife Conservancy and Management Bill is before us. I omitted to mention the Hon. Member, Mr. Seeraj, who I thank and compliment for his presentation. I believe that he did raise an issue at clause 52 about the transport of animals. The clause deals, specifically, with the export and import, in a sense the international trade. After consultations with the Chief Parliamentary Counsel, Mr. Dhurjon, and staff and Ms. Sankar from the Wildlife Division of EPA, we have, if the Opposition is good enough, decided to include, an amendment which I now bring to the House’s attention to take into account the internal trade and movement of animals. That is an additional amendment we wish to make, thanking the Hon. Member, Mr. Seeraj, for his observation and, at the same time, attaching it to the Act.

Mr. Nandlall has awakened and reminded me that he had made a strange argument that the wildlife traders should be a part of the regulatory agency that should be regulating their activities. It does not happen and it will not happen under this Government. If we are regulating you then you will not be a regulator at the same time. Insofar as Ms. Sankar is concerned, there

exist, right now, a Wildlife Division, which comes under the Environmental Protection Agency. By this Act, that division would be dissolved and would resolve itself into the Wildlife Conservation and Management Commission. There is no need for special persons to be appointed because they have all been catered for.

I want to read two excerpts. One from the Bill of 2014, as I am being described as bordering on [Mr. Ramjattan: Dictatorship] Dictatorship. Thank you for the reminder. [Mr. Lumumba: Your conscience is very long.] Yes, it is very long.

The Board of Directors, as set out by the People's Progressive Party Civic (PPP/C), it is stated in Bill No. 8/2014 that:

“The Board of Directors shall consist of not less than seven nor more than eleven people, a majority of whom shall be knowledgeable with experience in matters relating to international wildlife trade, *et cetera* and appointed by the Minister”.

Look at the powers that the Minister had in Bill No. 8/2014. The Minister alone decided who was knowledgeable in wildlife. The difference is that, under this Bill, we thought that we should be more democratic and open and, therefore, it was opened up. Sir, I wish to bring to your attention, the difference:

- “(1) The Commission shall consist of –
- (a) the Chairperson who shall be appointed by the Minister...
 - (c) a nominee of the Ministry of Finance;
 - (d) a nominee of the Ministry of Agriculture;
 - (e) a nominee of the Leader of the Parliamentary Opposition;”

There was none of that in the previous Bill. It was opened up to ensure that the Opposition, several agencies, the University of Guyana and the Private Sector are represented. Perhaps, it is the lateness of the hour and their memories, eyes and consciences failed them. It is quite obvious that what obtained in 2014 and what obtains now is a vast improvement. It is being done in a more democratic way than that which was before. I am reminded that it is a fresh approach.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you and I commend the Bill for passage through its third stage.

Question put and carried.

Bill read a second time.

Assembly in Committee.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, this Bill has 85 clauses and seven schedules. I must add that there are eight amendments, but that apart, the Bill remains otherwise unchanged.

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, may I propose a course of action that I hope will find favour with the House. That is that, as has been done in the past, though sparingly, the Clerk of the National Assembly notes the amendments which have been circulated and if there are no objections, they are considered accepted and will be written into the Bill without them having to be gone through one by one. The seven amendments have been circulated for some time and if there is no strong objection... **[Ms. Teixeira: *[Inaudible]*]** Mr. Speaker, there seem to be an objection to my process so I propose that we will go through the Bill.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, may I hear your suggestion, nevertheless?

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, I am suggesting that we take the seven amendments, having been proposed last week, as read and accepted, unless there is an objection. There seems to be an objection by Ms. Teixeira. I do not wish to be accused, again, of being a dictator, and so if the Hon. Member wants to go through the Bill clause by clause and explain to all of these people and their families that she wants to do so until 5.00 a.m., then she is free to do so. That is my proposal that the Clerk of the National Assembly, with Mr. Dhurjon, ensures that the amendments are written into the Bill, since we have done this before. There remains an amendment to clause 52, which is late, and which I wish, with your permission, to read to the Assembly at the appropriate time. For the other seven amendments, I propose that they be taken as read and accepted.

Mr. Chairman: The suggestion by the Hon. Minister has much to commend, in particular to the question of the dispatch of the matter before us. If the Hon. Members are uncomfortable with that, then I would suggest that I take the clauses in bulk and we treat the clauses as being part of

the Bill. In the absence of any objection we then go to Part II. For Part III, I would recite the clauses which are untouched, propose that they be accepted...

Mr. Trotman: Yes Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister?

Mr. Trotman: Sir that is acceptable. Hon. Member Teixeira?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, if I may just crave your indulgence. I did not object to the Hon. Minister's proposal. All I did was heckle the Comrade comment when he said that the amendments had been in the Parliament for some time and all I said was "4th August". I do not know why the Hon. Member got into such a tirade and as the Americans would say, *got his panties in a wad*.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, if we want a break in our seats, I can allow that and then we can start again. The suggestion I made is to help us to move along faster. If it finds favour with everyone then we will proceed in that way, but if we want to take a break for two minutes that can be taken too.

The Hon. Minister made a suggestion, is that acceptable to Members that we proceed that way or do we proceed with the suggestion which I made? Hon. Members, I would be guided by your preference in this matter.

Mr. Trotman: The suggestion proposed by Your Honour is the one we would go with, where we would go through each part and for the particular sections where there have been recommendations for amendments, you mentioned that if there is no objection, then we would accept the amendment. That is, I believe, a better way to proceed with the Bill. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you Hon. Minister. I would assume that all other Members find that acceptable. I thank you.

We will now consider the Bill clause by clause.

Mr. Trotman: It should be part by part, Mr. Chairman. In Part III, I believe there is the first amendment. May I suggest that the Bill be put in parts and when we get to a part where there is a

suggested amendment for a particular clause, we pause to incorporate that amendment or to take an objection to it, if there is one.

Mr. Chairman: That sits well with me. Does it sit well with other Hon. Members?

Hon. Members: Yes Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Then we will proceed in that way.

Part I – Preliminary - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Part II – Scope - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

2.45 p.m.

Part III- Administration

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, if it pleases you, I propose that there be an amendment to clause 9 (1) (d) as printed and circulated on 4th August, 2016 in Part III

Mr. Chairman: Clause 9 (1) (d) in Part III, sees to effect the change, “Insert immediately before the word “ranching” the words “breeding, propagating and”. The suggestion is that this amendment and all other such amendments would be taken as read and we will be considered incorporated into the Bill under the watchful eyes of the Clerk and the CPC.

Amendment to clause 9 put and agreed to.

Part III – Administration – as amended, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Part IV – Captive Breeding of Animals

Mr. Trotman: Sir, may I propose that the two amendments, firstly to clause 16 (1) (b) (ii) and then clause 19 (1) (h), be incorporated as amendments to Part IV of the Bill.

Amendments to clauses 16 and 19 put and agreed to.

Part IV – Captive Breeding of Animals – as amended, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Part V – Artificial Propagation of Plants – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Part VI – Wildlife Ranching – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Part VII – Importation, Exportation, Re-Exportation and Introduction from the Sea

Mr. Trotman: Sir, I propose that clause 36 (h) in Part VII of the Bill be amended as printed and circulated on the 4th August, 2016.

Amendment to clause 36 put and agreed to.

Part VII - Importation, Exportation, Re-Exportation and Introduction from the Sea - as amended, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Part VIII – Commercial Importation and Exportation of Wildlife – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Part IX – Transport of Wildlife

Mr. Trotman: Sir, I wish to propose that clause 52 be amended by adding a sub-clause and may I, with your permission, read it.

Mr. Chairman: Please read.

Mr. Trotman: I wish to propose that we amend clause 52 by creating clause 52 (2) with the following words:

“that every person who transports within Guyana a live animal or plant shall, where it is transported by land, sea or air prepare it for transportation and transport it in accordance with regulations made under this act.”

I wish to go on Sir, to create a new sub-clause 3, which will become:

“a person who fails to comply with subsections 1 or 2 commits an offence”.

Sir, I have consulted with Mr. Dhurjon, Chief Parliamentary Counsel and he advised....in fact this is his draft based on what I asked him and his staff to look at.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Minister. But there is one question I would like to ask in relation to clause 52 (1), as printed. In the second to last line it is stated:

“in accordance with the act or regulations.”

Does that remain that way? I heard you read in “accordance with these regulations”.

Mr. Trotman: Sir clause 52 (1) remains because it deals with international trade, so it will remain intact. A clause 52 (2) comes into being which addresses trade and movement within Guyana.

Mr. Chairman: So the correct expression is as it remains in clause 52 (1)?

Mr. Trotman: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Trotman: Sir, I believe a draft may have been left with the Clerk of the National Assembly or you of what is proposed here.

Mr. Chairman: I did see a draft earlier.

Mr. Trotman: Thank you Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Part IX, clause 52 as amended.

Amendment to clause 52 put and agreed to.

Part IX – Transportation of Wildlife - as amended, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Part X – Licensing of Holding Premises - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Part XI – Approved Institutions and Persons

Mr. Trotman: Sir. May I respectfully propose an amendment to clause 62 (5) (e) (ii) of Part XI of the Bill.

Mr. Chairman: The amendment finds favour with us all.

Mr. Trotman: As printed and circulated on the 4th August, 2016. Thank you.

Amendment to clause 62 put and agreed to.

Part XI – Approved Institutions and Persons - as amended, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Part XII – Keeping Records - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Part XII – Offences and Penalties - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Part XIV – Enforcement - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Part XV – Miscellaneous

Mr. Trotman: Sir, I wish to propose that Part XV be amended in two places in clauses 83 (1) (g) and 83 (2) (a), as printed and circulated on the 4th August, 2016.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. The amendments proposed have been accepted.

Amendments to clause 83 put and agreed to.

Part XV – Miscellaneous - as amended, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

First Schedule – Appendix I – Seventh Schedule – Appendix VII, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members that completes our consideration of the Bill.

Assembly resumed.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments read the third time and passed as amended.

3.00 a.m.

MOTION

**ADOPTION OF THE FIRST REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON APPOINTMENTS
IN RELATION TO THE APPOINTMENT OF A MEMBER OF THE LOCAL
GOVERNMENT COMMISSION.**

WHEREAS in keeping with the Local Government Commission Act No.18 of 2013, Clause 4 (i) (c); the Committee is responsible for nomination of;

“one member, appointed by the President, after approval by the National Assembly upon a nomination by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Appointments from persons submitted by Trade Unions within the Local Government System”.

AND WHEREAS the Committee agreed that the following list of unions represent Trade Unions within the Local Government System and should be consulted to submit nominees for appointment to the Local Government Authority Commission:

Guyana Public Service Union;

Guyana Local Government Officers Union; and

Guyana Labour Union

AND WHEREAS the Committee on Appointments after deliberations recommended Mr. Andrew Christopher Garnett of the Guyana Local Government Officers Union as the nominee to be appointed to the Local Government Commission.

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly adopts the First Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to address matters relating to the appointment of Members of Commissions and signifies to the President that Mr. Andrew Christopher Garnett of the Guyana Local Government Officers Union has been nominated in accordance with the Local Government Commission Act No. 18 of 2013, Clause 4(i) (c), to be appointed to the Local Government Commission”. [*Minister of Public Health – Chairman of the Committee on Appointments.*]

Dr. Norton:

“WHEREAS in keeping with the Local Government Commission Act No.18 of 2013, Clause 4 (i) (c); the Committee is responsible for nomination of;

“one member, appointed by the President, after approval by the National Assembly upon a nomination by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Appointments from persons submitted by Trade Unions within the Local Government System”.

AND WHEREAS the Committee agreed that the following list of unions represent Trade Unions within the Local Government System and should be consulted to submit nominees for appointment to the Local Government Authority Commission:

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Guyana Labour Union

AND WHEREAS the Committee on Appointments after deliberations recommended Mr. Andrew Christopher Garnett of the Guyana Local Government Officers Union as the nominee to be appointed to the Local Government Commission.

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly adopts the First Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to address matters relating to the appointment of Members of Commissions and signifies to the President that Mr. Andrew Christopher Garnett of the Guyana Local Government Officers Union has been nominated in accordance with the Local Government Commission Act No. 18 of 2013, Clause 4(i) (c), to be appointed to the Local Government Commission.” [*Minister of Public Health – Chairman of the Committee on Appointments.*]

Motion proposed

Ms. Teixeira: As the House is aware this report was completed on the 27th April, 2016. The reason why was because we were anxious in the Committee on Appointment that, following the Local Government Elections, we would not be found in default of the Constitution nor of the

Local Government Commission Act and to ensure that we were able to support the implementation of the Local Government Commission Act. This was provided to the Committee on Appointment to name the one person to that body.

We are pleased tonight that, on the cusp of us going into recess, this report has finally come up on the agenda. This is because the report has been sitting here for almost two months, having been tabled in June.

We feel very strongly, on this side of the House, that the Local Government Commission should be established. One would notice in the report that, even though the nomination was done by majority vote, nevertheless, we feel stronger in our views that the commission should be established, as quickly as possible, in order to lend support to the new local authorities that have been elected and to assist them in the hiring and the provision of human resources to allow them to function better.

As I have said, we are closing on this issue and we encourage the Government to move with rapidity. I think that this last nomination would allow the Government to move rather quickly to the appointment of the Local Government Commission and to establish it, especially, as there is a budget that has been approved in this House for the Local Government Commission as a constitutional body.

Just for the record, on this side of the House, in keeping with the Local Government Commission Act and the fact that the Leader of the Opposition has three nominees, we have already named our nominees: Mr. Whittaker, a former Minister of Local Government; Mr. Clinton Collymore who was a former Minister of Local Government and Regional Development; and also, Ms. Carol Sooba, a former Town Clerk of the Georgetown Mayor and City Council. We are pleased, as a Committee on Appointments, that we were able to do our work. Even though we voted, our work on this Committee was amicable and cordial and we were able, in the best interest, to bring nominees to the House. There are no impediments now for the Government to appoint the Local Government Commission.

Thank you. *[Applause]*

Dr. Norton (replying): Mr. Andrew Christopher Garnett was declared as the nominee to be appointed to the Local Government Commission, since he gained more votes than Ms. A. Maglenn, who was nominated from the Guyana Labour Union (GLU). At the seventh Committee meeting held on the 27th April, 2016, the Committee examined and unanimously adopted the report and motion. The report is accordingly hereby submitted.

Question put.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I think it would be right to tell you that this concludes our business for today.

Ms. Teixeira: Just for the record, Sir. We agreed to defer the motion in my name on the Commission of Inquiry into the Public Service.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members would have noted the statement by the Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, that the motion concerning the report on the public service is deferred.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, I would like to move the adjournment of this House, but before I do so, kindly permit me, a few words starting with tonight.

I recalled the book written by Ms. Angela Davis, *The Morning Breaks*, and so another morning has broken with us in this House, but what a difference that, at long last, we were able to see a glimmer of real bipartisan cooperation, and we have, in fact, entered into history in bringing through the long awaited Public Procurement Bill now to become, soon, a law.

While we met for 22 Sittings so far this year, I believe that the period ahead, with a budget coming in December, would also prove very hectic. I am hoping that the cooperation and consensus that we have arrived at here, today, would, in fact, flow over into the period after recess.

I wish you, Your Honour, all the best during the recess. I want to thank the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk and the staff of the National Assembly for staying with us during these long nights. I want

to take the opportunity to wish the Leader and the Members of the Opposition a restful recess and for those of you, who are going on vacations, here and abroad, enjoy your vacations with your families. For Members of the Cabinet who would continue to work, Cabinet sitting resumes later today, you would catch a few hours rest and we will continue. To the Government of the House and for Members of Parliament on the Government side, I also wish that you enjoy the moment away from Parliament to do things that you otherwise would have done if you did not had to go through these long Sittings.

I want to say that tonight, in fact, has been one of the more rewarding nights for me in Parliament and I think that we are seeing the contour of a new Guyana, a new cooperation. So in saying these words, I want to move that Parliament be recessed until 10th October, 2016.
[Applause]

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, we would just like to also join in, as we are closing for the recess, to first of all, thank yourself and the Clerk, Deputy Clerk and members of the staff of the Parliament Office who have worked very long hours, especially, in recent times. We wish to acknowledge and to thank the support that you have given to us. We also would like to acknowledge the media that has also been extraordinarily patient and sat through these long hours with us as well.

In addition to that, to say to the Leader of the House, the Members of the Cabinet, the Members of the Opposition and Members of the Government that we have a lot of work to do in this House when we come back in October and to try and organise ourselves so that we could, probably, maybe meet more frequently so that we have less backup or backlog of things as we have had in recent times.

Mr. Speaker, I wish everyone some break. I am not sure about those of us having holidays or anything like that, but it is change. So I think that we all need that to recharge our batteries and to come back in October, revitalised and ready to continue to do the best that we could in the development of our nation.

Thank you very much and happy recess to everybody. *[Applause]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we stand adjourned until 10th October, 2016. My best wishes to all for the in-between time.

Adjourned accordingly at 3.15 a.m.