



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE PARLIAMENT OF
THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC
OF GUYANA

OFFICIAL REPORT

*PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION
(2020-2022) OF THE TWELFTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF
THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE DOME OF THE ARTHUR
CHUNG CONFERENCE CENTRE, LILIENDAAL, GREATER GEORGETOWN*

43RD Sitting

Tuesday, 8TH February, 2022

**PARLIAMENT OFFICE
HANSARD DIVISION**

Assembly convened at 10.17 a.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair.]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Challenges related to the start of a Sitting

Hon. Members, I know it is hard once we get up to get back to our seats, but one of the challenges we have with an unscheduled start is a quorum. At the start of the day, the quorum is the issue, and when we take a break, getting back here with a quorum is an issue. However, we have been going well so far, and we will continue to advance the work of the National Assembly. Let us try to ensure that we could be as prompt as we could be.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTION

REVISED MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2022

WHEREAS the Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana requires that Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for any financial year should be laid before the National Assembly and that, when the Estimates of Expenditure have been approved by the Assembly, an Appropriation Bill shall be introduced in the Assembly providing for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet that expenditure;

AND WHEREAS the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the financial year 2022 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on January 26, 2022, as summarised in the attached Schedule 1;

AND WHEREAS the Constitution requires that the expenditure of each of the Constitutional Agencies listed in the Third Schedule of the Constitution be financed as a

direct charge on the Consolidated Fund determined as a lump sum by way of an annual subvention approved by the National Assembly after a review and approval of the Constitutional Agency's annual budget as a part of the process of the determination of the national budget;

AND WHEREAS the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act, Cap. 73 :02, requires that the annual lump sum subvention recommended by the Minister with Responsibility for Finance for each Constitutional Agency be included in the annual budget proposal for approval by the National Assembly;

AND WHEREAS the Minister with Responsibility for Finance recommends lump sum subventions for each Constitutional Agency for the financial year 2022 as summarised in the attached Schedule 2;

AND WHEREAS the Natural Resource Fund Act 2021 provides that the amount that the Minister with Responsibility for Finance shall request the National Assembly to approve, and the amount that the National Assembly shall approve, as the withdrawal from the Fund for the next ensuing fiscal year shall be included in the annual budget proposal and shall not exceed, for that year, the ceiling calculated in accordance with the said Act:

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2022, of a total sum of five hundred and one billion, six hundred and seventy-eight million, two hundred and ninety-eight thousand dollars (\$501,678,298,000) excluding fifty one billion, two hundred and fifty-five million, and four hundred and twenty thousand dollars (\$51,255,420,000) which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in Schedule 1, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to make further provision in respect of finance;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly approves the recommended lump sum subvention for each Constitutional Agency for the financial year 2022 as stated in Schedule 2, amounting to a total sum of eleven billion, seven hundred and twenty-nine million, eight hundred and

forty thousand dollars (\$11,729,840,000) which is charged upon the Consolidated Fund by the Constitution and for the sums voted for the Constitutional Agencies to form part of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditures of Guyana for the financial year 2022.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the sum of \$126,694,310,000, equivalent to US \$607,646,570.98, to be withdrawn from the Natural Resource Fund for the financial year 2022 in accordance with the Natural Resource Fund Act 2021.

[Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance]

Mr. Speaker: The Assembly will now resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2022.

Assembly in Committee of Supply

Time schedule for budget Estimates – Day 2

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, let us get started. Today, the first agency up is the Ministry of Agriculture. Just to bring you up to date with respect to the time, at the end of the first day of consideration, we saved 71 minutes. I think there were other timekeepers in the House and on the floor, so I trust that your numbers correlate with mine.

One other issue we have to deal with when we resume after the break is to pass a motion to allow the House to continue beyond 8.00 p.m. for the rest of the budget Estimates Sittings. I think we may have to tidy up that arrangement. Minister of Agriculture, are you in place with your team?

Minister of Agriculture [Mr. Mustapha]: Yes, Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Current Expenditure

Agency 21: Ministry of Agriculture

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration – \$1,010,060,000

Mr. Ramjattan: I have a question on line item 6116, Contracted Employees, I noticed there is almost a \$55 million increase in contracted employees. When, as of 2022, the contracted employees reduced was by 8. Could the Minister indicate the reason?

Mr. Mustapha: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me thank the Hon. Member for his question. We had 22 scholarship contracted employees contract that ended; and we have 14 contracted employees with scholarships added to the Ministry and that is why there is a difference of 8 employees.

Mr. Ramjattan: Are you saying the \$50 million more went towards scholarships? I missed you there.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, please allow the Minister of Agriculture; I think he is quite competent to answer.

Mr. Mustapha: I am saying that we had 22 scholarship contracted employees whose contracts which ended and out of the 14 scholarship contracted employees added to the Ministry's payroll, that is why you have the difference between the eight staff. This process will continue, because we are working with the Ministry of Public Service to fill vacancies that exists. It is an ongoing process, that is why in the budget, one would see money budgeted, and staff complement will be addressed. When I spoke in the budget debate, I said the Ministry is now embarking on a number of programmes. We are also looking at specialised personnel to fill these vacancies; and we are working very closely with the Ministry of Public Service, so that we could have specialised... As I said, we now have aquaculture as an industry where we would need specialised personnel because we have new crops, crops like we never had before like corn and soya beans, non-traditional crops. We are also concentrated on high value crops, so we need specialised persons. We are working very close to see that we have these specialised persons fit into the system, so that the Ministry could be prepared to diversify and also increase production over the next year.

Mr. Ramjattan: Hon. Chairman, I think my Colleague is failing to realise in 2021, there was 143 contracted employees and \$409 million was the amount paid to them. In 2022, the estimate is saying that they are going to have 135, which is eight less, but they are going to pay \$463 million. Why do we have a reduction in contracted employees and over \$55 million more being paid?

Mr. Mustapha: I think my Colleague is failing to comprehend what I am saying. I am saying that we had 22 scholarship students who were contracted employees and it reduced to 14 and with that it came not the payroll of the Ministry of Agriculture. I am saying that we catered to employ a number of specialised persons in various fields; that is why one would see that it is budgeted in our budget, and we will fill those vacancies very shortly, to ensure that we prepare for all of the programmes that we embark on.

Mr. Ramjattan: I will move on. Line item 6294, Other, I noticed that there is an increase from \$33 million to \$57 million. This line-item Other is always a little opaque. Could you tell me what that increase is for?

Mr. Mustapha: Line item 6294 caters for a number of programmes, for example, it caters for the rice assessment committees. We have active rice assessment committees across this country. There are a lot of age-old disputes between tenants and landlords that we are working to resolve, so that the rice assessment committee is functioning. We have the hinterland development support activity, \$5 million; we have the agriculture disaster risk management plan, \$5 million, we have the agriculture disaster risk management plan, \$5 million, we have food and nutrition security strategy implementation, \$3 million; we have the veterinary board stipend, \$4 million; we have the Jagdeo initiative, which I spoke of that Caribbean Community (CARICOM) adopted, \$1 million; we have the evaluators stipend, 2 million; stipend for work study, \$1.2 million; consultation and engagement with farmers in the region, agriculture outreaches, \$6 million; other administrative activities \$8.5 million; and it goes on. I could give the Hon. Member a copy of it.

Mr. Mahipaul: I want to go back to this contracted employees issue. I heard the Hon. Minister said that 22 of the scholarship students were taken off the payroll, if I am using the correct term, and 14 were added. I am figuring that it was after they completed their scholarship. Given that there is an increase in the allocation, for me, it signifies that there is an increase in salary that is offered to the 14 specialists. May I ask the Hon. Minister to please provide the designation of the 14 that were added and their remuneration packages, the total sum for each one. I would appreciate if you could lay it over, Sir.

Mr. Mustapha: If I am reading out in here, I would not lay it over, so you could make a note of it. The number of staff include: two senior food and agro-processing inspector, one earns \$247,399 and the other, \$236,287; one biologist, \$236,287; two engineers, \$236,287; one livestock extension officer, \$236,287; two planners, \$151,730; four crop extension officers, \$79,293; two drivers at \$74,900 each.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Just to follow up on the same contracted employees. The Minister highlighted scholarship persons, and he suggested contracts. Is it a new policy that persons who are coming back from scholarships are no longer going on the establishment and are now being contracted?

Mr. Mustapha: The Hon. Member, as a former minister should have known that these are bonded students.

10.32 a.m.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure if I heard but the Minister did not answer the question.

Mr. Chairman: I am not hearing you. Hon. Member, could you repeat?

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister highlighted that the scholarship students are now contracted employees at line item 6116 but as far as I am aware, once a person is on scholarship and he/she is placed, he/she normally goes on the Permanent/Pensionable Establishment. I am asking if the policy has changed and if scholarship students are now being contracted and not placed on the establishment?

Mr. Mustapha: I do not know what the Hon. Member is talking about. I just answered the question. These are bonded scholars. There is no policy like that. I do not know where the Hon. Member would have gotten that policy from.

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration –\$1,010,060,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration – \$1,362,510,000

Mr. Ramjattan: Project code 1302300 – Are the pumps here from the same manufacturer Apollo?

Mr. Mustapha: If I could explain for the Hon. Member's sake, these are moneys that were budgeted for the Indian line of credit pumps. I mentioned it and I said that the last Administration paid almost 73% of the contract sum. This money still remains in the budget because it is engaging the attention of the Attorney General (AG). The pumps are defective, and we are trying to recoup our moneys or get proper pumps. If we have proper pumps, then we will have to pay the balance of the contract sum. The money is still in the budget here. If one works, it out in United States dollars it is about US\$733,000 remaining in the budget.

Mr. Ramjattan: I asked a very direct question. Are these pumps coming from the same company Apollo that you are saying brought in the same defective pumps?

Mr. Mustapha: These pumps were supplied by Apollo. These are the Indian line of credit pumps that are right now in the country that I said that are defective.

Mr. Ramjattan: Is it from Apollo?

Mr. Mustapha: Yes, Apollo supplied these pumps. These were the defective pumps supplied by Apollo, that are presently giving us some serious problems around the country. There are 12 pumps – three mobile and nine fixed.

Mr. Ramjattan: Would there be court action against this Indian firm in relation to these so-called defects?

Mr. Mustapha: I indicated already that the matter is engaging our Attorney General. He is now trying to see what we will do. Eventually, we will have to get back our money on these pumps that we have paid. The AG could advise better on that issue.

Mr. Chairman: Again, sometimes we have to be a bit more keen with our ears, noting the amount of extra sounds coming from the Dome. The Hon. Minister did answer every point that was raised in the first question and was asked to repeat. We could be a bit more efficient with our time if we allow a bit more silence in the Dome and listen more keenly.

Mr. Mustapha: I notice is a No.2 on this project. How much money on institutional strengthening?

Mr. Mustapha: The sum of \$10 million is budgeted for institutional strengthening.

Mr. Jordan: Project code 2100700 – Flood Risk Management Project: Could the Hon. Minister state what is the earth removing equipment that is proposed to be procured and what is the cost of that equipment?

Mr. Mustapha: We have \$81.8 million for the procurement of earth removing equipment. We have one amphibious excavator, two excavators, three pontoons with mud bins and boat and barge. Those are the equipment that would be purchased under this head.

Mr. Mahipaul: I just want to ask if this is a continuation from what the Administration has inherited from the previous Administration?

Mr. Mustapha: I want to refresh the Hon. Member memory that this was a project started since 2014 when the PPP/Civic was in Office. It was continued by the APNU/AFC, and this was conceptualised by the PPP/C Government in 2014.

Mr. Ramsaroop: Just a clarification, Hon. Minister. I know in 2020 you commissioned a pump at Hope. I saw that you are going to do an installation of a pump at Hope. Could you say if you will be commissioning another pump at Hope on the East Coast Demerara?

Mr. Mustapha: No. I just want to say that I never commissioned a pump. That is one of the six pumps that we have problems with. I never commissioned a pump that is defective.

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration - \$1,362,510,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 212 – Agriculture Development and Support Services – \$12,448,723,000

Mr. Ramjattan: I notice a number of organisations under subventions, subsidies and contributions to local organisations. I want to deal with the Mahaica/Mahaicony Abary-Agricultural Development Authority (MMA/ADA). Maintenance of infrastructure in Appendix T

at page 835, indicates a massive decrease from \$307 million to \$154 million. Could the Minister give an explanation as to why that massive decrease?

Mr. Mustapha: If I could just answer the Hon. Member, when we took Government in August, 2020, the entire system in MMA, all the canals were clogged up. The first time I went to Cabinet as a Minister, I went to ask for \$90 million to do cleaning in the MMA scheme. We have done was over 15,000 miles of canals and drains in that scheme. We have reduced also, the cost from \$15,000 to \$3,500 for Drainage and Irrigation (D&I) charges and land rental, so much so that almost \$11,500 the farmers are saving. Over the years, the revenue of MMA has increased so that is why we are giving less subventions to MMA. Like I am saying the MMA, like other entities are now becoming self-sufficient, where farmers now are buying the system and working with management to develop these sectors.

Mr. Ramjattan: On National Agriculture Research and Extension Institute (NAREI) now, there are about eight local institutions, Sir. Minister, I noticed that you had indicated in your budget speech, that NAREI is going to be supported extensively for research and development. I notice that there has been nothing really – \$1.2 million it was and \$1.2 million it remains. Why was there no increase for NAREI?

Mr. Mustapha: What line item are you referring to?

Mr. Ramjattan: The line item is the same 6321, Sir. It then refers you to eight separate entities: NAREI, MMA/ADA, Hope Coconut Estate, and so on.

Mr. Mustapha: If I could just disaggregate that for training and research, you have moneys that is budgeted in NAREI that will aid research and extension services over the 10 regions of Guyana which will enhance agriculture food system. As I said, we are looking to consolidate climate smart agriculture. Last year we built 150 shade houses across the country. With climate change that is real now and that is taking a toll on Guyana, we are looking to build these shade houses, so that farmers could have direct control on all the elements that could enhance agriculture development in our country. What we are doing, we are purchasing these shade house materials, we are going to train farmers and at the same time we have extension services where I mentioned about the tablets that we purchased over the year where Extension Officers and farmers will have real time data, to send data to NAREI extension services.

We are also conducting demonstration forms. We are training the farmers to enhance their skills and also to help in the agro-processing facilities where NAREI and the Guyana Marketing Corporation (GMC) are working hand in hand to develop processing facilities too. We are bringing out new crops. As I said, we are looking now to enhance our production of Irish potatoes. We are looking to enhance onion production, so that we could reduce our food import bill over the years. Different research – we started the high value crop. We have finished almost six or seven shade house and we will complete another 19 to make it 25 at NAREI. We have different crops and research coming. We are starting a process where we are now doing research to start crop flower production. No other country in this part of the Caribbean is doing that. We are looking to set up a Green House very shortly at Timehri to start this production. This year we will target a specific set of the population, like single mothers. These are very lucrative crops, and these crops have ability to help people earn a good living.

Mr. Ramjattan: I must say that we are having a lot of *gyaff* here. Honest to God. What they have for education and training is at Appendix T. It is \$9.1 million and the same \$9.1 million. My question is that all of what he is saying about more and more training.

10.47 a.m.

Why has this figure not increased? This was \$1.2 billion last year, and it is \$1.2 billion this year. Is it the *gyaffing* about training or are they putting some more money behind training?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, basically I do not know about *gyaff*. Are you asking him if it is sufficient?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, again, it seems that this Member has a problem comprehending simple issues. I do not know if he does not know how a budget cycle works. For example, one has a set of money that is budgeted to do training. Then, one has other agencies that complement. One has the Agriculture Sector Development Unit (ASDU). [**Mr. Ramjattan:** *Inaudible*] the National Agriculture Research and Extension Institute's budget.] Part of that money is from NAREI's budget... [**An Hon. Member:** *Inaudible*] Would you like me to answer, or do you want to ask the question and answer it? [**An Hon. Member:** *Inaudible*] I am answering a question that you asked. A sum of about \$9 million is budgeted in NAREI's budget for training

and research. One has the ASDU which will complement that. The ASDU is doing a lot of training in other agencies and complement agencies across the Ministry.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: I have one question for the Hon. Minister. With all that he has just said, I was wondering whether rice and plantain prices will go down and we will not have to import rice anymore with all that you are doing?

Mr. Chairman: What line item, Hon. Member Ms. Sarabo-Halley?

Mr. Mustapha: I do not know if I should answer this question. If I were to give the Hon. Member an answer, she would not like it because I do not know if the NAREI is growing rice. She should ask herself that not the NAREI.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister. I did not put the question to you. You did not have to answer.

Mr. Ramjattan: I noticed that for the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) there is \$2 billion for current. I do not see it in an appendix but they generally would put it, just GuySuCo – \$2 billion. What is this \$2 billion this year going towards? Is there a performance assessment now done with the almost \$90 billion that was spent on GuySuCo just for it to survive?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, this question deserves a comprehensive answer. First of all, concerning the \$2 billion, I have it disaggregated here that it will be going towards fuel – \$251 million, lubricants – \$40 million, other essential materials and supplies – \$282 million, lorry contractors – \$144 million, wages and salaries – \$1.283 billion, amounting to \$2 billion. Over the years I have been mentioning and talking about the industry in terms of moving it forward. We knew for a fact that when we took over this industry it was crippling. The estates were limping. It was stated in the Hon. Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance's budget speech that the \$4 billion budgeted would be going to the agriculture sector, towards enhancing the field and factory. I will disaggregate it and tell him what the works are that we will be doing.

When we took over, the factories were limping at about 40%. The extraction rate was very low in terms of juice. That is why, even when one has good sucrose content in the sugarcane, the extraction rate was poor. That is why the sugar did not have maximum production. What we

have been doing over the last 18 months, we have embarked on critical capital support for GuySuCo. We will enhance field. I have here in my hand a thick ledger of all the works that will be started... [Mr. Mahipaul: Lay it over.] At the end of this budget speech. I can go through some of it. I have it in [inaudible]. Repair to roads, lands conversion – convert the Dutch bed to the English bed – lorry, enhance fuel machinery, enhance field equipment. Then, there are a number of other agricultural works in terms of purchasing pumps, purchasing four-wheel double cab vehicle for the management of the estate, road construction again and different areas. I can list it and give it to the Hon. Member.

Mr. Ramjattan: Thank you, very much for that.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you Hon. Minister. Hon. Member Mr. Ramjattan, just give me one moment. Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul, you asked a question.

Mr. Mahipaul: Is it me?

Mr. Chairman: You asked a question. As the Minister is answering, you are shouting other instructions to the Minister. I ask that you desist from this.

Mr. Ramjattan: I indicated too that I would like to see please if one could kindly lay over those. Also, the performance report as to when GuySuCo is going to break-even.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, we are working to break-even. First of all, our main objective is to break-even. We have a strategic plan that we are working with now. As I said, the three operating estates we will enhance those tremendously this year. We are moving to ensure that we add a value-added component to the production. Making more value-added sugar. For example, packet sugar instead of bulk sugar. Enhance the factory capacity and enhance the field to ensure that we have better growth and better sucrose content from these sugarcanes. We are moving them. We have the strategic plan. That is the objective. The \$4 billion that is in the capital programme for GuySuCo will go to do that and also part will go to enhance the reopening of the Rose Hall Sugar Estate. We have already employed close to 500 persons at the Rose Hall Sugar Estate already. I am hoping that this year we will continue to employ those persons who were put on the breadline and dismissed by the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change

(APNU/AFC) Government. They are very happy that we are giving them employment on the Rose Hall Sugar Estate.

Mr. Ramjattan: The strategic management plan that you are so vociferous about, could that be laid over to this National Assembly? In relation to the matter of the Skeldon Sugar Factory, do we not have any moneys for that this 2022?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, as I said and I have indicated many times in this National Assembly, we will reopen the closed sugar estates in a phased approach. As I said, the first estate that will be reopened is the Rose Hall Sugar Estate. We have the other estates that we have already... Like the Skeldon Sugar Factory this year, we will be purchasing excavators... [An

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]] Yes. Money is budgeted to purchase excavators for the Skeldon Sugar Factory. We will continue to do that because these estates were closed by the APNU/AFC. It was destroyed. As I said, it wants us to reopen it within one year, but it destroyed the entire estate. It cannibalised the Wales Sugar Estate, so much so that it cannot be reopened. That is the history of the APNU/AFC. When it touches something, it goes beyond repairs. It is beyond redemption. That is what *y'all* are doing in this country.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister state how the \$30 billion bond that the National Industrial and Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL) gave to GuySuCo is being utilised or is it being utilised?

Mr. Mustapha: That money started being used under the previous Government– the \$30 billion bond. The GuySuCo has to repay that sum of money. That is why the bond has been exhausted and that is why the Government is forced to give subsidies to the GuySuCo to continue in the investment of the GuySuCo.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Mr. Chairman, the Minister just stated that the bond has been exhausted, if I heard him correctly. Could he say what the bond was exhausted over? What exactly was done?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I cannot say what the bond was exhausted on during the APNU/AFC's time. However, some money was used from the bond to do some work within the GuySuCo. I do not have the details of that here. I can lay that over some other time. As I was

saying, over the last 18 months the bond was exhausted. That is why the Government is forced to continue subsidies to the GuySuCo.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Just to clarify, is the Hon. Minister saying that over the last 18 months the bond was exhausted?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, when we took Government \$3.8 billion remained out of the \$30 billion that they had. A sum of \$3.8 billion.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I would like to get some clarity from the Hon. Minister. [**An Hon. Member:** What line item?] Under the same line item. After spending over \$30 billion of taxpayers' moneys on the reopening of these estates, could the Hon. Minister state what date or what period in this year would the Rose Hall Sugar Estate be reopened?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I answered that question *ad nauseum*. It is a work in progress. We cannot say when. We are preparing the reopening of the Rose Hall Sugar Estate. There are a number of works that we have to do. For example, as I said, right now the management at the Rose Hall Sugar Estate is embarking on improving the cultivation. When we took over last year the cultivation was abandoned. There were bushes all around the cultivation. We have to do new tilling. We have to have enough sugarcane in the cultivation. I do not know if the Hon. Member knows how sugarcane or how sugar is produced. We have to have enough sugarcane in the cultivation so that we can reopen the estate. We have to ensure that we rehabilitate the entire factory. We have to ensure that we have enough punts. We have to ensure that we rehabilitate the mill dock. We have to ensure that we rehabilitate the field equipment department. All those parts in the estate are works in progress that we are continuously doing. I am very optimistic that the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government will reopen the Rose Hall Sugar Estate and it will produce sugar shortly.

Mr. Jordan: Hon. Minister, I am so thankful that you have a progress report on the reopening of the Rose Hall Sugar Estate. I can tell you that I am a former apprentice of the GuySuCo, so I know about the GuySuCo. Hon. Minister, I want you to say what percentage of progress you have made thus far at the Rose Hall Sugar Estate. Kindly detail that for us. What percentage of works have you completed so as to reopen this Estate?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I do not have that information. I know for a fact in the factory we are about 41% moving on. As I said, in the cultivation area, we are moving there. We will have to continue to do tilling and planting of sugarcane because the entire cultivation was abandoned. When one starts, one cannot get sugarcane for one crop. This sugarcane cycle is that when it starts and one starts to cut cane, there is a small period of outer crop, one has to have cane for the other crop. One has to have the entire cultivation as the capacity at the Rose Hall Sugar Estate will have to be enhanced to so how many weeks per year. That means we have to have enough sugarcane in the cultivation before we can start the Rose Hall Sugar Estate. I want to assure the Hon. Member, that I can submit a progress report, but I know for a fact that we are about 41% in the factory moving there.

Mr. Figueira: Hon. Minister, at the last Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Economic Services you indicated to that Committee the GuySuCo has a projection to break-even in 2026. You just informed this House that you are optimistic and so far, based on your projection of what has happened at the Rose Hall Sugar Estate it is 41% ready. The question is, how much more moneys because since 2020, the GuySuCo has been in receipt of over \$30 billion and \$4 billion more is budgeted for in 2022. If you have projected for the GuySuCo to break-even in 2026, how much more money have to be given to the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) to break-even as you would have projected?

11.02 a.m.

Mr. Mustapha: First of all, I want to inform the Hon. Member that I have not said that 41% of Rose Hall was completed. I said that the factory was completed at 41%. Remember, there are different components that we are talking about. You might have less in the field, you might have less at the FED, you might have less of the mill dock, you might have less at the various other parts, that depends, to ensure that you have the whole thing coming together to start production.

I want to make this point that when you look at GuySuCo, you have to look at it beyond sugar. I made this point at the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Economic Services. I said that sugar is our culture and GuySuCo encompassed many other things than sugar. It causes the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA), in certain areas, approximately \$1.8 billion to expend to do the drainage and irrigation (D&I) services that were provided by GuySuCo before. Those

are the social things that GuySuCo does in these communities. So, whatever it takes to bring back GuySuCo, the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/Civic) Government will ensure that we make the resources available.

Mr. Figueira: I hear the Minister in his expression of optimism to bring back GuySuCo. It is a part of our culture, but the fact is, it is the sweetest debt the country has been consistently incurring, and it cannot be a consistent burden on the Guyanese population. Now you have said that GuySuCo will breakeven in 2026. What is the current market price for sugar? As it is, we are paying more for sugar than those who are buying it from us. How are we going to reduce the cost for sugar with your projection of breaking even until 2026?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, probably the Hon. Member is too young. Their memories are so short. Almost \$500 billion was taken away from GuySuCo by the sugar levy by the Government, at that time, taking away the breath and the life of GuySuCo. Do you all remember the sugar levy? Now is the time, like I said, GuySuCo is a very important industry that not only encompasses sugar, but you have... [**An Hon. Member:** (*Inaudible*)] We said that it is too big to fail, and we will continue. We will continue to ensure that GuySuCo breaks even and, eventually, starts to make a profit. That is why we will continue to enhance it and I am very optimistic that the moneys Government is giving to GuySuCo are moneys that were taken away from GuySuCo when it was in its prime.

Today, we are looking at GuySuCo as bleeding the Treasury. It is not like that because thousands ... The Guyana Sugar Corporation is the largest single employer of people in this country. The Guyana Sugar Corporation makes a lot of contributions socially. We have the sports ground that GuySuCo used to look after; we have the D&I services in the community; we have the village economy in the community; we have thousands of persons, indirectly, depending on GuySuCo; we have thousands of people who depended on GuySuCo and who will depend on GuySuCo in the future to come. The Guyana Sugar Corporation is important. We will continue to ensure that GuySuCo breaks even. We are working very hard to ensure that GuySuCo breaks even. We have had a setback with the floods but, as I said, we have a strategic plan that will move GuySuCo forward.

Mr. Figueira: I do not wish for the Minister to conclude that I do not understand the importance of GuySuCo. I believe that the Minister is right, GuySuCo is important to us, but we have to prudently spend the peoples' money. I am saying that GuySuCo could be re-divested into other crops, and you have trained people to become specialists in other crops. Why has GuySuCo not divest itself and plant soursop, pepper – scotch bonnet pepper like Jamacia, where they are garnering real revenue for the country? The sugar industry is changing. We cannot compete in the international market even if we are projecting to breakeven in 2026. Why is it that GuySuCo is not taking this same money that I believe is not being spent prudently, and reinvesting it in the sugar workers? Retrained them and give them the land so that they could give it to their families, rather than giving them an inheritance of a cutlass?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, if I could respond. I think that the Hon. Member ... I do not want to be a part of GuySuCo to plant soursop and casava or whatever the Comrade talked about. The Guyana Sugar Corporation, as I said, is moving in different directions. We have a strategic plan, as I have said, where we started the study of producing ethanol; we are starting the study of looking at high grade molasses; we have increased private participation in GuySuCo in the field at Uitvlugt; and we are looking at various means and ways to ensure that we diversify GuySuCo, and we are moving there. I never come to the National Assembly and shout out what I do not know about. I know that GuySuCo is producing sugar and because of sugar we will get ethanol and because of sugarcane, we could get better molasses. Those are the products that we are looking at and, eventually, GuySuCo will meet there, and we will move GuySuCo forward.

Mr. Figueira: Mr. Chairman ...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please, I have Mr. Ramjattan and I have you. There was another person, Mr. Mahipaul before Mr. Ramjattan. Mr. Ramjattan, allow Mr. Figueira to ask a follow-up question and not to give a lecture.

Mr. Figueira: Sometimes lecturing is good.

Mr. Chairman: I agree, but there is a time for lecturing.

Mr. Figueira: This is a frightening situation. The Minister is saying to this honourable House that he is optimistic, he is hopeful, that GuySuCo, in 2026, after it received over \$30 billion from

2020 to now, might likely breakeven. This is not the safe position. We had hired a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who said that he is a turnaround specialist. We need to have some definitive response from the Minister who is responsible for this entire Ministry, to say to the Guyanese people, how is it that GuySuCo will no longer plunder the tax resources of this country, which are limited. We need our sugar workers to have a safe future in GuySuCo and we need to invest these moneys wisely. That is not what we are doing.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, the question is about the issue of how wise this investment is.

Mr. Mustapha: I do not know if the Hon. Member does not know what took place under...

Mr. Figueira: Mr. Chairman, may I correct you, that was not the question. The question is: how will GuySuCo become or assure profitability beyond the Hon. Minister optimism in 2026 with all these billions of dollars that are being invested in GuySuCo?

Mr. Mustapha: I was just about to answer the exact question that Hon. Member asked. But first of all... [*Interruption*] I was saying that I was attempting to answer the exact question that he asked. First of all, I do not know if the Hon. Member knows what his Government did. After spending \$17 billion from the Bond, they closed the estate. We only had \$3.8 billion. What the Hon. Member is saying there, I said that before I answered the question. He should have listened. I said that GuySuCo will breakeven, and, eventually, it will make a profit because we have started embarking on a number of areas. We are doing high volume production now; we are enhancing the packaging plant at Blairmount; we are looking to build a new packaging plant at Albion to have...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, do not listen to the noise, answer your question.

Mr. Mustapha: I am saying that we are building a new packaging plant at Albion; we are looking to enhance and look at ethanol production and we are looking to produce high grade molasses. These are the value-added productions that will help GuySuCo breakeven and, eventually, make a profit.

Mr. Ramjattan: In view of the distaste for doing this hard back-breaking labour, was there an assessment done for the next three years as to whether the next generation of cane cutters will

come from these estates? [**An Hon. Member:** *(Inaudible)*] You will get 50,000 jobs from other areas.

Mr. Mustapha: As I said, in this document it is listed, some of the mechanisations that GuySuCo will embark on. There are a number of mechanisations, especially, in the field. I do not know if the Hon. Member does not know that we have cane loaders now instead of cane cutters fetching cane on their heads. We have a number of bell loaders in the estate. Many cane cutters today are only cutting the canes and heaping them and then, later in the evening, these bell loaders go and load the canes. That is one way of taking out the pressure. I do not know if the Hon. Member did not know about those things.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, I am changing the question from GuySuCo to NDIA.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, thank you, very much. Hon. Member, Ms. Flue-Bess, you have the floor.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could the Hon. Minister say what is the current salary and other benefits of the CEO of GuySuCo?

Mr. Mustapha: Could the Hon. Member please repeat the question? I did not hear it.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Could the Hon. Minister say what is the current salary and other benefits of the CEO of GuySuCo?

Mr. Mustapha: The current salary of the CEO is \$1.4 million.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: I earlier asked the Minister about the Bond. As far as I am aware, when they came into Office in 2020, there was \$15 billion still in the Bond. As far as I am aware, the Bond was supposed to be used to diversify and mechanise the estate – GuySuCo – and to produce refined sugar and cogeneration power. What I just heard from the Minister was that the Bond has been completely exhausted, so I am wondering whether or not any of that money went into ensuring what the Bond was actually for was actually utilised for that the purpose?

Mr. Mustapha: As I said earlier, we have used that amount that I have stated earlier. The Government will have to put additional money. Over the years we have started that. That is the money I know about. I do not know anything more about more money from the Bond. As I said,

when we got into Government, we were able to spend \$3.8 billion from the Bond and then we had to put money from GuySuCo.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Would the Hon. Minister or GuySuCo be willing to layover to this House how exactly they spend the \$30 billion?

Mr. Mustapha: No problem, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Figueira: No, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Jordan.

Mr. Jordan: In his Budget Speech, the Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance said that, apart from the reopening of estates, they are looking towards the repositioning of the sugar industry and its sustainable path to profitability. Could the Hon. Minister say to us what percentage of works in the total restructuring, this is not for estate, but the total restructuring, have been completed thus far to see GuySuCo in a whole return to profitability?

Mr. Mustapha: I know the last time the Hon. Member asked me the same question. At that time, I told him between 38% to 40% and now we are at approximately 51% in restructuring.

11.17 a.m.

Mr. Mahipaul: Mr. Chairman, I noticed GuySuCo is getting the Minister a little bit agitated. Let me switch gears to the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority – NDIA. There is a budgeted sum here for a capital expenditure of \$4.1 billion. May I ask the Hon. Minister to disaggregate this sum and, also, tell us what is it that he intends to do with it?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, \$2.7 billion were for projects rolled over from last year to this year. For example, the pump at Trafalgar, cutter edge dredge, supply of pontoon with two excavators for the Pomeroon supply, two engines for pump station at green field, provision of consultancy services, procurement of mobile pumps, 40 hydraflo diesel pumps, 80 Cusick hydraflo diesel pumps, procurement of four new super long reach hydraulic excavator,

procurement of three motor graders, design of pump station, rehabilitation of pump station and the list goes on. There are about 84 items that \$2.7 billion is budgeted for.

For this year, there is \$1.318 billion: purchase of furniture and equipment, additional consultancy services for the supply and delivery of cutter edge suction dredge, and the procurement of tractor driven pumps. This is important. When we had the flood last year, a number of Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs) and municipalities were unable to do primary pumping. We will be purchasing 100 tractor driven pumps. Each NDC and municipality will be getting a pump from the NDIA this time, so that they could improve capacity in those areas.

We also have the supply of new outboard engine, rehabilitation of NDIA pontoon. The NDIA has three pontoons, one is now in dry dock to be rehabilitated. Consultancy service for the sluice at Capoey Essequibo. There is the design, review and supervision services for the construction of the pump at Charity. There is the construction of a new pump station at Charity. We have here rehabilitation of pump station of Cozier, in the Essequibo in Region 2. The empolderment of farmlands in upper Pomeroon-Supenaam. We have empolderment of farmland in Supenaam creek and a number of other areas. These will enhance our agricultural sector and make the D&I service more resilient to climate change. I could supply the Hon. Member with the breakdown and the disaggregation of the \$4.1 billion.

Mr. Mahipaul: I was just going to ask if the Minister would he be kind enough to lay it over. I am happy that he indicated to do so. In fact, this is one of the most cooperative Minister on the Government side. I must say that. I am looking at wages and salaries and I am seeing an increase there to \$319 million. May I ask if NDIA will be employing more engineers so as to monitor the work of D&I so that we could effectively manage what is happening in our country with reference to flooding and all the other engineering aspects of things?

Mr. Mustapha: What we are doing now, we are now building a new design department. With all these programmes coming on board, all these projects, rather than get the engineer stressed out, to go in the field and do work, we are building a design department where a number of specialised designed engineers will be employed, so that we could complete our design on time and our procurement policy could move ahead as we planned it for the year.

Mr. Mahipaul: May I ask what is the total number of engineers currently employed at the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority who are assigned field responsibilities in the respective regions? If the Minister could specify how many engineers...

Mr. Chairman: I just want the line item or the head.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, the same line item. There is one line item under this programme, and it has a number of agencies. It is NDIA I am dealing with, and I am looking at Appendix T on page 837.

Mr. Chairman: In employment, you might have engineers over all categories of employees.

Mr. Mahipaul: Pardon me, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, you have the floor.

Mr. Mustapha: We have 22 engineers who we have employed.

Mr. Mahipaul: The specific question was focusing on the engineers who are in the field who are assigned to respective regions. Could you let us know how many are in Regions 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9 and 10.

Mr. Chairman: A variation to the question according to...

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, as I said, I could lay over to the Hon. Member the engineers that are assigned to various regions. As I said, these engineers are now doubling up in terms of doing the design. Also, what we are doing now, these 22 engineers will be concentrating to ensure that they supervise projects in the field so that we could have value for our money and we could have contractors abide with the specifications of these projects. What we are doing now, we are looking, we have already interviewed a number of prospective engineers to do design. Very shortly, we will employ those persons to get them to do designs for these projects and other projects under the NDIA.

Mr. Mahipaul: Cde. Chairman, I appreciate the fact that the Hon. Minister will lay over, so I will rest my case.

Mr. Ramjattan: On the capital side of the Mahaica/Mahaicony/Abary-Agricultural Development Authority (MMA/ADA), I noticed at reference page 89, you stated what this \$166

million is going to go towards the purchase of equipment, which is one. Does this equipment that will be purchased includes an excavator or a dredge to dredge the mouths of those three rivers, the Abary, Mahaicony, and Mahaica?

Mr. Mustapha: The equipment that will be purchased are two excavators. An estimated cost is valued at \$68 million. Also, we have a tractor that is under this line.

Mr. Ramjattan: I just want to on that same line item and you could put it, Appendix T there, but in the capital side, the heightening of dams and embankments. Could you tell us which part of the MMA/ADA or is it the entire thing?

Mr. Mustapha: Yes. A sum of \$14 million has been budgeted to do this heightening of dams. This is to preserve the integrity of the conservancy dam at the MMA/ADA Scheme. That dam you know stretches from Abary right on to the Berbice River. Over the years, we had a pontoon with excavators there on a regular basis to do these works. These works were continuous works over the year and various parts of the dam will normally be heightened during the operations.

Mr. Figueira: Mr. Minister, after 18 months, could you state how many staff at the Ministry have been trained in harvesting crops?

Mr. Mustapha: What is he really saying?

Mr. Figueira: We are talking about Training. You spoke to training. I need to know Hon. Minister, how many staff at the Ministry have been trained in harvesting crops with respect to the United States of America (USA) phytosanitary standards.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, just give me a line item under the Current...

Mr. Figueira: Training, line item 6302. The Minister spoke about training already. This is an additional question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, which line item are you saying again, please?

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6302.

Mr. Chairman: Line item 6302 – there is a zero there.

Mr. Figueira: Hon. Minister, you would have spoken about training at the Ministry for staff. My question is, how many staff have been trained with respect to harvesting crops in relation to the US phytosanitary standards for crops to be exported at an international standard? How many staff have been trained to monitor those crops?

Mr. Mustapha: The Hon. Member has to decide which agency he is talking about. We have the Guyana Sugar Corporation, we have MMA/ADA, we have the National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI), we have the Guyana Rice Development Board (GRDB), we have the Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA), all these agencies. What we are doing, they would have formed...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, this subvention here covers all of those agencies.

Mr. Mustapha: They would have formed the Guyana Food Safety Authority, that never came into existence in terms of physically. What we are doing now is, we are enhancing that, and we are continuing to ensure that body come into being so that we will train a number of persons... We have started training already. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) work along with NAREI. They work along with GRDB, they work along with GLDA and they give a number of training in the phytosanitary needs of our country. Right now, I am working with the AG to put legislation in place. A legislation will come into being shortly for food security, for the sanitary and phytosanitary needs of the country. We are moving there, and a number of training sessions have already been held. I could lay over the number of persons who have already been trained or have started training in these fields.

Mr. Figueira: Mr. Minister, why do you always have to come off so aggressive?

Mr. Chairman: He is passionate about his work.

Mr. Figueira: Whatever it is. Mr. Minister, I am happy that training in this area is being done. I would like to know if it is also being done in the regions. This is because the Minister, in his budget speech, spoke about community farming. If we are going to promote that, then we need to train these local farmers in how to plant these crops to meet the international markets. That is why the question was asked. You do not have to be all aggressive and all of that.

Mr. Chairman: Now, the sub question is, is this training...?

Mr. Figueira: Is this training done regionally? Is it disseminated in all of the regions and at the community level as well?

Mr. Mustapha: I thought I answered that question when Hon. Ramjattan asked a question. I said that there are a number of trainings going on with NAREI and the Guyana Marketing Corporation (GMC). They are going in various parts of the country to train farmers. As I said, I spoke about the climate-smart agriculture, I spoke about agro-processing, and that is why we are building agro-processing facilities in various parts of the country. We are building one in Watooka in Region 10; we are building one in Region 9; in White Water in Region 1; we are building in Mabaruma in Region 1; we are building in Charity and Anna Regina in Region 2; and we are building in Black Bush Polder. You could see the effort that we are putting in agro-processing facilities because our farmers should discontinue exporting primary produce. We want them to have value-added produce that is why we are doing that kind of training. Also, GRDB has done a number of training in various parts of the rice growing areas of our country. The GLAD also has done a number of training in terms of enhancing the kind of production in the livestock industry.

Mr. Ramjattan: I just want to indicate in the capital project profile,

Mr. Chairman: We have not reached capital as yet.

Mr. Ramjattan: This would be NDIA where the appendix is indicating \$4.1 billion to NDIA. Then, we have \$166 million for MMA/ADA and \$70 million for mangrove management – all these capital works. Could the Minister say whether they are from the Natural Resource Fund (NRF)? We do have a column there that says they are from India, they are from the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), they are from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Could you say whether these central Government fundings are from the NRF Fund?

11.32 a.m.

Mr. Mustapha: I think the Member is unfair to ask me that question. I do not allocate funds here. I have a budget. The funds were allocated by my Colleague, the Senior Minister in the

Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance. He will be more able to answer that question.

Mr. Ramjattan: No, it is conveniently stated in the Others like drainage and irrigation that the pumps come from India. They put in the column here, India. There is the IsDB, the International Development Association (IDA) and the Inter-American Development Bank. I just want to know why they could not put that so that it could have been transparent enough for us to know where the money is coming from.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you will be able to ask the Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance that question.

Mr. Mustapha: Just for the Member's sake, Mr. Chairman, I thought by now, as a long-standing Parliamentarian, he should have known that foreign-funded projects are always stated in the Capital Project Profile.

Mr. Mahipaul: I am back at the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority. I know that the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority had – I do not know if they still do – some mini excavators in the respective regions that would assist with residential drainage so as to bring comfort to the residents across the country who cry out for poor drainage and deplorable roads. We have many schemes that are existing now. For example, I know in Region 3 there were four mini excavators that were not sufficient to cater to the cry of the people and help in residential drainage. Is there any consideration in this Budget for the inclusion of more mini excavators to assist with the residential drainage of these communities? I know that you have many schemes that are opening across the country.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is the NDIA taking on residential drainage responsibilities now?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I think that we normally assist. We have 40 mini excavators across the country and we will continue to use them wisely with the NDCs and the other local bodies in the area. As a matter of fact, where the Hon. Member talked about, I have visited a number of times and we used our excavators to do drainage work there and we continue to assist. My Colleague, the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, and I work very

closely. We move our resources and ensure that we help to enhance these drainage systems in the communities.

Mr. Chairman: I noticed that you work very closely. He was not in his seat, and he moved closer to you just now.

Mr. Mahipaul: Cde. Chairman, I heard the Hon. Minister indicating that they have 40 mini excavators. I know he is kind enough to lay over so I will trust that he lays over how many are in each of the respective regions. I want to also ask the Hon. Minister if he can indicate how many long boom excavators he has aligned for residential drainage cleaning?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, long boom excavators can only do certain works in residential areas. As I said, we have 40 mini excavators, and we have 79 long boom excavators. These excavators do more irrigation in D&I canals around the country – these large canals. Sometimes, there are canals that run across the housing areas, and from time to time, we may use our long boom excavators or these small excavators – the short reach excavators. As I said, I work with various stakeholders, and we ensure that we enhance the drainage system. We try to mitigate flooding as far as possible.

Mr. Mahipaul: I agree with the Hon. Minister. I believe that he is the most cooperative Minister on that side of the House, and I salute him for what he is doing in terms of the work pertaining to drainage and irrigation in the country. I heard him say that there are 79 long boom excavators. I will also appreciate it if the Minister can lay over which regions these excavators are in so that we can get an understanding.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Hon. Minister, would you lay over the long boom excavators' distribution?

Mr. Mustapha: That is not a problem, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Cummings: Actually, this is a spinoff from the Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul. It is to ask you about the same long boom excavators. Do you have those in your plans for the Lower Pomeroun? There is always flooding, coconuts are going in there, and it needs desilting. What is your plan for the Lower Pomeroun?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, if I could give a holistic picture of the Pomeroon. We have a number of blocked drains. I do not know if the Hon. Member knows what is blocked drainage. We are doing a lot of blocked drains to avoid flooding in Pomeroon. As a matter of fact, we have about four or five phases going on right now in the Pomeroon. We have work ongoing to do these blocked drains. We are doing them and a number of farmers are benefitting from these blocked drains. Also, in last year's budget, we had money budgeted for a pontoon and two excavators. This year, we will complete that. That pontoon and the two excavators will be solely placed in the Pomeroon. It is only for the Pomeroon. That would enhance the drainage system in the Pomeroon.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, I am also aware that these mini excavators function through the Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs). As the Minister rightfully said, he has a close relationship with the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development. What method, in terms of procurement, is being utilised to use these machines for the services, especially in these residential areas with these mini excavators? Is it public tendered then awarded to a contractor who provides the technical personnel to do the work and all you do is supply the machine?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, yes. Right now, we are advertising that through open tendering. We are hoping that we can get persons to apply so that they can manage these sets of excavators in terms of supplying fuel and ensuring that they do mechanical repairs and things like that. That is more cost-effective for the NDIA, rather than stretching its personnel out, also having to get mechanics, source other parts, and things such as that.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. Hon. Members, this has been some exhaustive questioning with respect to this particular head.

Programme: 212 – Agriculture Development and Support Services – \$12,448,723,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 212 – Agriculture Development and Support Services – \$12,959,553,000

Mr. Ramsaroop: Cde. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister state what amount was catered for in this retention mentioned here? Could the Minister provide a list of the projects which are under

this retention? I am sorry, the project code is 1301600, National Drainage and Irrigation Authority.

Mr. Mustapha: Pardon me?

Mr. Ramsaroop: The project code is 1301600.

Mr. Mustapha: This is the NDIA.

Mr. Chairman: With the capital...

Mr. Mustapha: We dealt with that already. Could the Hon. Member be so kind enough to repeat the question?

Mr. Ramsaroop: Thank you, Hon. Minister. I was just asking under that project code about the retention mentioned there. I was asking if you could provide a list of the projects which are under the retention.

Mr. Chairman: It is the list of projects under the retention.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I mentioned just now a number of projects that have rolled over and there are retentions there. I can supply the Hon. Member with the list. We have a number of projects that we are holding retentions for and they will be paid this year.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, on the very same project code, could the Hon. Minister state whether the three Hope-like canals are slated to be done under this code?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I could assure the Member that the study has started. We have already identified the areas and work will commence this year under the same project code. We will continue to have funding too. These are massive projects and, as I have said, we have already identified a number of areas in the three regions – Regions 3, 5 and 6. We are working very hard with the NDIA to ensure that we start work this year.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Minister, you mentioned that works have already started. Could you say to us what are the areas you propose to have these Hope-like canals in for Regions 3, 5 and 6?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I have not said that work has started. I said a lot studies were done. We have already identified the area. The Budget has not been passed as yet, how will we start work? We have already identified three locations in Canals Polder, Dantzig in Region 5 and within Number 43 Village, Number 50 Village and the Corentyne.

Mr. Ramsaroop: Under project code 1301600, National Drainage and Irrigation Authority, could the Hon. Minister state how many pumps will be rehabilitated and where?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, 34 pumps with various capacities – 40 cusec (Q/sec) and 80 (Q/sec), – will be purchased. What we are doing now, is looking to have a 24-hour drainage periods across the country. We will place these pumps at various parts of the country where there are vulnerable areas so that we can take care of any flooding that might occur.

Mr. Ramsaroop: Under the project code 1301900, Mangrove Management, Cde. Chairman, there is provision here for the Mangrove Restoration Projects. I noticed in the Capital Projects Profile that there will be the construction of rock groynes. I am seeking some clarification here as to if there will be any mangrove restoration and where.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, under this programme we have two rollover projects in Regions 2, 4 and 6 that will be completed this year. Then we have two other projects where groynes will be constructed in Region 2 – Perth and Paradise. In those areas, we will have those groynes. We have Perth and Eliza in Region 2 too for \$40 million. In those areas, we will build those groynes.

Mr. Ramsaroop: Thank you, Hon. Minister for that and thank you Cde. Chairman. For project code 1302400, Mahaica/Mahaicony/Abary, could the Hon. Minister lay over the list of equipment that will be purchased with their relevant costs? I have a follow up after this.

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I thought I answered this question. Mr. Ramjattan asked this question. I said that we will purchase two long reach excavators and a tractor. I do not know if the Member is listening. Let us listen; we are repeating ourselves.

Mr. Ramjattan: In all fairness, Mr. Speaker, in Appendix T....

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, thanks a lot but he was asking for you to layover.

Mr. Mustapha: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Ramjattan, did you want to say something?

Mr. Ramjattan: I said it was a little confusing doing it because, under Appendix T, each of these institutions has Capital and Current Expenditures.

Mr. Chairman: Confusion seems to be the word for the last two days.

Mr. Ramjattan: It is true that is why we are now on to Capital Expenditure for the same...

Mr. Chairman: Well, I had drawn your attention when you were speaking but, you being a senior Member of the House, I allowed some latitude to you.

Mr. Ramjattan: Sir, it is just that we had confused...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Ramsaroop, let us...

11.47 a.m.

Mr. Ramsaroop: Thank you, Cde. Chairman, at the same project code 1302400: Under retention, could you state the status of phase two of the Mahaica-Mahaicony-Abary (MMA) project?

Mr. Mustapha: Phase two is not retention. We have retention here for the construction of a heavy-duty bridge and not any phase two.

Mr. Ramsaroop: I am sorry. Could the Hon. Minister state the status of phase two of the MMA project?

Mr. Mustapha: We started some work last year and this will continue this year. This will be enhanced by the Hope-like canal where more land that we are making available will be coming under this drainage system. What we have done over the last year is open up close to about 8000 acres of new lands for cash crop, livestock and also rice.

Mr. Ramsaroop: Project code 1405500: Could the Hon. Minister state the model or make of these tractors that will be purchased and at what cost? If he wishes, he can lay it over.

Mr. Mustapha: These tractors will be purchased for Regions 1, 8 and 9. These tractors will be owned and serviced by the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) but will be given

to these regions to enhance production. These tractors will be fitted with harrow and grass planter and will help to enhance farming in these communities. When I visited a number of villages in these areas over the last few months, there were requests where we were crafting our budget proposal. These proposals were made and through the Rural Agriculture Infrastructure Development (RAID) programme we are having these facilities and this equipment being made available to communities in these areas. What we have found is that there is good potential in these communities to enhance our production.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I also heard a question about make and model. Do you have that for the tractors and equipment?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, I will after procurement.

Mr. Ramsaroop: Project code 1701500: Could the Hon. Minister lay over the type and cost of equipment to be purchased here?

Mr. Mustapha: Mr. Chairman, we will construct a modern bio-secure swine facility with semen processing areas. I can lay over what are some of the equipment that we will purchase to enhance production in this sector.

Mr. Ramsaroop: Project code 1701600: Could the Hon. Minister state the number of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) that will be purchased and the cost?

Mr. Mustapha: We have four ATVs. Those will be going to Regions 1, 7, 9 and 10 at an approximate cost of \$7.5 million.

Mr. Ramsaroop: Project code 1792100: Under the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC), we made this facility, that is the Hope Coconut Estate, self-sufficient. Sir, I am seeing that \$33 million is budgeted here for an extension of the coconut nursery. Could the Hon. Minister state the quantity of plants catered for here?

Mr. Mustapha: I said, in my budget presentation, that we will make 36000 seedlings available with these new nurseries that we will be building. As a matter of fact, last year, we built three. This year, what we have found is that the coconut sector is moving apace. We are now a member of the International Coconut Community (ICC). I think that there are a number of investors

coming into the coconut sector and we are moving to ensure that...coconut is now in demand and is becoming a very lucrative crop.

Programme: 212 – Agriculture Development and Support Services – \$12,959,553,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 213 – Fisheries – \$288,693,000

Programme: 213 – Fisheries – \$288,693,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 213 – Fisheries – \$55,000,000

Mr. Ramsaroop: Project Code 1201100: Could the Hon. Minister state how much moneys are catered for the aquaculture development intervention and what are these interventions?

Mr. Mustapha: We have \$8.7 million budgeted to increase capacity at the Satyadeow Sawh Aquaculture Station at Mon Repos. We have \$21 million budgeted for the brackish water shrimp industry in Region 6. This is to purchase High-density polyethylene (HDPE) tubes, these black tubes. We also have \$9 million budgeted to do small boxes and sluices for the brackish water shrimp industry in Region 6. We have \$11.5 million budgeted for fencing at the Satyadeow Sawh Aquaculture Station. We have lighting facility at the same station. There is a digital fish tagging device that the Department of Fisheries will purchase. Those are some of the activities that will happen under this programme.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, the legend states that they also catered for furniture and equipment. What is the sum associated with that?

Mr. Mustapha: I said some of the activities, Mr Chairman.

Mr. Mahipaul: Thank you, Cde. Chairman, but could the Minister please say what is the cost associated with that?

Mr. Mustapha: We will have purchasing of computer and accessories, \$894,000; purchasing of seven desks; purchasing of printers; purchasing of eight filing cabinets; and purchasing of semi-executive chairs. You wanted to hear about the furniture. I said some activities...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, please speak to the Chair.

Mr. Mustapha: Water dispenser, microwave, refrigerator, external hard drive – all of those are furniture and equipment that we will purchase under this programme, Mr. Charman.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, are you okay now? Thank you very much.

Programme: 213 – Fisheries – \$55,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services – \$584,699,000

Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services – \$584,699,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services – \$60,950,000

Mr. Ramsaroop: Under project code 2100100, \$60,950,000 is budgeted for fence and equipment. Could the Hon. Minister state what amount is budgeted for the fence and what is for the equipment, where these fences will be built and what type of equipment would be purchased? Sir, I do not mind if the Hon. Minister wants to lay this over.

Mr. Mustapha: First of all, I want to say that we are seeing more accurate weather reading from the Hydrometeorological Services. I think we must give them credit. That has come about because last year we invested in a model station; we have enhanced it. This year, we would continue that process. We have here \$36 million for an automatic absorption spectrometer. We will enhance that to enhance water quality. We will also enhance the Wireless Fidelity (Wi-Fi) system in the offices and around the country so that we can have up-to-date information coming

across the country. If you notice, also, the Hydrometeorological Services has been given various conditions across various areas in the country. We have the items disaggregated here that is equal to \$60 million. I could lay it over and give the Hon. Member.

Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services – \$60,950,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, let us thank the Minister and his team for taking us through that agency. Hon. Members, we will take Agency 23, the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce. As the Minister and her team get in place, let us turn to pages 208 and 209. Hon. Members, the last head took one hour and 38 minutes. We have utilised 38 of the 71 minutes that we saved yesterday. Do the math.

12.02 p.m.

Agency: 23 Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce

Current Expenditure

Programme: 231 – Policy Development and Administration – \$464,238,000

Mr. Rajkumar: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Staffing Details. There is an increase of five contracted employees from 2021. Could the Hon. Minister give the designations and emoluments of these new staff?

Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce [Ms. Walrond]: The increase caters for one Advisor to the Ministry, with effect from January, 2021, a Legal Assistant, a Systems Support Officer, one Expenditure, Planning and Management Analyst (EPMA), and one Electrician.

Mr. Rajkumar: Sir, I asked for the emoluments.

Ms. Walrond: The salary of the Advisor is \$374,500.

Mr. Sears: With reference to line item 6117, Temporary Employees, I see the employment of four temporary staff. Would the Hon. Minister kindly share what positions are being offered under Temporary Employees?

Ms. Walrond: The increase caters for two Clerk III, one Driver, and one Office Assistant. That is it; four new employees.

Mr. Mahipaul: What we have noticed in this budget is a very large increase under line item 6284, Other, and this Ministry is no exception. The line item, Other, 6284, has jumped from \$13,062,000 in 2021 to \$114,372,000 now. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to lay over the breakdown of this amount for this line item, Other?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, lay over...

Ms. Walrond: I will speak to this line item. This increase caters for marketing and communication activities to promote Guyana as a business and investment destination. It would include advertising, public relations, promotional video production, radio and television programmes, among others.

Mr. Rajkumar: Line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads: There is an allocation of \$9,800,000 million in the budget. Could the Hon. Minister say where these roads are to be maintained?

Ms. Walrond: This is for the rehabilitation of the main roads in the National Exhibition Centre (NEC); the main roads from the main gate to the main auditorium.

Mr. Mahipaul: I trust that regarding line item 6284, the Minister would be kind enough to lay over the breakdown. I want to ask, with this increased spending and this increased focus on policy development and administration, does the Hon. Minister believe that her staff complement is adequate to execute this work? Is there a need, in her view, to increase the personnel so as to ensure that the spending is effective?

Ms. Walrond: The Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce has a track record of properly and efficiently executing its mandate and its work. It has been exemplary, and it will continue with that record.

Mr. Mahipaul: Sir, a follow-up: I do hear the Hon. Minister, but the numbers we have before us indicate that what was budgeted in 2021 is not what was spent in total. It is against that backdrop and given that there was shortfall in terms of the spending in 2021, and notwithstanding a significant increase for 2022, the question was asked. Against that backdrop, would the Minister

at least endeavour to say if the department requires more personnel to effectively spend the amount of money?

Ms. Walrond: No, please. The department does not require any more personnel at this point.

Mr. Rajkumar: Line item 6281 – Security Services: There is an allocation of \$50,603,000. Could the Hon. Minister give us a breakdown as to the location and the cost of the security hourly rate?

Ms. Walrond: The increase in security services caters for the provision of security services *via* competitive bidding at current rates.

Mr. Mahipaul: This same line item. Is there an increase in location for the security officers of this programme, or is it the same places where they are currently providing the services that were provided in 2021?

Ms. Walrond: The locations have not increased *per se*, but there will be an increase of security services at the NEC. Because of the size of the compound, we recognise that we need more security services there.

Mr. Mahipaul: Would the Minister be kind enough to say what the number is that she is looking at in terms of the increase? From what number to what number?

Ms. Walrond: It is from nine to 12. At the NEC, more buildings are going to be going up there to house some... There will be more buildings that will be erected, and so it has increased from nine buildings to 12.

Mr. Mahipaul: A clarification: are you moving from nine security officers to 12 security officers?

Mr. Chairman: Is that a clarification or do you want to restate what you stated?

Mr. Mahipaul: It is a question. I am asking if the Hon. Minister is indicating...

Mr. Chairman: That is what she said. What are you clarifying?

Mr. Mahipaul: Nine security officers.

Mr. Chairman: To twelve.

Mr. Mahipaul: For the nine security officers...

Ms. Chairman: Hon. Minister, please, you could answer.

Ms. Walrond: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Mahipaul: For the nine security officers, are those the officers who were existing in 2021 that the \$34 million plus paid for?

Ms. Walrond: Yes, the same ones.

Mr. Mahipaul: So, \$34,768,000 was paid for nine security officers under Policy Development and Administration, Programme 231. We are now moving to twelve security officers, where we will be paying an estimated amount of \$50,603,000. Is that what the Hon. Minister is telling this Committee?

Ms. Walrond: We envision the increase in prices because we will be going out back to the competitive bidding process. At the current rates, yes, that is exactly what is going to happen.

Mr. Mahipaul: Could the Hon. Minister provide to this Committee a breakdown of the nine security officers who were paid the \$34,768,000 so that we could understand was the rate at which they were paid? This is for the nine security officers.

Ms. Walrond: Yes, I will provide the breakdown.

Programme: 231 – Policy Development and Administration – \$464,238,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 231 Policy Development and Administration – \$53,000,000

Mr. Mahipaul: Could the Hon. Minister provide us with a breakdown of the \$38,000,000 for project code, 1214700? I see the legend is guiding us that it is for:

“...provision for bridge, drains and trestles...”

Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to just give us a breakdown of the sum?

Ms. Walrond: It is for construction of concrete drains at the main auditorium at the National Exhibition Centre. There will be four of them. There is the construction of two trestles at the National Exhibition Centre, and the construction of two concrete bridges, external, at the National Exhibition Centre as well.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Rajkumar.

Mr. Rajkumar: No more questions.

Mr. Sears: With reference to Land Transport, project code 2406300, it states:

“Purchase of vehicles.”

Could the Hon. Minister please breakdown what vehicles are being purchased and for what purpose?

Ms. Walrond: Is this programme 1, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Sears?

Mr. Sears: Land transport. [**An. Hon. Member:** *Inaudible.*] My apologies.

Mr. Chairman: We are not there as yet. Sorry, Minister.

Programme: 231 Policy Development and Administration – \$53,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 232 - Business Development, Support and Promotion – \$904,295,000

Mr. Rajkumar: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Staffing Details. There is an increase of one employee. Could the Hon. Minister give us the designation and emolument of that new staff?

12.17 p.m.

Ms. Walrond: Mr. Chairman, this increase caters for one Head of the Scrap Metal Unit, and it also caters for salary increases that were given in 2021.

Mr. Rajkumar: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Could the Hon. Minister say which organisations will benefit from the budgeted sum of \$800 million?

Ms. Walrond: They are the Small Business Bureau (SBB) and the Guyana National Bureau of Standards (GNBS).

Mr. Sears: Line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence: We see an increase of just under \$5 million. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to shine some light as to what justifies the increase?

Ms. Walrond: This increase caters for the reclassification of the expenditure from the Chart of Accounts (COA) 6265 to 6261, as a result of the purchase of single airline tickets previously catered for under the Chart of Accounts 6265, as well as for container loading activities for the Scrap Metal Unit at multiple locations on the same day. There are about one to four containers being loaded at each location from 8.00 a.m. in the morning to 6.00 p.m. in the evening.

Programme: 232 – Business Development, Support and Promotion – \$904,295,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 232 – Business Development, Support and Promotion – \$3,783,434,000.

Mr. Rajkumar: Project code 2406300 – Land Transport: There is \$11,500,000 budgeted for the purchase of vehicles and ATVs. Could the Hon. Minister give us a breakdown as to how many ATVs and other vehicles will be purchased, and whether these vehicles will be new vehicles?

Ms. Walrond: That would be one ATV for Region 9's business incubator and three motor vehicles for the scrap metal yard inspections, and they are not brand-new vehicles.

Mr. Rajkumar: Project code 4404200 – Small Business Development Fund: Some \$300 million is allocated, and the benefits are for improving access to training and financing of micro and small enterprise development. The question is, could the Hon. Minister say how many businesses

are anticipated to benefit from this fund in 2022, and what mechanism does the Ministry have to ensure the beneficiaries use the funds for the intended purpose?

Ms. Walrond: We are targeting, at the Small Business Bureau, 800 grants with this amount. Last year, in 2021, we achieved our targets. I believe we were told that was the first time the Small Business Bureau had actually been able to achieve its targets for grant distribution. We have very robust scrutiny and a robust application process as well as follow-up with the small business applicants. When they are given their grants, we also continue to do developmental training with the applicants and the persons who receive the grants. Regarding the question that the Hon. Member posed about whether we are sure they will use it for the purpose, we have methods of verification. We do site visits. Before the grants are given, project proposals are done, and invoices have to be submitted for the exact amounts, and what needs to be purchased. It is a very robust system of verification. We do not just hand the grants out. It is very robust work before the grants are given and with the follow-up afterwards.

Mr. Rajkumar: The Minister just spoke about training...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, if you are going to use language like that, we are going to have to, at this time, ask you to leave.

Mr. Rajkumar: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister spoke about training. Could the Hon. Minister say what amount is allocated to facilitate training of small and micro business entrepreneurs in the different administrative regions?

Ms. Walrond: I would like to allude to our record for 2021 just to give the Hon. Member an idea of what we plan on building on. In 2021, we trained about 2,000 persons in all regions. The areas of training included business plan writing, small business management and recordkeeping. I, myself, have been present at some of these very training sessions across the country. Let me correct myself. The number of persons trained was about 1,300 in 2021. This year, in 2022, we are targeting 2,000 persons. The areas are business plan writing, as I said, recordkeeping, and WhatsApp for business. We plan on building and expanding areas of training in terms of accessing financing – the financial management training – marketing training and small business management training. These are all plans for 2022. So, yes, we are planning and building on the record that we already established in 2021. It is quite a successful one, I must say.

Mr. Rajkumar: Project code 4503300 – Industrial Development: There is a sum of \$699.8 million allocated under this project code. Could the Hon. Minister say what nature of upgrade is contemplated at the Lethem, Belvedere, Coldingen and Wakenaam locations?

Ms. Walrond: At the Lethem Industrial Estate, the upgrades that we contemplate and that we will undertake are a security hut, the security gates with barrier and lights and landscaping around the business incubator centre.

At the Belvedere Industrial Estate, we will undertake the construction of internal concrete drains and the construction of a building to house the blow moulding system that is at the incubator.

At the Coldingen Industrial Estate, we will have the construction of a signboard with lights and the renovation of the internal concrete drains.

At the Wakenaam Factory, we will be doing the completion of three buildings that are currently uncompleted and those are the plantain chip factory, the staff building and the generator hut building.

Mr. Rajkumar: Is there any allocation from this sum to further equip the Lethem and Belvedere facilities?

Ms. Walrond: No, Mr. Chairman. There is nothing in this budget for the equipping.

Mr. Rajkumar: Could the Hon. Minister state what amount will be spent on the Essequibo industrial estate and could the Hon. Minister state where this Essequibo industrial estate would be located?

Ms. Walrond: Could the Hon. Member refer me to the project code to which he is speaking?

Mr. Rajkumar: It is the same Project code 4503300 – Industrial Development. It is page 112 in the volume...

Ms. Walrond: Yes, please, Mr. Chairman. Could the Hon. Member repeat the question in relation to the Essequibo industrial area?

Mr. Rajkumar: What amount out of the \$699 million will be spent on the Essequibo industrial estate and where would it be located?

Ms. Walrond: It is at Onderneeming, Essequibo. It will be \$36 million for the clearing of the land. This is for bulldozing, cutting, grubbing, piling and the trees and all the necessary preparations for the land at Essequibo.

Mr. Rajkumar: Project code 4502800 – Rural Enterprise Development: There is an allocation of \$2 billion for the enhancement of enterprise development. Could the Hon. Minister say what this project entails?

Ms. Walrond: The rural enterprise development caters for the construction of two call centre facilities – the shells – and other co-investment projects.

Mr. Sears: Along the lines of the same project code under which the question was just asked, may I ask the Hon. Minister where these call centres would be located? Just to go back a little bit, I have a follow-up question for the previous project code.

Ms. Walrond: The initial locations earmarked for the rural development are Regions 2 and 6.

Mr. Sears: Going back to project code 4503300, Industrial Development, with regard to the industrial site for Linden, what is the location and how much is the allocated to it?

12.32 p.m.

Ms. Walrond: The location is Amelia's Ward, and it is \$26.9 million initially allocated.

Programme: 232 – Business Development, Support and Promotion – \$3,783,434,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 233 – Consumer Protection – \$137,256,000

Mr. Rajkumar: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: There is an allocation of \$17.5 million. Could the Hon. Minister say which organisations are contemplated to benefit from this allocation?

Ms. Walrond: The Competition and Consumer Affairs Commission.

Programme: 233 – Consumer Protection – \$137,256,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 233 – Consumer Protection – \$1,498,000

Programme: 233 – Consumer Protection – \$1,498,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 234 – Tourism Development and Promotion – \$658,639,000

Mr. Rajkumar: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: In the staffing details, there is an increase from seven to 12 employees. Could the Hon. Minister say what are the designations and salaries of those new employees?

Ms. Walrond: The five additional staff being reflected are not new staff; they are staff who were awaiting a renewal of their contracts at the time of the 2021 Budget, hence the difference in the staffing details. These are two Cleaners and three Machine Operators.

Mr. Rajkumar: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: There is \$481,000,000 allocated. Again, could the Hon. Minister say which organisation will benefit from these funds?

Ms. Walrond: This is a subvention to the Guyana Tourism Authority (GTA).

Mr. Rajkumar: Could the Hon. Minister say whether the Regional Tourism Committee will benefit from the allocation of these sums? With the Regional Tourism Committee, all regions are supposed to have one.

Ms. Walrond: Not for subventions; they are under another line item, not this one.

Mr. Sears: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: We see a significant jump from \$2.81 million to \$8.5 million. Could the Hon. Minister kindly share if this is a reflection of any increase in electricity charges or anything other than that?

Ms. Walrond: This increase caters for the monthly increase of electricity consumption at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre (ACCC) because of more events that are being hosted at the facility.

Mr. Sears: Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: We see an increase here. Could the Hon. Minister kindly share what national events or any new events this sum caters for?

Ms. Walrond: This line item caters for support/participation in the following events: Agri-tourism, sports fishing, cultural and heritage tourism, regional tourism development, sports tourism, Mashramani, Phagwah, regattas, Wedding Expo, Independence, Arrival Day celebrations, Caribbean Premier League (CPL), Waken am Expo, Moruka Expo, Emancipation, motor racing, yacht rally, Rupununi Arts and Music Festival, Diwali, Christmas tree light up and the Department of Tourism retreat.

Programme: 234 – Tourism Development and Promotion – \$658,639,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 234 – Tourism Development and Promotion – \$73,500,000.

Programme: 234 – Tourism Development and Promotion – \$73,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Let us thank the Hon. Minister and her staff for taking us through her agency. Thank you, Hon. Minister. It is 12.41 p.m., let the Assembly resume.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Members. Please join with me in extending a welcome to four-term Member of Parliament, Mr. Neendkumar, and also, one-term Member of Parliament, Mr. James Bond. They joined us for the last hour to listen to the debate. We want to continue to wish them well in their endeavours. Thank you very much. Hon. Members, this is good time to take the suspension.

Assembly suspended at 12.42 p.m.

Assembly resumed at 2.17 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Hon. Members, please be seated. Hon. Members, we would resolve ourselves into committee.

Assembly in Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: We would now invite the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Minister and his team. As the Minister gets in place, I want to say that we had an extended lunch so I would skip the afternoon suspension. If we are still here for the dinner suspension, we will take that one. At the end of the last agency, which took just about 39 minutes, we had 54 minutes which will be carried over. Did you note that, Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson?

Mr. Patterson: [*Inaudible.*]

Agency 26: Ministry of Natural Resources

Current Expenditure

Programme: 261 – Policy Development and Administration – \$361,924,000

Mr. Patterson: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees, in 2021, you expended... your actual was \$123.9, even allowing for the increase. The year 2022 shows an increase in allocation. Could the Minister state the two additional employees? Additionally, could you provide the designations and emoluments of the top three paid employees under this line item?

Minister of Natural Resources [Mr. Bharrat]: Let me thank the Hon. Member for the question asked. There is an increase of \$59 million because it is, firstly, to cater for the 7% increase. Secondly, a few staff were paid under the Ministry of Finance.

2.20 p.m.

They are now transferred to the Ministry of Natural Resources. The other part of the question... The three top designations are: Director of Climate Change – \$1.3 million, Legal Advisor – \$813,000 and Permanent Secretary (PS) – \$804,000.

Mr. Patterson: Could you repeat that?

Mr. Chairman: Could you repeat the emoluments again?

Mr. Bharrat: The Director of Climate Change – \$1,377,090; Legal Advisor – \$813,200; and the Permanent Secretary – \$804,455.

Programme: 261 – Policy Development and Administration – \$361,924,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 261 – Policy Development and Administration – \$2,200,000

Programme: 261 – Policy Development and Administration – \$2,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 262 – Natural Resource Management – \$472,603,000

Mr. Patterson: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There is a reduction of 25 employees under this head. Could the Hon. Minister provide some details in the sense of the reduction and the policy direction that [*inaudible*]?

Mr. Bharrat: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: This has moved from 63 employees to 36 employees. This covers the Compliance Department in the Ministry of Natural Resources. When we took Office, there were 63 members of staff, including the Director in the Compliance Department. However, this was reduced to 36. We had a number of resignations. We also had a number of Wardens who reached the age of retirement and a few whose services were terminated for performance.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much for the explanation, Hon. Minister, but the salary was \$169 million and it is now \$164 million. The Legend states 38 and you are claiming that it is 36. How come you removed 25 employees for all these reasons and is still at the same salary level?

Mr. Bharrat: I am advised that the two other members of staff left recently. That is why it was reflected as 38 and not 36.

Mr. Chairman: And, the second part of the question...

Mr. Patterson: Just for clarity, Hon. Minister, in 2021, there were 63 employees before you sent away 25 employees. Now there are 27 employees. You expended \$693 million. These employees have departed, you are now down to 36 employees, and you are asking for \$164 million.

Mr. Bharrat: Again, Mr. Chairman, these employees, as I mentioned, would have left recently. It is as recent as in January, 2021. The \$164 million is catering for the 7% increase in salary.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, with all due respect, 10% is \$16 million. The 7% increase means that you budgeted... \$199 million was the budget; you used \$169 million. You got rid of, or whatever word you want to use, 27 employees who are no longer there. The 7% increase cannot bring the figure up to \$164 million.

Mr. Bharrat: I am advised that they were paid for January in 2021 and it would actually be reflected in the actual in the 2021 Estimates.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Line item 6222 – Field Materials and Supplies: I see that there is a sharp increase in the budgeted sum. I am just wondering what the new materials and supplies are which were added to this.

Mr. Bharrat: Let me thank the Hon. Member for the question. This year we are on course, and we plan to open the Aranka mining station which will be a new station added to the Bartica Station which houses the Corp of Wardens that assist the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) and the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) with monitoring activities in the mining and forest locations throughout the entire country.

Mr. Patterson: Line item 6284: Could the Hon. Minister disaggregate the \$208 million, please?

Mr. Bharrat: The sum of \$200 million is budgeted for the National Forest Inventory (NFI) programme. This programme was started in 2018. It was estimated that this programme would cost \$1.4 billion over a five-year period. However, we are proposing to complete this forest inventory programme in 2022 at a total cost of \$784 million. Hence, we are requesting the final \$200 million to finish off the National Forest Inventory. The other expenses associated with this line item will cater for printing of brochures and magazines. Thank you.

Mr. Patterson: I am seeking your guidance under line item 6321 which has zero item under it, but it has some large statutory agencies – the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC), the Guyana Gold Board and the Guyana Forestry Commission – under this Ministry and they are listed in Appendix T. We have questions on that, but I am seeking your guidance on this matter.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, could you guide us with respect to where those agencies fall, if it is not here?

Mr. Bharrat: Mr. Chairman, there is no allocation to the line item. Besides, these agencies are statutory agencies. I do not believe we have ever discussed their budgetary allocations.

Mr. Ramjattan: We just discussed about five or six under the Ministry of Agriculture – the National Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (NAREI) and all of them. If we do not allow questions under the appendix, which comes under the Ministry of Natural Resources Natural Resource Management, then these statutory bodies will not suffer scrutiny by virtue of the zero being there. I think it was Mr. Winston Murray, years ago, who said that zero does have a value. Otherwise, if you say that, because it is zero, we cannot ask any questions... You cannot say that we are now excluded from scrutinising what is happening in GFC and GGMC simply because they make their moneys. It should be allowed.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, no one is saying we are excluding questioning. Under the Ministry of Agriculture, there was a lumpsum which covered all the agencies.

Mr. Ramjattan: That is correct.

Mr. Chairman: We had a number there which appeared in the same table that at which you are looking. All we are asking the Hon. Minister is to point out to us if those are coming from within these allocations under this head. Right now, I see a \$0 and I cannot permit any questions under that head. I am sure we will find it somewhere as we move along.

Mr. Ramjattan: This is the difficulty we will have. These are self-generating revenues, so they did not have a subvention, but they come under the Ministry. In this Parliament, this Minister is the one who has oversight over those boards – Guyana Forestry Commission, GGMC and on. If it is \$0, we will then be excluded.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, as I understand it, and I do not want to speak for the Hon. Minister of Finance, these Estimates consist of sums which we are going to appropriate to be spent from the Consolidated Fund for the works contained in these Estimates. If there are agencies that are not drawing moneys from the Consolidated Fund, it is not going to be included here. I am sure that there are other opportunities to ask questions on these agencies, for example, questions to the Ministers responsible and the Economic Services Committee. There are many other opportunities, but we are dealing with the appropriation which we have to make from the Consolidated Fund. Am I accurate there, Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance?

Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance [Dr. Singh]:
You are absolutely correct, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Sir.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, through you, I have a question on the very line item my colleague was questioning. Since the entity is not getting any money from the Consolidated Fund, could the Hon. Minister state for this House and the people of Guyana the balance of statement as at 31st December, 2021?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I cannot put that question because this Committee scrutinises the allocations being requested, and I am sure you could ask those questions through many other means outside of this format.

2.35 p.m.

Programme: 262 – Natural Resource Management – \$472,603,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 262 – Natural Resource Management – \$18,400,000

Dr. Cummings: Project code 2406800 – Land Transport: The profile shows that it is land transport and that the project entails purchase of vehicles as well as all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). I guess they are for transportation and for monitoring of the natural resources. Could you state the

quantity? Could you disaggregate which is for ATVs and for the vehicles and the specifications of the vehicles with the locations?

Mr. Bharrat: Mr. Chairman, the allocation is proposed to purchase two ATVs and two four-door pickups. All the vehicles proposed to be purchased in this Budget are for the new station in the Aranka area which covers one of the main mining districts in the country. We have most of our production coming out of that area, both in forestry and mining. More than likely the pickups... and we are in the habit of doing that. We buy the four-door Toyota vehicles so that they can transport the Corps of Wardens and carry cargo at the back. Toyota vehicles along with the Honda ATVs are mostly suited for the terrain.

Programme: 262 – Natural Resource Management – \$18,400,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, let us turn to pages 224 and 225. Hon. Members, I now put the question that the sum stated for Agency 26...

Mr. Patterson: You never put [*Inaudible*]. You said turn to page 225 and you are now moving on, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Patterson, if you want to address the Speaker you may stand and I can acknowledge you and then you may speak.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I said that you said to turn to the page. You never put the question so that we could so we could [*Inaudible*] and you are now closing the head.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I think you are still *jumping the gun*. Yes. I had said turn to pages 224 and 225.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 264 – Petroleum Management – \$578,779,000

Mr. Patterson: We will not detain the Minister much longer.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, you have a lot of time.

Mr. Patterson: Yes. I know. I saw that you seemed to be in a rush. Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I am simply asking the Minister if any of the employees of the Wales development authority, or whatever it is, are paid or contracted under this line item?

Mr. Bharrat: Mr. Chairman, the simple answer to the question is no.

Mr. Patterson: Follow-up: Is the Wales development authority, or whatever the name is that was mentioned, housed anywhere under your Ministry if not under this line item?

Mr. Bharrat: Mr. Chairman, the answer to the question, again, is no. For clarity, I wish to state that there is no Wales development authority yet. There is a Wales Development Committee which is made up of representatives from different agencies, including staff members of the Ministry of Natural Resources. There is no authority yet.

Mr. Patterson: Line item 6284 – Other: Could the Minister disaggregate the \$212.6 million?

Mr. Bharrat: Mr. Chairman, the sum of \$15 million goes to the third-party inspectorate which is stationed on the floating production storage and offloading (FPSO) vessel. As we are aware, now, soon it will be for two FPSO vessels and not only one as the Liza Unity will start up very soon.

The sum of \$18 million goes towards subscriptions to a number of international agencies and journals, including, if I may name a few, S&P Global Platts, Bloomberg Terminal, OnePetro, the International Energy Agency and Oracle Crystal Ball. These are all international agencies that help us to track vessels and also assist us at the Ministry of Natural Resources to seek out the best prices. They have also helped us tremendously to reduce the demurrage fees or costs that the Government of Guyana paid previously.

The sum of \$8 million will go towards the advertisement, design and printing of brochures and magazines for conferences like Offshore Technology Conference (OTC), and like the international conference which is coming up next week. The sum of \$88 million will go towards the review and evaluation of Field Development Plans (FDPs). The sum of \$60 million will go towards the cost recovery audit. For clarity, if I may state that this is for the audit of the other blocks other than the Stabroek Block. There have never been any audits done on the other seven blocks that were awarded except for the Stabroek Block which we know that there is an ongoing

audit and one that will start very soon as well. The sum of \$2 million is for legal services and \$20 million is for the implementation of the local content secretariat which involves the register, the portal, the database, certificates, *et cetera*.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you, Hon. Minister. Let us start off with the audits for the Stabroek Block which you said are ongoing and as you just mentioned. Where are those funds allocated in the 2022 Budget since you said the cost recovery audits are not for the pre-2015, pre-2018 audits?

Mr. Bharrat: The provision for that is catered under the World Bank loan that we have. It is in the capital for the very programme. [**Mr. Nandlall:** *Inaudible*].

Mr. Patterson: If he cannot keep up, it is not my fault. Concerning the sum of \$88 million for Field Development Plans, which field development are you doing? Is it for current one – Yellowtail?

Mr. Bharrat: Mr. Speaker, I had to get the right pronunciation. I think the right pronunciation is Uaru-plus. This is the other development after Yellowtail. Based on timelines and the interaction between our technical teams and Esso Exploration & Production Guyana Limited (EEPGL), we are expecting the Field Development Plan for this Uaru-plus before the end of 2022. We are making provision for that now. [**Mr. Ramjattan:** *Inaudible*].

Mr. Patterson: Under the same line item 6294, Other, the sum of \$170 million was budgeted in 2021. The actual was \$171 million, and it is now going back to \$127 million. The first question would be: What was not implemented in 2021? The second question would be: What is now budgeted to be implemented in 2022 as you fell short by \$100 million in 2021?

Mr. Bharrat: Mr. Chairman, in 2021 the allocation was made to cover demurrage costs which we significantly managed to reduce. Due to prudent management of the sector by the Ministry of Natural Resources, we would have reduced those costs. This year, for 2022, we are asking, only, for \$53 million of the \$127 million to cover demurrage costs. We are estimated to have, at least, 90 lifts in 2022 due to the start-up of the Liza Unity as I mentioned earlier. The other provision in this sum of \$127 million is the sum of \$41 million. Again, this is for third-party inspection. This is Guyana National Bureau of Standards (GNBS), a local entity, which will be conducting

this third-party inspection, and which has a fulltime presence on the Liza Destiny and will also have a fulltime presence on the Liza Unity as well.

Programme: 264 – Petroleum Management – \$578,779,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 264 – Petroleum Management – \$207,000,000

Mr. Patterson: Project code 4404600 – Oil and Gas Sector Development Programme: This is the World Bank International Development Association's (IDA) funded project. In the capital project profile, there are six different subheads. I will start with the gas-to-power study. Could the Hon. Minister provide us with an update?

Mr. Bharrat: Mr. Chairman, I can provide an update of the gas-to-energy project for the House, for the sake of our viewers and for the people of Guyana, generally. As we know the provisions for the gas-to-energy project falls under the Office of the Prime Minister. However, as I mentioned, I can provide an update for that project. I think we would have exhausted a lot of time and energies explaining to the people of Guyana what the project entails, how it will be implemented and the benefits that it will bring to Guyanese.

2.50 p.m.

It is not a project in the pipeline. It is a project in the implementation stage. I think the Hon. Prime Minister did mention it. The Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson, as well as the other Hon. Members on the opposite side, knows that part of the project is being funded from cost oil, covered under the Production Sharing Agreement (PSA).

However, the Government of Guyana, through the Prime Minister's Office, and as mentioned by the Hon. Prime Minister yesterday, will be constructing the power plant. We know that it is a project that will deliver 250 megawatts of net power to the Guyanese people. This is something I believe all Guyana would welcome, even the Hon. Members on the opposite side. I know they will benefit from it as well as all of Guyana. I could understand the scrutiny, and we are always open to that. I want to assure the Hon. Member and the entire Guyana that there is no secrecy in

this project. There is no hidden agenda expense in this project. Everything will be disclosed at the right time, of course, because now we are only conducting the geotechnical and geophysical studies, the lidar environmental studies, the cadastral survey. These are all activities that are ongoing right now. There is no physical work that has started at the site as yet, hence the budgetary allocation in the Prime Minister's allocations to start that work in 2022. Thank you.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. We had the Prime Minister yesterday and, as I said, he was quite clueless about it. I think you have provided a more elaborate explanation. However, in the Gas to Power Study that you have in here, what amount of money has been expended? I was hoping that you would go specifically to that and not to the whole project. You have a study in here. What has been done? What has been executed? What has been completed? What is the status of them as well as the cost attributed in this Budget for them? We know what the Prime Minister said, even though he did not explain or he did not know what to say. We know the project that you are trying to build.

Mr. Bharrat: I believe what the Hon. Member is looking at is the profile for the World Bank project, which entails expenditure for the gas-to-energy project over a period of time, but none has been allocated under the Ministry of Natural Resources, for 2022, to conduct any study for the gas-to-energy project.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I spoke to the Hon. Minister before saying [*inaudible*]. There are six items under the legend in the capital profile. Could the Hon. Minister disaggregate, specifically items one to six, how much money is allocated? Then we could move on from there. I was hoping that we would not have to go through this.

Mr. Bharrat: What I could do is to disaggregate the \$200 million allocated to the Ministry of Natural Resources from the World Bank project and listed under the different components for that project. I think that would probably clear up and justify or show the Hon. Member that no moneys were allocated to the Ministry of Natural Resources for the gas-to-energy project even though the profile stated the Gas to Power Study, among many others, which is the profile under the World Bank project. The World Bank project, as we know it, is a five-year programme that will come to an end in 2023/2024. Obviously, maybe next year or the other year, or some other

time, we will come back for funding under the World Bank project under that head. But for now, I can give a breakdown of the \$200 million under the different components.

Mr. Chairman, \$22.4 million is allocated to hire a law firm to provide legislative and regulatory support. We would have mentioned several times that we intend to have a model, internationally recognised PSA that would bring far more fiscal benefits to Guyana and the people of Guyana. Unfortunately, we have not had a discovery in the other blocks of commercial quantity until recently in the Corentyne block. Work will have to begin this year on ensuring that we have a model PSA that would bring far more benefits to Guyanese than the Stabroek PSA. Added to that, under this very provision, we had promised to look at the Petroleum (Exploration and Production) Act of 1986, which we know definitely needs to be updated with what is happening in the petroleum sector now. This provision will start that process.

Allocated too is \$38.7 million for the third and fourth Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) reports. Under this too, we have already contracted the independent administrator, the Binder Dijker Otte (BDO) firm out of the United Kingdom (UK) that is responsible for drafting or crafting that report and, of course, the Multi Stakeholder's Group (MSG) is the body that will review that report and make the final approval.

Also, as I have mentioned, the audit of the Stabroek Block, 2018 to 2020, is catered for under this provision of \$200 million again. It is for the hiring of a technical firm to provide... [**An Hon. Member:** *[Inaudible]*] Sorry, it is the sum of \$10.7 million because we envisage this to be a multi-year process, but we want to start it in 2022. As a matter of fact, we are committed to ensuring that we start the audit in 2022 for the years 2018 to 2020. I just want to put that issue to rest. I want to say clearly, that the Government of Guyana is 100% committed to ensuring that we conduct this audit because it is our responsibility, being a responsible Government, to ensure that we audit the expenses of the oil exploration in the oil sector. We are committed to ensuring that we do this, but everyone knows there has been a slight delay in starting the process, and we also know that it is because we want to ensure that we build local capacity.

We cannot bring a local content bill to the National Assembly for providing food, engineering, welding and fabrication, and then we are going to totally outsource the auditing of our expenses. We want to build capacity. To date, we – well, not we – have worked with a local consortium to

put together four leading firms in Guyana. They have come together to form themselves into that consortium and now they will work with an identified international company. We have ensured that, in the terms of reference (ToR), the international company knows fully that it is a transfer of knowledge process, it is a training process; so it is not only doing the audit or conducting the audit, but it is also training or building capacity in our local auditors in Guyana. Maybe at some point in time, in the future, we could have local firms conducting a full audit of expenses in the oil and gas sector. That is the idea behind this. Besides saving from this, this would also help us to save revenue. It would also allow us, as a Government and a country, to have up-to-date audit of the records and expenses. We do not have to wait until 2018 to audit from 1999 to 2017, or wait until 2022 to audit 2018 to 2020, but we could bring it up to date to, maybe, where we could even do quarterly audits or half-yearly audits because we have the local capacity in Guyana.

Once again, I want to assure all Guyana that we are committed to ensuring that we conduct the audit of the Stabroek Block, to complete the audit from 1999 to 2017, 2018 to 2022, and then move into the other years; as well as to conduct the audit for the other remaining seven blocks – the Corentyne Block, Canje Block, Kaieteur Block, Orinduik Block and Kanuku Block – and to conduct the audits of exploration in those blocks as well. Based on the work programmes that we have seen from the oil companies – and we have been working with them almost on a daily basis – they indicated that we would have significant exploration activities over the next two to three years. At some point in time, we need to start auditing those operators as well, besides just the Stabroek Block and ExxonMobil.

There is also a provision of \$51 million to hire a technical firm. This technical firm is the firm that would actually assess our petroleum sector in totality and advise the legal team as to what changes are necessary or needed in the Petroleum (Exploration and Production) Act of 1986 and in reservoir management.

There is also a provision of \$5.3 million for our consultant to start looking at the design of our data repository. It is due now. We have been in production since 2019. We have been in exploration for a long time – 1999. We have found oil since 2015. At some point in time, like all petroleum production nations, we must move to have our own data repository or data bank. Presently, we do not have it in Guyana. Presently, it is in Houston. It is not advantageous for us, as a country, to continue in this manner, but to bring it to Guyana and to have it onsite, or in-

house, so that we could be able to manage the sector in a more prudent manner. This allocation is to do the assessment and the design for that data repository, to tell us what hardware is needed and how we could move forward in setting up that data repository.

Also, added to that, is \$23.7 million to hire the firm to conduct the Strategic Environment and Social Assessment (SESA). We have already started this process. We have already advertised this. It is at the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB). We intend to complete this evaluation soon and to award the contract to the companies so that they could start working. The component D, which is \$47.5 million, basically caters for project management, that is, the salaries, their benefits and the operational cost for the Petroleum Department, formerly the Department of Energy. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Programme: 264 – Petroleum Management – \$207,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister and your staff for taking us through this agency's estimates. Hon. Members, let us now invite the Ministers of Public Works and their teams to join us in front.

3.05 p.m.

Agency: 31 Ministry of Public Works

Programme: 311 – Policy Development and Administration – \$1,691,511,000

Current Expenditure

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Member, may I turn our attention to line item 6113, Other Technical and Craft Skilled? Hon. Member I recognise, for 2021, you had a revised sum of \$7.7 million. What I notice is that you have an increase of \$8 million with the same number of staff remaining. Could you explain for this honourable House the reason for these increases when the staffing details remain constant?

Minister of Public Works [Bishop Edghill]: I thank the Hon. Member for the question. The increase here is not \$8 million. The total allocation for the year is \$8 million as against \$7.7 million. It is an increase of \$355,000 and as a result a 5% increase.

Mr. Ferguson: Hon. Member, thank you very much for the correction. May I turn our attention to line item 6241, Rental of Buildings? Could the Hon. Member state for this House the buildings that you are currently renting? Also, could we get the location where these buildings are and a disaggregation of the buildings? If they are too much, I do not mind you laying them over, Hon. Member.

Bishop Edghill: Again, I thank the Hon. Member for the question. Mr. Chairman, you would recall that this is a matter that came up for public discourse and contention, while we sat in the Opposition benches. Is the Hon. Member who is asking the question, and her Colleague who presided at the Ministry of Public Infrastructure who entered into an engagement with a distinguished Guyanese gentleman for the rental of a house to facilitate the United Nations (UN) offices...? Every quarter the taxpayers of Guyana paid US\$235,576 for the rental of this facility. It is just one building and this is a quarterly rental of US\$235,576.44 times four, at an exchange rate of average \$220 to one as a projection. This is what is responsible for this allocation. It is not a rental that we engaged when we came into office; it is something that we inherited. The Hon. Member who presided there is now asking me the question.

Mr. Patterson: The same line item. Could the Hon. Member state how many buildings the UN occupied previously that are now in the possession of the Government? How much rent did the Government previously pay? Could the Hon. Member say if all of the UN agencies are now housed in this compound?

Bishop Edghill: It is obvious that the Hon. Member who is asking the question is trying to do some damage control. [**Ms. Walton-Desir:** Answer the damn question.] Mr. Chairman, did I hear somebody say, I must “answer the damn question?” [**Mr. Nandlall:** Yes.] Did I hear that?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, please continue. I do not know what you heard. I am listening very keenly.

Bishop Edghill: The Government of Guyana as a State party has a responsibility to host United Nations agencies in Guyana. Historically, these agencies were hosted at different places. When you add the cumulative square footage of all of the five buildings that were being used before and compare it to what is being offered now, we are offering the people less and we are paying more. As a matter of fact, there is even no adequate parking for that facility as compared to what

existed before. The Hon. Member who is asking the question could not get an answer because we are dealing with allocations and appropriations for 2022, but he would like me to discuss what the expenditure of 2016 and 2017 was, which is not in this arrangement.

Mr. Chairman, I will indicate to you that in as much as we were dissatisfied at the time – because we questioned this in the National Assembly, and all the questions that the Hon. Member is asking me we asked him then to prove the justification that this rental was a necessary rental and it was cost savings, and he was unable to provide that information at the time while he was a sitting Minister. Now he would like me to come and defend that position – what was sure is that we continue the engagement because we are a responsible Government, and we are part of a state party. Even if we wanted to break this contract and find a better accommodation, which I think the Government of Guyana will do eventually because we should build a proper facility to host all the UN offices... In this contract, if we break the contract, we have to pay the distinguished gentleman, whom we are renting from, one year contract. That is the nature of the engagement.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister. Before Hon. Member Mr. Patterson takes the floor, I just want to caution Members once again about the use of language. During the break, I had to send a personal note to the Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul – I do not think he has retrieved it as yet – with respect to the language he has been using while creating some amount of heckle in the land. I am now listening keenly, noting that the Minister heard words or a word which would not have been allowed by me. Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson, you have the floor.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I do not want to detain us more. I would simply like to ask the honourable gentleman if he is aware that the UN selected the building *via* the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and through a... The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the agency that requested the building. Buildings are being paid under the Ministry. Is the Minister aware that the UN selected what is now called the UN house and recommended it is us? It was not the Government of Guyana. Is the Minister aware of that?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I do not see how it relates directly to the line item right now. Since you made a speech, I will ask the Minister if he wants to respond.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I am not aware. What I am aware of is that if we had invested US\$5 million, which we paid the gentleman – that is \$1 billion Guyana dollars – we would have

had a facility that we could have been hosting the UN agencies comfortably on a plot of land that is owned by the State. If we continue this rental for 10 years, that is \$2 billion; \$10 billion just like that. We are here going over things that we know should not have been done. The State party has a responsibility. While the State party has a responsibility, the UN would normally list some of the criteria they are looking for and we try to accommodate that, but it must also be dealt with in the context of what the State could afford. I think where we need to go in all of this, and I would signal that to the public today, is that we appreciate and welcome all the UN agencies operating in Guyana and we will be working assiduously to ensure that they are properly housed in an energy-efficient and cost-effective facility where they can all be comfortable. Thank you very much.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, through you, could I turn the Hon. Member's attention to line item 6272, Electricity Charges? I recognise that we had a budgeted sum of \$48 million for 2021 and we have expended some \$19 million. We have an approximate \$12 million increase for 2022. Could the Hon. Member state the reason for the increase and the areas that would be benefiting from this allocation, please? Thank you.

Bishop Edghill: What we did at the Ministry last year was to ensure we had proper reconciliation between our records and Guyana Power and Light (GPL). As a result of that reconciliation, we had cost savings. You would have noticed – I shall not say you, Sir, but in the past – we questioned this because, in the budgets that were presented by the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC), there were block sums in every Ministry for electricity charges and there was not necessarily reconciliation being done. We did the reconciliation and showed that we had savings. The budgetary allocation that is included here will also pay for what we have right now, and we are engaging additional buildings for other things that we are doing, and that is catered for in this appropriation that is being requested from the House.

Ms. Ferguson: Through you, Mr. Chairman, may I turn the Hon. Member's attention to line item 6281, Security Services? Hon. Member, I recognised that for 2021 we had a budgetary sum of \$96 million of which we spent a little less than that. What I recognise, there has been a significant increase for 2022 where this particular service is concerned. Could the Hon. Member

share with us, one, the reason for the wide increase? Secondly, which areas are likely to benefit from such services in the Ministry?

3.20 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, the reason for the increase is because we did not select, privately, a company to provide service, but we went out for competitive bidding following the Procurement (Amendment) Act 2003. It is based upon the lowest evaluated bidder that contracts were awarded. We will do the same thing in 2022. The areas that would benefit have to do with: the derelict site at Kuru-Kuru; the pontoon that we have at Butakari; the 28 Miles section of the Mabura road; the Wisroc site where we have a stockpile; the Permanent Secretary's (PS's) residence; Flat 18 at Echillibar Villas; the Government building at Plaisance; the Boskalis Guyana Incorporated building in Kingston; the Government flat at New Market Street; the Special Projects Unit (SPU) on the Railway Embankment; the Coldingen Workshop, East Coast Demerara; the Kingston compound, which is on Fort Street; the Kingston compound as well on Fort Street – as you know we have two buildings there; Wight's Lane, Kingston, which is where the Minister's offices are; and the Sea Defence Board compound at Kingston.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, this is the last question on this particular line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. Mr. Chair, to the Hon. Member, there has been a slight increase in the sums being sought for 2022 as against 2021. If the Hon. Member can assist, the sum for the Guyana Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) is \$384 million, could you explain the reason for this request? Thank you.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I came to this Committee last year and requested subsidies for the GCAA as we did in 2020. That was largely because of two things. One, when we left Office the GCAA's bank balance was in excess of \$1 billion. When we returned to Office, we were in deficit. We were in a Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) environment and the GCAA was not reaping the returns as it was accustomed to. We make significant sums by earnings for overpass flights, air navigational services that we provide to aircrafts that use our airspace to get to various destinations. Due to COVID-19 and the other restrictions, we lost significant revenue. Then, in order to keep our International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) compliance status, we needed to have a reserve fund of a particular level. We wanted to ensure that we preserve that

reserve fund and take care of operational expenses. The reduction of what is being given this year is a result of us anticipating that the overflights will pick up. As a matter of fact, I received a report just yesterday that we started to see an increase in flight overpass in our territory and our air navigational services are set to reap some more. This is basically because of the depleted balance at the GCAA and to compensate for the lack of income as a result of COVID-19. We are providing the subsidy to keep the entity moving and in full compliance. Thank you.

Ms. Ferguson: You know, Sir, it was the APNU/AFC Government that made it possible for the compliance level of the GCAA. We must be able to give credit where it ought to be given. That being said, Hon. Member, on the very line item 6321, I notice that you have a \$43 million increase for the Transport and Harbours Department. If my memory serves me accurately, I recall that the Minister in his budget speech spoke to the issue of a decrease in excise taxes for gasoline. Am I to understand that this full sum, the more than \$543 million, is wholly and solely for fuel, or is it for other activities that the department will be responsible for, Sir?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, the entire sum is not for fuel. You would recall and realise that most of our stellings are made of timber, Members, and they have to be maintained. We look forward to the time when we will be able to have sufficient money to invest in Capital Expenditure and provide proper ports that are resilient and long-lasting. For now, we have to keep the vessels going. We have to keep the fuel subsidy that has been traditional, but we also have to do some maintenance at our stellings as well.

Mr. Patterson: I would not delve into the response made just now about the Transport and Harbours Department and maintenance. Sir, under line item 6321 is the Berbice Bridge Company Incorporated (BBCI) and there is an allocation there for it. What I note is that the same allocation is there for 2020, 2021, and 2022. I would ask the Hon. Member, is this an indication that the vehicular traffic will not increase during 2022 despite the Government's claim of massive developments in Regions 5 and 6?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, we need to be reminded that the Berbice Bridge Company Incorporated is a public-private partnership (PPP) that is being run as a business. That is the way it has been since it was built and established. The previous Administration made some actions that are engaging the court. As a matter of fact, the distinguished gentleman, the Hon. Member

who asked the question, initiated those legal actions that took possession of the bridge. We, at this time, are in discussion with the Berbice Bridge Company Incorporated to establish two things. One, we as a country must find ways and means of sending signals to people that their investment would not be unnecessarily taken over by the State. Secondly, while they invest in Guyana, the interest of the country must also be best served.

As a result of that, we have engaged the Berbice Bridge Company Incorporated and we are having discussions with them. While we are discussing to come to a resolution to bring us out of the state that we are in as the result of the actions of my predecessor, the *status quo* of subsidies, where tolls are concerned, remains as good faith. I will be happy, at some time, to report to this National Assembly the significant developments of how we could get that public-private partnership going, un-interfered with by the State, and ensuring that the interest of the citizens of Guyana is protected also, at the same time.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much for the explanation. That was my question. However, could the Hon. Minister state if the order signed in November, 2018, is still in force? If it is, does he acknowledge that he has the power to dissolve the order and why has he not done it for the last 18 months?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, what I heard the Hon. Member asking is if I realise that I have the power to undo what he did, because he is the one who signed that order. We are a responsible Government. As a responsible Government, I just said that we are engaging the Berbice Bridge Company. Cabinet is discussing this matter. Based upon the discussions that we are having with the Berbice Bridge Company – the Hon. Attorney General is involved in this matter – I just said that I will be happy, at the appropriate time, to come to this National Assembly and tell the people of Guyana what the future is, which is that the bridge as a public-private partnership could continue and the interest of the people of Guyana could be protected and served. Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, in his first response, he indicated or insinuated that I and my Government performed an illegal act which is...

Mr. Chairman: He did not insinuate that. He said that it was an order you signed.

Mr. Patterson: The order that I signed was illegal.

Mr. Chairman: Did he say, illegal? Did you say, illegal?

Mr. Patterson: He did not say the word, illegal, but if you are in court...

Bishop Edghill: I never said so.

Mr. Patterson: That is all right, my apologies. May I rephrase, Sir? Is it the Government's intention to remove the order because it is not legal? That is the question.

Mr. Chairman: I do not know if I should put that again because I heard him say that they are a responsible Government, he is engaging, and at a later date he is willing to update. Am I wrong in my listening, Sir?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, you are absolutely correct.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Hon. Members, I now put the question.

Ms. Walton-Desir: Mr. Chairman, I have been trying to [*inaudible*] a question.

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Walton-Desir, you have the floor.

Ms. Walton-Desir: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to draw our attention to line item 6322, Subsidies and Contributions to International Organisations. Before you disallow it, I would ask you to hear me out?

Mr. Chairman: Before I disallow it? Would you withdraw that comment now, please, or else I will shut off your microphone?

Ms. Walton-Desir: Sir, I withdraw it.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Ms. Walton-Desir: What I was going to say is that there is zero value there. It was on that basis I supposed that you, in keeping with the rule that you said, where there is a zero value...

Mr. Chairman: Just put me back again to the line item.

Ms. Walton-Desir: The line item is 6322, Subsidies and Contributions to International Organisations. I want to draw our attention to the subsidies to the International Civil Aviation Organization. I note that there is a value there in 2021 of \$11,164,000 and then another \$21,565,000 but there is none budgeted for 2022. I am curious as to why that is so?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I will be happy to inform the Hon. Member that in our reconciliation, which is something that we are keen on doing – when you spend taxpayers' money you do not just pay it. You ensure that you are receiving service and the amount that needs to be paid is paid and nothing that is not to be paid is not paid – we discovered that we had some savings and we advanced to International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the ICAO. No payment, however, was made to the Caribbean Aviation Safety and Security Oversight System (CASSOS) for 2021. The CASSOS is the regional entity. We are basically updated, reconciled, and ahead of our game. That is why this [*inaudible*].

3.35 p.m.

Ms. Walton-Desir: Just so that I understand the Hon. Member correctly, because I know that when you divide it, you will realise that there are two payments in one. The Ministry has paid in advance for this year and last year. Is that what the Hon. Member is saying? Is that what he is saying as well, in respect of the international maritime organisation? Is it yes or so?

Bishop Edghill: I thought I was very clear that after we did the reconciliation, we discovered we had moneys that were appropriated. We have already advanced for this year.

Programme: 311 – Policy Development and Administration – \$1,691,511,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 311 Policy Development and Administration – \$2,725,487,000

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman for recognising me. Project code 1214800 – Government Buildings: I note here that there is an appropriated sum of more than \$2 billion. Could the Hon. Member provide a disaggregation? I notice in the profile legend, in Volume 3, there is payment of retention, provision for living quarters at Coldingen and construction of

office complexes. As I asked before, could the Hon. Member provide a disaggregation of this more than \$2 billion? What are the retentions for? Where are the living quarters at Coldingen? Where are these complexes to be constructed? It would be good if you can give us the dimensions and whether it would be made out of timber or concrete? Who are likely to be the beneficiaries of these buildings? Thank you very much.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you very much. Retention would be paid for works that were done in various flats at Echillibar Villas; retention would be paid for the rehabilitation work that was done at the boardroom and kitchen at Oranapai Towers; retention would be paid for rehabilitation works at the De Winkle Building; retention would be paid for rehabilitation to Government flats two and six at Main and New Market streets. [**An Hon. Member (Opposition):** Could you give the cost?] I could give you the cost. For the rehabilitation for the various flats at Echillibar Villas – \$2.5 million; rehabilitation of boardroom and kitchen at Oranapai Towers – \$570,000; retention would be paid for rehabilitation of De Winkle building – \$577,000; rehabilitation to Government flats two and six at Main and New Market Streets – \$386,000; rehabilitation of flats to three Echillibar Villas, Campbellville Georgetown – \$3.5 million; rehabilitation to washrooms, kitchen and Accounts Department – \$245,000; rehabilitation to offices for the ground and first floor retention – \$422,000; rehabilitation to the construction of the timber weather proofing system to the document centre – \$226,000; retention for the upgrade to the Parking area at the Ministry of Public Works compound 4th Street Kingston – \$290,000; retention for the construction of the guard hut and wash room at Camp and Lamaha streets – \$148,000; and retention for the construction of guard hut and washroom at Water street compound – \$139,000. Please give me one second. Mr. Chairman, the Government is the owner of property at Coldingen which was not utilised. We are improving that facility to be used and we have budgeted \$30 million for that. Construction for a fence, guard hut and the living quarters at Coldingen – \$15 million; and construction of office complexes \$2.6 billion.

What we are seeking to do here, and this is what we spoke about when we talk about the modernisation of Guyana, we have Government offices, for example, the Ministry that I preside over with my Colleague the Hon. Minister, Indar, in Kingston we have several buildings. We have Transport and Harbours, Maritime Administration Department (MARAD), the Work Services Group (WSG) and different buildings. The modern Guyana that we are talking about,

will see us putting all of our offices into a multi-storied office complex. That will be duplicated several times over around the government service. What will see is that we have to do the geotechnical studies, we have to do the designs, we have to get the supervisory services and ultimately, the advanced payment for civil works. This is what this allocation is to facilitate. Thank you very much, Sir.

Mr. Patterson: The same project code, I am particularly talking on the construction of the Officers building. To start off, where will this office complex be located? I will ask in small parts.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, the intent based upon the discussions on what we are talking with the architects and the design people is that we will utilise plots of lands within the vicinity of where the offices are now held but rather than spreading out, we will go up and free up space for other activities that will take place in that area. It will be within the vicinity of the present officers.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister. Hon. Mr. Patterson, are you asking if there will be parking provided? Go ahead.

Mr. Patterson: Is it a joke?

Mr. Chairman: No. I did not. I was anticipating that you were going to ask him if there is going to be adequate parking.

Mr. Patterson: You are peeping my notes.

Mr. Chairman: I am long sighted.

Mr. Patterson: You are peeping my notes, Sir, because right here I have details of this complex, the square footages, the design, the total number of occupants, the number of parking spaces and offices. I also would like to ask the Hon. Members; he said he has \$2.6 billion in it, would he be kind enough to show the Parliament or the world the designs because we have to finish this within this phase 2022.

Bishop Edghill: I am sorry that I have to disappoint the Hon. Member but, at this stage, I cannot share with him what he is requesting, because it is still a work in progress.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, could I ask how the honourable gentleman and his team came up with the figure of not only \$2.6 billion but the entire programme. Mr. Chairman, if you are to look at the profile, it is \$10.5 billion but we start off in small pieces. On what basis did the Hon. Member come up with \$2.6 billion, is it the number of occupants, the square foot, *et cetera*?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, it is very interesting with the questions that are being asked because the Hon. Member, who was once the Minister presided over a Ministry where all the technical people who are there, I inherited when I went there. The Hon. Member will know that in preparing estimates and also in preparing a budget, one has to make room for some assumptions. There is something that is called price for square foot for construction. For example, if a man is going to build a house now and it is 45x35, so in 10 minutes he could know about how much money he needs to source to finance it because it would be 45x35 depending on if he is going at the high end for \$12,500 per square feet or if he is going to the top end with \$15,000 per square feet. If he is going for the moderate, about \$10,000 per square feet taking into consideration everything; the Hon. Member, based upon his background and his profession knows that. Based upon the best estimates, assumptions and considerations knowing what we are seeking to do, the Ministry of Public Works have been able to make certain assumptions and arrive at a particular figure. Every cent that will be spent will be accounted for and not only accounted for but will also have the benefit of a post audit of which the Hon. Member sits as a Member of that Committee that examines those reports. Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Patterson: I so love that answer. Could the Hon. Member tell me what was the square footage cost that was used to come up with this? Welcome guys, it is good to see you ladies and gentlemen. Could the honourable gentleman tell the nation what is the square footage used to arrive at this office complex?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I do not know if the Hon. Member would like to have a competitive advantage when we go out to request for proposals. At the appropriate time when we go out to request for proposals, the engineers estimate and those matters would be made public like we always do.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I know you are disappointed with that answer because he went through all that about square footage including high and low and you multiply that. Sir, we have \$2.6 billion.

Obviously, the gentleman threw the cost in there, they have no facts and no basis. However, the world is looking and they know the fluff from bluff. What does the Ministry or the Government intends to do with the existing buildings that they vacate after this, if this complex is a modernised complex building? Is it the Government's intention to sell them off to bidders?

Bishop Edghill: Guyana's development is not being left to chance. We are not making it up as we go along like others did. Guyana's development is strategic, purposeful and it is well thought out.

3.50 p.m.

The Demerara River where most of the properties that the Ministry of Public Works currently occupy is a thoroughfare that will be needed, every square inch will be needed, whether it is for hotels, whether it is for development in terms of support to the oil and gas sector or whether it is for other aspects of our development. Whenever property, land or buildings are made available, there is a process of which those lands can be acquired by investors or for government's use in other areas. All of that, based upon the principles that have been established historically by the PPP/C, will be made known when that becomes the necessary action.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. That is the first most forthright answer you have given today, which is that you intend to sell the properties because they have high values.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, for the avoidance of doubt, please do not let Mr. Patterson put on record words that I did not say.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, you will get a chance to respond.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you, Sir. I will ask a direct question to the Minister, which I will ask every time. I know what the answer will be. Will this building or office complex be funded with moneys from the Natural Resource Fund (NRF)?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, you may complete the remarks you were making earlier.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I would like for the record to show that I have never said that the Government will be selling off the property. That is the Hon. Member's misunderstanding and

misinterpretation of things that he does not want to understand properly. As it relates to funding from the Natural Resources Fund, Mr. Chairman, I -have been in this House... This is my third tenure as a parliamentarian. We have had moneys transferred from the Guyana Gold Board (GGB) to the Consolidated Fund; we have had money that was transferred from the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) to the Consolidated Fund; and we have had money that was transferred from the Lotto fund to the Consolidated Fund. Not once did I ever hear anybody ask if this GGMC money would be funding this or would the Guyana Gold Board money be funding this. It is the Consolidated Fund. When we come to this National Assembly, we could only appropriate moneys that are in the Consolidated Fund. The reason it is called “Consolidated” is because it is the sum of the total of taxes, fees, fines, transfers or all of them consolidated together, so that the people of Guyana could understand what the Consolidated Fund is. It is the aggregate of all of the moneys that are available to the state, whether it is value-added tax (VAT), whether it is income tax, whether it is the Guyana Gold Board revenues, whatever it is, the Natural Resources Fund or whatever it is all goes into the Consolidated Fund. I do not know how I could answer the question if the first story will come from gold, the three other stories from oil and the five stories from sugar. I cannot answer the Hon. Member on that but what I could tell the Hon. Member is that whatever is being spent is coming from the Consolidated Fund, which will be properly... If it is the Natural Resources Fund’s money in the Consolidated Fund, it will be transferred in keeping with the law, and appropriated right here in this National Assembly.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, quickly.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson, proceed.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The Hon. Member, I know, earlier in his explanation said what the more than \$2 billion would do. The Hon. Member did state that \$15 million will go towards the quarters at Coldingen. Could the Hon. Member state what would be the use because he did not explain what the use of the building would be there at Coldingen?

Bishop Edghill: Could I say what?

Ms. Ferguson: Earlier in your explanation, you provided the breakdown that \$15 million has been appropriated for works to be done at Coldingen. My question to you is, what would be the use, after construction, of the facility?

Bishop Edghill: I said two things about Coldingen. We are going to spend about \$30 million on the buildings in the compound, and we are going to spend just over \$15 million – we know it is quite an expansive compound – to fence it properly and put in the guard hut with facilities. The purpose of the work that is being done is going to be twofold. One, we are going to be accommodating some of our engineers and staff who were transferred from various places and have to live, like we have done at Paradise, Plaisance and other flats. Secondly – and this is not definitive – because of the expanse of land that is there, there is the possibility of looking at moving the workshop where the repairs and servicing of heavy-duty equipment, trucks and all the rest of it are done, as against allowing it to occupy prime property in the city. It will be used for the advancement for the work of the Ministry of Public Works and for use by the staff, engineers and other highly technical officers who are required to be in the centre for living, even if they come from the regions.

Programme: 311 – Policy Development and Administration – \$2,725,487,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 312 – Public Works – \$6,212,025,000

Ms. Ferguson: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: I note that from a revised sum in 2021, we are up \$10 million more than 2021. Could the Hon. Member explain the reason for the increases? The Hon. Member could assist by laying over to us the buildings that are expected to be maintained for the year 2022.

Bishop Edghill: At line item 6242, the proposal, emergency upgrades to meter circuit for additional loads for government flats, \$540,836; emergency works, replacement of 400 amp main breaker and cabinet, \$460,500; connection of a Guyana Power and Light Inc. (GPL) transformer to document centre, which is a building that the Hon. Member is aware of, \$90,200; replacement of ATS and installation of sub-main switch, \$3.5 million; supply and installation of

batteries and inverters for information technology server room, \$126,696; supply and installation of batteries and inverter for the Government Electrical Inspectorate (GEI) building, \$126,696; field material and equipment, \$7,952,000; supply and installation of battery banks, security huts entrance and exit backup for gates, \$1.446 million, installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems backup for gates, \$1.325 million, install solar PV standalone lights and repairs to generator room, \$790,000; electrical upgrades to main circuit security huts, entrance and exit, \$796,000; repairs to electrical equipment, \$1.970 million; rehabilitation of work services group building, \$2.3 million; minor repairs and replacement of windows to Buildings Division, 4th Street, Kingston, \$78,000; minor repairs and painting of Special Projects Unit building, \$213,000; minor repairs and painting of flats four and six, West, Main and New Market Streets, \$240,000; repairs and painting to Merle House building, Fort Street Kingston, \$256,000; minor repairs and painting to Lot 14, Plaisance, East Coast, Demerara, \$318,150; minor repairs and painting to sea defence living quarters, Number 63 Beach, Berbice, \$465,000; minor repairs to Service Division Task Force Building, Fort Street, Kingston, \$71,000; repairs to staircase at Government building, 88th Carmichael Street, \$1.4 million; repairs and painting to flat three, West, Main and New Market Streets, \$1,097,000; repairs and painting to Government buildings, Better Hope, East Coast Demerara, \$272,000; repairs to main internal hallway staircase and painting of the exterior of Government buildings at Main and New Market Streets, \$1.5 million; repairs to the Police Complaints Authority, Brickdam, Georgetown, \$862,000; rehabilitation of 105 New Garden Street, there is a zero for that; emergency works to flat five, West, Main and New Market Streets, \$262,137; emergency works to Lot 12, Echilibar Villas, renovations to roof and ceiling, \$234,000; and repairs and painting of flat five, East, Main and New Market Streets, Georgetown, \$1,168,000.

Mr. Chairman, some of these buildings at New Market and Main Street, we are now getting possession of them since we got in Government. Some of the officers who were there and who are no longer in the Government's employ are now giving them up and we are now fixing some of these buildings. It is for repairs to Government flats, Fort, East and Main Street, \$5.2 million; repairs to kitchen and hallway at laboratory, Ministry of Public Works, \$1.7 million; repairs to Government building, Plaisance, \$6.5 million; repairs to Echilibar Villas, Flat 10, \$4.2 million; repairs to residence at Paradise, \$11.8 million; minor repairs and painting to the eastern building, Main and New Market Streets, \$3.5 million; minor repairs and painting of the Government

Electrical Inspectorate building, \$1.5 million; repairs to washroom at Echilibar Flats, \$870,000; repairs to offices and cleaning of carpets at Oranapai Towers, \$2.8 million; emergency repairs to bathroom, 88 Carmichael Street, Georgetown, \$650,000; emergency works to Buildings Division, Manager's Office, \$717,000; fire extinguisher, Oranapai Towers and Merle House, \$677,000; purchase of building materials, \$8.7 million; painting Ministry of Public Work's Materials Laboratory floor, \$807,000; emergency repairs at stairway at Merle House, \$1.3 million; emergency works at flat 14, Plaisance, \$992,000; supply and installation of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) vertical blinds, \$980,000; replacement of carpet at the Government Electrical Inspectorate, \$995,000; repairs to Oranapai Towers, ground floor, \$2.4 million; emergency repairs to northern wall at the Maritime Administration Department (MARAD), \$7 million; which is a total of \$99,077,000.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, through you, to the Hon. Member, did you give an accumulative sum of \$99,077,000? The budgeted sum is \$110 million.

4.05 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: My forgiveness there. I omitted to mention that there is a repair to the district office at Den Amstel which total is \$12 million.

Ms. Ferguson: To the Hon. Member, thank you for providing a detailed list of what the sum of \$100 million will do. Could the Hon. Member say to this House and to the small contractors who are listening in, whether these proposed projects will be advertised publicly so you will get a wider spread of contractors bidding for these works?

Bishop Edghill: I believe one community that is quite happy in Guyana with the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) are contractors, because they feel they have a fair chance now with the PPP/C. As a matter of fact, if I had anticipated this question, I would have brought a report of how many new entrances and how many old contractors so that we would be able to show that the works are not just going to one special group, but people have a fair chance. I want to use this Committee of Supply, today, Sir, to again indicate to all Guyanese contractors, be it small, medium and large scale, ensure that you prequalify, submit your bona fides and we will always follow the Procurement Act to ensure that we get value for money, and the most qualified

and the best suited person, gets the job. The contractors are happy with the People's Progressive Party/Civic Government. Thank you very much.

Ms. Ferguson: Line item 6251 – Maintenance of Roads: I have noticed a 100% increase from 2021 to 2022. Could the Hon. Member, in the interest of time, layover to the National Assembly the list of the proposed roads to be maintained? While I am on my feet, could the Hon. Member say to the people in the Meadow Brook area, whether in the 2022 Budget, because there is a hole in the street that has been there for the longest while, Hon. Member Bishop Edghill it has been there for months, you have provisions to rectify that hole? I think it is in the Meadow Brook Gardens area, if my memory serves me accurate.

Bishop Edghill: At one time I thought that the Hon. Member was at the Mayor and City Council addressing the Mayor. The Ministry of Public Works has a responsibility of maintaining public roads. The Mayor and City Council has a responsibility for the other roads, just like the Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs) have a responsibility for other roads.

Secondly, Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson, the budgetary allocation is not doubled. I know that we have challenges with mathematics but it is an increase of \$600 million. It is not doubled. It was \$1.9 billion last year and it is \$2.5 billion this year, which is an increase of \$600 million. It is not doubled.

I want to indicate that while it is not primarily the first responsibility of the Ministry of Public Works to maintain these roads, the Ministry of Public Works has been taking the cry and concerns of the citizens seriously. We have been making the necessary interventions but we need to consistently remind that the billions of dollars that City Hall collects, it has a responsibility to maintain roads in the City of which it has been doing zero. When the Hogg Street bridge collapsed Sir, it was...

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, for fixing the street where I was born.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I gave notice to the Mayor and City Council that the bridge is broken and I anticipated at least the main town council would say 'well we have this and we could do this'. We had to do it all by ourselves. When the bridge that leads to Congress Place at the eastern highway collapsed, it was the Ministry of Public Works who had to come in

and fix that bridge. When the bridge at Dennis Street collapsed, we had to do it. You would have seen over the period October, November and December, several crews from the Ministry of Public Works, Maintenance Department, were maintaining sections of road and upgrading sections of road across the city. This allocation is not just for Georgetown.

Right now, we have to maintain all of the main access roads and the fact that we are building more access roads, we have to allocate more money for the maintenance. The maintenance of roads, may I take this opportunity to explain, is not just about fixing potholes, but it is also preventing potholes. One of the ways we prevent potholes, is to keep the road shoulders clear. The Ministry had to use valuable time, equipment and resources to remove sand from the edges of the road. People who are doing construction would dump sand and not move it. We know that once the road is flooded, it will deteriorate the road. People would dig their drains and put their debris on the sidewalk and we have to maintain those roads. Every month we have to weed and clean the road shoulders across the entire country. This sum is not just about patching potholes, it is about maintaining our main access roads throughout the length and breadth of the country.

May I take this opportunity to thank the men and women of the Special Projects Unit of the Ministry of Public Works? They work Sunday to Sunday and often times even at night because we do not want to interrupt the flow of traffic. When we did the public road at Grove, all of us who pass through there knows how congested that area is, and to find an appropriate time during the day to fix it, the men had to get out there in the curfew hours. When we did in front of the Stabroek Market, it was the same thing. Our men and women at the Ministry of Public Works, Special Projects Unit, need to be commended by this National Assembly for the good job that they are doing. I am saying it is not sufficient, because like the hole the Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson raised about at the Meadow Brook Gardens, I am sure she has my number. If you send it to me and the description, I could have my people look at it and we will see what we can do.

Every day, myself and my Colleague, the Hon. Minister, Mr. Indar, get *WhatsApp* messages, get videos, get phone calls, letters from the NDCs and residents who would sign several petitions to fix various roads. We just have to keep doing it. Ultimately, we will look and ensure that we have quality roads where the maintenance would be reduced because we will have adequate drainage accompanying these roads. People would call and say ‘put *lil crush* run’. The Ministry of Public Works is not about putting crusher run because at the next rainfall, all would be gone.

If we are going to do something, we will do it properly. You would have seen what we did on the Rupert Craig Highway. We had to mill the road and then re-lay it. You will see when it comes to our capital budget, one of the things we are seeking to buy is a milling machine because we have to rent that at US\$12 per square metre from the private sector. We do not own that.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. I do commend you for the works of that particular unit, the works services, and again, thank you for the Hogg Street, Albouystown, bridge. Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson, you have the floor.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I think we can...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members on both sides, I am trying to hear the Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson.

Ms. Ferguson: ...we can minimise a bit from the political grand standing.

Mr. Chairman: I agree with you.

Ms. Ferguson: While the Hon. Member has commended the work services of the Special Projects Unit (SPU) staff, are you aware that those staff did not receive the seven per cent? Through you, Mr. Chairman, could I turn the Hon. Member's attention to line item 6254 – Maintenance of Sea and River Defences? I note we have a \$310 million increase between 2021 and 2022. Perhaps you can assist us, to save time, by providing us with the information as it relates to the regions that will be benefiting from maintenance where the sea defences are concerned. Thank you very much, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I think you should check into that observation with respect to the seven per cent.

Bishop Edghill: I could answer that in the House on the floor right here and right now. The Hon. Member is creating something that they know differently. The men and the women of the Special Projects Unit are not permanent staff at the Ministry of Public Works. They are paid hourly rates. When they work overtime, they are paid hourly rates. When it was once in a lifetime when we were heading to an elections where you wanted votes, you gave them an increase like regular public servants to secure your votes. That was once in your lifetime, in 2019.

Ms. Ferguson: That is not correct.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, what I can tell you is, I authorised from the savings that we had in December, a two weeks' pay out to all the men and women of the Special Projects Unit. While they did not get a retroactive seven per cent, and the fact that the minimum wage has gone up, the hourly rates are automatically revised. I do not understand why we are trying to sell pessimism as if we are short-changing those men and women. Oftentimes people would hear these things and it would slow down what is happening because they are doing a good job, but somebody is saying that they are not getting compensated. These are people who are paid an hourly rate and there are rules of engagement where that is concerned.

As it relates to the sea defences, here again, when we came into Office, one of the areas of this Ministry that was really in crisis had to do with sea defences. It is not that we changed the staff because all the people who are managing this sector are the same people who were there before we arrived. What we are doing better is monitoring. We are not waiting for something to collapse and then rush to fix. The head of this agency knows whether it is the use of drone technology – because they have bought the drones – but we have also sent boots on the ground. There must be men who walk these stretches and they must be able to see where there are potential areas of deterioration. I would like to thank the rangers, the men all across this country because it is not just sea, it is sea and river defences. We had overtopping and we had the spring tides. Our quick reaction groups moved in, got the necessary sandbags, prevented damage to people's property and fixed anything that was going.

4.20 p.m.

We anticipate with the capital investments that we are making, we will have a reduction of some of these threats, but we also have to bear in mind the reality of climate change, weather patterns, and how vulnerable we are both on the coastline and in our rivers, and we are preparing to ensure we deal with any eventuality as that comes along, but we are being proactive as well.

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6252, Maintenance of Bridges, could you indicate in the maintenance of the respective bridges across the region, if the Mackenzie/Wismar Bridge, the Blueberry Hill Bridge and the Wismar Hill Scheme Bridge is part of this allocation for maintenance?

Bishop Edghill: I am very disappointed that I have to answer this question, but I will. The Hon. Member who just asked this question is the elected geographical member for Region 10, and the Hon. Member should know that the Wismar bridge does not fall under the Ministry of Public Works. It is a bridge that is handled by the Mayor and City Council of Linden in conjunction with the National Industrial and Commercial Investments (NICIL). It is a toll bridge where they collect revenue, and a percentage of the revenue from that bridge is supposed to go for the maintenance and some is supposed to be put into the community for social services. This is the elected representative of Region 10 that is asking me, because the Linden Mayor and Town Council is not doing its work, if the Ministry of Public Works would do that when this is a toll bridge.

I go to Linden very often, representing the People's Progressive Party (PPP/C), and every time I cross the bridge, even though I am a Minister, I stop and pay, I do not sign the book; and I do so for a particular reason. They collect the money and there are times when you do not even get a receipt. That is not a bridge that falls under the Ministry of Public Works, but I must tell you, the fact that we are developing the corridor, and you could go and tell the people of Linden, but they would hear me from now, because I am telling them now, I am speaking to Linden. The fact that we are developing the corridor all the way from Corentyne, connecting with the deep-water harbour at the Berbice River mouth; we are coming all the way to Georgetown; we are upgrading the Linden Soesdyke Highway; we are building the road to Mabura; we are getting the bridges from Mabura all the way into Lethem, we know that bridge that links McKenzie and Linden have to be expanded and developed. There are studies that have already been done, and at the appropriate time, the capital investment would be made for that to be fixed, but right now, the capital investment is being made for the more important bridge, which is the New Demerara River crossing.

Mr. Figueira: Do I have the floor Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I gave you the floor.

Mr. Figueira: Thank you. With all of the rhetoric the Minister just mentioned, could he state if the Ministry of Public Works with respect to all of the studies that was done, with regards the

Mackenzie/Wismar bridge, if that project would be executed? The study was already done, and it has been approved. would the Ministry of Public Works be constructing that bridge in 2022?

Bishop Edghill: The Hon. Member is addressing capital; we are dealing with maintenance. He is asking me about a capital investment, but I could answer the question right now. As the Minister of Public Works, when I came into office, I received the handover study by the consultants with the team from the Ministry, and that is on the burner and I just said at the appropriate time, because when you do development, you cannot do everything at the same time, you have priority one, priority two. The traffic across that bridge cannot be compared with the traffic that is taking place at the Demerara Harbour Bridge and so if you are going to put your investment in a capital project, you have to deal with answers in need for the masses, hundreds of thousands of people daily. The McKenzie bridge will be addressed by the PPP/C at the appropriate time.

Programme: 312 – Public Works – \$6,212,025,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 312 – Public Works – \$81,388,355,000

Mr. Patterson: Project code 1101200, New Demerara River Crossing, could the Hon. Minister state for the record the procurement status of the contract award?

Bishop Edghill: The procurement status is that it was publicly announced; having went through a public tendering process, which attracted international companies from around the world, and we did not receive an unsolicited bid. It was evaluated and cabinet offered no objection to the lowest responsive bidder, and authorised negotiations for the completion of the contract. As of today, the negotiating team, which I will not name, but I could tell you the qualifications. It includes a lawyer, engineers, finance specialists and management consultants have been engaging with the number one rank bidder, and the negotiators have since informed the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) that they wish to terminate the negotiation process, because the term sheets and the cost of financing would not serve the best interest of the people of Guyana. Currently, we are negotiating with the second rank responsive bidder. However, because negotiations are ongoing, disclosures on this matter would be very

concerning, and I would be very restricted with what I say, but I could tell you, negotiations are ongoing, and the next meeting would be tomorrow morning.

Mr. Patterson: I would like the Hon. Minister to confirm that the public procurement he mentioned was for a finance bill and transfer contract, so he would not say that I mislead this House.

Bishop Edghill: I have to say that we are not following. This was a public notice where we went out for two proposals, every bidder was allowed to offer two proposals, if you were following, you would have known. Design, build, finance, operate and maintain, as one option, or a design, build, finance option. Every bidder, Europe, South America, North America, Asia, had an opportunity to put in two proposals which were evaluated; some put in both, some put in one. It was a design, build, finance, operate, maintain, or a design, build, finance.

Mr. Patterson: That was the exact response that I was looking for, because in all two options, there was finance; design, build, finance, operate [*inaudible*]. Could the Hon. Minister tell the nation if finance was involved in all two bids, you know what I mean, the second [*inaudible*] is public record. China Road and Bridge Corporation, \$340 million... Could the Hon. Minister tell the country if he went to bids for design, build operate, or design, build, whichever variation, what is the money included under this line item for, which is in this \$21 million, because he went out to get financing in the bids, could he enlighten the House?

Bishop Edghill: The Hon. Member asked me to inform the people of Guyana and I will. I will inform them of the following: number one, this PPP/C Administration, led by President Irfaan Ali, is committed to building a New Demerara River crossing, to ensure that the people of Guyana benefit from such.

Secondly, the bridge would be a four-lane high span bridge, which would allow for 53 metres above the level of the water to allow for Handymax to pass it would require no opening for marine traffic. It would be 24-hour traffic for boats and 24-hour traffic for vehicles. The proposals and the question that the Hon. Minister is asking of why we have \$21 billion, and we asked for a finance project, Mr. Chairman, I am sure that you as a man who has been very wise in the things of the world, know that even if someone is bringing financing, there is a contribution and a proportion that the client have to provide to ensure guarantees and also, we

have to look at the fact that you are building this bridge, and if someone brings total financing and have to recoup its financing, the price of tolls would go out of whack. The Government of Guyana, and I do not want to speak too much because of the negotiations that are currently being undertaken, provided this sum to ensure that all of the necessary things that needs to be done when we engage the preferred bidder, our contribution to get that project kick started, and it could be built within two years, we do not have to come back next year to ask for the money to do this and to do that, we are getting that done now. This \$21 billion that the Hon. Member is asking about, I want to assure him and all the people of Guyana, is to ensure at all costs, that we get this bridge, secondly, we get it at the best price, and thirdly that the interest of Guyana is served when we finalise a contract with whoever would be doing the construction of this bridge.

4.35 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: The Hon. Minister invoked your assistance because he said that you are a financial wizard, and you did not... When he said to you..., I saw you nodding. I will assume that you...

Mr. Chairman: I was nodding to tell him to continue and not to acknowledge that he is giving me expertise which I may not have.

Mr. Patterson: Well, I am seeking the help, Sir. I am seeking your help and maybe the House help. The Hon. Minister said that the \$53,265,000,000 in the budget, is the Government's contribution to the project. Am I to assume, or the country and the world to assume that the China Railroad Bridge bid contribution is \$340 million, and the Government is now contributing an additional \$265 million which brings it up to over \$600 million for the bridge? That was the explanation given to this House. It went out for financing bid. A bid which was received was discarded and it went to the second one which is \$340 million. I asked what the money was for, and he said that it is the Government's contribution towards the bridge. The contractors, I forgot their nationality, are financing its section of the bridge. The bridge, as I can see here, if we add the two together would be US\$605 million. Is that correct, Sir?

Bishop Edghill: I do not want to use the Committee of Supply to discuss financing options, financial models, equity and all the rest. I do not want to use the Committee of Supply to do that.

The gentleman who is asking this question was the Minister of Public Infrastructure who planned to build a bridge and do not understand these mundane issues that we are discussing. I will rest my case but I could promise you, Mr. Chairman and the people of Guyana, the moment that the negotiations are completed and we have an agreement, all of the terms and conditions will be made public and the people of Guyana would be able to watch every day for the next two years while the bridge will be under construction, and say we needed this 20 years ago, thank God we are getting it now. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Patterson: I hope the people of Guyana noticed that the Hon. Minister did not dispute my submission of the final sum. Could I ask the Hon. Minister how much of this sum which is the Government's contribution to the bridge, including over and above the financing, is allocated for land acquisition and how many properties will be acquired, because it is public knowledge as you said you took the Regional Chairman to the location.

Bishop Edghill: The first thing I want to say is that I do not agree with the Hon. Member that this bridge will cost US\$600 million. The reason why we went to the second bidder was because the first bidder bid price was US\$256 million. In the negotiations for terms on the term sheet, we are not driving the cost up, we are driving the cost down. That is the first thing I want to put on the record. This US\$600 million, I do not know where he got that from. That is some sort of Mathematics that does not belong in this National Assembly.

The second thing is..., [**Mr. McCoy:** He is dishonest. That is Patterson.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, Parliamentary language. I may have to send you, like I did to Mr. Mahipaul, the sheet again. Hon. Minister, continue, please.

Bishop Edghill: In the development of every major project, there are people who could be displaced as a result of that development. I want to assure this honourable House, that using the law and fulfilling the constitutional provisions, that if we have to acquire or compulsory acquire properties, it will be in keeping with what the Constitution states and at market value. We will not be denying anybody of their property. We will fulfill the Constitution. This afternoon, I will not stipulate how much of this \$21 million is going towards the acquisition of property because there are those who would like to use that number to start speculating and using the opportunity to get a windfall. We are advancing this process and sufficient sums have been allocated to

ensure all of the necessary things that needs to be done, are done including if we have to compulsory acquire property at fair market price. Thank you, very much, Sir.

Mr. Patterson: Could I remind the Hon. Minister, by convention the compulsory acquisition of lands and those things like that is a statutory process. The determination of costs and things like that are not done based on what he said in this House. It is done by an independent agency which is an Evaluation division. Could I ask the Hon. Minister, once again, has he allocated any money for the acquisition of lands?

Bishop Edghill: I thought the Hon. Member was listening and understood. I said from this sum moneys available, should there be a need for 1,15,12,9,3 or whatever are the properties to be acquired... I am not naming a number right now, but moneys are available to ensure any incumbrance that has to be removed, to ensure that those persons will be adequately compensated at fair market price facilitated elsewhere, so that we will have a free thoroughfare for the building of this bridge and bring it in two years' time. We are not going to be caught up in court battles, wranglings and with those who would like to stop a major project from taking place. Could you imagine, Mr. Chairman, we went to the area and walked the entire alignment. His Excellency himself did it and we looked at everything, consulted with the people and one person who is affiliated with the political Opposition, because of a statutory position that he holds, was trying to tell the people who are living in the area, through the Neighbourhood Democratic Council (NDC), that they should not give approval.

One already saw the writing on the wall. That is why I am very restrictive of what I say. There are those who do not want this to happen, and they want to use all of the various things to block it. We are determined and I have said that we will give to the people of Guyana, the new Demerara River Bridge Crossing. The people are happy. The people who may be affected are happy, they are talking with us and we know what we have to do in law. Nobody does not need to lecture us on compulsory acquisition. The A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU\AFC) acquired the property of a member of the People's National Congress/Reform (PNC/R) and she did not know that it was being acquired. She was an ambassador representing Guyana in Canada and she did not know that it was acquiring the property. Now, it wants to come here and lecture us about acquiring property. One should ask the Hon. Member who signed the compulsory acquisition order.

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

Mr. Patterson: Yes, the same question.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. The Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson.

Ms. Ferguson: My question to the Hon. Member, is on the very line item that is very high in contention. May I turn the Hon. Member's attention to Profile 125 of Volume III. This is what the budget detail is stating or the description of the project:

“1. Provision for a new Demerara Harbour Bridge

2. Provision for consultancy”.

My Hon. Colleague asked about the land acquisition but there is no provision for it in *Budget 2022*. To you, Hon. Member, could you say to this honourable House, from the \$21 billion, what percentage or amount will go to the provision for consultancy service and also, what percentage or amount will go to the building of this new Demerara Harbour Bridge (DHB)? [**Mr. Indar:** (*Inaudible*)] Indar, you best listen. This is taxpayers' money.

Bishop Edghill: The first thing is – project profile 125... [**An Hon. Member:** 126.] She said 125 – does not address the new Demerara Harbour Bridge. It is project profile 126 that addresses the new Demerara Harbour Bridge. At this current time, the world is notified that we are looking for consultancy services to supervise the construction of this bridge. The world is notified by way of publications throughout the world in local newspapers and other international places. The consultants will come in with a bid price. They will be evaluated and the best with value for money in keeping with our procurement laws, will be awarded the supervisory contract. Provision for the new Demerara Harbour Bridge in this profile did not give \$5 million for this or \$3 million for that or \$20 billion for that. There is a specific reason for that, Mr. Chairman, and that is what I am asking this honourable House to understand and appreciate.

We are not going to provide information at this time for speculators and people who use the advantage of information for their own benefit. I am emphatically saying from this US\$21 billion, moneys to pay supervisors, moneys if we have to acquire land or property, our contribution depending on what the negotiations and the term sheet throws up in the final sum,

are provided for in here. That is what I will say as a final explanation on this matter, at this time. I will want to be assured that the Hon. Members who are asking the question, could give to the people of Guyana their unequivocal support; that they are supporting the Government of Guyana for the building of a new Demerara River Bridge which will benefit all of us in this Assembly and all the people of Guyana and that they will not stand in the way or use whimsical or other mechanisms to thwart or delay the building of the bridge because this is a necessity. The moneys allocated here is to ensure that we get on the project. Thank you, very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I will yield to my Colleague.

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

Mr. Patterson: It is the same line head. I have not moved off of this, and I do not think it is right to move off without asking the Hon. Minister – the budget has \$53.7 billion, do the Government and the Ministry of Public Works think, since we are putting US\$270 million from our coffers, is it not a more prudent procurement method that we go out for bids because we are funding this project? One of the reasons why the Americans and the Europeans did not tender was because they cannot compete with the Chinese firm for the cost of financing, if they want to finance. Now, that we are financing, do they not think it is a better procurement method for the Government, for the country for one to go out for a traditional procurement system since we are putting up the majority of the money for this bridge? I would like the Hon. Minister to respond for the record.

4.50 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I would not like to join the Hon. Member in his commentary. He has already formed certain assumptions that no amount of information will help him at this time. I have already committed to this House and to the people of Guyana that when the negotiations we are in are completed, full disclosure will be made on the terms of financing, what is coming from the contractor or what the Government of Guyana is putting up. Thank you.

Ms. Ferguson: To the Hon. Member under the very line item. I note here we have a total figure of over \$53 billion of which we anticipate spending some \$21 billion. Could the Hon. Member

state for the National Assembly and the people of Guyana whether the \$53 billion will be funded through the Natural Resource Fund (NRF)?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I respectfully decline to repeat myself.

Mr. Patterson: Moving on to project code 1214900 – Infrastructural Development: The project profile has provision for urban renewal projects and programmes and there is a sum of \$3.69 billion. Could the Hon. Minister, on that specific item only, shed some light on that specific expense – urban renewal projects and programmes.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, the total sum that is being sought is \$3.697 billion. Some of the money has to do with the payment of retention for the construction of the tarmac and parking lot at Diamond at \$3.4 million; the construction of the pedestrian sidewalk in Klien Pouderoyen at \$1.2 million; the construction of the access road into the Diamond Housing Scheme, phase one at \$7.5 million; construction of the paradise and animal shelter at \$685,000; geometric improvements to sections of Vlissingen Road, JB Chandisingh Road, the Kitty roundabout, Lamaha Street – 1200 metres at \$1,068,000; construction of pedestrian sidewalk, Anna Regina market to the police station, \$859,000; installation of light emitting diode (LED) lights on Vlissingen Road and the retention is \$497,000.

The new projects; urban renewal project and programmes at \$3.345 billion. I guess this is what the Hon. Member is inquiring into. It is no secret that this Administration is on a campaign to elevate Guyana. I use the word elevate because we are not just building but we are doing beautiful things as well. Guyana must look beautiful. It must not just be that we build buildings. Our architecture, our appearance and the aesthetics of the country must look different. It is not just Georgetown but in all our urban centres. We must then be able to translate that into other areas. The constant areas about people being flooded and then there is one person who built their bridge and the next one who built their parapet and the next one is down and uneven, the disabled cannot pass – all of these things have to be addressed. We are on a programme of improving safety for people. We are on a programme of beautifying the country and we are on the programme of ensuring the livelihoods of people are uplifted. There are several initiatives that are being undertaken and some of them will be announced soon. I do not want to *steal the*

thunder at this stage to announce them. At the appropriate time there will be an announcement. Every cent of this money on these projects will be for the benefit of the people of Guyana.

Many years ago, in another life, I went to Bogotá. On the Sunday when I was leaving to go to church, I discovered that where my hotel was I could not get a car in because every Sunday they would lock down that thoroughfare, so that the people who live in the area in the high-rises could come out, get some fresh air, the people in the wheelchairs could get out, the kids could play with their bicycles because they did not have sufficient, well-kept open spaces.

In Guyana, mental health is becoming a big issue. We have seen manifestations of that even here sometimes in the National Assembly. We have to ensure people have a chance to recreate. People must be able to spend quality family time. People must be able to exhale in spaces. Everyone cannot go to the seawall. I look forward to the people of South Georgetown being able to have a space there. I look forward to the people of Albouystown and Punt Trench Dam and those who live in La Penitence being able to have a space there. I look forward to that kind of enhancement and development. There are several projects and programmes that are going to be rolled out that will be taken care of under that budget. We are continuing with the next phase of the construction of the tarmac for the market and parking lot at Diamond, where there will be a \$55 million allocation for that. The construction of the pedestrian sidewalk on West Bank Demerara, Phoenix Park to Plantain Walk, where we are going to spend about \$39 million. We are going to continue some work at Charity at \$58 million. Construction of access road into the Diamond Housing Scheme at \$77 million and the construction of pedestrian sidewalk along the University of Guyana access road. We are building that access road now but because it is a main thoroughfare into Cummings Lodge, Cummings Park, Sophia... Everywhere we build a road, the first thing people tell us is *ya gotta* put speed bumps, *dem man does speed*.

Last night we had a terrible accident on Mandela Avenue which I regretted ever happened. The sidewalks for our young people, our seniors and pedestrians are becoming more and more important, and we are going to put one in there. Geometric improvements to sections of Vlissingen Road and JB Chandisingh Road. We have done phase one last year and we have put up the lights right through. An Hon. Member said the light pole fell and did not disclose that a car hit the light pole. We are continuing that sidewalk all the way down to Lamaha Street. These are some of the things that will be financed under this line item, Sir. Thank you very much.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, the Committee of Supply is where the Ministers, the Opposition and the members of the public come to seek answers to moneys that have been requested and appropriated. The Minister got up and said that there is \$3.345 billion in the budget. He says that he does not want to disclose it, but he is asking us to vote for it. He does not want to burst anyone's bubble. Sir, I do not know if you think that is appropriate for the public or for the country or for this National Assembly, for you to ask for \$3.4 billion and we do not even have a clue or is it that the Minister does not know what he is doing? I ask again, Sir, on behalf of the people of Guyana, what is it that you will be doing with \$3.4 billion in the year 2022 under urban renewal projects and programmes – if you have any idea.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, the lowest form of wisdom is sarcasm and Mr. Patterson specialises in that. I am not going to be practicing the lowest form of wisdom of being sarcastic. [Mr. Patterson: It is wisdom I am speaking about.] You do not have that. If you had wisdom, you would not have asked the question that you just asked because I answered it already. I have just said there will be several projects that will be involved in the improvement of the urban centres across the country. If you would like to have a list so that you could mobilise to block them, you will not get it in this National Assembly. I will tell you that right now. If you would like to get a list so you could run into Albouystown and tell the people, they plan to do this but *y'all tek* over this land. You will not be able to do that. You will not be able to do that. We will be working with the communities across Georgetown... [Ms. Hastings-Williams: The people are listening to you.] Yes. They are listening. South Georgetown is listening to me. Albouystown is listening to me. Bartica is listening. Linden is listening. New Amsterdam is listening. We are going to be working with all of them for the improvement of life and livelihoods. Some of this would be hard infrastructure and some of this would be community projects for the improvement of the aesthetics in their communities. Thank you, very much, Sir.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, it is obvious that the Hon. Member have not a clue why the money is there. Sir, on behalf of the people from Albouystown, they are not obstructionists and the people of Bartica, they are not obstructionists. They are citizens of this country. [An Hon. Member (Government): You are.] I do not mind, Sir. I personally do not mind being an obstructionist. I am asking, Sir, if the Hon. Minister has no idea of what he is doing with this money, could I ask how did the Ministry arrive because I cannot say how he arrived...

The whole project is \$11.864 billion. He is obviously clueless about the \$3.6 billion. Could I ask him about the larger programme of \$11.864 billion, the total project cost? What does that encompass, Sir?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, when someone is set in his/her own ways it is difficult to change him/her. I have just gone through the list to say all that we will be doing. Geometric improvements to Vlissingen Road, this happening there, and I gave actual amounts. I then gave a block amount for the urban renewal projects and programmes, and I gave you the total. The distinguished Hon. Member is asking me the same thing. Let me say this, I understand why the Hon. Member is asking such questions. He presided over a project, the D'Urban Park, that he never told the people of Guyana that he was taking taxpayers' money to spend on. He also took money from the Consolidated Fund and gave it to a private company. He is concerned about what is happening. I understand his fears. I am guided by a principle that says as a man thinketh in his heart so is he. When one sees people saying certain things, they are saying this is what I would have done. This is what I would have done if I had a chance. [**Mr. Hamilton:** He has larceny in his heart. He is a petty larcenist.] I am making the point very clear. We on this side of the House when engaged across this country in a consultative process, community groups, people in the various centres, just like we have done getting the private sector, men and women in uniform, citizens' groups, political operatives and other stakeholders. What we did in Georgetown in two days, the City Council did not do in seven years.

5.05 p.m.

We have literally taken back spaces. Go to Drury Park. [**Mr. Indar:** Drury Lane.] Drury Lane. I am probably naming it too earlier, Drury Park. Should we leave Drury Park as a dumpsite next to a main highway that is being built? The answer is a resounding no. Drury Park must be developed into a safe space where the people from Newtown, the people from Campbellville and the people from Sophia could come out and recreate in a safe environment. That kind of development is what Mr. Patterson cannot understand will take place. We would not be building shrines that nobody could use because wood ants and vagrants are living there. We are going to engage with communities to ensure that Guyana looks different, the people in their neighbourhoods feel different and the people start taking pride about themselves.

Mr. Chairman, we started a clean-up in Georgetown and across the country. Everywhere people are planting trees, cleaning up the place, fixing their front yards and taking pride in their environment. This is what we want, a national movement. In our 'One Guyana' approach, part of what we do must bring people together to do things together, but we must also provide spaces where people could come from their enclaves and meet, engage, interact, socialise, build relationships and bring families together. We want a Guyana that we are all proud of. We would be doing that through this allocation with the urban renewal projects and programmes that we will be doing. Thank you, very much.

Mr. Chairman: Great, Hon. Minister. Hon. Minister, the Hon. Minister, Ms. Rodrigues, and yours truly would be happy if some of that could come to Independence Boulevard.

Bishop Edghill: We have that in mind, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Ms. Ferguson: This afternoon we are just being railroaded with a lot of political rhetoric. We are here to do the people's business.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are you adding to that?

Ms. Ferguson: I am not adding to it.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Hon. Member. Ask your question.

Ms. Ferguson: I am making a comment.

Mr. Chairman: It is question time.

Ms. Ferguson: For the time wasted, we could be looking at the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: We have not wasted any time. We are saving time, actually.

Ms. Ferguson: Okay, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: We are into the 98 minutes that we saved from the previous heads.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Member, project code 1406400, Transport Infrastructure Programme and project code 1406500, Eccles – Timehri Road Linkage: If we are to go to profile numbers 141 and 142, respectively, I notice that the projects would be funded by China and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). What I recognise, Hon. Member, is that the IDB funding caters for, which is identified under reference 141, and it states:

“1. Construction of highway from Diamond to Timehri.”

Then, you have:

“2. Provision for studies.”

If one looks at reference 142, this is the project description. It reads here:

“The project entails provision for construction of four-lane highway - Eccles to Timehri.”

The concern I have here is that it seems to me that... Perhaps you could explain to the House whether it is the one project in the same area being funded by two different funders. Could you explain to us what is happening here, Sir?

Bishop Edghill: I will be sure to help the Hon. Member and to let the people of Guyana know what is happening. Just like we did on the East Coast Demerara where we built the four lanes and then we did works on the railway embankment, we will continue to work on the embankments, so that you could get six lanes. We are doing the bridges on the railway embankment to enhance six lanes. There are two distinct projects. There are two different projects. We are building a road that would connect the Eugene F. Correia International Airport at Ogle with the Cheddi Jagan International Airport at Timehri. That is one project.

In the second project, we have the four lanes all the way up to Diamond. We now have to upgrade that road, expand it and get it all the way out so you could have, at any given time, six lanes plus the four lanes that are being built through the Ministry of Housing and Water to give greater access. The road network of Guyana, with the building of the new Demerara River Bridge, we have to put in a lot of connector roads, and we have to be able to reroute people to reduce travel time. The trucks that we are seeing on the East Bank Demerara, if they are heading to a project on the East Coast Demerara, we should no longer be seeing them on the East Bank

Demerara. They should be coming through the back and getting out. People who are coming from West Demerara heading to Linden or people who are coming from Corentyne and heading to the airport must have alternative routes. All that we are doing in terms of our transport infrastructure is adequately providing for the Guyana that we are talking about.

The Hon. Member was also the Minister of Housing and Water. The Hon. Member ought to know where lands are available for the development of new housing areas. People cannot go into new housing areas if they do not have accessibility and utilities. When a road is opened, way in the back, thousands of acres are being opened for housing, new hotels possibly, recreational parks and other development infrastructure, but you are also maintaining what was known as the main thoroughfare and we are upgrading that as well. Thank you, very much. It is two separate programmes.

Mr. Patterson: I am looking at project code 1404000, Bridges, the provision of bridges and I see in the project profile, reference 130, which states:

“3. Provision for construction of bridges between Kurupukari and Lethem.”

The total is \$4 billion. Could the Hon. Minister state, one, the number of bridges? I have heard [*inaudible*], but I want to confirm, and the exact money out of this that was allocated for the bridges between Kurupukari and Lethem?

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, the whole country is aware because the world has seen, which we have gone up to six lots, advertising for contractors to bid for this project. There are 32 bridges of various sizes and lengths that would have to be built. You would agree with me, Mr. Chairman, that since these bridges are important to keep traffic between Linden to Lethem, you cannot collapse all 32 bridges to build them at the same time. There is a method which we are going to be using – sections and creating bypasses. The total projects for all 32 bridges will not be built this year. That is why the Budget states \$4 billion, but the appropriation is only for \$1.2 billion in 2022. The total project is \$4 billion. All 32 bridges cannot be built in one year because we still have to allow people to pass; the trucks have to go with supplies to the people of Regions 8 and 9. Thanks.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you for that explanation, Hon. Member. The sum of \$1.2 billion is for this year. Could you, actually, then disaggregate the other \$4.46 billion, if only \$1.2 billion is for the bridges this year from Kurupukari and Lethem?

Bishop Edghill: I begged to correct myself. The allocation for the bridges is \$4 billion.

Mr. Patterson: Pardon me, Hon. Member?

Bishop Edghill: The allocation for the bridges this year is \$4 billion. My apologies.

Ms. Ferguson: Project code 1601100 – Stellings, I note we have...

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman have we gone to a new project code, to transport?

Ms. Ferguson: Project Code 1601000 – Stellings [**An Hon. Member:** (*Inaudible*).] No, the light is affecting me. Project Code 1601000 ...

Mr. Chairman: It is Stellings.

Ms. Ferguson: Yes, it is Stellings. We have an appropriated sum of \$455 million and when you turn to the profile reference 146 in *Volume 3*, I note in the description of the project entails:

“...provision for Leguan, Fort Island and Bartica stellings.”

To the Hon. Member, could you provide us with the disaggregation for the three stellings to be done? I know for a fact that Leguan is under construction and also Bartica. You all inherited a nice stelling in Bartica from us there – modern stelling. Cde. Chairman, to the Hon. Member, could you provide us with a status report on what is happening at both Leguan and Bartica’s Stellings? What percentage would have been paid as at the 31st December, 2021? Thank you, very much, Sir.

Bishop Edghill: I would have thought that the Hon. Member would avoid asking questions on this. For the simple reason, let us start with Bartica. The total contract sum for Bartica, I think it was just about \$413 million. It was just over \$400 million. The full contract sum for the construction of the Bartica Stelling was more than \$400 million. The sum was \$434 million. When we came into Office, 90% of the money was already paid and 15% of the work... Thanks to the Hon Members, Mr. Patterson and Ms. Ferguson. That is for Bartica. The contract for the

whole stelling that was signed was for more than \$430 million and 90% plus of the money was already paid to the contractor.

5.20 p.m.

Fifteen per cent of the work was done and the contractor is not currently engaged on the stelling. We have gone there, there was an audit and we checked to see the value of the materials and all the rest of it. If I stand in this House and I say that the A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) was incompetent and they mismanaged, and transactions were irregular against the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act (FMAA). And use all the dignified terms basically to say that you squandered the people's money, the people of Bartica still do not have a stelling. This Budget is making appropriation for us to be able to have the stelling completed at Bartica. I want the people of Bartica to know that the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Administration will spend \$217 million this year and we will continue next year to the completion of the Bartica Stelling that was messed up and mismanaged by the previous Administration. I am announcing that to the people of Bartica.

Let us go to the Leguan Stelling now. You will see that we are spending another \$168 million on Leguan. It is no secret. I publicly announced the termination of the contract at Leguan – poor performance. There again, he was paid far more than the works executed. The man had an involuntary loan thanks to the Hon. Member David Patterson. He got a loan up front. What was worse was the nature of the contract. Could you imagine a contract stating: 'install four hundred and something piles', and a man was able, whatever was the arrangement that took place in the management of this contract, because the word supply was not written into the contract, the man said the Government has to pay to supply it. This is the first contractor that you are giving a lump sum contract to build a stelling. Every other stelling, this same contractor built before, he supplied and installed the piles. This one, the Government has to supply it thanks to the Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson. We have the gentleman engaged, terminated him and when we were pushing, we recognised that nobody was going to take this mess. Nobody would have taken it over. Nobody wanted it, so we re-engaged him. Under new contract management, under strict terms and conditions... Go to Leguan right now, the work is advancing. The Hon. Member who presided over the Ministry when this was happening, is asking about this. One hundred and sixty-eight million more dollars of taxpayers' money have to go to fix Leguan. Thanks to the

mismanagement that came. Thanks for the question. I would like you now to compare this to Fort Island.

We awarded a contract for Fort Island in the second half of 2021. As I am standing here speaking, it is 90% completed. Fort Island is 90% completed. Compare the two things. Seven months, 31st December 2018, Guyana must take note of that date, after a no-confidence vote, sweetheart deals were handed out, who was the Minister presiding? The Minister is asking me questions here this afternoon. Just compare that to Fort Island. How much is Fort Island's contract? Is it eighty something million? It is \$88 million. Thirty-eight million is what will be paid in 2022 to complete Fort Island – a tourist destination thanks to the businesses that are looking to open overnight accommodations. I beg more people to go to Fort Island and let that island get development. When we spend Government's money, we must come to this Parliament with clean hands and say what we did and not pontificate and pretend as if we do not know. We are correcting the mess. Thank you very much, Sir.

Ms. Ferguson: To the Hon. Member, I need to put it before the House, the Bartica Stelling was done in two phases. The first phase was completed and the sums that the Hon. Member refer to, were the retention or they [*inaudible*] the sum. When the Government changed, they were in the second phase. When we come into this House, we do not come for political grand standing and trying to point fingers. Do not point fingers to people. That is the fact. I asked a straight question. Could we have a disaggregation and status report on what is happening at Bartica and Leguan?

Mr. Chairman: I allowed you some latitude.

Programme: 312 – Public Works – \$81,388,355,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 313 – Transport – \$155,683,000

Programme: 313 – Transport – \$155,683,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 313 – Transport – \$3,952,486,000

Programme: 313 – Transport – \$3,952,486,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: On your behalf, let me thank the Hon. Minister and his staff for taking us patiently through the last agency.

Mr. Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, if you would permit me?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, you have the floor.

Mr. Bishop Edghill: May I take the opportunity to thank my staff at the Ministry of Public Works. Sometimes they do not get what they deserve. The politicians at the Ministry are Minister Indar and me. We expect all our staff to be professional. We came to the office by way of politics, they came by way of their qualifications. We demand professionalism from them. I would like to thank all of my professional staff at the Ministry of Public Works for the fine job they are doing. I would just say, Sir, while we are not perfect, we look forward to working with all the people of Guyana to benefit this country.

Agency: 38 Ministry of Labour

Programme: 381 – Policy Development and Administration – \$644,844,000

Current Expenditure

Ms. McDonald: Could the Minister identify, under this same heading – Policy Development and Administration, the location of the sheds that were identified, cost... [**An Hon. Member:** Please use your microphone] Do you have a problem with your hearing, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I have a problem with my hearing.

Ms. McDonald: Alright, Sir. Are you hearing me now?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. If you could stay in that particular position, I would hear you. Hon. Member, you could repeat for me please.

Ms. McDonald: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Member, could the Minister share with us the cost for the sheds that are identified under that heading and where these sheds will be located?

Minister of Labour [Mr. Hamilton]: Just to say for reference and background, before the People's Progressive Party/Civic came into Office in 2020, there existed no Ministry of Labour. It was a department in the Ministry of Human Services. Secondly, they had no home where they could have rested themselves. Today, 18 months in Office, we have a complex at 82 Brickdam, where the Ministry of Labour and its department there is a... Last year, we upgraded two sections and this year we are attempting to attach three buildings. One, the labour building proper. Two, a building that was loaned to us by the Ministry of Culture Youth and Sport and a building that was loan to us by the Ministry of Human Services. Therefore, the canopy is to allow for both buildings to be attached to each other, that is the labour building proper and the building that we now use as the administrative building that was loaned to us by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport.

5.35 p.m.

Ms. McDonald: Mr. Chairman, I just asked for the Hon. Minister to say for us what would be the cost of the shed identified. While I am on my feet, I heard you talk about where it is going to be and where it is not going to be. We would want you to be specific and say who would benefit directly from this shed and the buildings that you talked about.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, again, when we took Office, we took it with a department which had a staffing strength of 127. Under the previous Government, there was just staffing of 87. They were in a deficit in the first place. What I can say to you is that, presently, the Ministry of Labour has been granted the authority to increase that staffing strength from 127 to 200. So, the answer to the question is the employees – those who I met there, those who have come since and the rest that will come. Subsequently, they will benefit from the construction that we are to do at the complex at 82 Brickdam.

Ms. McDonald: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister state for us, what is the dimension of the shed that is going to be built?

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, presently, I do not have that with me, but I could get that to the National Assembly for circulation.

Ms. McDonald: Just under that again, we are looking at Furniture and Equipment. Could the Hon. Minister say for us whether the sums allocated there would be for new furniture or are we talking here about replacement? If they are new, it means that we would have had older furniture. Was the correct process done with regards to discarding those furniture?

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, again, we are speaking about a department becoming a ministry. It is moving from having 87 staff members to nearly 200 or there above. It follows that to accommodate those persons we must have furniture. I could assure the Hon. Member that we are talking about new furniture. Of course, anything to be disposed of in the public service is an Auditor General's matter. What I can assure this Committee is that all the furniture we will procure will be new. We will utilise the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) process to ensure that those furniture come to the Ministry.

Ms. McDonald: Could the Hon. Minister give us a breakdown of the furniture that would be purchased?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, which line item are we on?

Ms. McDonald: The same one that we are on, Sir. We are looking at Capital Expenditure, Programme 381, Policy Development and Administration.

Mr. Chairman: What are we looking at?

Ms. McDonald: Under the same programme there, Policy Development and Administration.

Mr. Hamilton: She has already gone to Capital Expenditure. She has not dealt with the Current Expenditure, and you have not put the matter.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I think that I am still in control of my comprehension and my faculties. I raised the issue to bring to the Hon. Member's attention that we are dealing with the Current Expenditure. Hon. Member, what you are asking about is for the Capital Expenditure which I have not proposed as yet. So, I proposed the Current Expenditure, which was Agency: 38, Programme: 381. We are on pages 270 and 271. I know that you are going to have some

questions there, so I just wanted to pull you back to what we have before us at this time. So, take a minute, come back to that page and then you can ask questions on the Current Expenditure. We will take the questions under the Capital Expenditure as they are already taken. The pages are 270 and 271. Hon. Member, Ms Ferguson, you have the floor.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. To the Hon. Member, if I could turn his attention to page 271, Staffing Details, we are looking at line item, 6116, Contracted Employees. I notice that we have a big jump from 16 to 38 employees. Could the Hon. Member provide reason or reasons for the increase in staff? That is one. Two, could you provide the emoluments, the descriptions and the positions for the first five? Also, for the last five, could you provide their emoluments, their designations and the other benefits that they are getting? Also, Cde. Member, could you say where these persons are assigned? Thank you very much.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, if this matter was not so serious, I would have been laughing off my seat hearing the Hon. Member asking her question. Just for reference again, the Ministry of Labour that now exists, never existed under the former Government when the Hon. Member was a Minister, even though a very junior one. I have said before that the staffing strength of the department was 127. The department was starved. The four Ministers who served during the period never paid attention to the Department of Labour which is now a Ministry. They never filled the 40 odd vacancies. The Government of the People's Progressive Party/Civic had promised that, once re-elected, it will establish a Ministry of Labour. Therefore, in the assessment, we have proposed to the Ministry of the Public Service that the staffing we need is about 200 persons. For the benefit of the Member, when I got there, there were only 16 Labour Officers. Today, I can report that there will be 26 Labour Officers. Further, I can report that many regions that never had a Labour Office or a Labour Officer, now have.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, thank you very much for the overview. We now have to come to the particulars. Under this Programme, Policy Development and Administration, if I see the strength moved from 25 to 51 and the Member said that you have a big jump. That is what she asked for you to explain.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, very much so, I am answering her question. I am making the point that I cannot put the staff in a vacuum. I have to put them in a place. I am making the point

that we now have regional offices through the length and breadth of Guyana. I want to situate the staff. That is the reason I want to situate the staff. If you would allow me, I am trying to make the point that except for Region 8, presently, every other region outside of Region 4 now have a Labour Office.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, over the next hour or however, you will have at least two other programmes that staffing details will pertain to. You will get an opportunity after this overview of where you have situated all these staff to answer the questions about the particulars of each programme and its staffing. Could we now come back to that?

Mr. Hamilton: That is all right, Mr. Chairman. Again, there was no administration. This is the administration of the staffing details: one Receptionist, four Cleaners; two Confidential Secretaries, the Permanent Secretary (PS); five Drivers; two Office Assistants; One Administrative Assistant; two Typist Clerks; two Receptionists; a Public Relations Officer (PRO), a Legal Officer; three Clerk II; two Data Entry Clerks; one Stores Keeper; a Systems Development Officer; a Procurement Officer; one Stores Clerk; one Handyman; two Assistant Accountants; and one Accountant.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman for upbraiding the Hon. Member. He must know his time and place.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, could you please withdraw that comment. I did not upbraid the Hon. Minister.

Ms. Ferguson: All right. Thank you very much, Hon. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Did you not hear me?

Ms. Ferguson: Pardon?

Mr. Chairman: Your description of my action, please...

Ms. Ferguson: It is not upgraded; you did not upgrade him. You upbraided him.

Mr. Chairman: I did not upbraid him; I am asking you to withdraw that.

An Hon. Member: She is saying upgrade.

Mr. Chairman: Upgrade? It is not even that. I did not upgrade him at all. Only His Excellency, President Dr. Ali can do that.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am proceeding on. May I turn the Hon. Member's attention to line item 6242, Maintenance of Buildings. Hon. Member, for 2021, I note that you had \$5 million budgeted. You spent \$5.9 million. I am sorry you had \$5.9 million budgeted for 2021 and you had a revised figure of \$10.4 million for 2021. The first question to the Hon. Member – what would have caused this increase? Where exactly was the money spent? My third question has to do with the new appropriation being sought which is \$4.9 million. Could the Hon. Member state whether the \$4.9 million is sufficient in comparison with what was spent last year and which buildings are to be maintained? Thank you.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, this is just to say that the sum of \$4.9 million is adequate because many of the upgrades that we had planned were done in 2021.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member failed to answer my other questions. In 2021, you budgeted for \$5.8 million, and you ended up spending \$5.9 million.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you may have to memorise these figures because you are confusing them.

Ms. Ferguson: I am sorry. Hon. Member, you budgeted \$5.9 million in 2021 and you spent \$10 million in 2021. So, the question I asked earlier – why the increase? Just before you respond, secondly, you are now asking for \$4.9 million. What I am asking you is, which building is or buildings are to be maintained with this \$4.9 million?

5.50 p.m.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chair, yes, we have budgeted \$5.9 million. Earlier, I said that we had to take three buildings to make a Ministry. Therefore, in consideration of the works that had to be done, there were virements that we were authorised by the Ministry of Finance to do, and that is the reason you would see 10 point 'whatever' million dollars that were spent to upgrade the complex that we are trying to build.

Ms. McDonald: Could the Minister clearly say to us why there is such an increase with regard to security? That is under line item 6281– Security Services. [**Mr. Persaud:** It is because you all are burning down buildings.] Relax *ya* self, boy. Could the Minister explain to us why there is this drastic increase from \$21,362,000 to \$30,046,000? Could you identify the security company for us and where the security service men or women are assigned?

Mr. Hamilton: I am advised that it is \$30 million because the cost of security services has gone up and that is the reason there is that increase.

Secondly, security is at the complex – all three of the buildings, both the Hadfield street side and Brickdam side. There is also security service at the Permanent Secretary's (PS) residence. Presently, the company that is there, from a previous contract, is RK's Guyana Security Services. At the moment, we are about to tender for new security services.

Ms. McDonald: I did ask for the name of the security service that is being used.

Mr. Hamilton: Someone is not listening. I said it is RK's Guyana Security Services.

Ms. McDonald: You need to speak clearly, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms. Singh-Lewis, you have the floor.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Thank you for recognising me, Sir. Line item 6284 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister disaggregate the sum for us and tell us the activities that would be covered under this sum?

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, curtains – \$35,000; consultant fees – \$3.5 million; programming of our network – \$475,000; and sanitact services – \$200,000.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Follow up: Could the Hon. Minister tell us about the consultancy that is covered under the sum?

Mr. Hamilton: The consultancy services is to have a consultant in our Ministry who will help us to develop a strategic plan for labour and policy and issues about legislation and all those things, taking into consideration that Guyana is moving from one place to the other. The labour force survey...All of that is packaged in the consultancy work to be done so that, as a nation, we can

properly have an understanding about the new jobs for which we have to train people. All those things would be *part and parcel* of the consultancy to be developed for the Ministry of Labour.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: This sum that we are looking at is a meagre sum and the Minister has said there are a number of other things, including curtains and other things. Could he be a little bit specific and tell us what is the cost of this particular consultancy?

Mr. Hamilton: When Members ask questions, they have to pay attention to the answers. I went through and I disaggregated this money. Some \$3.9 million is for the consultant. I called four or five items and I listed the costs.

Programme: 381 – Policy Development and Administration – \$644,844,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 381 – Policy Development and Administration – \$72,500,000

Mr. Chairman: Before I recognise Hon. Members, I think we were at project code 2512300 when I intervened. The Hon. Member, Ms. McDonald, you could have the floor and ask your question.

Ms. McDonald: We noticed under this heading, Furniture and Equipment...the question I was asking before...

Mr. Chairman: You would have to stay closer to the microphone because we are getting a very muffled...

Ms. McDonald: Are you hearing me now, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: I am still not getting you good.

Ms. McDonald: Are you not hearing me again?

Mr. Chairman: I am hearing you now, yes.

Ms. McDonald: Mr. Chairman, earlier I was asking about the furniture and the equipment that are listed here. Could the Minister say to us what equipment we are talking about and the cost for the equipment?

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, they are Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras, desks, biometric time machines, cubicles, low back chairs, monitors, microphones and web cameras, television sets, projector and screen, conference table, self-powered Public Address (PA) systems, executive chairs, 9000 BTU air-conditioning (AC) units, equipment and tools for the handy man, four laptops, and four computer workstation desks.

Programme: 381 – Policy Development and Administration – \$72,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 382 – Labour Administration Services – \$306,247,000

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson, you have the floor.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for acknowledging me. To the Hon. Member, could I turn your attention to line item 6116? I notice here there were nine staff last year, 2021, and for 2022, it is up by 31. Could the Hon. Member explain to this Committee the reason for the increase in staffing numbers? Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, you have another opportunity.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, as I was saying some time earlier, we are moving the staffing complement at the Labour Department from 16 to 26 and we are moving the staffing complement of the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Department from nine to 30. We moved the staffing complement of the Central Recruitment and Manpower Agency (CRMA) department by some five and also the Co-op's Department by, I think, five. As regard to the Labour Department, most if not all of the persons are already hired. I think we just have a couple more to be hired. As regard the Occupational Safety and Health Department, so far, we have hired about 50% of the sum total of the persons to be hired. Therefore, that is why you see the increase from 65 last year to 85 for 2022.

Ms. Ferguson: To the Hon. Member, thank you very much for your explanation. The Hon. Member mentioned that, later in the year, they will be hiring additional staff. I have two questions for the Hon. Member. Firstly, could you say whether the positions would be advertised publicly? Secondly, for the remuneration, I noticed that there is an increase from \$17 million to \$86 million for contracted employees. The question I have is whether provisions have been made for the new personnel who will be hired sometime in the year, or you would have to come back with supplementary paper later in the year to cater for the additional staff. Thank you very much.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, a couple of things. One, I think some of my colleagues had to explain this already to the Opposition benches. Regarding hiring of staff during the period, the Ministry of Finance deals with that matter as regard to paying for the staffing. So, nothing will come back as regard to a supplementary for the payment of new staff.

Secondly, if we increase staff, it follows that the line-item cost will increase. There is no bafflement there. As I have said, we have increased the staffing complement, in regard to technical officers, from 65 to 85. Therefore, it follows, I repeat, that the sum will be increased. Additionally, I am sure that the 7% increase is part of what the numbers are showing for 2022.

6.05 p.m.

Ms. McDonald: Line items 6113 and 6117: I have noticed that, in 2021, there was a staff total of 28, and then in 2022, there is 26. In 2021, there was 11 and then in 2022, there is seven. Could the Hon. Member say to us what the reason for the decrease in staff was in the totals under the line items, Other Technical and Craft Skilled and Temporary Employees?

Mr. Hamilton: Under line item 6117, I am advised that the persons were temporary staff who have left the Ministry. Under line item 6113, I am advised that there was resignation of two officers and that is why the number has moved downwards from 28 to 26.

Ms. McDonald: We are looking at Other Technical and Craft Skilled. Is the Minister saying to us that the Ministry is now fully staffed so it does not need the additional, or is it going to be advertising for these persons at some point?

Mr. Hamilton: Earlier, I said that we have the authority to hire a staffing complement of nearly 200 persons, of course, authorised by the Ministry of Public Service. We started the process of

hiring people and building the administration department. There was no accounts department, no personnel department and no information technology department. All of those are things that we are building with new staff. As regard technical officers, as I said, there were only nine occupational safety and health (OSH). The complement will go to 30. Therefore, the hiring of persons has continued. It started in 2020, and still, as I speak to you, people are being interviewed. Some of the recommendations are at the Ministry of Public Service waiting for approval. We still have to hire more persons. As regard advertisement, what I know is that CRMA, which is a department of ours, that is one of its functions. It follows that it will do the same advertisement as it does for the private sector and other people. Added to that, there was an advertisement on our *Facebook* page about the staff, and people responded to that. Even in the early days, when the Guyanese people recognised that a Ministry was being re-established, I can tell you, there were scores of applications which we are still looking at. Many people have been hired *via* that process. The hiring will continue until we fill the complement of persons. Importantly, also, is the fact that we have established regional offices. We have determined that all of the technical officers who will man those offices will belong to the region, and that is what we have been doing. In all of the regions, there are persons from the regions who are working in the regions.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, could I turn the Hon. Member's attention to line item 6291, National and Other Events? What I recognise here is that \$3,500,000 was budgeted for 2021 and only \$1,399,000 million was spent. I notice that for 2022, the Ministry is now asking for \$18,500,000 in a Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) setting. I guess the Hon. Member can explain to us what it is the Ministry will be celebrating as national events and, perhaps, provide us with a disaggregated list of what these events are.

Mr. Hamilton: I just wish to say that the Ministry of Labour has embarked on a sensitisation programme. That will be one of the issues for 2022 – sensitisation about labour relations and the rights of workers. I can inform this Committee that on Friday, there will be a conference, first of its kind, a labour conference, where we will be engaging all the companies in Guyana which operate in the oil and gas sector. [**Ms. Ferguson:** Is that a national event?] Yes, it is a national event.

Secondly, a public relation (PR) and communication strategy will be rolled out to deal with the issue of safe work, because we have been aggressively dealing with the issue of health and safety. Just for reference, because of the work that was done by that department, we have decreased workplace deaths in our first full year in Office by 16%. [Ms. McDonald: Has it decreased or increased?] We have decreased it. You all have hearing problems over there. We have decreased, by 16%, the incidents of deaths in the workplace. That was because the Occupational Safety and Health Department and the Labour Department have been out there, sensitising and engaging the public sector and private sector and doing training for employers and employees. That work will continue in the new year. Flyers and brochures and all of those things are involved in that. The Hon. Member might say that Occupational Safety and Health Month activities is not a national event, but it is a national event.

The International Energy Conference and Expo, the Ministry of Labour will be there, prominently, with a booth, where our departments will be engaging with the people from the oil and gas sector. We have child labour day, co-operatives day and several others that are important national events in the calendar of the nation which the Ministry of Labour promotes and will continue to promote. This money will be utilised, this year, to do that.

Programme: 382 – Labour Administration Services – \$306,247,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 382 – Labour Administration Services – \$18,000,000

Programme: 382 – Labour Administration Services – \$ 18,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very, very much, Hon. Minister and staff, for taking us through the agency. I now invite the Hon. Minister of Human Services and Social Security and her staff to take up their positions in the Dome. Hon. Members, we will take the break after this presentation.

Agency: 39 Ministry of Human Services and Social Security

Current Expenditure

Programme: 391 - Policy Development and Administration – \$352,158,000

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Under line item 6211, the Staffing Details indicates that there are eight new employees in 2022. It is line item 6116, sorry. Could the Minister list the designations and emoluments for these employees? It is line item 6116, Contracted Employees.

Minister of Human Services and Social Security [Dr. Persaud]: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Member, thank you for that question. The designations: Deputy Permanent Secretary (DPS) (Administration), Administrative Assistant, Principal Personnel Officer, Systems Development Coordinator, Procurement Manager, Procurement Officer, Administrative Assistant, and Transport Officer. In that order: \$359,124, \$96,595, \$299,600, \$287,058, \$187,642, \$109,202, \$96,595, and \$81,320.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Line item 6241, Rental of Buildings: I have a three-part question. Could the Minister say who the landlords are in the rental agreements, what has caused the increase in the rental of the buildings, and where are these buildings located?

Dr. Persaud: It is the Maraj Building for the Guyana Legal Aid Clinic. You wanted to know what the increase was about; it was for that, rental.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Mr. Chairman, I asked about the landlord and the Hon. Minister has given me the location.

Dr. Persaud: The Maraj people are the landlords.

6.20 p.m.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: All right.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson, you have the floor.

Ms. Ferguson: A follow-up to my Hon. Member's question. Line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings: I think my colleague did ask the question about the reason for the increase.

Dr. Persaud: The rental was raised, and we are catering for that increase in the rental. It was raised from \$313,500 per month to \$361,000 per month. As I said, it caters for the legal aid entity, which provides free legal services to all those who cannot access legal services.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Line item 6281 – Security Services: Could the Minister tell us the reason for the increase and where these security services are located?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I think security services would come under a different line item. It is just to bring that to your attention. Go ahead.

Dr. Persaud: With regard to line item 6281, the last time, it was not the entire year that was catered for. In this Budget, the entire year is catered for, and it includes the Special Constabulary and the Elite Protection Services.

Ms. Philadelphia: Line item 6292 – Dietary: I recognise that there is an increase from 2020...

Mr. Chairman: Is it line item 6292?

Dr. Persaud: There is no such thing, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Philadelphia: Line item 6292 – Dietary...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, allow the Hon. Member to...

Ms. Philadelphia: Sorry, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Line item 6284 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister disaggregate for us and tell us about the activities that would be under this head?

Dr. Persaud: There is the rental of photocopying machines because we have heavy maintenance cost for the machines, and in order to reduce downtime, we have been renting machines at a cost of \$402,000. There is the advertisement for public tenders and vacancy notices, and the editing of interviews and television programmes for the Ministry. This is to do with the Ministry's work and programmes and getting those out there across the country. There are carpets and window blinds; fixtures and servicing of appliances and other equipment, such as our fire alarms, our CCTV cameras and telephones; Microsoft licence suite; sanitact services, and the Private Branch

Exchange (PBX) phone systems, and this is because there was an expansion to the Ministry and the current PBX system does not have the capacity. So, we are improving that.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Line item 6291 – National and Other Events: Could the Hon. Minister tell us if there would be any religious holidays under this heading?

Dr. Persaud: It is all of the religious holidays. We have had a tradition, since I am there at the Ministry, of observing all of the religious holidays.

Ms. McDonald: Could the Hon. Minister say for us, under line item 6294, what ‘Other’ there indicates?

Dr. Persaud: It is for staff identification document (ID) and replacement of new ID cards because we are considering using a biometric system at the Ministry, and we look towards doing that to improve efficiency of our staff members and our timekeeping. We are also looking at stipend for work study; service of the Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) power supply; the purchase of staff and retirement tokens that are traditionally done; stipend for ministerial tender board; replacing of the mats in the washroom facilities outside the office building; replacing industrial carpets in our offices; staff t-shirts for when they go out to represent the Ministry; and payment of evaluators.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): Could the Hon. Minister list the types of training and state who will be the beneficiaries of this training?

Dr. Persaud: Our staff will be the beneficiaries. This training includes staff development, project management and event planning for our Ministry, and a diploma in general computer skills. What we are trying to do is enhance the capacity and capability of our staff to cater for the enormous amount of work that we have been doing through this Ministry that was really never done before. Last year, we embarked on a series of events, programmes and initiatives. So, we are just bringing the staff up to speed at the moment and I believe in investing in staff, too.

Ms. McDonald: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contribution to Local Organisations: Could the Minister share with us the organisations that are going to be afforded this opportunity?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I will just bring the attention of other Members that all of these organisations are listed in the Budget Estimates, and the details are in there. Hon. Minister, you may answer.

Dr. Persaud: If you would like, I can read it out, but it is on page 604 and goes on to page 605. Would the Hon. Member like me to read them all out? I can. That is all right.

Ms. McDonald: That is fine. Thank you, Hon. Minister.

Dr. Persaud: All right.

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6292 – Dietary: I noticed there was a revision in 2021 of just \$344,000 but now it has gone straight to \$18,500,000. Is it new locations and new additions? I know there is the Night Shelter and some other places. With regard to dietary, where are we talking about?

Mr. Chairman: Just help me here, Hon. Members. I think we are at Programme 391, Policy Development and Administration, Current Expenditure. I am checking line item 6292 – Dietary and I see zero. Am I wrong?

Dr. Persaud: You are correct, Mr. Chairman. There is no such line under this programme. This was a previous question.

Mr. Chairman: Perhaps, the Hon. Member has moved ahead, signalling her intention to...

Programme: 391 – Policy Development and Administration – \$352,158,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 391 – Policy Development and Administration – \$1,032,082,000

Ms. Singh-Lewis: If I may refer to the items at 162, could the Hon. Minister tell us what these items are and where they will be placed?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, which page are you on? I heard you say 162 and I am looking for 162. Just put on the microphone. I cannot hear from there.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: It is project profile 162.

Dr. Persaud: For this, we have photocopying machines for registry and procurement; cubicles for all the staff on the different floors; multipurpose printer for procurement and the secretariats; electronic timekeeping system, and I explained why; laptop computers for the Expenditure Planning and Management Analysis (EPMA), Project Officer, Information Technology (IT) Specialist, Transport Officer and procurement; desktop computers for Administrative Assistant, accounts and personnel; executive chairs for a number of staff; filing cabinets for Administrative Assistant; Project Officer and personnel; a small refrigerator for the Procurement Department; external hard drive for personnel and public relations (PR); shredder for procurement; a vacuum cleaner for the Ministry; and a guillotine for EPMA. That is it, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Sir, if we can look at project profile 161, it states:

“Provision for stores and payment of retention”.

Could the Hon. Member provide a disaggregation and tell us what goes to the retention and what goes to the stores?

Dr. Persaud: There are only two items here. I will start with the simplest one. We are constructing stores because the office at Lamaha Street really does not have space, and that is to the tune of \$5 million. The other is a retention on remodelling that was done to the building. We instituted a Difficult Circumstances Unit. People who come to access services from the Ministry, we want to maintain their dignity and we want to have them comfortably settled, so there is an expansion of that. There is an expansion of space for the Procurement Unit. It is pretty much to accommodate staff and programmes of the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: A follow-up. Could the Hon. Minister tell us where this facility will be constructed?

Dr. Persaud: It will be at the office at Lamaha Street, as I mentioned.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I put the question that the sum stated for Agency 39, Ministry of Human Services...

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Cde. Chairman...

Mr. Chairman: ...and Social Security...Hon. Member, you are going to have to decide because this is the second time the Committee...

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Comrade Chairman, this is the last question.

Mr. Chairman: You know you can ask as many as you want within the time...

Ms. Singh-Lewis: I can? Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, within the time, but to have us about to put the question, and then a reflex action...

Ms. Singh Lewis: I am sorry, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: That is all right, Hon. Member. Go ahead.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Thank you, Comrade Chairman. For project profile 163, we have:

- “1. Cash transfers
- 2. Electricity bill credits
- 3. Survivor’s Advocate Programme
- 4. Media Campaign”

It is \$970 million. Could the Hon. Minister disaggregate this sum for us?

Dr. Persaud: As you know, we did a number of excellent programmes last year to benefit our pensioners, people living with disabilities and people who are on public assistance. Each one of those categories got \$25,000 in a voucher through this line, and now we are also looking towards that again.

6.35 p.m.

We looked at expansion of so many programmes, and we touched so many thousands of lives across the country. This will be used again in that direction. We are looking at the most vulnerable in our population. We are also looking at the Survivors Advocacy Programme, and this is a programme that is very special to the Ministry. This programme deals with how we tackle domestic violence, and it complements the 914 hotline, and the 914 application (App)

called *iMatter*. The survivors' advocates provide personalised support to people who would have experienced violence and abuse. We have taken on a number of those persons last year, and we are going to expand the complement this year. The intention is to ensure that we have those survivors advocates in all of the regions, to ensure that there is knowledge about our programmes and all of the good work that we are doing, and to ensure that there is excellent access when people across the country would be doing media campaigns. We are also looking at strengthening the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security's efficiency, delivery of service. So, all of that falls under this line, and we would have to cater, too, for administrative costs as well.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Cde Speaker, I have a follow up question, or rather, if I may redirect the question, could the Minister tell us, of the \$970 million, how much would go to cash transfer, how much would go to electricity credits, how much would go to the Survivors Advocacy Programme, and how much is assigned for the media campaign?

Dr. Persaud: Sure, Mr. Chairman, thank you. Three hundred and sixty-seven million, two hundred and nine thousand for cash transfers; and \$77,050,000 for beneficiaries of old age pension. We have already dealt with electricity credits; the Survivors Advocacy Programme, \$59,021,000; media campaign, \$67,351,000; and strengthening of the Ministry and how we could have really good output, \$236,844,000.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Project Profile page No. 164 – this caters for technical assistance. Could the minister explain what technical assistance would be provided here?

Dr. Persaud: This was something that was sitting on the shelf for a number of years within the last Government's Administration. I raise it because these are very important things that we want to do, things such as a poverty map. This was in combination with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) project. The poverty map would help us to determine who the beneficiaries are, where they are and what their circumstances are. It was done and it was not well done, because the population of the poverty map was flawed. We are now waiting for the census survey results so that we could relook at this. I think I would have mentioned it; but no, I forgot, you all were not here the last time.

Then, there is the proxy means test and the Digital Specialist, who will give oversight to the development of our digital unit, the Management Information Systems Unit (MISU); and also, Change Management Specialists, who will work with us to ensure that there is integration of the department, the information coming out of the department, so that our response would be that much faster and more effective; project executing and emoluments and equipment, and also, consultancy. If you like, I could give you the breakdown because I figure that you will ask for that: \$8,340,000, \$6,255,000, \$8,340,000, \$6,081,737, 20,983,263, and that is in order. Thank you.

Mr. Ramjattan: In relation to the cash grants, Hon. Minister, could there be a commitment to transparently place on the website who are the beneficiaries?

Dr. Persaud: Thank you for the question. It would be 15,861 persons for public assistance. This is done by using our public assistance register. It is not that we go out and randomly select people. They go through a process of coming through the Local Boards of Guardians, and also having the Poor Law Commission review as well. This includes persons with disabilities. Then we are looking at a number of other persons, in the thousands, who are also benefitting, cash grants – 10,000 and old age pension. We are looking at more than 58,000 people, 2,800... I think that would be a bit unwieldy for public placement, but I have nothing to hide; it is all transparent. If it is possible at all, I have nothing to say about not doing that.

Programme: 391 – Policy Development and Administration – \$1,032,082,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 392 – Social Services – \$27,557,663,000

Dr. Cummings: I am following up on the question I should have asked the last time. Line item 6292 – Dietary: There is an increase by approximately \$10 million. Could you explain why the increase, the locations and who are the beneficiaries of this sum?

Dr. Persaud: This line item caters for meals for all of our homes and institutions. We are now moving to a full capacity. There has been an extension of the Palms Geriatric Home, and an extension of the Night Shelter. Now, with more and more Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidelines

being put in place, we are in a better position to accommodate more persons. So, we are looking at the Palms Geriatric Home, Night Shelter, Hugo Chavez Centre, Mahaica Health Care Centre and all of our shelters across the country. The Palms Geriatric Home has a capacity of 210, Night Shelter has a capacity of 102, Hugo Chavez Centre has a capacity of 120. Those are some of the numbers we are looking at.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: There has been an increase in contracted staff from 62 in 2021 to 122 in 2022. Could the Hon. Minister say to this House, why there is such a significant increase in one year and where are these staff placed?

Dr. Persaud: This line caters for the 7% increase as well as 16 new staff members. Actually, these are very much needed members of staff who will cater to the needs of the Ministry, including some of the places that require and demand so much more care. Let us start. They are the Deputy Director at our office on Cornhill Street; Administrator, Hugo Chavez Centre; Project Officer, Guyana Women's Leader Institute (GWLI); and Senior Training Officer, GWLI. As you know, GWLI has become a hub for all of the activities dealing with women. So, we have to increase our capacity. I think one person was there before, and that is, probably, why nothing was done. Then, there is the Assistant Administrative Officer at the Palms Geriatric Home, the Liaison Officer, Ministry of Human Services and Social Protection, Cornhill and Water Street, and the Probation and Social Services Officers. We also have hotline operators. You would see that a number of these persons include our hotline operators; our first responders, I and II, who deal with domestic violence; Ward Maid; Kitchen Assistants; Cleaner; Nursing Assistant; Patient Care Assistant; Laundress; and Typist Clerk.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, I think she was also asking about the movement of the staff under line item 6116.

Dr. Persaud: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I just read it. The 60 new staff whom we took on. Also, I made reference to the 7% increase which is contained.

Dr. Cummings: I am following up on the same line item 6116. Could you give us the emoluments of the top five persons in this category?

Dr. Persaud: Administrator – \$322,152; Deputy Director – \$321,000; Senior Gender Affairs Officer (GAO) – 275,190; Senior Training Officer – \$256,371; Administrator – 242,725; and Matron – \$235,993. That is it, I gave you a bonus.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Minister. Hon. Member, Mr. Deonarine Ramsarran... Ramsaroop, my apologies. I keep giving you a new name every time I...

Mr. Ramsaroop: That is fine, Sir. Under line item 6284, Other, there is a budgeted allocation for \$120 million. Could the Hon. Minister say if the healthcare workers employed at the Palms Geriatric Home would receive their two weeks bonus which was promised to the healthcare workers by Government.

Dr. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, that is not catered for under this line item; it does not relate to this line item.

Programme: 392 – Social Services – \$27,557,663,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I will try a new thing here. Let us turn to the next page to deal with Programme 393, Child Care and Protection Agency. It might prevent us from turning many pages up and down if I take it this way.

Programme: 393 – Child Care and Protection – \$886,357,000

Flue-Bess: Line item 6294 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister say what are the areas covered under this line item?

Dr. Persaud: Would you like me to read them all out? I can. This is the Independent Living Skills Programme with transitioned housing for youth and family. We have to cater for children who are in State care, and many of them age out of homes. We started an aggressive programme to look at their welfare even after they leave our homes, because it is tough from them, so this caters for that – \$2.5 million.

6.50 p.m.

Then there is screening and processing of potential foster parents. As you know, we started expanding our foster care programme. This is a programme where it allows children not to be in institutional care for a protracted period of time. Here again, this is catered for.

Then there is maintenance of the Adoption Board - The Adoption Board was reconstituted, and it has been doing excellent work. We have managed to clear a significant backlog of adoptions in the country.

The public awareness programmes on issues affecting the well-being of children – Last year the ‘Every Child Safe’ programme was launched. This is to deal with community engagement on the safety and security of children. We are looking at this in a wholistic way, where we work with our officers, as well as parents and the wider community to have safe environments for children and that is catered for here.

We are cognisant of teenaged pregnancies. There is a ‘Teen Prevention and Empowerment’ programme where officials are working with young pregnant mothers. We are also looking at community partnership development programmes to help those families, which have instabilities, to ensure that they catered for and supported in this line item.

There is the annual staff conference. One of the programmes that I think all of us would like to see happen very quickly and will be happening very soon is our parents training programme. We are going to be working with parents across the length and breadth of this country. We are going to be training trainers to deliver this kind of training. They will go out to work with parents – new parents, parents who have difficulties and parents at large. This is catered for under this head.

There is the child development and life skills building programme to prevent juvenile offending. As you know, the new Juvenile Offences Act was in place. We are embarking on an expansive programme to prevent those kinds of offences and to also intervene if the need arises.

There is in-home case service to children and their families to reduce the number of out-of-home care for children. The Child Care and Protection Agency has the national alternative care policy because the world is moving towards less institutionalisation of children. As such, we are

looking to prevent that, should it arise and to work with families to have more of a sense of equilibrium in their homes.

Financial support and assistance for the implementation of the same national alternative care policy, the maintenance of the visiting committee. This is something that is new. It was started last year. We have a visiting committee that would visit all of the children's homes across the country and provide reports to the Ministry so that those homes could improve their standard of care, school supplies, clothing and footwear.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I have Dr. Cummings and I have the Hon. Member, Ms. Annette Ferguson. Ms. Ferguson is first. Ms. Ferguson, Hon. Member, go ahead.

Ms. Ferguson: The very line item 6294 – Other: I am happy to hear from the Hon. Member about what are some of the activities for vulnerable communities and stuff like that even though you did not provide us with the areas that are likely to benefit; you spoke more wholistically. What I want to find out from the Hon. Member is whether areas such as Agricola, Buxton, East Ruimveldt, South Ruimveldt and Lusignan would be captured to benefit from what the budget allocation has to offer.

Secondly, how will your beneficiaries or the target numbers be derived? What assessment has been done to ensure that the most vulnerable persons, within these communities to which I just alluded, gain benefit? Thank you.

Dr. Persaud: I am glad the Hon. Member asked that question because I was very clear when I said all of Guyana will benefit. In fact, last year a number of areas were identified as hotspots. Work has already started in some of those areas, like Bare Root and Mocha. A lot of these areas will be captured and a number of... I went into that area myself when the 'Every Child Safe' programme was launched. We had a thing where we were letting off balloons and lanterns. I do not know. If you had just looked up in the air, you would have seen it.

The Child Care and Protection Agency has its officers working in the fields. We were on the highway; we were in all parts of the country. This will be expanded to include the hinterlands and areas that are most vulnerable. I do not think the Hon. Member has anything to worry about because I do care about all the children of Guyana.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. The Hon. Member, Dr. Cummings and then the Hon. Member, Ms. Singh-Lewis.

Dr. Cummings: I am looking at line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships). In the revised 2021 Budget, it was \$5,900,000 and *Budget 2022* was almost doubled from \$5,900,000 to \$12,845,000. Who are the beneficiaries of this training and what criteria is being used? Are we covering all of Guyana, especially the vulnerable population like in Baramita...and representatives from these places? How are you going about choosing persons to be trained?

Dr. Persaud: Thank you, Hon. Member for that question. The training will have both an outward and inward dimension, in that we will be working with people within the Ministries to increase their capacity and externally to benefit people from across the community. For example, we will be training foster parents. The number of persons intended to benefit will be 50 persons.

We are looking at the existing list of foster parents to work with so that... We are looking at long term indicators of potential adoption and to strengthen how they deliver care to children right now.

We are also looking at mentorship training. This one is a very good programme that we will be launching, where we would be working with people across the country to develop mentorship skills in communities. I think we will all agree that children and young people benefit from positive role models. We want to equip those persons, who are enthused, to benefit. Twenty-five trainers will be equipped with those skills.

We are also looking at community workers as voluntary social workers and transitional coaches – 30 of those persons. Again, we are focusing on juveniles. Here again, 60 of those persons – young people pruned to... and young people in the system who are known to not really be on the right track. Those persons will benefit from life skills and will also be working with children. There will be special training programmes for children in all our institutions during the vacation period. I think that is self-explanatory. Last year, we had a very nice response from children as they benefitted from the arts, music and dance. We were able to identify a lot of talent there. Eighty children will benefit.

One of the ways in which one could strengthen any system is not to only develop a system, but it is to work on the human resources. It is important that the existing officers we have upgrade their skills, be more in line with best practices and benefit from the newer models of engagement with children and parents.

Capacity building, training for Child Protection Officers and police and other service providers will be done. We are catering for 100 persons. We are looking at, again, more training for parents and positive parenting. Three hundred parents are earmarked. It is intended that these parents will be spread across the country.

We are looking at, as much as possible, to have the spread across the length and breadth of the country. A lot of the information and what will drive it will be dealt with through the Child Care and Protection Agency because it works with the most at-risk children and is very aware of those parents who should and could benefit from that.

Mr. Chairman: I have the Hon. Member, Ms. Singh-Lewis.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: I then recognise the Hon. Member, Ms. Philadelphia.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Line item 6284 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister disaggregate this for us, please? It is \$12 million.

Dr. Persaud: Thank you, Hon. Member. For the first one, it is payment to three tutors for remedial schoolwork for the children in our care centres. There are a lot of children who are pretty much not rapid in terms of their learning curve. Everyone has a different learning curve. That is to the tune of \$2,160,000.

Everyone will agree with me that the Covid-19 impact has been tremendous on children and they would not have benefitted from as much social interaction and engagement and also not being in the classroom. There are lots of reasons. So, we are doing payments for special mental health services for children to the tune of \$1 million. There will be payment for three instructors, again for the arts and sports for children – \$2.2 million. We want our children to always be in good shape, their well-being and their physical appearances, so there will be barbering service for

boys-in-care as we promote good grooming – \$650,000. We have a lot of boys in care. There will be payment for continued maintenance of all computers at our secretariat and district offices. There is a billboard that you will be seeing across the country, I think you will like it so look out for this – \$996,400. There is payment for procurement notices, which I think that is self-explanatory; ID cards for the staff; washing of towels, mats and cleaning of windows monthly – \$450,600; Sanitact services for Childcare and Protection Agency (CPA) and children's homes – \$648,000; and a parking sign at one of the Ministry's location – \$25,000.

Ms. Lewis-Singh: Just for clarification, Cde. Chairman, all the services to be rendered for children, are they children in State care or countrywide?

Dr. Persaud: I was very specific about saying that this is with reference to children in State care.

Ms. Philadelphia: Line item 6116: I recognise an increase of 17 contracted personnel. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to inform us about the reason for this increase; the portfolio and the institutions that will benefit from this increase in staff? Thank you.

Dr. Persaud: As you know, the Childcare and Protection Agency is really starved for human resource and has been for a long of time. In fact, this was one of the things that I would have said when I was in Opposition, in my budget speeches, that we need to increase it. We started to do that and so ... [**Ms. Ferguson:** *[Inaudible]*] Mr. Chairman, I am happy to take Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson in care, if she wishes. The places are quite nice.

Here are some of the positions: the Administrative Assistant position – this was a person who was transferred from temporary to permanent; Office Assistant – the same thing; and the Probation and Social Services Officers. The officers are placed in the rural and hinterland communities because there is where we are starved. There is a receptionist; six Probation and Social Service Officers; a Social Service Assistant, a Maid; Kitchen Attendant; Social Service Assistants; and three House Service Supervisors and a Registration Licensing Officer. These are in Georgetown at our agencies, as well as our institutions in Region 4.

7.05 p.m.

Mr. Cox: I just a follow-up question on the same line item, 6116. I have special interest in the two vulnerable communities, Mabaruma and Port Kaituma. Could the Hon. Minister say how

many staff are located in Mabaruma and Port Kaituma, and whether these staff are adequate knowing that Port Kaituma is one of the most vulnerable communities when it comes to childcare? Thank you.

Dr. Persaud: We have two staff in Port Kaituma and we have to find someone for Mabaruma. There was someone there. This is part of the efforts and that is why I am sure you will support this because we want to increase our capacity in the hinterland.

Programme: 393 – Child Care and Protection – \$886,357,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 392 – Social Services – \$124,569,000

Ms. Singh-Lewis: For clarity, are we finished with...

Mr. Chairman: ...all of the current. We have...

Ms. Singh-Lewis: ...and the capital expenditure for Policy Development. We are on capital expenditure for Social Services and Child Care and Protection.

Mr. Chairman: You are very correct, Hon. Member.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Thank you, Sir. At Profile Page No. 165, there is a project titled 'Buildings'. The project description includes:

- “1. Completion of disability centre at Mahaica and culinary training facility...
2. Rehabilitation and extension of domestic violence shelters.
3. Provision for guard hut and trestle - Hugo Chavez Centre...”

I am interested in the second part:

- “2. Rehabilitation and extension of domestic violence shelters.”

Could the Minister list the domestic violence shelters and say how much of this sum will go towards each centre?

Dr. Persaud: I can give you the amounts listed for the shelters, but I cannot give you the locations. I am sure Members understand that; it is a matter of security for the persons who are living in violent circumstances who will be in our care. I can tell you the sum is \$9,702,000, almost \$10 million, for what we have planned.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Sir, I understand the sensitivity to the issue. Could the Hon. Minister lay it over for us?

Dr. Persaud: Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to layover the sums that I just stated, but I will not divulge the locations. As the Member correctly said it is a very sensitive issue, and I cannot do that.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Sir, I do not understand. As a Member of Parliament (MP), if I need to visit one of these centres it is unknown at this point in time because we cannot ask the question and the Minister will not answer.

Mr. Chairman: I want to say to the Hon. Member that the Minister mentioned the sensitivity of these locations. I know the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Social Services visits and makes requests for visits. Hon. Minister, you may answer again.

Dr. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, I think you have covered it nicely for me. Domestic violence is such a huge issue in our country, and we must be very sensitive and conscious of these nuances. I think your honourable colleague, Ms. Hastings-Williams, is signalling to you that you should not ask me that. My Director of Social Services is telling me that I am correct in what I am saying. Thank you.

Programme: 392 – Social Services – \$124,569,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 393 – Child Care and Protection – \$69,068,000

Programme: 393 – Child Care and Protection – \$69,068,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Let me thank the Hon. Minister and her staff for taking us through her agency. Thank you very much, Hon. Minister.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, would you like to move that the relevant Standing Order be suspended so that we can go beyond the 8.00 p.m. time to conclude the business of today; not only for today, but for today, tomorrow and Thursday?

Suspension of Standing Order No. 11

BE IT RESOLVED:

“That Standing Order No. 11 be suspended to enable this sitting of the National Assembly to continue with its business beyond 8.00 p.m.”

[Prime Minister]

Prime Minister [Brigadier Ret'd Phillips]: Mr. Speaker, I so move that the relevant Standing Order be suspended so that we can continue our work today, tomorrow and Thursday.

Mr. Speaker: ...beyond 8.00 p.m. Thank you very much.

Question put and agreed to.

Standing Order suspended.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, this is a good time to take a half of an hour suspension. We will come back for the Ministry of Housing and Water.

Sitting suspended at 7.13 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 7.55 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Members. Kindly be seated. The House will resolve itself into Committee of Supply to continue consideration of the Estimates.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we now invite the Hon. Minister of Housing and Water, the Hon. Collin Croal, and his team to lead us through his agency. Hon. Members, we will take all

the current expenditure and then we will take the capital expenditure so that we do not have to turn the pages too often.

Agency: 45 Ministry of Housing and Water

Current Expenditure

Programme: 451 – Policy Development and Administration – \$254,309,000

Ms. Ferguson: [*Inaudible*]

[*Technical difficulty experienced.*]

Mr. Chairman: Technicians?

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, a pleasant evening. We are just back from dinner. Through the Chairman to the Hon. Member, if I can turn his attention to line item 6166 under staffing details, could the Hon. Member provide, in writing to the National Assembly, the categories of staff under this line item?

Minister of Housing and Water [Mr. Croal]: Mr. Chairman, the line item is actually 6116, Contracted Employees. I have the information here that I can readily provide to the House. There is no need to lay it over. If the Hon. Member is interested, I can give the information.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. I would prefer for the information to be laid over.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, I did not commit to a layover. I committed to state to the House what line item 6116 entails under staffing details. I have no problem in providing such here and now. May I proceed? [**Ms. Ferguson:** Yes.] There are fifteen contracted employees: one Permanent Secretary, two Personal Assistants, one Community Liaison Officer, two Confidential Secretaries, two Technical Assistants, three Vehicle Drivers, one Administrative Assistant, two Cleaners and one more Office Assistant. This category caters for all the emoluments in terms of benefits, gratuity, *et cetera*.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Hon. Chairman. To the Hon. Member, for the five top positions, could you provide us with their qualifications?

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, I can provide the emoluments that are being paid for all the category employees I just identified. That is as far as what I am willing to provide.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, may I remind the Hon. Member that it is taxpayers' moneys that are being paid. By right, we have to ensure that the persons who are employed are capable enough to carry out the peoples' business. By right, we must be able to know whether they are qualified for the post that they currently hold.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, are they qualified?

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, I can assure the House that all the persons employed here are competent for the job that they have been employed for. It is not like what we met in some of the cases, in the Secretariat of the then Minister, and that is why we had to send home those staff.

8.02 p.m.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I would not even waste time to respond to the Hon. Member. Who should go home? It is Ali who should go home because he is not qualified enough.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, who are you referring to?

Ms. Ferguson: Ali? [**Hon. Member:** *Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: She went home already.

Ms. Ferguson: I am not referring to that Ali, Sir. We all know which Ali I am referring to.

Mr. Chairman: I do not know, Hon. Member, but you could tell me. I do not see any Ali in the House.

Ms. Ferguson: It is the person who sits as the President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you have to withdraw that.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you, very much.

Mr. Chairman: The next time you make reference to that I will not acknowledge you.

Ms. Ferguson: With your guidance, Sir...

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Ms. Ferguson: Through you, Mr. Chairman, to the Hon. Member, there has been a 40% increase from what was spent as the revised sum in 2021 and what is to be spent in 2022. Hon. Member, could you explain the reason for the increase? Thank you.

Mr. Croal: I could provide it as is stated in the Estimates. I do not want to waste our time, but I could go through where the increases are. Could the Hon. Member be specific in asking a question? If I am to respond to it appropriately, I would end up calling all the line items where there is an increase, which is already here in the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, could you specify the line item or line items?

Ms. Ferguson: We are considering line item 6116, Contracted Employees.

Mr. Croal: There were seven new employees and, of those 15 that I called a while ago, the new ones are the Technical Assistant, one Administrative Assistant, two Vehicle Drivers, two Cleaners and the one Office Assistant.

Ms. Ferguson: Moving on to line item 6272, Electricity Charges, could the Hon. Member explain the reasons for the exponential increase in electricity charges from a revised sum of \$5.6 million to \$55.85 million for 2022?

Mr. Croal: This is for the payment of arrears to the tune of \$22.5 million of that total. That goes from July, 2018, to the end of December, 2021. The reason for that payment for the arrears was as a result of an investigation that was done by the Guyana Power and Light (GPL) Incorporated in terms of the meter, so it is to correct that outstanding amount. The difference would be the current catering for 2022.

Ms. Ferguson: To the Hon. Member, would this sum take care of one building or several buildings under the Ministry?

Mr. Croal: It will take care of one building, lot 41. It is for the office where you used to occupy – hardly occupied actually.

Ms. Ferguson: I now turn the Hon. Member's attention to line item 6281, Security Services. In 2021, the Ministry was provided with an approved allocation of \$33 million for security services. They expended the sum of \$14.3 million. Could the Hon. Member explain the reason for the decrease and also provide to the House the reason for the budgetary allocation of \$31 million now being sought in *Budget 2022*?

Mr. Croal: The \$31 million now being sought reflects the new contract which commenced in January of this year and it runs for 12 months; so it is for actual expenditure foreseen. It is a new security company that is in place. We had less payments last year. It was for the very reason they had to change the security company, and that is in terms of the performance from the last company. Likewise, there was less utilisation.

Ms. Ferguson: Could the Hon. Member indicate the name of the security firm providing security services and the location to which these services are being provided or will be provided?

Mr. Croal: It is Atlas Security Service. It is being provided at Lot 41 Brickdam as well as the Permanent Secretary's residence.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you, Hon. Member, for the question. [**Mr. Hamilton:** Not the question, the answer.] ...for the answer. Thank you very much. My mind is all over the place.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, please give the former Hon. Minister an opportunity to ask her questions.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman for your protection. To the Hon. Member, I know earlier you did mention that the Ministry will be seeking new services from other security companies. Could you say to this House what method of procurement would be used to solicit security services for the Ministry of Housing and Water and also the dear Permanent Secretary's residence?

Mr. Croal: May I correct the Hon. Member? It is not "will be." We have already contracted that new company, so it is present tense. Likewise, as has been done the norm, the public advertisement went through the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board.

Ms. Ferguson: Cde. Chairman, I do not have any further questions for the Hon. Member on this particular current expenditure. I do not know if any of my Colleagues have.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Member.

Programme: 451 – Policy Development and Administration – \$254,309,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the estimates.

Programme: 452 – Housing Development – \$1,384,856,000

Ms. Ferguson: If I am to turn the Hon. Member's attention to the Staffing Details, line item 6116, Contracted Employees, I notice you had no allocation for 2021, but you now have one listed for 2022 with an allocation of \$3.9 million. Could the Hon. Member say to this House what is the position of this person and, if you could, provide us with a breakdown of the person's emoluments and benefits and where that person is currently assigned or will be assigned?

Mr. Croal: The position is for one Housing Economist. That person was employed during last year, but the reason you would not have an expenditure stated in 2021 is that, as is the norm when you have subsequent employment in the Government service, the Ministry of Finance covers that, and then it is now reflected in the current year. Secondly, the salary is \$235,993. What is paid is the gratuity and vacation allowance when due. The person is assigned to the Ministry of Housing and Water.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, with your permission, may I turn the Hon. Member's attention to line item 6112, Senior Technical? For 2021, you have zero there under the Staffing Details. I notice for 2022 you will be engaging two staff. Could the Hon. Member provide to this National Assembly the designation of the individuals, their emoluments and benefits, and where these persons will be assigned?

Mr. Croal: With the two persons, as I explained with the Housing Economist, it is a similar process. They are two Architects. One is being paid \$241,861 per month. The other one is \$284,861 per month. The other benefit they will get is a traveling allowance and they are assigned to the Ministry of Housing and Water.

Ms. Ferguson: For line item 6112, Senior Technical, and also line item 6116, Contracted Employees, could the Hon. Minister state how these persons were actually engaged? Was a public advertisement done whereby you had people from *all walks* applying for this job? How did the employment process go?

Mr. Croal: The two architects were actually already working in the Government service. They were at the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development. The Housing Economist came through the system, as contracted employees come through and will receive approval from the Ministry of Public Service.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Mr. Chairman, I am at line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. I am just confirming that we are on page 424–425.

Mr. Chairman: Go head, Hon. Member.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, there is \$1.3 billion. As I go to the back, I believe that is for the Central Housing and Planning Authority (CHPA). I would like to ask a question under that. I was [*inaudible*] with this. As far as I am aware, the CHPA was responsible for the round-about that is at the Mandela/Aubrey Barker section. Could the Hon. Minister state who did the scope of work, who did the layout and design for that particular round-about that is being done there?

Mr. Croal: I would be happy to give a half of an hour presentation, a few minutes, on the round-about and the four lane *et cetera*, but that is under the capital expenditure not the current expenditure.

8.17 p.m.

Ms. Ferguson: I just do not know how that particular line item missed my eyes. Line item 6321 – Subsidies to and Contributions to Local Organisations: Could the Hon. Member explain to the National Assembly the reason for the increase? I think, in 2021, you had a budgeted sum of \$1.254 billion. You are now asking for \$1.3 billion. Could you explain the reason for the increase?

Mr. Croal: I honestly did not want to go down this road. I find it strange that we are being questioned about the subvention. I understand why. Because the Central Housing and Planning Authority was actually starved of the Government of Guyana's contribution for operational expenses during the last Government's tenure. Last year, as was quite rightly mentioned, there was an increase close to one billion dollars. The increase came about as a result of the 7%, and additional activities as part of our operational costs. I could also go into details on the \$1.334 billion, of how this subvention could be spent, if the Hon. Member so desires.

Mr. Chairman: Thanks Hon. Minister. Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson, do you so desire?

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I think I can read and comprehend things for myself. On page 872 of the Budget *Estimates Volume 1* there is Appendix T, and this is where you will find the \$1.3 billion which caters for salary, emoluments, wages, amongst every other thing. The question to the Hon. Member is, if I may – because I notice, Cde. Chairman, that your employment cost is \$937 million as against \$677 million for 2021 – could the Hon. Member explain the reason for the increase? That is one. Two, will all staff in the Ministry of Housing and Water be paid from this particular line item?

Mr. Croal: The staffing that is paid here is for employees under the Central Housing and Planning Authority. The staffing that we went through a few minutes ago are staffing under the Ministry. One is the agency; one is the Ministry. There have been a few new employees throughout the last year to now. I could certainly go into them if the Hon. Member would like. Would you like me to go into the new staffing?

Ms. Ferguson: Yes.

Mr. Croal: Sure. No problem. Staffing is broken down into Administrative, Senior Technical, Other Technical and Craft Skilled, Clerical and Office Support, as well as Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled, and Contracted Employees. The new employees during 2021: there was no new employee under Administrative or Senior Technical; a new employee would have come under... I will go back. I will give you the details: an Enforcement and Investigative Officer; an Assistant Public Relations Officer; another Enforcement Officer; Clerk of Works, 5; System Analyst; Skid-Steer Operator; another Enforcement Officer; Architectural Technician; Engineering Technician; Clerk of Works; Planning Officer; Engineering Technician; Community

Development Officer – two of them; another Excavator Operator; Engineering Technician; Community Development Officer, 1; Surveyor Technician; Administrative Assistant; and Electrical Technician. I am not finished as yet.

Under Clerical and Office Support: Housing and Administration Officer, 3; Data Entry Clerks, 2; Assistant Regional Housing Officer; Data Entry Clerk; Data Entry Clerk; Regional Housing Clerk; GIS Research Officer; Accounts Clerk – 2 of them; Receptionist.

Under Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled are Vehicle Drivers, Office Keeper, Handyman, Labourer. Under Contracted Employees: one Project Support Facilitator, a Deputy Administrative Manager, and one more Project Support Facilitator. That is it.

Ms. Ferguson: If I could turn our attention on the very page 872, Appendix T, under Capital Revenue, the Central Housing and Planning Authority budgeted for \$1.9 billion. This is for sale of assets, *et cetera*. I recognise that the Authority was able to net \$5.195 billion. You did extremely well last year. Therefore, you should not have been enjoying any subsidies to local organisations because you have money. The question to the Hon. Member, could you provide to this House what are the assets, whether land, vehicle...? Let us know what this \$5.195 billion was able to bring? That is one. Two, whether these lands or whatever assets were sold, were they sold to private developers or individuals for commercial purposes? That is the type of information I am requesting from you, Hon. Member. Thank you very much.

Mr. Croal: I am wondering if it is a former Minister asking this question. First of all, as a nation we should be happy that we have been able to rake in more revenue as part of our performance as a Ministry. Likewise... [**Ms. Ferguson:** *Inaudible*]. Do not worry. I sat and I listened. Now it is your turn to listen. Likewise, the former Minister would know that there is a model that we use that is called cross subsidisation. Our revenue is earned from the lots that you pay, when you are allocating. Revenue is earned from the commercial lots when persons are allocated. There are three categories: house lots; residential/commercial; and commercial. The money that is stated there is derived from such exercises. If the Hon. Member is asking for all the persons we have allocated, that is another question. I want to know if the Hon. Member is asking that. If the Hon. Member is asking that, then I would have to go way back to start dealing with allocations.

Ms. Ferguson: I would not follow up the sarcasms. I would proceed. Even though you were able to sell lands, whether for commercial purposes, for residential purposes or for house lots, all I am asking you to provide this honourable House is where exactly these lands were sold – whether it was on the East Bank of Demerara, whether it is Experiment, whether it is Stewartville. That is the type of information I am requesting.

Mr. Croal: Some of the areas include, under Region 3, for example, Anna Catherina, Cornelia Ida (CI), Edinburgh, Meten-Meer-Zorg, and Stewartville. Right here in Region 4, for example, Mon Repo, Annandale, Vigilance, Bladen Hall, Strathspey, La Bonne Intention (LBI), Cummings Lodge, Great Diamond, Little Diamond, Prospect, and Providence. Region 5: Experiment, Berbice; Williamsburg; Hampshire; Number 75; Number 79; and Ordnance Fort Lands.

Ms. Ferguson: A follow-up on this particular line item. Thank you very much Mr. Croal, Hon. Member, for providing that sort of information. It would have been better for all of us to know how much money was raked in from the sales at Experiment, probably the acres of land sold – that type of information. If you do not have it now, I would be more than grateful for the Hon. Member to lay over to the National Assembly detailed information as it relates to the sale of these lands.

Mr. Chairman: Hon Minister, are you prepared to lay over the detailed information for the sale of the lands?

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, the answer is no. There is a parliamentary procedure the Hon. Member could apply in asking questions to the Minister.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Line item 6284 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister tell us what are some of the items that are covered under this line item?

Mr. Croal: They are broadly broken down into two categories. One is for the hosting of an upcoming building expo that we will finally host this year. The second would be for dream realised activities. The building expo, we intended to pull it off last year, but we delayed it because of the Coronavirus disease pandemic; so we are hoping to do that this year.

Ms. Ferguson: I have been trying to locate this particular figure in the Estimate. To the Hon. Member, are you aware that there is a US\$3 million, which is equivalent to \$600 million Guyana dollars in an account at Guyana Bank for Trade and Industry (GBTI)? This sum was actually procured through an Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) project for wastewater. If yes, Hon. Member, could you indicate whether the money from this account has been in use post-August, 2020?

8.32 p.m.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure which line item the question is being asked on. The short answer to that is, yes, we are aware of the US\$3 million.

Ms. Ferguson: To the Hon. Member, since you have confirmed that you are aware of the US\$3 million, could you say to this Committee whether that sum will be used in the shortest time, and perhaps, what arrangements you have for the utilisation of such a fund? Thank you.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, as far as I am prepared to say now, we are in consultation with the Inter-American Development Bank for the utilisation of the funds.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Member, we all are aware that the money has been lying in that account for some time now. Obviously, it would have incurred interest. So, could you say whether you all used the interest on the sum?

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, let me assure the Hon. Member that the sum is there. Whatever has been accrued is all there in the bank account.

Ms. Ferguson: [An Hon. Member: *[Inaudible]*] Housing is dear to my heart, so I have to pay a lot of interest there. Mr. Chair, I think that I have exhausted my questions on this particular area. Thank you.

Programme: 452 – Housing Development – \$1,384,856,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 453 – Water Service Expansion and Management – \$3,096,862,000

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Mr. Chairman, just for clarification, we went from Current Expenditure for Housing Development and did not go to Capital Expenditure.

Mr. Chairman: It is Current Expenditure. We are going to come to the Capital Expenditure. It will save us turning the pages back and forth.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: That is all right. [**Hon. Members:** *[Inaudible]*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson, I hope that you are not letting out bedroom secrets.

Ms. Ferguson: No, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson, you have the floor.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. To the Hon. Member, Project code 2507000...

Mr. Chairman: No, we are at Current Expenditure for Programme 453, on pages 326 and 327. It is the next page. We are still on the pages for Current Expenditure.

Ms. Ferguson: Where?

Mr. Chairman: It is pages 326 and 327. We are taking all the Current Expenditure and then we will take all the Capital Expenditure.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, you know that I am a bit tired. Having to deal with the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) is not easy.

Mr. Chairman: That is all right. You are doing very well. You are holding up well under your tiredness. Hon. Member, I do not want to say, the tired Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson. The well-worked Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson, you have the floor.

Ms. Ferguson: I am just confirming that we are on pages 326 and 327.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Sir. Cde. Chairman, I do not have any questions.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Hon. Member Ms. Flue-Bess, thanks for stepping in for the tired Hon. Member.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you, Cde. Chair. Line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships): Could the Hon. Minister tell us what programmes or scholarships will be offered under this line item?

Mr. Chairman: Just repeat the line item for me.

Ms. Flue-Bess: It is line item 6302, Training (including Scholarships).

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, while the line item is called, Training (including Scholarships), there would not be any scholarships, just training. Training, for example, will be certificate programmes in Water Waste Management, Supply Chain Management, and Supervisory Management.

Programme: 453 – Water Service Expansion and Management – \$3,096,862,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we will turn to page 659. I had suggested that we take it this way so that we do not have to turn the pages again.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 451 – Policy Development and Administration – \$3,500,000

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for acknowledging me. Could I turn the Hon. Member's attention to Project code 2507000, Furniture and Equipment? I notice here that we have a budgetary allocation of \$3.5 million to be spent. Could the Hon. Member disaggregate since it is for furniture and equipment? Could you say what furniture will be purchased, for where and its cost? What equipment is to be purchased, its cost, and where the items will be located? Thank you very much. [**Hon. Member (Government):** *[Inaudible]*] *[Inaudible]* Shut up.

Mr. Chairman: I do not like the words, "shut up."

Ms. Ferguson: I am sorry, Sir.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, I will start with the equipment. These are three desktop computers to be located – one at the Minister's level and the others at the Secretariat of the Permanent Secretary. These are for the Secretariat and not the Minister directly. There are two laptop computers – one at the PS's Secretariat and one at the Minister's Secretariat. I see three printers, one each. There are backup batteries, similar for the computers. There are two shredders. There is one water dispenser for the PS's Secretariat and one scanner for the Minister's Secretariat.

In terms of furniture, there are four executive chairs. There are cubicles for the PS's Secretariat because we are setting up that area downstairs. There is one sofa chair, and I wish this could be for me to replace the green chair in my office. There is one sofa chair and that is it for furniture.

Mr. Chairman: Equipment...?

Mr. Croal: I went through the equipment.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the Minister went through equipment and furniture and their locations.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Through you to the Hon. Member, you only answered part of my question.

Mr. Croal: What did I [*inaudible*]?

Ms. Ferguson: I asked, what is the cost association for each item. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: My apologies. Hon. Minister, what is the cost association?

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, my apologies, I omitted that. Let me go: the desktop computers – 480,000; the laptop computers – \$340,000; the executive chairs – \$480,000; the filing cabinets – \$600,000; the printers – \$575,000; the backup batteries – \$150,000; the cubicles – \$240,000; shredders – \$170,000; the binding machines – \$40,000; the sofa chair – \$185,000; the water dispenser – \$40,000; and the flatbed scanner – \$200,000.

Ms. Ferguson: I have no further questions for the Hon. Member. Thank you.

Programme: 451 – Policy Development and Administration – \$3,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 452 – Housing Development – \$11,000,000,000

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Member, Project code 1903100, Infrastructural Development and Buildings: based on the explanation given here in the Legend...

“Provision for access road and infrastructure works in new and existing areas.”

...the authority is now requesting \$10 billion. Before I put my question to the Hon. Member, for the last 18 months, Mr. Chairman, the Ministry of Housing and Water was provided a sum of \$3.7 billion in 2020, and \$16.5 billion in 2021. That now gives us a total of some \$19 billion. Now they are asking for a \$10 billion allocation for 2022. Given the sector and the accumulated sum over these 18 months of \$29 billion, and this must be of concern. Could the Hon. Member lay over to the Committee a detailed breakdown of all projects funded by the \$19 billion and the projects to be funded by \$10 billion that they are now requesting.

8.47 p.m.

Mr. Croal: I am here to answer for the \$10 billion that is being requested in the national Budget and that is what we are asking for. I would be happy to provide what we are asking that for. From the \$10 billion the sum of \$3 billion is going towards the four-lane highway from Eccles to Diamond. The existing areas would be \$750 million; utility infrastructure for those areas that we have developed, \$1 billion and the other \$5.250 billion is for the new infrastructure works.

Ms. Ferguson: A follow-up: three billion for the highway from Mandela to Eccles, could the Hon. Member state the projected cost for this particular project and the amount of moneys paid as at 31st January, 2022?

Mr. Croal: The total contract sum for the 12 lots is \$13,327,912,019. The amount that has been paid has been the mobilisation advanced to the tune of \$1.9 billion and we are asking in this budget for \$3 billion to go towards that allocation.

Ms. Ferguson: To the Hon. Member, earlier you said \$5.20 billion will be going to new infrastructural areas. Could you list these areas and the sums associated with them? Remember

that the legend reads: “new and existing areas”. The figure you give to me here which is the \$5.20 billion, according to you caters for new infrastructure. Would the work be done in existing schemes because a lot of works have to be tidied in Diamond, Eccles, La Parfaite Harmonie and those areas?

Mr. Croal: Hon. Member, I thought you were listening to me attentively. For the existing, I did say \$750 million. The new areas would include Onderneeming–Essequibo; Buxton; Saint Joseph, Charity; Versailles, West Bank Demerara; Wales; Leonora; Edinburg; Blocks nine and 18 Golden Grove; Block five, Great Diamond; La Bonne Intention (LBI); La Reconnaissance; the commercial area at Prospect; Golden Grove new commercial area; Little Diamond and Great Diamond. the Community Hub, Peters Hall, the Commercial area, Lethem and Amelia’s Ward Phase four Linden. Those I just called are for the new areas. The existing sum for the existing areas is \$750 million.

Ms. Singh-Lewis: Hon. Minister, I just want to follow up on that same item. Could you say if [inaudible] Herstelling or what we call First Bridge, in Herstelling, is listed as your existing area for road works?

Mr. Croal: There are one point five kilometers (Km) of road in Herstelling that is catered for under the existing areas.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Now that I see that we have come to Capital, I will rephrase the question that I asked the Hon. Minister earlier. Firstly, could he clarify whether the roundabout that is being built at Aubrey Barker, Mandela, would be accounted under this line item?

Mr. Croal: The answer is no. It is not for the breakdown that I just provided.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: The Infrastructural Development and Buildings have a \$10 billion cost. Could the Hon. Minister state where the funding would come from for the roundabout that is currently being built?

Mr. Croal: The roundabout was already dealt with under the last year supplementary.

Ms. Ferguson: The Hon. Member was not clear. Could he repeat himself?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you were not clear to some Hon. Members. Could you please repeat?

Mr. Croal: The roundabout, we have already dealt with that in the previous Supplementary Paper (SP). The roundabout is not catered for in the breakdown that I just give you.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Mr. Chairman, the roundabout has not been completed. Is the Minister stating that the moneys have already been paid to the contractor to complete the roundabouts?

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, the answer is no. I said the roundabout was dealt with, with supplementary last year and any additional sums that are required will be dealt with from the House [*inaudible*]. It is not being catered for here. That is all I can say.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Member, as I stated earlier, this particular Ministry, over the last 18 months – GY\$29 billion. Could the Hon. Member state whether the Ministry of Housing or Central Housing and Planning Authority (CH&PA) has the capacity to execute projects of such magnitude?

Mr. Chairman: Of such magnitude meaning the \$10 billion in this budget? We have to this amount.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, \$10 billion plus \$19 billion would give you a total of \$29 billion.

Mr. Croal: The short answer is yes but I need to add something. The capacity of the...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, did you say that you need to ask something?

Mr. Croal: I said 'add'.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, I am sorry.

Mr. Croal: The capacity of the Ministry of Housing and Water and the Central Housing and Planning Authority have been saving the taxpayers of this country hundreds of millions of dollars because if you notice, we do not come to this House to ask for consultancy fees and design fees, *et cetera*; all of those are done inhouse by the CH&PA.

Mr. Chairman: I now...

Ms. Ferguson: Not as yet, Mr. Chairman; do not rush.

Mr. Croal: There is no rush. We only have about 20 minutes remaining.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you. From the 10,000 house lots that the Hon. Member would often times boast about, could you provide a breakdown of the areas? Perhaps, Mr. Chairman, in the interest of time, I would request for the Hon. Member to lay that information over to us, please. Thank you.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, I would beg that you give some additional time so that I could provide some information to the House now.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we have exhausted the one...

Mr. Croal: I would be happy to...

Mr. Chairman: Let me finish please. Hon. Member, we have exhausted the one hour remaining for the time allocated. We have a principle, the time saved on the previous heads will be used in the subsequent heads. I have 26 minutes remaining that were saved. We have 26 more minutes to use if you so like.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, the areas that we have allocated for the 10,000 house lots are...

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, may I?

Mr. Chairman: I have given the floor to the Hon. Minister. If you want, you could raise a Point of Order which would have been the last issue raised by me, so if you raise that on a Point of Order, you are challenging my time keeping. Hon. Minister, go ahead.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, the areas that we have allocated includes Onderneeming, phase four in Region 2; as well as Charity, that is Saint Joseph and Buxton; Anna Catherina; Edinburg; Corneila Ida (CI), Block X1, Block X2 and Y1 in Meten-Meer-Zorg; and Stewartville which are for Region 3. Block A1, B part of Plantation Annandale; Cummings Lodge, Parcel 1768; Cummings Lodge, Parcel 1767; Industry 409; Track NX and NY, La Bonne Intention (LBI); Block A1 portion of Vigilance; Plantation Bladen Hall; Plantation Strathspey; as well as Mon Repos; La Reconnaissance; Plantation Prospect; Great Diamond; Little Diamond; Block 18

Golden Grove; Block five Great Diamond; Block nine Golden Grove; Parcel 115, Providence; Block A Balthyock; CHPA Lethem; and Amelia's Ward, Phase four. Mr. Chairman, that accounts for the more than \$10,000. [**Mr. Dharamlall:** She is very dishonest.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Dharamlall, that is unparliamentary. I will send you the list. Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson, you go ahead. The list is going to him now.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. To the Hon. Member, from the areas that you have just highlighted, could you state whether these lots are service lots?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, serving lots.

Mr. Croal: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For me...

Ms. Ferguson: Service lots, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Did you say service?

Ms. Ferguson: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, service lots.

Mr. Croal: For me to start providing that information, let me start from the period 2015–2020 for which allocations were done but no infrastructure work, it is what we inherited. These include: Mon Repos, Annandale, Vigilance, Bladen Hall, Strathspey, La Bonne Intention....
[*Interruption*]

9.02 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, allow the Minister to answer.

Mr. Croal: ...Cummings Lodge, Prospect Phase 1, 2, 3, Williamsburg, Hampshire, Number 79, Number 75, Ordnance, and Fort Lands. Mr. Chairman, as I speak, allow me to highlight the areas for which we have had infrastructure work completed, as well as ongoing or nearing completion, that will signal occupancy, very shortly, for thousands of Guyanese. These include infrastructural works at Anna Catherina; Cornelia Ida; Edinburgh; infrastructural works at Meten-Meer-Zorg; and Stewartville, which are in Region 3; Mon Repos; Annandale; Vigilance; Bladen Hall;

Strathspey; La Bonne Intention; Cummings Lodge; Great Diamond; Little Diamond; Prospect; and Providence, which are in Region 4; Experiment, Region 5; Williamsburg; Hampshire; Ordnance Fort Lands; Number 75; and Number 79 for Region 6.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Member. Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson, if you have exhausted your questions...

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. **[Ms. Rodrigues]:** *[Inaudible]*

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, Member.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you for protecting me from the Hon. Member. I do not know why she is always attacking me.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I have to protect the Hon. Member.

Ms. Ferguson: To the Hon. Member, could you say when the allottees will be able to access their lands? Mr. Chairman, sorry. If I may, let me just qualify the question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you know, it is sort of a little... I do not want to use an unparliamentary word. Once you take your seat and I give the Minister, the Minister is on the floor, you would have to stand on a Point of Order. I will allow you to add. Hon. Minister, please, allow the Hon. Member to add. Go ahead

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. To the Hon. Member, the 10,000 house lots allocated, could you say when the 10,000 allottees will be able to access their lands to construct their dream homes? **[Ms. Rodrigues: *[Inaudible]*]** You listen, Ms. Rodrigues.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, remember that the Minister has to answer for the lots under this \$10 billion. For the 10,000 house lots, I understand that was allocated last year, under last year's appropriation. This one would have to be when the persons would receive their house lots, which will become available under this head. Hon. Minister, would you like now to answer?

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, it is an ongoing process and all within this first quarter will be shown. They have already started and for those who have not, before the completion of this quarter can find where their lots are.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I just have a few more questions under this particular head. Could the Hon. Member provide to this National Assembly the balance in the Housing Fund as at 31st January, 2022.

Mr. Croal: I would ask that the Hon. Member ask that question probably through the format of when you ask the Minister, because these are referring to bank balances, for which I did not come with today.

Ms. Ferguson: Project Code 1903900 – Adequation Housing and Urban Accessibility Programme: Could the Hon. Member advise the National Assembly whether there has been an increase in the scope where this project is concerned? If yes, could the Hon. Member lay over to the National Assembly the information as it regard to the change in scope?

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, there is no change in scope.

Ms. Ferguson: A follow-up: there has not been any changes in the scope. Therefore, there have been extensions to the project. Could you say which areas are now included in the programme that was not initially there?

Mr. Croal: I like how the Hon. Member is asking about this project, because this is a project that should have been implemented already and was signed since 2018. Having said that, because of your inefficiency to implement the project, we are doing that now. The boundary for this project falls within up to Haslington on the East Coast; Grove, Diamond on the East Bank; and La Parfait Harmonie, that cluster [*inaudible*], the one that you know.

Ms. Ferguson: I heard you mention areas on the East Coast and La Parfait Harmonie. What about Sophia; is Sophia out from the project?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I think I heard you correctly, from upper Haslington to Grove, Diamond.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, let me go over it slowly. Haslington, that way, all the way so, going that way, all the way so, crossing the Demerara Harbour Bridge. Sophia, obviously, will be included, and there are ongoing projects at Sophia.

[The Hon. Member signalled a direction.]

Ms. Ferguson: I have no further questions on this particular area for the Hon. Member.

Programme: 452 – Housing Development – \$11,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 453 – Water Service Expansion and Management – \$ 1,703,200,000

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Project code 2802100 – Hinterland Water Supply: I must thank the Hon. Minister for ensuring that the residents of Jawalla and Kamarang have access to potable water. I see there are three projects listed under that project code. I am interested in project number three, where provision is being made for seven communities that are listed. Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to disaggregate the sums allocated for each of those seven communities?

Mr. Croal: Thank you, for the complement, Hon. Member. We will be in your village shortly to commission that project. The new projects identified under the Hinterland programme are – this is specifically for the drilling of wells – Phillipai, \$35 million budgeted; Itabac, another \$35 million budgeted; Isseneru, another \$35 million; Yakarinta, another \$35 million... My apologies, I did not finish listing the Region 7 projects, I went to Region 9. Tasserene, \$34,650,000; and the Hon. Minister of Education will be pleased to know, Waramadong, which will also address the issue at the secondary school, \$35 million. I mentioned Yakarinta and the other village is Katoka in Region 9, which has another \$30 million budgeted.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Member, may I turn your attention to project code 2802200, Coastal Water Supply. I notice here there is \$200 million budgeted for 2022. The description highlighted in the box where the project is concerned speaks to two issues. “1. payment of retention.” Perhaps the Hon. Member can provide us with some information, what we are paying for, the cost. Secondly: “2. Provision for upgrading and expansion of water supply systems.” Where are these systems located and the cost associated with this particular project?

Mr. Croal: The rollover would be for the Lusignan well, so that is \$9.4 million. That well is now completed. The new activities would include the transmission and distribution mains for Parika Backdam. The areas to benefit from the drilling of that new well—the actual drilling will

be done and is ongoing by the Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI)—are Ruby, Farm, Bushy Park, Hydronie. Those are some of the catchment areas that will benefit from this new well. The \$45 million is for the transmission and distribution mains. There is \$37.8 million for the installation of water supply systems at Kuru Kuru, Long Creek and Moblissa. These are for first time access and improved level of services. There is the installation and the extension of the distribution network in a number of areas, which will form part of the first-time access. These areas are for materials, basically. Region 2 would be from Better Success to Better Hope; Bola Dam to Dartmouth; Richmond; and Good Hope. Region 3 would be in Canal Number One and Le Desir. Region 4, on the East Bank, Kuru Kururu; on the East Coast would be Foulis, North; Belfield Housing Scheme; Melanie Damishana North; Annandale; Eastville Housing Scheme, Vryheid's Lust to Graham Street, Plaisance. Region 5, Little Abary Sideline Dam.

9.17 p.m.

Region 6, Fort Ordinance Main Access Road and the Guyana Telephone and Telegraph Company Limited (GT&T) Chamber Backdam Road in New Amsterdam. While in Region 7, over the Bartica end, it would be at Bidarabo and Five Mile. Region 10, at Wisrock, Statia Corner and South Amelia's Ward. This will be at the Church Street area extension, which would take care of the breakdown and there is \$7 million for administrative project or programme administration.

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman. Through you, I must commend the Ministry for considering, improving the water system there in the Dartmouth area because, as you know, it is high in content. Could the Hon. Member state, on completion of this project and more so for all the areas, specifically for the residents in Dartmouth, whether they will enjoy an improved water system, purified water flowing through their tank? Thank you.

Mr. Croal: We are speaking about two different things. The improved level of service would be what we just referred to and this is whereby, per increase access changing pipelines, *et cetera*. To deal with the quality of the water, the iron content that is high in Region 2 and not only in Dartmouth, which is being dealt with under the Water Treatment and Supply Infrastructure Improvement Programme (WTSIIP).

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions for the Hon. Member. Thank you.

Programme: 453 – Water Service Expansion and Management – \$1,703,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister for that extensive and intensive answering of the questions. Thank you and your staff for taking us through the head.

Hon. Members, let me just bring you up to date with the timekeeping at this moment. We are moving on to the Ministry of Education that has one hour allocated to it. We have now saved two minutes on the previous heads, so we have to be very efficient with the questioning and the answering. Hon. Minister, I will give you a minute to get the staff in place. Hon. Members, we will take all of the current expenditures so we do not have a lot of pages to turn back and forth, and then we will take all of the Capital.

Current Expenditure

Agency: 40 Ministry of Education

Programme: 401 – Policy Development and Administration – \$1,791,270,000

Ms. Flue-Bess: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I note there is an increase by 27 under this line item. Could the Hon. Minister say what are the designation of the newly appointed contracted employees?

Minister of Education [Ms. Manickchand]: There would be Programme Managers at the Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL) – academic progression, the first one was learners support, Programme Manager at GOAL – social media marketing, Programme Manager at GOAL – Information Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure, Programme Manager at GOAL – enrolment management, Administrative Assistant at GOAL, six Clerks at GOAL, two Clerks, two more Clerks, one Office Assistant, one Typist Clerk, one Administrative Assistant, one Coordinator – school feeding, one Driver, two Clerk Generals, two Quality Enhancement Officers at the National Accreditation Council and one Accreditation Officer at the National Accreditation Council.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister. Hon. Minister, you may have to come a bit closer to the microphone or turn up the volume next time. We will have the Hon. Member, Mr. Cox, and then the Hon. Member, Ms. McDonald.

Mr. Cox: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: There is an increase of more than \$38 million for this budgeted allocation for 2022. Could the Hon. Minister provide a breakdown or details of what constitute these additional electricity charges? Thank you.

Ms. Manickchand: This provision in 2022 caters for 29 departments in the Ministry of Education, current bills.

Mr. Cox: A follow-up: Mr. Chairman, Hon. Minister, are you saying that these departments were not catered for in the previous year's budget and it is now being catered for in 2022 only?

Ms. Manickchand: They were paid for by the Ministry of Finance in 2019 and 2020 through some credit arrangement. The Ministry of Education will pay its own bills from this provision.

Ms. McDonald: Could the Minister clarify for us, the security services we are talking about under line item 6281. There is an increase from \$72 million to \$79 million. Could you state the security services and where are we deploying the security services?

Ms. Manickchand: The increase is due to increased rates in security charges for service provided at 13 locations. The previous security service providers utilised lower rates.

Ms. McDonald: Would the Minister be kind to give us the names of those 13 locations?

Ms. Manickchand: They are 26 Brickdam, 21 Brickdam, 68 Brickdam, the Examination Division, the Book Distribution Unit, the Allied Arts Unit, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the Ministry of Education (MOE) Bond, the Basic Education Access and Management Support (BEAMS) building, the Ministry of Education Sports Complex, the Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) building in the Queen's College Compound, the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Office and the Permanent Secretary's (PS) residence. That is all.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister actually give to this House what is the total administrative cost for the GOAL programme?

Ms. Manickchand: We answered just now online item 6116 about GOAL but GOAL is actually Programme 6 which spreads across the different...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Sarabo-Halley, GOAL is Programme 6. It will come up later.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Would it come up later?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister please give the emoluments for those persons that she listed as contracted employees under GOAL?

Ms. Manickchand: I would just like to focus the Hon. Member...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, please just answer it. Ignore the honourable hardworking...

Ms. Manickchand: The Guyana Online Academy of Learning caters to provide online scholarships for the pursuit of degrees, masters, Doctor of Philosophy (Phds) and other qualifications to ordinary Guyanese for who we pay. The Government and State pays for their study, so clearly that had to have been done by department. As you know, more than 6,200 persons are already on the programme and are studying. This year caters for 4,500 more young Guyanese to become qualified. We are very glad to be able to bring this programme to Guyana. The Programme Managers earn \$350,000; the Administrative Assistant – \$200,000; the Clerk Generals between \$75,000 and \$78,000 each; an Administrative Assistant – \$150,000; Coordinator, distribution centre – \$200,000; Coordinator, school feeding – \$200,000; Drivers between \$70,000 and \$78,000 and Clerk General or Quality Enhancement Officer – \$190,817.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Just for clarity's sake, because I know the Minister would not want to hand over any of those documents, could the Minister please state for me how many Programme Managers, their actual salary and benefits for each person who is under the GOAL section of the contracted employees?

Ms. Manickchand: Under line item 6116 – Contracted Employees, there are five Programme Managers and one Administrative Assistant.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Ms. Sarabo-Halley, do you want a follow-up?

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Just for clarification, the five Programme Managers who are being paid \$300,000, is that the basic salary or is that salary with benefits?

Ms. Manickchand: I said \$350,000 and that would be for the salaries.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Could the Hon. Minister please say what the benefits are?

Ms. Manickchand: It is for the gratuity and the leave passage, please, Your Honour.

9.32 p.m.

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6261, Local Travelling and Subsistence, I noticed that there is a whopping increase \$43 million or there about, \$79,891,000 in the revised 2021, appropriation here, there is an increase of \$123 million. What is the reason for this big increase in the light of Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and all of that?

Ms. Manickchand: Coronavirus disease has not stopped us from performing. We, in the Ministry of Education have not hidden from COVID-19, in fact, we faced it head on. We reopened schools, as you know, from November 2020, we began with 4th, 5th and 6th forms; and I believe, in April of last year, we opened Grade 6. By September of last year, all the schools were open from all levels, but on rotation. As you also know, the worldwide science and learning on the issue of school reopening in the advent of COVID-19 with the extent nature of the disease is that the best practice for us to reopen schools, so we have not stopped. In fact, we have had to travel more, and I say we loosely, meaning officers in the Ministry, to make sure that our reopening catered for, and was according to the standards that we ourselves defined, so yes, we actually spent more time traveling, and that is a credit to the officers on the ground and today I thank them.

The increase is to cater for increased monitoring visits to all regions for the school feeding programme as well as the books programme, and that is estimated to be in the sum of \$57 million. This activity was significantly reduced because you know that the A Partnership for National Unity/ Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) collapsed the school feeding programme completely and there were almost no books distributed.

For increased monitoring visits to all education districts by the new inspectorate unit that we have which would cost in and around \$6 million. For the policy implementation and monitoring unit, that would cost around \$3 million. In effect, Hon. Member, it is to cater for increased monitoring and delivery of services.

Dr. Cummings: Line item 6284, Other, I noticed that there is an increase of \$20 million, what constituted this?

Ms. Manickchand: Other, which existed in this line and has been funded under this line for a long time, including all the five years that APNU/AFC was in office, caters for the payment for consultants, for the regional operational plans, the payment for consultants under school improvement plan, key stakeholders consultation to review and enhance book distribution, book distribution process, payment of consultants for the restructuring of the inspectorate, producing scripts and advertisements for the welfare unit, payment for the Educational Management Information Systems (EMIS); mostly consultancy services.

Ms. McDonald: Under line item 6283, Cleaning and Extermination Services, I recognise that there is a decrease in the amount there, I am wondering why.

Secondly, the service that was used to provide the cleaning and the buildings that were...

Ms. Manickchand: There is actually a decrease there, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. McDonald: That is exactly what I said.

Ms. Manickchand: The decrease is due to the washing of compounds now being done once per month instead of twice per month, as was previously done at Ministry of Education 21 Brickdam, Ministry of Education, 26 Brickdam, Ministry of Education Book Distribution Unit (BDU), Ministry of Education Examination Division and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Line item 6302, Training (including scholarships), there is almost a \$200 million increase, if I am seeing accurately, so could the Minister state what this constitutes?

Ms. Manickchand: Did you say decrease, Hon. Member?

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Yes.

Ms. Manickchand: No, there is a \$14 million increase at line item 6302.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Line item 6302 was \$190 million, now it is \$400 million.

Ms. Manickchand: Which programme are you looking at?

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: My bad, I went ahead of myself.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, since the Hon. Member went ahead of herself, clearly, we have exhausted...

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: My apologies Mr. Chairman, I was supposed to ask that question, but I was on the wrong page. The same line item 6302, there is an increase from 26 to 35, could the Hon. Minister state what this increase is for?

Ms. Manickchand: This line is Training, (including scholarships), and the increase caters mainly for the following: the student support services unit at \$3 million for training workshops and workshops to develop and implement an environmental sanitation project that addresses appropriate training for teachers and students in waste disposal management and sanitation practices for the school's environment; Water sanitation and hygiene training programme for selected primary and secondary schools and dorm facilities in Georgetown, Region 1,4,5,7 and 9; and training to facilitate the establishment and resuscitation of Parent Teacher's Association (PTA) in schools and training for adolescent parents.

Under this civil works unit, we will have some Information and Communications Technology (ICT) software training and structural project management and other ICT engineering software. The statistical services and monitoring unit would have an annual statistical questionnaire training in all regions, BDU school feeding would train cooks, treasurers and other management committee members in the hinterland and coastland regions, this was not done in 2021 due to the pandemic, the inspectorate is going to train all regions to facilitate the restructuring of the unit; Disaster, risk and prevention management unit, we will be training Regional Education Officers (REDO) in risk management and planning and implementation and training for risk

management. The procurement unit is scheduled to provide training in procurement for five officers.

Ms. McDonald: A follow up on the question I asked before, on line item 6283, I did ask for the name of the company or companies, and I am surprised that in light of the COVID-19 numbers rising, we are now having cleaning at all of these departments being done once per month, which is sad.

Ms. Manickchand: If an assessment was made, it was made in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and not after a panic reaction. Line items 6283, 6281, they have Radar security and Inter-service security services for weekdays and holidays.

Ms. McDonald: Mr. Chairman, I am asking for cleaning.

Ms. Manickchand: Are you asking who is cleaning?

Ms. McDonald: Yes.

Ms. Manickchand: I am using those words after consideration that it is the small contractors that are used to clean those buildings, that is the Ministry's building. I just want to make a distinction between the Ministry and the schools that we supervise.

Ms. Ferguson: To the Hon. Member, earlier in her presentation reference was made to the Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL) Programme, under line item 6116, Contracted Employees, could the Hon. Member state the total number of applications currently on file, that is one. Two...

Mr. Chairman: She made two references to the Goal Programme, one, the details of the GOAL Programme could be in programme six, which is coming up; and she did mention that the persons who were hired to deal with COVID-19, some of them were included in the staffing here.

Ms. Ferguson: All right, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: You are welcome, my dear.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you, Hon. Member.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Line item 6222, Field Materials and Supplies, I noticed there was a sharp increase in the total, so I would like to know what caused this increase?

Ms. Manickchand: The increase caters for one additional unit to this programme, under the Disaster, Risk, Prevention and Management, and other units. It caters for provisions made by BDU to purchase wraps and bags with internal plastic to be used to package books, the styme for the hinterland regions in order to prevent books from becoming damaged by water, \$2 million for that; it caters for the School Support Unit to purchase supplies for distribution to schools and dorm facilities, pillows, bed nets, spectacles, sanitary pads, vests, socks, combs and so on for children; it caters for the purchase start up kits for adolescent parents, that is mothers and fathers, for courses they enrolled in that would help them to get a start in their business venture; it caters for the reintegration of adolescent mothers and it caters for some purchase of face masks, face shields, gloves and so on.

Programme: 401 – Policy Development and Administration – \$1,791,270,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 402 – Training and Development – \$2,031,739,000

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: I now address the Hon. Minister to the question I was asking earlier. I am at line item 6302, there is almost a \$200 million increase, could the Hon. Minister say what is the cause of this increase?

9.47 p.m.

Ms. Manickchand: This caters for the National Centre for Educational Resource Development (NCERD). What happened was because of limited expenditure in 2020, in 2021, less than what was required, was given and we sought to correct that with the Ministry of Finance because we cannot train the way we should be training if we were not given a bigger allocation. The NCERD administration would be training to improve in the quality of school management, train school managers across the country to better their strategies and methods for greater efficiency in school management and to ensure that there is national impact on the management of nursery, primary and secondary schools.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Thank you, Hon. Minister for that. What I have heard from you, Hon. Member is that there will be a lot more training done this year. Training to me, means somebody in front of a class or in front of people doing some amount of training and it may be something else. Could the Hon. Minister explain what exactly this extra \$200 million or the \$400 million will be spent on that requires such high sum to training across the country?

Ms. Manickchand: Hon. Member, if one look at the 2018 and 2014, provision to NCERD one would see that it used to get \$200 million plus. It was unable to spend it in 2020, in 2021, I am assuming, the Ministry of Finance measured expenditure versus what it should give, and it gave a significantly reduced amount. I think it gave \$50 million or something. This is more in keeping with what has been given in previous years. I could go through with you, if you want all the spending that this increase would cater for. Would you like me to do that? It is not only NCERD.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I think you are speaking to me.

Ms. Manickchand: Sorry, Sir. It is not only to NCERD, but also for the Deputy Chief Education Officer (DCEO) office, the Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE), the Unit of Allied Arts, and some other curriculum development.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: I would appreciate if the Hon. Minister would not mind laying it over instead of her going through it. I would much appreciate that.

Ms. Manickchand: I could go through. The increase in the line item is due to...

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Mr. Chairman, in the interest of time, I request that it be laid over. If she does not want to lay it over, then never mind. We have a lot of other things to do.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms Sarabo-Halley, when you ask a question, I have to put it to the Hon. Minister. I put it to the Hon. Minister and you chose to interrupt. Hon. Minister, would you lay it over?

Ms. Manickchand: I would not mind laying it over to you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, very much, Hon. Minister.

Dr. Cummings: I think my Colleague looked at line item 6302, but I am looking at line item 6301. There is a whopping increase from \$62 million to \$200 million. That is a lot of money for the education subvention and grants. I see in Appendix T it is only the National Library. Is that agency consuming all this money or are there are other entities that it concerns? It is a lot of money from \$62 million to \$200 million.

Ms. Manickchand: I am glad you asked. The Cyril Potter College of Education is the only teachers training college in the country. It is the College that is responsible for determining how, what numbers and what quality of teachers we have in the classrooms. Up to 2021, intake was limited to about 535 students at its maximum because of space constraints. When we came into office in August, 2020, the CPCE was closed completely without any prospect or plan for reopening.

We took a policy decision that we would go fully, although not solely, online. Fully means that everything is online, but it also means that once we could reopen, given the Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) situation, that we would also have courses in person. Once we did that, Hon. Member, we had an increase from 535 students to 3,000 plus students. This line item here caters for that increase. With more students, come more stipends and because we went fully online, we had to buy products and services to have an online school. An online school is not just standing in front of a computer's camera and teaching. One has to give access to library materials, to tutorials and to other things. This line item caters for that expansion. I could take you through each item.

It caters for the grant of all preservice students that are the CPCE. The increase will accommodate a new intake of preservice students. Since the programme will be online, there will be no resident stipends. Year two is projected to have 995 non-resident students which would cost \$148 million. In addition, the projected year one is 988 non-resident students. That is expected to cost \$49 plus million. The remaining \$1.8 million will cater for stipends to offset costs for the Board at College, therefore the projected expenditure for the CPCE under this line item is \$130 million for year two, plus \$49 million for year one. I am rounding off here, by the way, plus \$1.8 million for the Board stipend and that is \$200 million. That would be it.

Mr. Cox: Under the same line item, could the Hon. Minister state whether any provision has been made here for laptops or tablets to the trainee teachers?

Ms. Manickchand: That would be capital. While we are on the issue and the question was asked, the Hon. Member is very interested in this issue. I remember him saying last year, to go fully online meant you were taking away the interactive nature of this. That is why I said it is not solely online. Before the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) left office in 2015, we had a programme, a rotating fund, where each student was given the opportunity to purchase at a heavily subsidised cost, a computer. That programme crashed, collapsed, neglected and not followed by the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC). It was replaced by nothing even though that Party had come into office promising One Laptop Per Teacher. Do you remember that was a manifesto promise? That was another broken promise.

We have in that account, about \$36 million and we intend to restart. The process for procurement has begun to restart that revolving fund, so that teachers on the CPCE training programme could benefit from subsidised laptop, which they found very useful before.

Programme: 402 – Training and Development - \$2,031,739,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Programme: 403 – Nursery Education - \$2,849,967,000

Ms. Flue-Bess: Line item 6292 – Dietary: I see there is a very sharp increase under this line item. I would like the Hon. Minister to tell us what has caused this sharp increase under this line item?

Ms. Manickchand: This programme caters for the expansion of the school feeding programme. For the benefit of the Hon. Member who I have been told is a teacher, all students from Nursery to Grade 2 have, traditionally under the PPC/C governance, enjoyed nutritious food, either through the biscuit and juice programme or through the school feeding programme – the hot meal programme in the hinterland.

When the APNU/AFC came into office it abolished the cash grant programme – the 'Because We Care Programme' and it said it was going to replace that with a breakfast school feeding programme. That breakfast programme was a total failure. It never started in Region 10 and it

never started in Region 2. Only six schools in Region 6, benefitted from that programme. Very few schools benefitted from the programme. This here, Hon. Member, through the Chairman, will cater for us expanding the breakfast programme that never got off the ground under its Administration, as well as increasing our capacity to deliver nutritional dietary supplements to children in the school system across the country.

Ms. Flue-Bess: I have listened to you; Hon. Minister and I would like to know what we can expect the students to have for the breakfast programme? If it is not the biscuit and juice, what else will they be getting?

Ms. Manickchand: It was an excellent question, Mr. Chairman. The breakfast programme that was started... Remember I said, the APNU/AFC never started it in Region 10, never started it in Region 2, it had a very slow start with only six schools in Region 6 and I think five schools in Region 5. It was quite an embarrassment really and quite a robbery from the children. For the places that it started, Region 4, Georgetown and Region 3, the management and roll out of the programme was lacking. What we saw in this inquiry about how we could do this better, cereal was put into a bag and given to the children, and someone walked around with a mug of milk, pouring it into the plastic bag. That is what made up the breakfast programme.

In some other places you had bread and spread, which I think could be good, bread and cheese spread, bread and tuna spread, and bread and butter spread. If there is a disputing of what I am saying, then I would be happy to provide the evidence. I would be glad to lay it over for you, if you want me to lay over what was being served and which schools did not get. In fact, I am undertaking to lay over to this House, the schools that received the breakfast programme, which are very few in numbers, as well as, what they received on the programme. I know the Hon. Member is coming from a place of genuine consideration, because I understand you have an interest in sport and clearly that would come with nutritional support.

10.02 p.m.

The entire programme is being looked at not only with a view to determining a more equitable spread but to determining a more nutritious spread. I believe we could give black-eyed peas. We could give channa. We could give roti and curry. We could give sandwiches. We could give eggs. We could give a far more nutritious meal that people would feel comfortable relying on.

Ms. Flue-Bess: Thank you, Cde. Minister, for that information. I am just wondering if there is a dietician or someone that is in place to work along with this programme to ensure that the children receive the best possible breakfast or feeding programme that they will be a part of?

Ms. Manickchand: I think the intention was to have a dietician on the programme. Hon. Member, sometimes it is not whether advice was received from a dietician but whether the implementation of that on the ground is happening. In this case, we will certainly be utilising the services of experts on what would be a nutritious meal for students. We would make sure that that is implemented on the ground. One could say what one wants on a policy document. If one does not make sure that the schools in the various areas are providing what one asked for, then it would be a failed programme – as it turned out to be.

Programme: 403 – Nursery Education – \$2,849,967,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 404 – Primary Education – \$6,773,879,000

Ms. Hastings-Williams: Line item 6292 – Dietary: I see a whopping increase from \$303 million to \$1.4 billion. The school feeding programme has proven over the years to improve the attendance and performance of children especially in the hinterland schools. I am happy to see that the allocation has been increased. Hence my question, how many additional schools have you catered for under this line item?

Secondly, what will be the cost per meal that will be provided to our children? Thank you.

Ms. Manickchand: This caters for the expansion. This is primary, the one we dealt with just now is nursery. Again, it caters for an expansion of the school feeding programme and where it never started off, a beginning of that programme. This caters for the expansion to 3000 more students of a meal or a hot meal. I do not believe we have a cost that we have fixed and determined, but if it is catering for an expansion of 3,000 then we could divide by the increased amount and probably get the answer here. I can also give it to you now.

The purchase of *Topco* juice for \$230,872,272. The purchase of school feeding biscuits for \$153,915,000. The purchase of *Topco* juice for \$127 million. The purchase of school feeding biscuits again, \$85 million. Hot meal programme, \$743,626,000. Hot meal programme

expansion, \$106,300,000. Under the breakfast programme, \$121,622,000. The sum of \$28 million... Dora Secondary school which has always been classified separately, \$15 million.

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Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. Hon. Member, Ms. McDonald, you have the floor.

Ms. McDonald: [*Inaudible*]

Ms. Ferguson: He did not recognise me. He recognised you.

Mr. Chairman: I might not recognise you after. Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson, you have the floor.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you, very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much, my Colleague. To the Hon. Member, may I turn your attention to line item...

Mr. Chairman: You see. I made the right call, Ms. McDonald.

Ms. Ferguson: ... 6284 – Other: Through the Chairman, I notice for 2020, you had a budgetary sum of \$250 million with a revised sum of \$249 million. I notice there is a reduction from \$249 million to \$170 million. Could the Hon. Member explain the reason for the decrease and whether this amount currently sought is adequate?

Ms. Manickchand: Yes. We believe that it is adequate, and we will make it do. The decrease is more philosophical than that. The primary enhancement programme is no longer being catered for under central Ministry. It is going to be placed into the regional budget because hither to it was not properly conceived and it was not properly placed under the central Ministry.

Ms. McDonald: Mr. Chairman, I recognise under line item 6271, Telephone and Internet Charges, there is a whopping increase there. Could the Minister say to us what is responsible for the high cost that we are having under Telephone and Internet Charges? It seems as if that is a new form of [*inaudible*].

Ms. Manickchand: I am happy to report that this is going to cater for the expansion to 28 primary schools and to the Ministry of Education's unit at Lot 68 Brickdam. The provision of internet or the expansion of the internet that exists at those places.

Ms. McDonald: A follow-up question. Could we have a list of those schools?

Ms. Manickchand: I will have to lay that over, Your Honour.

Dr. Cummings: I am just using my calculator. Line item 6292, Dietary, that my Colleague Dawn Hastings-Williams spoke about and asked the question, you said 3000 additional students. What was the original number of students?

Ms. Manickchand: Hon. Member, if you recall I said that every Primary School student at Grade 1 and Grade 2 in the country ought to be offered something. On the coast, it is usually juice and biscuit or the breakfast that the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) said they were going to be offering. In the hinterland it is a hot meal or the provision of some kind of warm breakfast. This programme caters for the expansion but that also caters for the continuation of the programme. This would allow 99,641 students to be able to receive dietary supplementation under this line item.

Dr. Cummings: Through the Chairman, is it 99,000 plus the 3,000 for expansion?

Ms. Manickchand: No.

Dr. Cummings: *Oh.* The total.

Ms. Manickchand: It is 99,000 for the total amount.

Programme: 404 – Primary Education – \$6,773,879,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 405 – Secondary Education – \$6,896,858,000

Ms. McDonald: Mr. Chairman, again we are seeing under Secondary Education, line item 6271, Telephone and Internet Charges. We have seen \$37 million from last year and we are seeing the same thing again. Could the Minister say to us what the telephone and internet charges entail?

Ms. Manickchand: This is to enable payment of telephone and internet charges for 2022 for 33 secondary schools, five Practical Instruction Centres (PICs) and the Assistant Chief Education Officer's office in the Department of Education's administrative departments.

Dr. Cummings: Mr. Chairman, could I ask the Minister to lay over the list of schools and the PICs?

Ms. Manickchand: I would be happy to, but I am curious as to what the list is going to be used to do. This Government believes in equitable service, so the list is going to show equitable service. I would be very interested in knowing what the list would be used for. Is one child more equal than another?

Ms. McDonald: Mr. Chairman, under line item 6272, Electricity Charges, we have moved from \$15 million to \$104 million. Could the Minister kindly give us an explanation with regards to the increase in those charges?

Ms. Manickchand: It is the same explanation given earlier. Apparently, there were credit services under the APNU/AFC where there was some level of credit being given. There seems to have been arrears every year that we were trying and struggling to pay off. This year, this should allow us to pay our bills without taking credit or owing anyone.

10.17 p.m.

Ms. McDonald: Again, under line item 6283, Cleaning and Extermination Services, could the Hon. Minister say to us if we are going to be having... it moved from two to once per month and the buildings that we are talking about here?

Ms. Manickchand: Extensive fumigating and cleaning works were undertaken in preparation for the reopening of schools, including a lot of investments that do not have to be made again. This would help us to fumigate the building twice a month, wash water tanks once per term, wash the compound once per term or more, if necessary, remove garbage at least once a week and treat termites where that is needed.

Ms. McDonald: To the Hon. Minister, is there a listing of schools that you have where this service is going to be offered?

Ms. Manickchand: Yes, Hon. Member. The schools are: Queen's College; Bishop's High School; St. Stanislaus College; St. Rose's High School; St. Joseph's High School; Central High School; Charlestown Secondary School; Christ Church Secondary School; Cummings Lodge Secondary School; Dolphin Secondary School; Lodge Secondary School; New Campbellville Secondary School; North Georgetown Secondary School; North Ruimveldt Multilateral Secondary School; Richard Ishmael Secondary School; South Ruimveldt Secondary School; St. John's College Secondary School; St. Winefride's Secondary School; Tucville Secondary School; Tutorial High School; Brickdam Secondary School; Carmel Secondary School; East Ruimveldt Secondary School; Queenstown Secondary School; St George's High School; St. Mary's High School; Ascension Secondary School; West Ruimveldt Secondary School; Houston Secondary School; Kingston Secondary School; Freeburg Secondary School; Sophia Special School; St. Barnabas Special School; Agricola Practical Instruction Centre (PIC); Agricola PIC I/A; Durban Backlands PIC; Kingston PIC and Sophia PIC. I hope that I am demonstrated what equitable service looks like.

Programme: 405 – Secondary Education – \$6,896,858,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are now at 10.20 p.m. exhausting the one hour allocated for the Ministry of Education. However, we have six minutes of savings from all of the previous heads, so I have six minutes remaining to consider the estimates for the other heads under the Ministry of Education.

Programme: 406 – Post-Secondary/Tertiary Education – \$5,251,239,000

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: One question for the Hon. Minister. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to layover the administrative cost for the Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL) under this particular head?

Ms. Manickchand: Yes, I will be happy to lay it over.

Programme: 406 – Post-Secondary/Tertiary Education – \$5,251,239,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, could we turn to page 653 and consider all of the capital programmes under the Ministry of Education?

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 401 – Policy Development and Administration – \$2,986,880,000

Ms. McDonald: Under this Programme, we are seeing furniture and equipment. Could the Hon. Minister say to us, under the purchase of furniture and equipment, what are the types of furniture that are going to be bought and the equipment?

Ms. Manickchand: It is one water dispenser; one refrigerator; one microwave; two 16 inch fans; two 18,000 British Thermal Unit (BTU) air conditioning (AC) units; 12 pallets; one air conditioning unit; one executive chair; 14 stacking chairs; one printer; one projector and screen; one laptop; two office desks; one AC unit; one microwave; one water dispenser; one laptop computer; one Private Branch Exchange (PBX) phone; one executive office chair; one filing cabinet; one water dispenser; one printer; one photocopying machine; one desktop computer; six network routers; 10 access points; one chair; two laptops; one AC unit, one computer printer; one executive chair; one desktop computer; six spare wheels; one jumper lead; one electric kettle; one rechargeable fan; one vacuum cleaner; two computers; four executive chairs; one network printer; one computer; one air conditioning unit; one executive chair; three semi-executive chairs; one shredder; one laptop computer; one water dispenser; one filing cabinet; one printer and scanner; one satellite phone; two desktop computers; one suite; three typist chairs; one printer and photocopier; one air conditioning unit; one air conditioning unit; two air conditioning units; one expandible cordless phone; one desktop computer; one laptop computer; one laptop computer; one suite; four executive chairs; one microwave; one satellite phone; four PBX systems; one paper shredder; one air conditioning unit; four PBX systems; and 12 network switches.

If you note, you heard a repetition. This is because this Programme caters for a wide number of persons. It is for the Minister, Permanent Secretary (PS), Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and Planning Officers. A large number of persons benefit from services under this line.

Programme: 401 – Policy Development and Administration – \$2,986,880,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 402 – Training and Development – \$218,317,000

Programme: 402 – Training and Development – \$218,317,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 403 – Nursery Education - \$93,000,000

Programme: 403 – Nursery Education – \$93,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 404 – Primary Education – \$120,500,000

Programme: 404 – Primary Education – \$120,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 405 – Secondary Education – \$2,124,450,000

Programme: 405 – Secondary Education – \$2,124,450,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 406 – Post-Secondary/Tertiary Education - \$2,201,853,000

Programme: 406 – Post-Secondary/Tertiary Education – \$2,201,853,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, very much, Hon. Minister and staff for taking us through that Agency. Hon. Members, that exhausts all the time we had for this head and the savings. Hon. Members, we will now have Agency 44, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport. Let me ask the Hon. Member, who is standing in for the Hon. Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport and the staff of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport to take their positions.

Hon. Members, I wish to inform you that the Hon. Member, Mr. Charles Ramson, the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport is in isolation. He has been tested positive for the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). He has authorised the former Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, the Hon. Member, Dr. Frank Anthony to stand in for him. This is permitted under Standing Order 25, Section 2. Let me just double-check that the Standing Order is correct.

Minister of Health [Dr. Anthony]: Mr. Chairman ...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister ... Sorry, it is Standing Order 22, Section 5. Hon. Minister, Dr. Anthony, go ahead.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, just to say that the Hon. Minister has asked that I stand in for him. I am using Standing Order 22(5).

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Minister. Again, like the previous agencies, we will take all the current expenditures and then the capital expenditures.

Agency 44: Ministry of Culture Youth and Sport

Current Expenditure

Programme: 441 – Policy Development and Administration – \$333,154,000

Mr. Figueira: Cde. Chairman, I must say that I am disappointed to hear that the Hon. Minister has contracted COVID. I would like to extend to him a speedy recovery.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, very much, Hon. Member.

Mr. Figueira: I know that the Hon. Minister, Dr. Anthony, has come with some degree of experience once heading this Ministry. Could the Hon. Minister indicate, with respect to line item 6116, Contracted Employees, I would have seen a decline of one of the contracted employees, which is good, but what is astonishing is that there is an increase of over \$20 million. Could an explanation be provided with regard to why this particular line item would have seen an increase of over \$20 million and the contracted workers would have declined?

Dr. Anthony: The increase is because of the persons who we have employed under this heading. We have a number of persons who are attracting different salary scales.

Mr. Figueira: Were those persons the same persons in 2021 or has there been a change?

Dr. Anthony: They are the same persons from 2021.

10.32 p.m.

Mr. Figueira: They are the same persons and we have seen an increase of \$20 million. Could you explain to us what caused this significant increase? What are the skill sets that these contracted employees are bringing to enhance the Ministry that requires this \$20 million increase?

Dr. Anthony: It has to do with improving the services offered by the Ministry of Culture Youth and Sport. The skill sets, I am sure because of their experience, they will be able to enhance the services provided.

Mr. Figueira: Minister, you would agree with me that they were hired in 2021 because of the unique skill sets they possess. Why this spiking increase by \$20 million? Could you say to us, what the positions are of these skilled contracted employees? What are their salaries and their benefits? What is the technical skill for each individual?

Dr. Anthony: Under this heading there are a number of persons who are employed, and this includes internal security. The salary for that person is \$130,240. There is also a Supply Expeditor I. That person's salary is \$79,935. There are Vehicle Drivers at \$74,900. There is another Vehicle Driver at the same salary. A Vehicle Driver for \$123,931. There is a Confidential Secretary for \$160,000. There is a Superintendent of Works for \$229,876. There is an Accounts Clerk for \$125,598. There are three Cleaners, their salary is \$83,281. Office Assistant – \$74,900. Receptionist/Typist – \$96,255. There is Storekeeper II – \$126,938. There is a Typist Clerk I – \$74,900; Typist Clerk I – \$129,771; Vehicle Driver – \$74,900; Vehicle Driver – \$133,151; an Assistant Accountant – \$163,648; Internal Security - \$126,989; Maintenance Inspector – \$206,723; Personal Assistant – \$214,000; an Advisor to the Minister at \$535,000; and a Technical Officer at \$400,000.

Mr. Figueira: Of all of the persons that I have heard there, I do not see any real technical skills that require this large amount. Given the fact that the Minister would have procured the services of an Advisor, what is the qualification of this Advisor? Is he providing advice for the Ministry or a specific agency, either sport, culture or for youth?

Dr. Anthony: I think the Advisor is a person who is well qualified both academically and, also, has many years of experience having worked in the Ministry of a number of years.

Mr. Figueira: Could the Minister be a little clearer with respect to the qualifications of the...? I did not hear when you say that, I was distracted by the chief heckler.

Dr. Anthony: I said that the Advisor has a university degree, is a graduate from the University of Guyana with a degree and could suitably serve in the position as an Advisor to the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport.

Mr. Figueira: The Minister apparently does not want to provide what degree the Advisor holds. Going on to line item 6291...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Figueira, you know the Minister did answer when you said the Minister did not want to. He answered that the person had a degree and previously...so he had experience. He did answer. Subsequently, you made a comment, a degree in what. If you want to ask what the degree is, you could ask that, and I would allow it.

Mr. Figueira: Thank you for your guidance, Cde. Chairman. Could the Hon. Member indicate to this House what degree the Advisor holds?

Dr. Anthony: I think we will have to get the details from the Ministry. As far as I am aware, I think that person holds a degree from the University of Guyana in the area of tourism.

Mr. Figueira: I appreciate the Minister's effort in proffering a guess. We would rather it be confirmed and be laid over. Line item 6291 – National and Other Events – I am recognising an allocation of over \$29 million. Could the Minister indicate what are the national and other events for this line item?

Dr. Anthony: These funds allocated here will be used for various national events which include the launch of Emancipation Day, Phagwah celebrations, Youman-Nabi, Easter programme, Independence celebrations, Diwali, Christmas programme, Arrival Day, Indigenous Heritage Month and, of course, Mashramani.

Mr. Figueira: Could the Minister, specifically for Mashramani, indicate what would be allocated for this national event?

Dr. Anthony: I think it is a bit premature to say what exact sum will be allocated to Mashramani because it is still to be determined, whether or not we would have festivities in the street. As you

know we have a prevailing pandemic and, therefore, it would be difficult to decide the efforts that we will be having. Like last year, there were celebrations. Those celebrations were virtual. More than likely, they might be the same. There have been discussions within the Ministry to see whether or not they could do something more outdoors.

Mr. Figueira: Finally, on this same line item, a follow up. Sir, you would agree that Mashramani is two weeks away from now or less. I find it rather strange that you are saying you cannot give a response with the preparatory position the Ministry is at, given the known situation of COVID-19 and given the experience of 2020 and 2021. We would have been given some degree of guidance of how we could prepare in 2022 for Mashramani. Could you give a little clearer response in that regard?

Dr. Anthony: As the Hon. Member would know, Mashramani consists of a number of events. It is not just a parade. There are lectures, things that are done in the regions and a whole host of activities, including calypso, chutney, steel band, school performances, a whole host of things. Therefore, some of these activities would require mass gatherings and because of the prevailing COVID-19 situation, the Ministry has taken a position that some of this we cannot have at this point-in-time. However, it does not mean that we cannot celebrate. As we have done in the past, some of these activities would have migrated online. That is the same thing that the Ministry is right now considering. How much of it is going to be online? How much of it you could actually do where you could have a limited audience? That is what they are considering right now.

Mr. Figueira: Hon. Minister, in 2021, there were over 16 virtual concerts. Could the Minister, in light of the fact of what you would have said that there is a greater possibility of this being replicated in 2022, could you say to this House what is the method that will be utilise? As a matter of fact, could you say the company that managed the virtual concerts?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Figueira, we are going to have to ask in the present because we are dealing with the subvention for 2022.

Mr. Figueira: Could the Minister indicate, therefore, what is the methodology that will be employed for companies to bid to host these virtual concerts, or would it be sole sourcing again?

Dr. Anthony: Again, I think, as the Hon. Member knows, there are various procurement methods, some of them could be public tendering, others could be restrictive, and others could be direct sourcing. It depends on the skill set that one wants; one might have to choose one or the other method of procurement.

Opposition Chief Whip [Mr. Jones]: The same line item, just to confirm with the Minister, is the Minister saying as of today, the 8th February, 2022, 15 days away from the Republic celebrations 23rd February, that the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport currently has nothing on its agenda for Mashramani? Is that what the Minister is saying?

Dr. Anthony: I hope that the hour is not too late that the Hon. Member has fallen asleep, because I certainly did not say that. I give you a range of activities that normally would happen at Mashramani. I have said that some of those will be migrated online, while some of the other activities might be done in person. We have explained that.

Mr. Jones: Follow up: Cde. Chairman, we are looking for specificity. As I said before, we are 15 days away before Mashramani. Could the Hon. Minister please inform this House, with the allocation that has been made, 15 days away from Mashramani, what are the events, activities that are going to be had, whether they are going to be online, how many of them, what are the names of them? There must be a programme that guides the Ministry.

10.47 p.m.

Dr. Anthony: I think we have gone through that already. As I have stated, some of the programmes for Mashramani would be online. I am sure that the Ministry would be able to lay that over to you.

Mr. Jones. Cde. Chairman, I will move to line item 6111, Administrative. Could the Hon. Minister indicate if this line item takes care of a Director of either Culture, Youth or Sport?

Dr. Anthony: Again, as the Hon. Member Mr. Jones would know, this deals with administration. In administration, the positions that we are talking about are the Permanent Secretary (PS), Senior Personnel Officers (SPOs), Accountants and so forth. The positions that you are looking for would be under the specific programmes. You worked in this Ministry, and you should know that.

Ms. Ferguson: To the Hon. Member, under line item 6291, National and Other Events, from the sum being sought here for 2022, could the Hon. Member say whether provisions are catered for, probably – national awardees – persons to be bestowed with national awards? Are there any provisions here?

Dr. Anthony: As I have said before, this caters for national events such as the national holidays that we have. Those national holidays, I just read them out. There are religious holidays, other holidays that we celebrate in this country. Those are the ones that are catered for under this heading.

Programme: 441 – Policy Development and Administration – \$333,154,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 442 – Culture – \$1,135,836,000

Mr. Jones: Line item 6284 – Other: we see an increase from \$60 million to \$160 million, could the Hon. Minister indicate what has occasioned this increase?

Dr. Anthony: Hon. Member, the increase of \$100 million caters for the Endowment Fund in Culture. It provides for money that will be going to resuscitate the Guyana Prize for Literature. It is also going to resuscitate the various cultural festivals and provide, also, for the Cultural and Creative Industries Grant. This is where the \$100 million would be spent.

Mr. Jones: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: when one goes to the Details of Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, we see an allocation to the National Youth Commission. We see a zero in terms of the actual allocation, then we see a request... [**Hon. Member:** (*Inaudible*)] Sorry. [**Hon. Member:** (*Inaudible*)] Yes, it is Subsidies to Local Organisations under Culture.

Mr. Chairman: It seems to be the wrong head, Hon. Member.

Mr. Jones: Sorry.

Mr. Chairman: It seems to be the wrong head. If it is zero, then the...

Mr. Jones: A figure is here, Sir. There is a request for \$150 million. What I am saying is that in 2021, there was a request for \$150 million. We are seeing a revised figure of zero and then budgeted now for 2022 is \$150 million. We want to know if... **[Hon. Member: *Inaudible*]** It is on page 605. It is under Culture on page 307 and when one goes to the Details of Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations on page 605.

Dr. Anthony: Is this last year, for this line?

Mr. Jones: That is right. It is for the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport. It falls under Culture.

Mr. Chairman: Before he explains, again, Hon. Member Mr. Jones, you are raising the National Youth Commission here. That is what you are raising.

Mr. Jones: *Inaudible*

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. I know we have had a long day and we are now burning the midnight oil. Go ahead, Hon. Member Mr. Figueira.

Mr. Figueira: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Under the line item 6284, Other, where we would have seen an increase of over \$100 million, the Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance, in his Budget Presentation, where he made mention of the extending and strengthening of programmes within the schools for arts, is this line item catering for that as well?

Dr. Anthony: This line item 6284, Other, caters for the rental of tents and so forth and also the Endowment Fund for \$100 million, which would include money going for the resuscitation of the Guyana Prize for Literature, cultural festivals and grants for Cultural and Creative Industries. That is what this line item would be spent on.

Mr. Figueira: Could you give some guidance with respect to where the \$7.5 million that is budgeted for the National Trust of Guyana 50th Anniversary is located in this?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, some guidance on the National Trust of Guyana.

Dr. Anthony: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If the Member would turn to line item 6291, there is an allocation there for the National Trust of Guyana 50th Anniversary.

Mr. Figueira: This is the last question on that same line item. This celebration, will it be taking a virtual format as well?

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, the intention is to have an in-person ceremony – small but significant. Apart from having that in-person ceremony, there is also going to be a book launch celebrating the 50th Anniversary. We would also have various other types of activities that would be done at some of the sites that are under the National Trust of Guyana. This is how they intend to celebrate the 50th Anniversary.

Mr. Jones: Cde. Chairman, line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, could the Minister explain the figure of \$150 million allocated to the Linden Museum of Industrial & Socio-Cultural Heritage?

Dr. Anthony: There are a number of organisations that would benefit under this line item. You have, first of all, the \$140 million that is going to the National Trust of Guyana. You have \$70 million that is going to the Castellani House. You have \$100 million that has been allocated for the celebration of the International Decade for People of African Descent. You also have \$1,500,000 going to the Theatre Guild and \$150,000, which is an annual subvention, given to the Linden Museum of Industrial & Socio-Cultural Heritage.

Mr. Jones: Just a quick follow up on the same line item with the Linden Museum of Industrial & Socio-Cultural Heritage. The Hon. Minister said that it is an annual subvention, but we note that in 2021 it was zero. Was this money not paid to them last year?

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, as far as I am aware, from more than 10 years ago, this arrangement has been put in place. Every year they would receive this sum of money to assist them with the work they are doing at the Linden Museum of Industrial & Socio-Cultural Heritage. For last year, I am told that it was paid.

Programme: 442 – Culture – \$1,135,836,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

11.02 p.m.

Programme: 443– Youth– \$791,297,000

Mr. Jones: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Could the Hon. Minister indicate if the Director of Youth is captured under this heading?

Dr. Anthony: Yes, the Director of Youth is under this heading.

Mr. Jones: Follow-up, Cde. Chairman. Could the Hon. Minister indicate when this vacancy was filled and was it advertised *via* the Ministry of Public Service?

Dr. Anthony: This vacancy was filled on 1st December, 2021 and it was done by way of contract.

Mr. Jones: Some further guidance, Sir. Based on the Ministry of Public Service, it is said that this is a public service position, which would have to be advertised *via* the Ministry of Public Service. Could we get the qualification of the individual that holds this position as well?

Dr. Anthony: Employment in the Government sector could be of two forms – one is *via* contract, and one is *via* the Public Service Commission (PSC). In this case, the option was used to employ the person using a contract. The person so employed currently holds a Master's in Education. The person is highly qualified for the position.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: Mr. Chairman, as far as I understand, using contract does not mean that you do not go through the process of advertising and also interviewing persons for a particular position. Could the Minister please clarify whether that process happened in this particular case? [An Hon. Member: *[Inaudible]*]. The Director of Youth, yes. The Director of Sports is a different thing.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, as far as I understand, due process was followed, a suitable candidate was identified, and that person was recruited on contract and is now working.

Mr. Jones: The final question on this note, Cde. Chairman. Could the Hon. Minister indicate when this post was advertised? Could he be kind enough to share with us that advertisement and the scores of the individuals who applied and who were interviewed?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the Minister was very clear on the due process, but I will ask him to respond.

Dr. Anthony: Again, a vacancy was created because the previous director, who was on leave since 2019 and was off the position for more than 14 months and receiving a salary of more than \$289,000 a month but not working... After that position was declared vacant, a new director was appointed.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: How?

Dr. Anthony: A suitable candidate was found, and the person was interviewed and appointed.

Mr. Figueira: With respect to the contract, could it be indicated what is the length of the contract that was signed?

Dr. Anthony: The length of the contract is three years.

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships) ... [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members on my right, please allow the Member to ask his question so we can all hear properly.

Mr. Figueira: Line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships): We see an allocation of over \$200 million. Could the Minister indicate how many scholarships would be allocated for 2022 and what would those scholarships be catering for?

Dr. Anthony: This is a line item, traditionally, that is used to do a number of trainings. During this year, the Ministry intends to train people in financial literacy and small businesses. There is an allocation to train young people who need additional lessons. There is also a sum that has been allocated to do technical training to give people skills. As you know, this Ministry trains a lot of persons who might have dropped out of school and would like to get a second chance at developing a skill so that they can get a job. This line item provides for that. It also provides for training young people in subjects such as robotics, digital training, and to do what is called the Regional Volunteer Apprenticeship Support Programme. There is a lot of other technical trainings that will be done by the Ministry. The extra allocation for this year caters for the expansion of these programmes.

Mr. Figueira: Minister, you have given an explanation with regard to training in particular, but it also caters for scholarships. Would there be any scholarships offered under this line item and, more so, if it is going to be offered, how many are going to be offered and in which field?

Dr. Anthony: Training is the main focus of this line item. While the heading might be training and scholarships, the training component is what is being focused on here. Scholarships are offered by the Ministry of Public Service. Through that Ministry, persons who would like to access a scholarship, for example through the Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL) programme, would be able to go to that Ministry and access the scholarship. Perhaps, we could also define what we mean by scholarship because most of the persons who are coming for training, if they are coming out from the interior, we pay for them to come out from the interior and we house them. In the case of the Kuru Kuru Training College, they spend nine months there, they are taken care of, they are given a stipend and when they are ready to go back to their villages, they are sent back. Maybe, that can be considered as a scholarship. There are several other examples with these training programmes. So, it might be considered as training and scholarships.

Mr. Figueira: Noted.

Mr. Jones: Line item 6116– Contracted Employees: Could the Hon. Minister indicate if there are any advisors to the Minister that could be found under this line item?

Dr. Anthony: As far as I am aware, this line item does not have any advisors.

Mr. Jones: Line item 6292 – Dietary: Could the Hon. Minister indicate if this line item caters for the schools that come under Youth – Kuru Kuru Training College, Sophia Training Centre and Vryman’s Erven Training Centre?

Dr. Anthony: The Member is absolutely correct. It caters for dietary for the various schools that the Ministry would run; the Kuru Kuru Training College, Sophia Training Centre, Vryman’s Erven Training Centre and the other programmes that it has.

Mr. Jones: Follow up: Could the Hon. Minister indicate if those three schools named are currently functioning?

Dr. Anthony: Right now, they are not functioning, but the intention is to get them up and running this year.

Mr. Jones: A quick close and then we will move on, Cde. Chairman. Could the Hon. Minister indicate if the schools were up and functioning last year?

Dr. Anthony: I am told that they had several trainings last year.

Programme: 443 – Youth – \$791,297,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 444 – Sports – \$739,753,000

Mr. Chairman: The Minister's staff is being given a few seconds to get in place. Let me also welcome a former Member of Parliament, the Director of Sport, Mr. Ninvalle, and his team.

Mr. Figueira: Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the Director of Sport. It was a long-awaited position. I think the best man has gotten the position. Line item 6291– National and Other Events: I recognise that \$13 million has been allocated to this line item. Could the Minister indicate what are those national and other events that this line item will cater for?

Dr. Anthony: The \$13 million caters for a number of annual sporting events, such as the South American 10K, National Athletics Competition, Caribbean Premier League (CPL) Cricket Tournament, the Aliann Pompey Track and Field event and there are some other cricketing tournaments that would be covered under this heading.

Mr. Jones: Cde. Minister, would you be kind enough to guide us as to the line item that deals with the funding for the completion of the sports policy?

Dr. Anthony: As you know, we go through these things by line item, and I should be guided by the Hon. Member and not the other way around.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Hon. Minister. It is not funny; it is the reality. The Hon. Member was a Member of Parliament (MP), he became Director of Sport, and now he is a MP again. The current Director of Sport was an MP. So, I think both persons are very qualified.

11.17 p.m.

Hon. Members, are there any more questions under the Youth Programme? Hon. Member, Ms. Sarabo-Halley, you have the floor.

Ms. Sarabo-Halley: I have just one question. I was just wondering, under National Events, whether or not any discussion has been had on bringing new sports into view. There are a lot of sports at the Olympics that we are not quite doing. Has there been any discussions on bringing new sports on board during this year?

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, I am sure that the Ministry is working to add and to make sure that we could compete in the various Olympic types of sports. If you could recall, the track and field that was developed at Leonora caters for some of the sports that are currently not being done, such as steeplechase, hammer, javelin, and a number of other things that can be done there. We have the facilities for it. That facility has been accredited. So, if anybody goes and breaks a record there, it can be accepted because the facility is internationally certified. I am very confident that the Ministry is working to make sure that we can develop in some of these areas. In addition to that, the Ministry is working on developing a sports academy. Through that sports academy, there would be development of our athletes so that they can grow from just performing at the school level or the national level to be able to become international champions.

Mr. Figueira: Minister, with respect to what you just mentioned, would the Ministry be giving priority to identified sports disciplines so that we could become competitive at the Olympics?

Dr. Anthony: As you know, in sports there are a wide range of activities. The Ministry feels that it ought to concentrate on or prioritise 12, and it has been working on that as core sports. It feels that by utilising the resources in these areas, it will have the best chances of sending athletes to the Olympics and to other international competitions. The focus is on these 12.

Mr. Figueira: Could the Hon. Minister provide us with the names of those 12 disciplines?

Dr. Anthony: I think it is best to lay them over because, while the experts here are aware of the 12, they are trying to tell me what they are. I would prefer for us to lay it over.

Mr. Figueira: Thank you, Sir. I can accept that. Finally, has the Ministry considered providing scholarships for gifted athletes to extend their studies at the university?

Dr. Anthony: I would venture to say this is something that is under active consideration. It was done in the past, and there is no reason it cannot be considered so that, in the future, such scholarships could be given.

Mr. Figueira: My last question, Hon. Minister. I am happy that the Ministry has identified 12 disciplines that it wants to give serious attention to, but has the Ministry also taken into consideration that there is paltry qualified coaches and the technical skillset that is required? Guyana does not even have two A Licenced coaches for football, one of the biggest sports in this country. Given this reality and the identified disciplines, do we have the skillset in the coaches? If not, would the Ministry be investing in training those individuals so that they could become certified or qualified to lead those respective disciplines?

Dr. Anthony: I think there is a two-fold way that we can approach that problem. There is a recognition that there is a glut of the type of expertise needed to coach the young people. There are two approaches. One is to hire and to bring in expert coaches. We have had, in the past, such arrangements with Cuban coaches who came to Guyana and worked with our athletes. There were swimming coaches, there were persons in track and field, and there was boxing and so forth. That is one approach.

While we do that, we also have to work on our local coaches to elevate them and to make sure that they have access to the various training programmes so that they can be qualified. The Ministry, as you know, has a resource centre, and that was built specifically to train coaches. It also has at the bottom, a resource centre with books and so forth, where some of this type of resource material can be accessed. In collaboration with the various associations... Because in some of the disciplines, there are specific – you mentioned football – coaching requirements. The football federation, the international body, would offer these courses from time to time. Once we go back to a pre-pandemic period, we would be able to reinstitute that type of training and to make sure that there is continuous training so that there can be a pool of coaches to help us in these areas. So, I see this growing.

Programme: 444 – Sports – \$739,753,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 441 – Policy Development and Administration – \$6,647,000

Mr. Jones: Cde. Chair, are we doing the entire spread or is it just administration?

Mr. Chairman: Let us take them head by head and we can move fast.

Mr. Jones: Project 4506400 – Ground Enhancement Programme: Could the Hon. Minister lay over...?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we are dealing with administration.

Mr. Jones: All right.

Mr. Chairman: If there is no question under administration, I will put it.

Mr. Jones: I thought we would have done one spread just to expedite it.

Mr. Chairman: No. Hon. Member, Mr. Figueira, you have the floor.

Mr. Figueira: Project code 2506600 – Furniture and Equipment: I recognise there is an allocation for \$85 million. It is going to be providing for musical instruments...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Figueira, we are under Policy Development and Administration, Programme 441.

Mr. Figueira: My apologies.

Programme: 441 – Policy Development and Administration – \$6,647,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 442 – Culture – \$200,200,000

Mr. Jones: Project code 1205700 – Buildings: Could the Hon. Minister indicate the provision of upgrading the facility and payment of retention? Which facilities and upgrading does this project code speak to?

Dr. Anthony: It is a whole range of places. The first one would be to pay the 10% retention on works that were done at the Enmore Martyrs monument site and that is approximately \$1 million. The second one deals with retention for the works done at the dance studio in the

National Park and that is \$1.3 million. The third is the rehabilitation of the Umana Yana roof and \$15 million has been allocated. There is provision of a fence to the National Culture Centre (NCC) compound and that is \$10 million. Rehabilitation of studio 2 at the Guyana National School of Dance is \$4.5 million. The construction of a drainage system at the Indian Arrival Monument compound is \$10 million. Construction and revetment of a bridge at Fort Nassau is \$22 million. Construction of a chain-link fence and sanitary facility for the Rose Hall Martyrs monument site is \$15 million. Installation of power transformer at the 1763 Monument site is \$15 million. Construction of a timber access walkway and concrete benab at Hogg Island and the windmill at Hogg Island is \$21 million.

Mr. Figueira: Minister, I did not notice any allocation for the Linden Martyrs monument; probably at the next go around. The \$85 million that I was making reference to with regard to the intention to purchase musical instrument, furniture and equipment, could the Minister indicate what the musical instruments are, specifically, that the sum of this allocation would be used to purchase?

Dr. Anthony: First of all, from the \$85 million, there is a \$12.5 million allocation for musical instruments. The rest of the money is spent on various things, such as theatre chairs for the balcony of the National Culture Centre. There is an allocation of \$62 million for that. For the same National Culture Centre, a 20-tonne air conditioning (AC) unit has to be put in and that is \$6 million. Then, there are various smaller ACs that are placed at different facilities that the Ministry has – the Castellani House gallery and a number of other places. Then, there are smaller purchases of chairs, televisions (TVs), desks, and so forth. Pertaining to the musical instruments, there are 45 different instruments that would be bought. These include 10 sitars, five harmoniums, five trumpets, five alto-saxophones, 10 guitars and 10 steel pans.

Mr. Figueira: Thank you for your detailed response, Hon. Minister. With regard to the musical instruments, would they be housed centrally, or would they be distributed regionally for the enhancement of the various genres of music?

Dr. Anthony: I think some can be at the National Music School – as you know, there is a National Music School on Brickdam – and others would be sent out to the regions. Right now,

the Ministry is trying to take these activities out in the regions and develop regional music schools.

Mr. Figueira: I am happy that it would be distributed in the regions, but to which organisation in the regions?

11.32 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are now just about 10 minutes over the time allocated. I will give an allowance to finish all the heads. If the persons questioning can deal with the general aspects and ask for some specific details *via* another format, then we can complete it. Hon. Minister, do you want to answer that?

Dr. Anthony: This would not be handed over to any specific organisation. These are programmes that the Ministry itself would be running. The Ministry intends to employ musicians who will be helping with the training in the specific regions. These would be Ministry-run programmes in the regions.

Programme: 442 – Culture – \$200,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 443 – Youth – \$50,000,000

Programme: 443 – Youth – \$50,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 444 – Sports – \$2,418,000,000

Mr. Figueira: Project code 4406800 – Multi-purpose Sport Facilities: I am seeing an allocation of \$1.7 billion here. I recognise Anna Regina and Albion. Was there a change in one of the locations for the placement of the multipurpose facilities?

Dr. Anthony: As far as I am aware, the sites are going to be Anna Regina Community Centre Ground – Region 2, Albion Sports Complex – Region 6, and Mackenzie Sports Club – Region 10.

Mr. Figueira: [An. Hon. Member: *(Inaudible)*.] Yes, I know. It was New Amsterdam. Hon. Minister, you said Mackenzie Sports Club Ground for the multipurpose facility. Could you say

what was the rationale for the Mackenzie Sports Club being chosen for the multipurpose facility...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister?

Mr. Figueira: ...when, if I can conclude, the Mackenzie Sports Club is already a multipurpose facility? What is the thinking behind that when Amelia's Ward does not have any anywhere?

Dr. Anthony: As you would recognise, it is not only the Mackenzie Sports Ground. The three places we have spoken about, all of them are sports grounds. The level of facilities that they have is not on par with what we want to develop. That is why we are going to repurpose it and develop it to a different standard, basically to meet international standards. If we look at Mackenzie Sports Ground, there is a lot of room for improvement. You will recognise the types of stands that are there and the location of those stands away from the playing field. There are no stands on the eastern side, as far as I can remember, or the northern side. Therefore, by redeveloping the whole facility, there would be a better facility and it would be able to accommodate more spectators. We would also be able to do a wider profile of a sporting activity there, including not just in the daytime, but in the night-time. It is a complete enhancement of the facility which would bring a lot of additional benefits and, as I said, it would be done for all three locations.

Mr. Figueira: Hon. Minister, in recognising the latitude the Chairman has given for time, I would not be given enough time to explain to you why that is not the best location, and there was a rationale why the eastern side of the Mackenzie Sports Club Ground did not have accommodation. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us when construction is slated to start on this multipurpose facility?

Dr. Anthony: As the Hon. Member knows, these are allocations we are asking for now and so it is slated to start later this year.

Mr. Figueira: I am asking specifically because \$200 million was also allocated for the same multipurpose facility, which was scheduled to start last year and the year before. The Ministry, in itself, having made this request and having known when this Budget would be passed and approved, should have already had a plan of when they would want construction to start on this

facility. My question remains, sir, when is this project expected to start and what is the projected time for its conclusion?

Dr. Anthony: My answer remains the same. It is later this year.

Mr. Figueira: I will move on. The National Sports Commission: There is an allocation of \$450 million. Could this be broken down to give a clearer understanding of how these moneys will be allocated?

Dr. Anthony: Some \$20 million dollars would be used at the Leonora Track and Field Centre; \$2 million would be used for backfilling drains in Region 6; rehabilitation of the driveway of the National Gymnasium – \$2.8 million; construction of a basketball court at the National Gymnasium – \$1.6 million; purchase of sports gears – \$10 million allocated; rehabilitation to the cricket academy shed at the Guyana National Stadium – \$15 million; rehabilitation to the batting areas and bowling areas at the Stadium – \$12 million; purchase of replay cameras for the cricket academy at the Guyana National Stadium – \$10 million; purchase of gym and sports equipment – \$15 million; installation of bucket seats at the Cliff Anderson Sports Hall – \$80 million; installation of air conditioning at the Cliff Anderson Sports Hall – \$30 million; filing cabinets and so forth – \$1.2 million; purchase of an electronic cricket scoreboard – \$50 million; rehabilitation of the flooring of the Cliff Anderson Sports Hall – \$20 million; construction of pavilions at the synthetic tracks for Region 6 and Region 10 – \$124 million; rehabilitation of the Andrew ‘Six Head’ Gym – \$10 million; asphaltting of the parking lot at the Leonora Track and Field Centre – \$10 million; a generator for the – \$13 million; a water pump for \$520,000; rehabilitation to the fence at the National Track and Field Centre – \$4 million; purchase of a water hog for the National Stadium – \$3 million; and refurbishing of the pool at the Kwakwani Staff Centre – \$15 million.

Mr. Figueira: Project code 4506400 – Grounds Enhancement Programme: I am seeing an allocation here, Sir, for \$250 million. The Hon. Minister, in 2021, had given 10 grounds \$10 million. Are those grounds going to be in receipt of any of this allocation to enhance the grounds that were given the \$10 million?

Dr. Anthony: This allocation, as the Hon. Member rightly said, is for ground enhancement and it would be used for grounds across the country. Depending on the magnitude of work that was

done previously, if it needs extra assistance, we probably will have to do that in this round. If not, we will look at other grounds where there is need, and certainly fix them.

Mr. Figueira: Has the Ministry identified these 25 grounds and, if so, could that be laid over? Thank you.

Dr. Anthony: I am sure that the Ministry did the assessment, and, in some cases, it is not necessarily to spend \$10 million on each ground. It might vary. Therefore, they would have those specific grounds and the sums that they would be expending.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister. Hon. Members, we are now just about 15 minutes over the time allocated for this head and all the savings from the previous head. I will allow one more question from the person who has worked so hard all day in this House. Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson, you have the floor.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for your kind consideration. I have two questions for the Hon. Member.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, Ms. Ferguson.

Ms. Ferguson: One, the line item 6321 – Subsidies to... [**An. Hon. Member:** *[Inaudible]*]. Capital...No, but you identified a whole set of activities to cover...Was it \$20 million or \$200 million? You made reference to a back drain to be filled in Region 6. I want to know exactly where this drain is located. That is one.

Two, could the Hon. Member confirm to this National Assembly whether...You know, Mr. Chairman, I would usually go and exercise on Carifesta Avenue at the Guyana National Service ground. I was made to understand that the ground is now being sold. Could the Hon. Member confirm whether the Guyana National Service (GNS) ground has been...

Mr. Chairman: The second question I cannot allow because I do not see that reflecting here. If you do not have an option of exercising because at the Guyana National Service Ground, right now, you cannot exercise there, I welcome you at Everest Cricket Club ground anytime to exercise. Hon. Minister, you have one question to answer about the drain. Where in Region 6 is that drain to be rehabilitated?

Dr. Anthony: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I think the Hon. Member would be pleased to note that this drain that we are backfilling is located in New Amsterdam in the Burnham Park.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much.

Programme: 444 – Sports – \$2,418,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

11.47 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we have now dealt with every single agency and head except for a few under the Education Programme. We have been caught up with the time and spent a few extra moments. Tomorrow, we will start on a fresh page. Let the Assembly resume.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, please proceed.

ADJOURNMENT

BE IT RESOLVED

“That the Assembly do now adjourn to 10.00 a.m. on Wednesday, 9th February, 2022.”

[Prime Minister]

Brigadier (Ret’d) Phillips: I move the adjournment of the Assembly to 10.00 a.m. on Wednesday, 9th February, 2022.

Motion put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Prime Minister. I forgot to thank the Hon. Minister and the staff of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members, the Assembly now stands adjourned to 10.00 a.m. on 9th February, 2022.

Adjourned accordingly at 11.48. p.m.